

SUEHIRO SHUZO

Kira "The Killer" Ginjo Suehiro Shuzo, Fukushima Prefecture



SAKE DETAILS:

Rice: Gohyakumangoku
Polish Rate: Koji rice: Domestic rice 60% polished
Kake rice: Domestic rice 60% polished
Sake Meter Value: +13
Acidity: 0.9
Alcohol: 15.3%

ABOUT "GINJO" SAKES

The term Ginjo means "specialized brew." Ginjo grade sakes must use rice polished to at least 60%, and generally employ labor intensive practices resulting in a more refined sake. Notice that the term Junmai does not preface the term Ginjo. This tells the drinker that a small amount of brewer's alcohol has been added to the sake.

ABOUT THE BREWERY

Hailing from the small region of Aizu within the Fukushima Prefecture since 1850, Suehiro Shuzo is truly one of the classic breweries of Japan, known throughout the country due to the number of national awards it has gained, and groundbreaking production methods it has spearheaded. Suehiro Shuzo is the founder of *Yamahai* style brewing. Yamahai sake begins with a "spontaneous" fermentation, using ambient microbes and yeast to begin the starter. It represented a departure from the much more labor intensive *Kimoto* method which was the standard until the early 20th century. Yamahai brewing is considered a classic style of brewing in the sake world. The resulting sake is lively, structured, and excellent with food. Suehiro was the first brewery to employ an official *Toji*, or brewmaster, now common in all sake breweries. They were also the first brewery to hold a formal contract with local rice growers ensuring rich community bonds.

Aizu is a region that takes pride in the rich samurai culture of Japan. It stood as the last stronghold of the shogunate until its defeat by the Imperial Army in 1868, ushering in the Meiji Restoration. Suehiro Shuzo is the official sake supplier of the Toshogu Shrine. Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate which ruled Japan for over 250 years during the Edo Period lies here. The current President of the brewery, Shinjo Inokichi, represents the 7th generation at Suehiro Shuzo, and can trace his lineage back to the first ruler of the Aizu region.

The physical brewery stands as a nationally protected building, showcasing a classic dark wooded façade with a large central balcony to display the *sugidama* – the cedar ball hung by breweries to signify when fresh sake has been completed. As the green leaves gradually turn brown, it notifies the public of the age of the sake on hand for sale. Today, the brewery is known for their expressive Yamahai style sakes, luxurious Daiginjo grade sakes, and fun sparkling sake.

TASTING NOTE

This is a very dry and lean sake. Snappy notes of citrus and toasted grain.

FOOD PAIRING

Perfect with traditional izakaya fare –
Takoyaki, fried chicken, ramen noodles.



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