

Shō Chiku Bai (Takara Shuzō)

Takara Shuzō was established by the Yomo family in 1842, and since then it has grown to become a global business. For the first twenty-two years of its operation, Takara Shuzō brewed only sake, but in 1864 it began to produce other Japanese staples such as *shōchū* liquor and mirin, a sweet sake used in cooking.

The name of the company's signature brand, Shō Chiku Bai, which translates to "pine, bamboo, plum," is a reference to an artistic motif of strength (pine), longevity (bamboo), and beauty (plum) that was introduced to Japan from China during the Heian period (794–1185). As three plants that endure the yearly snows, *shō-chiku-bai* are also referred to as "The Three Friends of Winter."

The winter season has a special significance in sake-making, as it is the seasonal cold makes low-temperature, open-tank fermentation possible by reducing the chance of contamination and spoilage.

The *shō-chiku-bai* concept also embodies prosperity and good fortune, qualities that Takara Shuzō has enjoyed as it rose to become a global company. Takara Sake USA was established in 1983 in Berkeley, California, and has been a pioneer in promoting and brewing sake in the United States.