

About Ozeki

Ozeki Sake is one of Japan's oldest and largest sake breweries. It is best known in the United States as the warm house sake offered by Japanese restaurants that care to serve their customers premium quality sake. Only highly polished rice is used to brew Ozeki sakes and this gives them their smooth, rich flavor. In 1979, Ozeki became the first Japanese brewer to produce fresh, local sake in the United States by opening a brewery in Hollister, California. This location was carefully selected because the high quality local rice and water from the Sierra Nevada Mountains allow Ozeki to produce good sake without compromise. Ozeki's original Japanese brewery was founded in 1711 by Osakaya Chobei in Imazu village. The brewery was called "Manyro" until 1811 when the name Ozeki was adopted. At the time, this was the title awarded to the grand champion sumo wrestler. Sumo grew out of the matches common between castle guards to prove their strength. The winner was called the Ozeki, a word very similar sounding to 'Odeki', which means 'good job'. Ozeki chose this name in order to use the sumo world as a medium for publicity, but it also motivated the brewery to do a 'good job' brewing sake. The beliefs necessary for becoming a Sumo champion - strenuous hard work and technical skill - are the same beliefs necessary to craft perfect, balanced, delicious sake.

A Brief History of Sake

The origin of sake has been traced back to 4800 BC along the Yangtze River Basin of China, but its substantive history and development is Japanese. Sake is the national beverage of Japan and its people have devoted centuries of painstaking effort refining this enchanting beverage.

In the 3rd Century BC, wet rice cultivation was developed in Japan and soon thereafter farmers began fermenting their rice into a thick, low alcohol, porridge-like substance that was eaten rather than drunk. In 689 AD, sake was formally elevated from a common man's drink when the Imperial Palace established a brewery. During the century that followed, sake gradually became a central component of Shinto religious practice and breweries sprouted up in temples across the country. By 1575, sake rice was being polished before being brewed and the market was gradually taken over by merchants.

Although sake is brewed in every part of Japan today, the art of sake brewing began in the south-eastern coastal region known as "Nada" in the Hyogo prefecture. Nada is the cradle of sake production because it is blessed with a unique water supply known as *Miyamizu* (Shrine Water). This spring water is filtered through the rock strata of the Rocco Mountains and is sourced from about 50 wells that have been in use for centuries. In the 17th century it became evident that sake brewed with *Miyamizu* tasted superior to sake brewed from other water sources. Ozeki is one of just a few breweries that have access to this coveted water source.