

Kuma Shochu—Types and Characteristics

There are 27 distilleries in Hitoyoshi Kuma, each with its own distinct range of Kuma Shochu. These distilleries combine the rich traditions of rice shochu distillation with new techniques and innovations to create a wide range of single-distilled, premium shochu.

The flavor profiles of Kuma Shochu are determined by a variety of factors, including the type of rice and koji mold used for the mash, the yeast used in the fermentation process, the pressure at which distillation takes place, and the period of aging. Kuma Shochu can range from light and refreshing, to fruity and floral, to rich and full-bodied. The four categories are Light Type: crisp and delicate, produced through vacuum distillation; Rich Type: intense, full-bodied flavor and aroma, distilled at atmospheric pressure; Flavor Type: defined by the aroma, typically fruity or floral; and Character Type: aged or with a very distinctive flavor produced through non-traditional methods.

Kuma Shochu can be enjoyed straight, on the rocks, with water or soda water, or in a cocktail. The Flavor and Light types are often served on the rocks or with soda water, and many Flavor types are used in citrus-based cocktails. Character and Rich types may be served straight or on the rocks, and Rich types are also typically enjoyed with warm water. The alcohol strength (alcohol by volume, or ABV) of Kuma Shochu can range anywhere between 25 and around 44 percent.

More information on Kuma Shochu, including the different types, drinking styles, and food pairing advice, is available at Kuma Shochu (kumashochu.or.jp), the official website of the Kuma Shochu Makers' Association.