



HAKKAISAN

Greetings

The current state of sake

As the drink that is most familiar to the Japanese, sake has long played a crucial role in the lives of Japanese people. Despite this fact, consumption of sake has been on the decline for the past 30 years or so, and less than half the peak amount is now consumed. As a worker in the sake industry, and as a Japanese citizen, I cannot help but express my deep concern over the loss of interest in sake.

Many factors contribute to this shift away from sake – changes in diet, culture, tradition, to pleasures of life – but I believe the biggest reason is quality. Of course, many breweries continue to produce wonderful premium-quality Ginjo and Daiginjo sake, but with high quality comes high prices. Furthermore, production is limited, so only a select few are able to enjoy such sake.

On the other hand, many of the more casual and accessible sakes are cheaply mass-produced, leading to a sloppy brewing process which by no means lives up to the essential standards of sake. It is my firm belief that this has resulted in the declining quality of the drink that the Japanese come across in their daily lives, thus causing the people to shy away from it.

Hakkaisan's philosophy

“How can one make good sake?”

This question was answered over a century ago, and the techniques for sake brewing have long been established. I feel that the only way to brew good sake is by carefully following these techniques and procedures. Generally speaking, good sake can only be produced in small amounts. However, brewing only prized, expensive sake will lead to its extinction, as will brewing only cheap, low-quality sake. Faced with such a threat, we at Hakkaisan feel it is our duty to improve the quality of everyday sake and raise the standards.

We brew our Futsushu, “table sake,” using high quality Ginjo sake techniques. We brew our Ginjo to match Daiginjo quality. And we brew our Daiginjo every year striving for the ultimate quality. This is the Hakkaisan philosophy.

Good sake for all

To brew Futsushu using Ginjo methods means to achieve quantity along with quality, and I believe that brewers are faced with two responsibilities – quality and supply. Working to maintain and improve quality is a must, but it is also important to provide a steady supply at affordable prices when it comes to something like sake, that is to be enjoyed in our daily lives. We cannot be content with just quality. We must also pursue quantity. If not, we as sake brewers would be neglecting our responsibility to supply the people. And with this belief, we have challenged ourselves to balance the contradiction of quantity versus quality.

The essence of Hakkaisan lies in our people and facilities that steadily produce good sake, and our organization in which we all share a common philosophy. I truly hope that you will continue to enjoy Hakkaisan sake, the fruit of our work and passion.



Jiro Nagumo
President

HAKKAISAN BREWERY CO., LTD.
HAKKAISAN CO., LTD.



I. PHILOSOPHY

One goal

There exists, unbeknownst to the general public, a Hakkaisan sake that is never sold on the market. It is the “Special Sake” that is prepared during the harshest winter conditions.

Every January, the chief brewer and all the workers unite in the creation of this Special Sake. Every step is carried out by hand using traditional techniques, and the workers completely devote themselves to brewing this sake.

Master brewers concentrate their skills, knowledge, and experience into this sake, produced in the year’s prime brewing season with the best ingredients available. Therefore, only a small amount can be made, making it impossible to sell on the market. But it is this sake that is the epitome of quality that we strive for with all Hakkaisan sake. It is a manifestation of our goal, a symbol of our philosophy, and we brew this sake to engrave its taste, quality, and technique onto the souls of our brewers.

This Special Sake is the ideal, the pinnacle of all Hakkaisan sake.





2. QUALITY

Prizing human work, harnessing the riches

To state an obvious fact, the most crucial factor for making good sake is good ingredients – especially water and rice.

Hakkaisan draws water from the sacred Mt. Hakkai. The groundwater from this mountain, known as “spring water of the god Raiden,” is used for every aspect of Hakkaisan’s sake brewing. For rice, we use kinds that are suitable for sake, such as Yamadanishiki and Gohyakumangoku, grown by carefully selected farmers. With such premium resources, traditional methods, trial and error, and refined technique, we put in our utmost effort into creating sake that is made by human hands.

The resulting sake transcends human intention and ego. Nothing is overbearing about this treasure created with the ultimate ingredients and techniques. Its light, crisp taste and aroma are perfectly balanced, and it retains the true flavor of sake without interfering with the food paired with it. It is a sake that never bores the palate – a sake that leaves an impression.





3. SUPPLY

Good sake for all
Fulfilling our responsibility to supply

The brewing techniques for making good sake were established over a century ago, and there is little room for change in the fundamental process.

Mass-producing sake of high quality is a difficult task. Compared to the production of other alcoholic drinks, the sake brewing process is quite complicated and each step requires technical mastery. If traditional methods are adhered to, large quantities cannot be brewed and the result is unaffordable sake.

