

NISHIDE MOROMI

720ml (\$35)

Junmai

Nishide Shuzo 西出酒造

English by appointment, cafe open weekends

Location: Komatsu City, Ishikawa, en route to Yamanaka Onsen

Rice: Local table rice / Polish: 65%

Yeast: K-901H : a #9 mutant producing high malic acid

Acidity: 3 / SMV: unknown / Alcohol: 14%

With over a century of history in the Kaga region, Nishide Shuzo operates under the mantra that "sake brewing is our life." Nishide brews handmade sake alongside his brother in law, and is only in operation thanks to Nishide-san infusing his creativity and impressive training (with Noguchi-san, sake #4) into the struggling family operation. Many of his sakes are made with ambient or house-cultivated yeasts, imparting a truly localized and unique profile. At less than 100 Koku per year in annual production, Nishide is perhaps the smallest brewery we work with, on par with Chochin. For Sunflower Day (7/31), stop by the shop to taste a bottle of his pride and joy, Hirohisa Junmai Daiginjo Omachi, one of my personal favorites!

YUHO RHYTHM OF THE CENTURIES

720ml (\$36)

Junmai

Mioya Shuzo 御祖酒造

Retail only, tours unavailable.

Location: Hakui, Ishikawa (Noto Peninsula)

Rice: Gohyakumangoku + Notohikari (local) / Polish: 55%

Yeast: #9 / Brewing method: kimoto

Acidity: / SMV: / Alcohol: 15% / Aging: 2-4 years

The town of Hakui in Ishikawa is known for their UFO (yuuhō in Japanese) sightings- and Mioya playfully leans into the pun. But a silly bottle belies a serious sake! Light in body but with serious depth, creamy texture and a crisp finish. For kuramoto Miho Fujita and toji Toshi Yokomichi, it's all about making sake they want to drink themselves, with rice grown by farmers they know and trust. Like most of their brews, this sake is aged: 2 years at the brewery in tank, then bottled and aged a bit longer before you open it. Kimoto refers to the vigorous and labour-intensive production method often used in Ishikawa, as many of the brewers historically worked and trained in Hyogo where it was developed. Here the moto [starter ferment] is mashed by brewery workers using long bamboo poles to create a puree of the ingredients. The Kimoto method gives a robust character while the highly polished rice creates elegance. Yuho is still rebuilding after the Noto earthquake, but thankfully has now resumed production.



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720ml (\$45)

Daiginjo Nama Genshu

Yoshida Shuzoten 吉田酒造店

Retail only, tours unavailable.

Location: Yamashima, Ishikawa

Rice: Yamada Nishiki (Hyogo) + Ishikawamon (local)

/ Polish: 45% / Yeast: House (#14 lineage)

Acidity: 1.2 / SMV: +3 / Alcohol: 15%

GI Hakusan

Like so many people my first introduction to sake production was through the documentary film, the Birth of Sake, which follows a dramatic brewing season at Yoshida Shuzo-- I strongly recommend it. Yoshida Shuzo (Yoshida is the family name, Shuzo means brewery), makes Tedorigawa brand (gawa means river, Tedor is the name of the river) and it's currently run by the 6th generation president Yasuyuki Yoshida, who in the movie was just a young trainee. This sake is designated GI (Geographic Indication) Hakusan, which is named for the mountain the river runs down and is full of crisp minerality lent by the river. This is an alcohol-added premium sake (daiginjo) that clearly reflects the mountain terroir.

NOGUCHI HONJOZO (2020)

720ml (\$66)

Honjozo Nama Genshu

Noguchi Naohiko Sake Institute 農口尚彦研究所

Private tasting experiences by appointment only, or visit the Kanazawa Station tasting room

Komatsu, Ishikawa

Rice: Gohyakumangoku (local) / Polishing: 60%

Yeast: N/A, Acidity: N/A, SMV: N/A

GI Hakusan

"God of Sake" Noguchi Naohiko humbly rejects his title, but it's clear to see how he earned it. He brought fame to Ishikawa's Kikuhime brewery with his expertise as a Noto Toji during the yamahai revival in the 70s. Forgoing retirement in his 90s, Noguchi is still brewing at the sake institute dedicated to his name, training up the next generation of brewers. He works every single day, monitors every single batch of sake from soaking to steaming to brewing. His care is bottomless and his skill, particularly in honjozo and yamahai methods, is arguably unmatched in the world. The brewery is located up the mountain/ upriver from Tedorigawa (sake #2) in the same valley, and Nishide-san (sake #1) trained here for several years.

ISHIKAWA IS LOCATED HERE-- IT'S A MAGICAL PLACE FILLED WITH EXTRAORDINARY CREATIVE TALENT & CULINARY TRADITIONS. ONE OF THE BEST SPOTS OUTSIDE OF HOKKAIDO TO GET SUSHI/ SASHIMI, A HOTBED OF SAKE BREWING, ONE OF JAPAN'S MOST MAGNIFICENT GARDENS, AND MANY OF MY FAVORITE PEOPLE. YOU SHOULD GO SOMETIME!

