

1. EMISHIKI “SENSATION BLACK”

720ml (\$33)

Junmai
Emishiki Shuzo

Koka, Shiga

Rice: Tamazakae (Shiga), Polish: 50%

Yeast: 7 + Hanakobo, Acidity: 1.6, ABV: 16%, SMV: -2 Shubo:

Kimoto / Muroka (not charcoal fined), genshu (undiluted)

Emishiki roughly translates as “Laughter of the Four Seasons” and is captured in the noh mask on the modern front label. With just 3 full-time employees, Emishiki is focused on rediscovering kimoto, junmai, funa-shibori (non-mechanical) pressing, and local Shiga rice, especially rice they grow themselves-- 100% of their sake meets these criteria, although it isn't advertised. Perhaps due to his U of Tokyo background, Emishiki toji utilizes a range of yeast strains including hanakobo (flower yeast) & proprietary strains he isolated personally. These unique characteristics in addition to his own eclectic sensibilities and appreciation for wine define the very unusual and thoughtful Emishiki brand.

3. SHICHI HON YARI SHIBORITATE

720ml (\$42)

Junmai Genshu Namazake
Tomita Shuzo

Nagahama, Shiga

Rice: Tamazakae + Ginfubuki (local), Polish: 60%

Yeast: 1401, Acidity: 2, ABV: 17.5%, SMV: -4.0 / Muroka (not charcoal fined), genshu (undiluted), namazake (unpasteurized)

In 1543 the Tomita family begins sake production. The brewery enjoys success in its early years but it's not until 1584 that Shichi Hon Yari, Seven Spearsmen brand, is born. In the mid-16th century, Toyotomi Hideyoshi's legendary seven generals, later called the Seven Spears of Shizugatake, played a key role in Hideyoshi's consolidation of power and eventual shogunate. Shizugatake Mountain lies just west of Kinomoto city limits, a steep peak 421m in elevation that overlooks all of Lake Biwa, and was the site of the spearsmen's valorous performance. This mountain and the surrounding city were made famous in the aftermath of the battle, and Tomita Shuzo-- an enterprising local brewery-- seized the opportunity to brand its sake in honor of the victors. Shichi Hon Yari: Seven Spearsmen sake was to be the chosen brew for samurai and villagers celebrating the new leader of Japan.

2. OTA “KOKORO” JUNMAI NAMAGENSHU

720ml (\$36) 180ml (\$11)

Junmai Namagenshu
Ota Shuzo

Kusatsu, Shiga

Rice: Tamazakae (local), Polish: 70%

Yeast: 701, Acidity: 1.9, ABV: 17.8%, SMV: +10 / Muroka (not charcoal fined), genshu (undiluted), namazake (unpasteurized)

The Ota family has a long history in Shiga prefecture, going back to the early 1600's when they were relocated by the reigning daimyo to protect the Tokaido high road that passes through the area. The sake brewery was founded at an unusual time in history, 1847 right at the end of the Edo period, on a mission of local production and local consumption to serve travelers and community. Named after the family's famous Samurai warrior, poet, and eventual monk ancestor Dohkan Ota, the sakes of Ota Shuzo are made with organic rice from their own farm in Kusatsu City. They also organically farm grapes and produce wine at their own winery, Ritto. The umeshu is one of our best, but the namagenshu is a quiet pleasure and also sold in 180ml cups.

4. DAIJIRO YAMAHAI NAMAGENSHU

720ml (\$39)

Junmai Yamahai Namagenshu 2022
Hata Shuzo

Higashiomi, Shiga

Rice: Ginfubuki (local), Polish: 60%

Yeast: ambient, Acidity: 2.3, ABV: 16%, SMV: 4.0 / Muroka (not charcoal fined), genshu (undiluted), namazake (unpasteurized)

Daijiro Hata, one of our favorite brewers here at Sunflower, manages to produce Kimoto, Yamahai and Sokujo-- an extremely rare degree of diversity because the methods easily interfere with one other. Even more amazing is that all kimoto and yamahai are brewed without added yeast, only yeast cells from the air in the brewery, and this sake (as well as many others) is brewed using rice from his own fields: only Tamazakae, Ginfubuki, Wataribune (all Shiga varieties) and Yamadanishiki.

In Daijiro-san's opinion, Yamahai is the most interesting and challenging method of the three: It's the least predictable, and needs the most careful temperature management. Although he uses ambient yeast, Daijiro is careful to clarify that it's not real wild yeast-- probably an airborne derivative of #9, which is used in the sokujo. Daijiro sake are not known for fragrance, but full body. Daijiro san learned from Noto toji, because Noto farmers came to Shiga to work in the past and as a result, deeply influenced local brewing culture.

**BONUS: OTA “DOHKAN” UMESHU**

720ml (\$43)

\$6

Junmai Umeshu
Ota Shuzo

Kusatsu, Shiga

1 year aged junmai (sake base) + aging in bottle

Ingredients: Junmai sake made with local rice, ume from Wakayama and Fukui, rock sugar. Alcohol: 10%

A fascinating, bittersweet, tart and deep umeshu. Delightful and complex-- not an everyday sipper, named for the famous Samurai warrior, poet, and eventual monk ancestor Dohkan Ota. This umeshu is made with only junmai (pure rice) sake and is aged for several years before release.



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