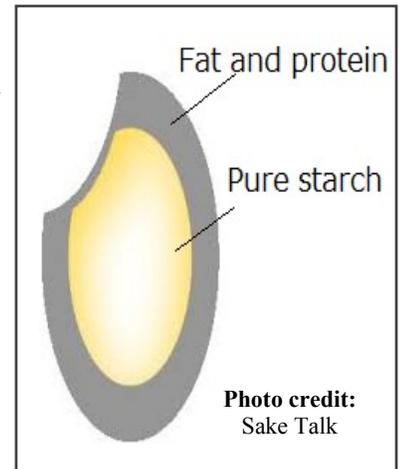


Exploring The World Of Sake

Sake, the national beverage of Japan, is made from fermented rice. Traditionally referred to as a “rice wine,” it’s actually akin to the production (not taste) of beer - ie., converting starches to sugars and alcohol. Historically, sake was enjoyed at family celebrations, sporting ceremonies, purification rituals, offerings and court festivals. It was heated in small earthenware bottles and sipped out of porcelain cups.

Today, sake has become more well-known in the U.S., due to an expansion in food pairings. Sake rice is different than table rice. It’s denser, has less protein and lipids and has a starch in the center known as *shinpaku*. Just like grapes, there are many different types of sake-suitable rice. The type of water used, its nutrient composition and polishing ratio (how much the rice is polished) all greatly influence sake’s style and taste.

Labels & Polishing. Like some wine labels, sake labels can be confusing. The words on labels are often indicators of a sake’s polishing and whether alcohol is added during production, the two basic tenets of differentiation for sake. First - the polishing. Rice is polished before it undergoes fermentation. Rice grains are polished to get rid of protein, fat and oils that can give off-flavors, leaving the inner center that is close to pure starch. The polishing ratio indicates the percent of rice grain that remains after polishing. If the ratio is 70% then 70% of the grain remains while only 30% was polished away. The higher percentage then the less is polished away; the lower percentage then more is polished away. Typically the less percentage that remains (a lower number) the cleaner and often better quality the sake. The words related to the addition of alcohol is Junmai (no addition) and Honjozo (addition); words referring to the polishing are often Daiginjo or Ginjo, indicating more premium quality.



To Heat or Not. Good quality sake is not meant to be heated, but almost treated like white wine. Drink at room temp or chilled depending on the type. Once opening drink within a day or two for freshness. Have fun experimenting!

