

## Shirakami Sanchi Wine

In 2003, a newcomer joined the lineup of beverages made in Shirakami Sanchi: wine made from Yama Sauvignon grapes cultivated in the heart of Fujisato. Yama Sauvignon is a hybrid of the Cabernet Sauvignon varietal and a wild grape species known as *yamabudō*. Wine from Yama Sauvignon grapes typically has balanced acidity, good depth, and notes of black currant. Shirakami Sanchi Wine captures these qualities in a wine that is dry and medium-bodied; it pairs well with full meals, particularly red meat.

*Yamabudō* (*Vitis coignetiae*) are endemic to Japan and are often found in cool, mountainous regions. There are records of wine being made from wild *yamabudō* as early as the Meiji era (1868–1912), but the process is arduous compared to methods using other grape varieties. Unlike standard wine grapes, *yamabudō* are dioecious, meaning each vine has either male or female flowers. Male plants do not produce fruit, but must still be grown nearby for pollination to occur, decreasing the overall yield. *Yamabudō* also have several large seeds, so the grapes yield much less juice than other varieties. Despite these downsides, *yamabudō* grapes have a rich, complex flavor.

During the 1980s, a professor at Yamanashi University began crossbreeding *yamabudō* with Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, which originated in the Bordeaux region of France. After experimenting with more than 600 strains, in 1990 he registered a disease-resistant hybrid suited to wine cultivation in Japan. Yama Sauvignon was born.

In 1998, the Fujisato Shirakami Grape Producers' Association began growing Yama Sauvignon grapes, and the first Shirakami Sanchi Wine was produced five years later. In 2020, the premium cosmetics company Albion built a joint research facility and winery in Fujisato. Visitors can tour the winery and buy Shirakami Sanchi Wine on-site. It can also be purchased at Hotel Yutoria, near the Shirakami-Sanchi World Heritage Conservation Center Fujisato Facility, and at several of the alcohol retailers in Fujisato.