

Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) encouraged the technological development of many domestic industries, including the sake production industry, as part of the modernization of Japan. These straw-covered sake barrels are offered to Meiji Jingu annually by the members of the Meiji Jingu Nationwide Sake Brewers Association. The brewers make this donation to show their deep respect for the enshrined souls of Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken (1849–1914). The barrels, which are decorative and empty, are offered to the *kami* deities along with the sake in bottles.

Sake plays an important role in Shinto. It is considered to be one way to connect people and the *kami*. While sake is normally called *nihonshu* in Japanese, the sake used at shrines is referred to as *miki* or *omiki*, written with the Chinese characters for ‘*kami*’ and ‘alcohol’. *Omiki* is offered daily to the *kami*, and distributed to followers after rituals and festivals held at the shrine.

The juxtaposition of wine and sake at Meiji Jingu is symbolic of the culture of the Meiji period. Led by the efforts of Emperor Meiji, the combining of overseas influences with Japanese traditions was a key aspect of this period.