If all sake were to become too expensive to enjoy in our daily lives, more and more people would stray away from it. We believe that to spread the culture of Japanese sake, the standards for everyday sake must be raised. Therefore, we at Hakkaisan brew our sake in a way that permits more people to enjoy it, without compromising our standards for quality. It is our challenge to realize the seemingly conflicting goal of “Good sake for all.”

However, this does not mean we will go over our limits. With our Futsushu, we feel our limit is three tons of rice per batch. When considering factors such as the amount of koji – rice inoculated with spores – that can be made by hand, and the mixing work during the fermentation process, three-ton batches are the limit for sake brewing without over-expansion of the business. In order to maintain Hakkaisan’s standards for quality, we cannot brew more volume than this in one batch, but to compensate, we brew many, many batches.

Hakkaisan’s striving for quantity is not carried out efficiently by any means; one might say it is foolish. But in order to provide a steady supply and assure top quality, we brew many batches and refine our technique. This is how a brewery fulfills its responsibility to supply the people.





4. REFINEMENT

The relentless pursuit of higher quality
High product standards to meet our expectations

The foundation that determines Hakkaisan's sake quality lies in having the brewers share a common goal. With the Special Sake being the pinnacle, Daiginjo has its own standards for quality, as do Ginjo, Honjozo, and Futsushu.

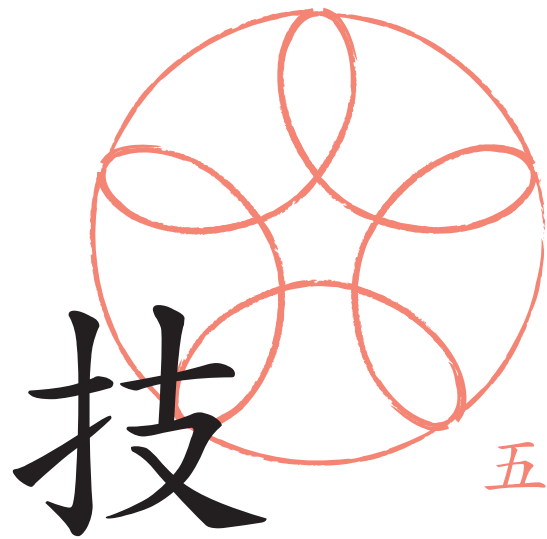
Each of our products is designed in a way that the standards can be met, from the kind of rice, rice-polishing degree, time and temperature of fermentation, and amount of alcohol obtained from the ingredients, to how much sake kasu – also known as lees, or the unfermented rice remaining after pressing – will be left over. In order to brew sake that meets our standards, every aspect is regulated.

Our products are indeed designed in a way to meet their standards, but one must have technique, a high degree of quality control, and countless other skills in order to brew sake that adheres to its product design. The more rice is polished, the greater will be its ability to produce sake of high quality, but the skills needed to brew such quality sake are not easily obtained. The process becomes even more complicated as the moromi mash is fermented at lower temperatures. To maximize the potential of the polished rice and continue our relentless pursuit of quality, we will further refine our skills.

	Futsushu	Honjozo	Ginjo	Junmai Ginjo	Daiginjo	Special Sake
Rice-polishing degree	60%	55%	50%	50%	40%	35%
Moromi fermentation (approximate)	28 days	28 days	28 days	28 days	30 days	35 days
Fermentation temperature (approximate) *maximum moromi temperature	13.3°C	13.0°C	12.3°C	12.5°C	12.0°C	10.5°C
Kasu ratio (approximate)	34.0%	36.0%	44.0%	43.0%	48.0%	XX.x%

(The goals for the 2008 brewing year)





5. CRAFT

What humans can do. What machines can do.
What humans can do better. What machines can do better.
What only humans can do ...

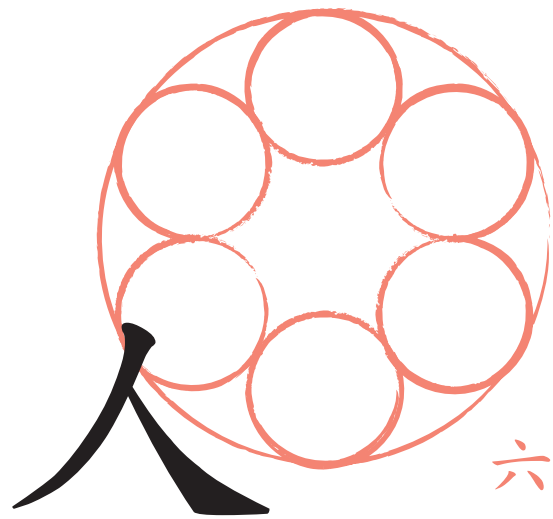
At Hakkaisan, the koji creation for all our products, from the Special Sake to the Futsushu, is carried out by human hands. The koji is one of the biggest determining factors of sake taste and quality, and koji that meets our standards cannot be made by machines.

