

## Sake Brewing: Part Two

To understand sake, it is necessary to understand its main grades and classifications. The naming system is extensive, due to the sheer diversity of variables and methods involved in sake production. Even two sakes of the same grade may taste dramatically different depending upon the raw materials used in production, the terroir, and the skills and preferences of the master brewer.

Sake grades are determined by the milling ratio of the rice. Almost all sake is made with white rice, but the flavor of the sake can differ based on how much of the grain remains after milling. The more the rice is milled, the more expensive the finished product will be.

A brewer's flagship products are often their *ginjō* and *daiginjō* sake. To qualify for the *ginjō* class, the rice grains must be milled to 60 percent or less of their original size. *Daiginjō* sake is made with rice milled so that 50 percent or less of the original grain is intact. *Daiginjō* is a grand sake, always sophisticated and rarely inexpensive. Both *ginjō* and *daiginjō* are often made with special yeasts and are fermented at lower temperatures than average sake. *Honjōzō* is made with a small amount of brewer's alcohol added to create a clearer, more distinct flavor, and the rice grain is milled to 70 percent or less of its original size.

*Junmai* is a separate classification that indicates that a sake was made without the addition of sugar, extra starch, or brewer's alcohol. The *junmai* classification can be applied to *ginjō* and *daiginjō* sake, in which case they are known as *junmai ginjō* and *junmai daiginjō*, respectively.

*Nama* refers to unpasteurized sake. Any of the classifications above can be made as a *nama*. The above classifications can also all be made into *nigori*, which is defined as a mildly filtered, cloudy white sake with a pronounced "rice taste." *Koshu* is aged sake—a relative rarity.