



SIGNOR SAKE

CHALLENGE 90

Part of what defines sake in Japan is the milling ratio of the rice used which will impact the character of the drink to varying degrees. Simply speaking, the more you polish off, the cleaner the flavour profile will tend to be.

The outer portions of rice grains are made up of fats and lipids which can mean off-flavours.

If crafted well though, these outer parts can serve as interesting flavours. But it really requires a talented brewer to turn rice that's barely been milled into a quality drink. Creating character is easy but balance is not.

Here are some of the best available in Japan all made with rice milled to 90% remaining or less.



TSUCHIDA KIMOTO

TSUCHIDA SHUZO - GUNMA
ABV 16% locally grown rice milled to 90%

Family-owned Tsuchida use the labour-intensive Kimoto method for all of their releases. They're advocates of additive-free fermentation—for them that means no distilled alcohol, no manufactured lactic acid, and rarely any yeast additions. Stylistically, the drinks tend to be on the sweeter side with lots of chestnut and bran notes.

- Banana, toffee, and honey
- Sour bran and nutty
- Light acidity funk



CHALLENGE 90

MORIKI SHUZO - MIE
ABV 17% Locally grown Yamada-Nishiki milled to 90%

Before anyone cared and when a lot of brewers were racing to see who could make sake with the most milled rice, Rumiko did the complete opposite. At the time, it was rare to use barely-milled rice and quite a brewing challenge, hence the name. This drink and its name was the inspiration for this tasting report.

- Rice bran, cheese rind and melon
- Punchy acidity
- Savoury and complex



KATORI 90

TERADA HONKE - CHIBA
ABV 15% Koshiki Hikari milled to 90%

You really can't get more natural than Terada Honke where they prioritise energy-saving methods over convenience—just watching the team shovel out a ton of rice from the steamer is painful enough. Katori is the name of the area close-by. This sake is tasty at room temperature but really shines warmed up bringing out the umami and complexities.

- Full-bodied with a long finish
- Cereal and buckwheat
- Apricot and raisins



KIREI 92

KIREI SHUZO - HIROSHIMA
ABV 17% Locally grown Hattan-Nishiki milled to 92%

Hiroshima and in particular the area of Saijo is well-known as a top sake producing region with a number of breweries located there including Kirei Shuzo. It was the construction of the railway which attracted brewers to set up here instead of the area of Takehara which had been up to that point a popular brewing area.

- Dry and punchy acidity
- Voluptuous creamy mouthfeel
- Toffee and bran

NIIDA SHIZENSHU

NIIDA HONKE - FUKUSHIMA
ABV 16% Locally grown rice milled to 90%

Shizenshu is the flagship label and is made with rice from their own paddies harvested without the use of agricultural chemicals or commercial fertilisers which results in lower yields but a quality grain. They also skip yeast additions which is in keeping with the true Kimoto fermentation starter method.

- Tropical fruits and honey
- Soft-textured
- Sweet and savoury

