

How to Drink Sake

The temperature at which sake should be drunk is yet another important consideration. Generally, sake tastes best either chilled or at room temperature, but some sake is made to be drunk at warmer temperatures. Common sake terms referring to temperature are *reishu* (cold), *jōon* (room temperature), *nurukan* (gently warmed), and *atsukan* (hot).

Regardless of temperature, sake is traditionally served in a ceramic vessel called a *tokkuri*, from which drinkers pour the sake into a drinking cup known as an *ochoko* or *sakazuki*. Most Fushimi breweries produce their own drinking vessels emblazoned with their name or logo which make for popular souvenirs. At festivals, sake is sometimes served in a small, wooden square box called a *masu*. The flavor of the wood is picked up by the sake, changing the drink's aroma. In restaurants, highly aromatic sake is more commonly served in a wine glass which brings out the aromas better compared to an *ochoko*.

The etiquette of Japanese sake drinking is not particularly complex, but it is helpful to know a few basic rules. Younger persons are typically expected to pour for their elders, and it is considered polite to fill your drinking partner's cup and have the pour reciprocated. Once the initial formalities are observed, drinkers will generally replenish their own cups at their own pace.