Another process that is carried out by people is kai-ire, or moromi mixing. Kai-ire is not just a simple mixing step. It is an important step that aids the natural convection that occurs in the moromi's fermentation. One must carefully perform kai-ire to control and maintain the moromi by understanding its condition and lending an ear to what it has to say. Currently, machines cannot perform work as delicate as what humans can do.

However, this does not mean we disapprove of work done by machines. If machines can do human work at the same standards or even higher, then it is best for machines to handle the work. For example, rice polishing is better left to machines. If rice is to be evenly polished down to more than 50%, as is done for Daiginjo, machines are better suited. Water absorption is another such case. People can make rice evenly absorb water if there is only a small amount, but to make a large amount of rice do so in a short amount of time, one must rely on tools and machines.

But there is something only humans can do. That is maintaining the quality of good sake. Even the most precise instruments taking the most accurate measurements cannot surpass human inspiration and intuition. Without human hands, good sake cannot be made.





6. PEOPLE

Technique. Sensitivity. Understanding.
Mind. Conviction. Character.
Cultivating people.

Carrying out each step faithfully and managing every fine detail – this is the only way good sake can be made. In other words, if one single worker is careless even in the smallest of procedures, the sake will not meet the standards. In sake brewing, the principle of “Liebig’s barrel”^{*} holds true. Due to this, we set precise standards and goals for every step of the process so that every worker can act based on clear intentions. However, this does not mean that quality work is guaranteed. It is crucial for each and every worker to master skill and technique. All workers must hone their sensitivity to listen to the sake. All workers must understand Hakkaisan’s standards for quality and be able to identify good sake. All workers must have a strong mind to endure rigorous training. All workers must have the conviction for pursuing ideal sake. And all workers must have the character to devote themselves to brewing sake in the humblest of ways.

They must understand what it means to brew Hakkaisan sake and stand proud.

Through the work of brewing sake, our workers shape their lives. To brew sake is to cultivate oneself. The common goal and principle of brewing good sake cannot be shared if a common philosophy is not shared. We at Hakkaisan, through the daily work and training of our workers, strive to cultivate people who possess the character and pride needed to make good sake.

^{*} Liebig’s barrel: a principle stating that the limiting factor determines the outcome of the whole. In a barrel with staves of unequal length, water can only be filled up to the height of the shortest stave.





7. LAND

Groundwater from Mt. Hakkai – Spring water of the god Raiden
Cold, humid winters. The culture of a snowy land.
The character of Uonuma City residents.
The tradition of the Echigo brewing school.
A land blessed by the gods.

Sake is created by the nature and climate of the region – it’s “the drink of the land.”

Throughout Japan, each area produces its own unique sake. The sake from Uonuma, Niigata Prefecture, makes full use of the area’s consistently low temperature and soft water brought about by the snowfall. The sake produced with these natural features is referred to as “tanrei,” meaning “light and crisp.”

Here in Minamiuonuma City, we are fortunate to have some of Niigata’s heaviest snowfall and softest water coming from Mt. Hakkai, providing us with the perfect condition to brew tanrei sake.

It is said that a sake brewer who once visited the area claimed that the land was “a land created by the gods for brewing sake.” It is our ambition to brew sake that takes in the blessings of the land – to brew sake that is worthy of this land.





8. BREWERY

Our sake is the embodiment of
Hakkaisan's ideology for sake brewing
Hakkaisan will continue to be Hakkaisan – forever

Hakkaisan Brewery was founded in 1922. We are still a relatively new brewery, but following in the footsteps of the first and second generation owners, we have taken on the challenge of quality head on. Through our original work with the researchers of the sake brewing lab and our efforts to hold nothing back with regard to ingredients, labor, and equipment, we have worked fervently, all for one simple purpose – to brew good sake. And we will continue to, as we always have, utilize every available resource in our relentless pursuit of quality.

With our earnest desire to “pass down the culture of Japanese sake,” we will continue to raise the standards of sake.



HAKKAISAN BREWERY CO., LTD.

<http://www.hakkaisan.co.jp/>

Consumption of alcoholic beverages during pregnancy and/or lactation may harm an unborn child and/or infant.
Underage drinking is strictly forbidden. Drinking and driving is also prohibited. Please refer to your local laws.