

Awamori: The Spirit of Okinawa

Awamori has been produced in Okinawa for over 600 years and is Japan's oldest distilled spirit. It is made from water, rice, yeast, and a special black mold called *kurokoji*. Only awamori made in Okinawa Prefecture may use the name Ryukyu Awamori. It is truly the spirit of Okinawa.

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What Is Ryukyu Awamori?

Awamori is Japan's oldest distilled spirit, and has been made in Okinawa for over 600 years. Awamori comes with varying levels of alcohol content, but the percentage is usually similar to that of brandy or whisky. Like those spirits, it can be aged to create an almost infinite variety of aroma and flavor combinations.

The ingredients for awamori are simple: water, rice, yeast, and a special black mold called *kurokoji*. The fermentation and distilling processes used to make awamori are relatively straightforward, though the maturing requires great skill and patience. All awamori is matured for at least six months to a year, but some of the finest are decades old, and the traditional method known as *shitsugi* allows awamori to be matured indefinitely. Highly prized aged awamori, known in Okinawa as *kusu*, is sweet and mellow, and often has hints of vanilla and caramel.

The 47 awamori distilleries in Okinawa make over 1,000 different brands. There are many ways to drink the spirit: some dilute it with hot or cold water, while others drink it on the rocks or in cocktails. There is a wide range of awamori drinking vessels as well, some made of traditionally shaped pottery or colorful Ryukyu Glass.

Awamori is a liquor born of Okinawa's distinctive climate, culture, and history as a trading nation. It has been granted Appellation of Origin status by the World Trade Organization, meaning that only awamori made in Okinawa Prefecture may be called Ryukyu Awamori. It is truly the spirit of Okinawa.