

# PRESS RELEASE

## **New nonfiction book reveals the multifaceted world of sake – Japan's liquid cultural heritage**

Cultural journey of discovery: "Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine – The Culture of Japan's National Drink" is released in Germany!

The Japanese rice wine sake is enjoying increasing popularity worldwide, but remains a mysterious beverage for many Germans. The newly published book "Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine – The Culture of Japan's National Drink" now offers a comprehensive insight into the world of this millennia-old cult drink and closes a significant gap in German-language specialist literature.

Interest in Japanese culture and cuisine is constantly growing. Therefore, this work presents a well-founded treatise on the history, production, cultural significance, and tasting of sake at the right time. The book is aimed at both gastronomy professionals and connoisseurs seeking authentic taste experiences.

The author Hermann Candahashi has earned a reputation through years of research and visits to traditional sake breweries in Japan. Now he shares his expert knowledge in an accessible and engaging way. The book takes the reader on a journey through Japan's diverse regions and explains how factors such as local water, rice varieties, and climate shape the character of sake.

"With this book, I invite readers to understand sake not just as an alcoholic beverage, but as a living expression of Japanese culture,

history, and craftsmanship. Sake is more than just a beverage—it is a window into the Japanese soul."

The book explores the various sake categories and quality levels and offers valuable information on tasting and pairing with food. It presents traditional Japanese pairings as well as innovative combinations with European dishes.

The Essence of Japanese Culture in Liquid Form—A Comprehensive Look at the New Standard Reference

Japanese beverage culture has gained international attention in recent years. While Japanese whisky has already established itself firmly on the global spirits scene, sake – the traditional Japanese rice wine – remains a mystery to many Europeans, shrouded in misunderstandings and cultural barriers. The newly published book "Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine" addresses this knowledge gap and offers a comprehensive insight into the fascinating world of sake.

The book first guides the reader through the millennia-old history of sake, beginning with its origins in the Yayoi period (300 BC to 300 AD), when the first forms of fermented rice emerged in Japan. It traces its development through the Nara and Heian periods, in which sake played an increasingly important role in ritual ceremonies and court celebrations, to the industrial revolution during the Meiji era, which revolutionized sake production. Particularly interesting is the depiction of the postwar period, in which sake had to compete with the rise of beer and whiskey due to the increasing Westernization of Japan, before a renaissance of artisanal quality began in recent decades.

The author pays particular attention to the complex production process of sake. Unlike wine, in which sugar is fermented directly from grapes, sake requires a two-step process: First, the starch compounds in rice must be converted into sugar by enzymes before the actual alcoholic fermentation can begin. This process, known as "multiple parallel fermentation," is explained in detail and understandably without overwhelming the reader with technical details.

The book also delves into the material culture surrounding sake – from traditional ceramic bottles (tokkuri) and drinking bowls (ochoko, sakazuki) to ceremonial vessels such as the masu, a square wooden vessel originally used for measuring rice. The aesthetic dimension of these objects is explored as well as their practical use and cultural significance.

An entire chapter is devoted to the ritual and social significance of sake in Japanese society. From Shinto ceremonies, where sake serves as an offering, to weddings, where drinking together from a single vessel (san-san-kudo) symbolizes the union of the spouses, the drink's deep roots in Japanese culture become clear. Sake drinking etiquette is also covered in detail—from pouring each other, which signals respect and attention, to the seasonal aspects of sake consumption.

The detailed guide to tasting sake is particularly valuable for beginners. The author explains the various aromas and flavor profiles and offers tips on what to look for when evaluating sake. The most important technical terms are explained, and an overview table helps distinguish between the numerous sake categories – from junmai-shu to ginjo to namazake.

The book also breaks common misconceptions about sake. It clarifies that high-quality sake is generally not heated, but served slightly chilled, and that the range of quality is as broad as that of wine – from simple table drinks to complex premium products reserved for special occasions.

Another chapter is dedicated to regional styles and sake breweries in various parts of Japan. The reader learns how water quality, local rice varieties, and climatic conditions influence the character of sake. Particularly well-known sake regions such as Niigata, Hiroshima, and Nada are profiled, featuring both traditional breweries with centuries of history and innovative newcomers.

