

Ozawa Sake Brewery

Tokyo has only nine sake breweries, and Ozawa Sake Brewery, founded in 1702, is one of the oldest. The brewery is currently managed by the 23rd generation of the Ozawa family, and is in the Sawai district of Ome, famous for its pure mountain water—critical for the production of high-quality sake.

Ancient innovation

The brewery occupies several traditional Edo-period (1603–1867) buildings with thick earthen walls, designed to keep the interior temperature stable throughout the year. The cool, dark interiors provide the best conditions to preserve the intended flavors and aromas of sake once it is brewed and ready for consumption.

A sacred offering

There is a *kamidana* Shinto altar with a *shimenawa* sacred rope above the main doors of the brewery. Sake was originally made as an offering to the deities, and Shinto practices still play an important part in the brewing process. At the beginning of the brewing season, a priest comes from Musashi Mitake Shrine at the top of Mt. Mitake to purify the brewery and staff.

The importance of fresh water

Fresh water is used at almost every stage of the brewing process, from washing and steaming the rice to diluting the final product. There are two sources of water for the brewery. Visitors can enter a narrow tunnel to see a natural spring in the hillside behind the brewery, which supplies water for the brewing process. The other water source is a well on the other side of the Tama River.

Touring the brewery

The brewery produces 30 different varieties of sake every year. Some of the sake is exported to the United States, Taiwan, and Singapore. The brewery offers free tours with advance reservations. Most tours are conducted in Japanese, with pamphlets about the brewery and brewing process available in English. Tours conducted in English are offered several times a month. Visitors are able to see different stages of the brewing process, depending on the time of year. A tasting room is located in the Sawanoi Seiryu Garden next to the brewery, where visitors can sample seasonal varieties.