The author also addresses the challenges facing the sake industry today: declining consumption in Japan, demographic changes that are exacerbating the shortage of successors in family breweries, but also new opportunities due to growing international interest and efforts to achieve UNESCO World Heritage status for traditional brewing methods.

Practical advice on storing and serving sake rounds out the book. The author explains which temperature is best suited for each sake style, how long opened sake can be kept, and which glassware should be used. Both traditional and modern approaches are considered.

The chapter on sake pairings with various dishes is particularly fascinating. In addition to classic Japanese combinations – such as the marriage of rich junmai with grilled eel or the accompaniment of sashimi with an elegant daiginjo – surprising connections with European dishes are also presented. Readers learn how well a dry honjozo can pair with cheese, or how a fruity ginjo elevates desserts to a new level. These culinary bridges make the book

particularly valuable for restaurateurs and home cooks seeking to create new taste experiences.

The author also sheds light on the growing international sake scene. In recent years, not only specialized importers and distributors have established themselves outside of Japan, but sake breweries are even emerging in countries such as the USA, Canada, and Spain. This global-local dynamic is examined in detail, addressing both the opportunities for cultural exchange and the challenges to authenticity.

The book concludes with a look at modern developments in the sake world: experimental styles that utilize unusual rice varieties or yeast strains, organic certifications that have only recently gained traction in Japan, and creative approaches by young brewers who are reinterpreting old traditions. Derivatives such as sparkling sake, sake liqueurs, and aged specialties such as koshu are also presented.

The author himself brings impressive expertise. After studying Japanese culture in general and spending several extended stays in various regions of Japan, he also delved into sake production and visited numerous breweries. His passion for the subject is palpable on every page, without compromising on scientific rigor. The balance between personal enthusiasm and objective information makes the book an enjoyable and informative read.

"Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine" fills a significant gap in the literature on Japanese beverage culture. While there are numerous works on wine, whiskey, and even craft beer, a comprehensive, up-to-date book on sake has been lacking until now. This gap is now impressively filled.

The book is aimed at a broad audience: gastronomy professionals looking to expand their beverage offerings, Japan enthusiasts seeking to delve deeper into the culture, connoisseurs seeking new taste experiences, and, last but not least, cultural scholars interested in the connections between beverages and social practices.

There is currently a growing general interest in authentic, artisanal products with cultural depth. That's why this book comes at just the right time. It not only offers practical knowledge for enjoying sake but also conveys a deeper understanding of the cultural, historical, and social dimensions of this fascinating beverage.

"Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine" is more than a beverage guide—it is a cultural journey of discovery that invites the reader to rediscover Japan through one of its most significant culinary products.

## **Reviews of the book**

*"A long-overdue standard work that finally makes the fascinating world of sake accessible to Western audiences. Well-founded and written with palpable passion."*

*"As a chef, I am particularly pleased with this book. It helps me explain the perfect sake accompaniment to our dishes to my guests and inspire them to enjoy this wonderful drink."*

*"This book is a revelation – even for someone like me who travels to Japan regularly. The depth of research and attention to detail make it an indispensable companion for every sake enthusiast."*

*"As an importer of Japanese specialties, I can only confirm the accuracy and timeliness of the information in this work. It will certainly contribute to improving the understanding of sake in the western world and increasing the demand for high-quality products."*

## **About the author**

The author is a renowned expert on Japanese culture and religion, having published numerous articles on these topics. He spent several years, with interruptions, in Japan, where he intensified his knowledge in various places and cities. His field research has taken him to numerous regions of Japan, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, and has given him deep insights into local traditions and customs. In addition to his travels, he also sees himself as a cultural mediator and has authored numerous books on Japanese spirituality and folklore. He is particularly interested in the connection between traditional ideas and modern society, as well as the intercultural dialogue between Japan and Western culture.

"Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine – The Culture of Japan's National Drink" is one of his most intensive works to date and the result of many years of research.

## **Availability**

"Sake: The Art of Japanese Rice Wine – The Culture of Japan's National Drink" is now available in three languages ??(German, English, and French) from bookstores, in hardcover, paperback, e-book, and audiobook formats. Further information, excerpts, and event information can be found on the publisher's website.

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# SAKE: THE ART OF JAPANESE RICE WINE

The Culture of the Japanese  
National Drink



Hermann Candahashi

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