



STARS  AND STRIPES®

# A Taste of Japan

The 3 'R's to good eating –  
Restaurants,  
Reviews & Recipes

**8-page pullout**



# The wonderful world of Japanese Wine

BY HATTIE RICHARDSON,  
BYFOOD

Japanese wine has been making quite the splash both domestically and internationally in recent years. The country is becoming increasingly aware of its potential as a winemaking region, leaning into this from both a touristic and gastronomic standpoint.

When something starts to trend, we all want to stay ahead of the curve, right? Well, we've got you covered. Here's the scoop on wine in Japan, as well as a focus on the country's top wine-producing regions!



## A history of wine in Japan

It may surprise you to know that grapes are not all that new to Japan. They were imported to the country from China around the 7th Century, though it is likely that without modern cultivation techniques, the grapes would have been pretty inedible. In northern regions of Japan, like Tohoku and Hokkaido, there is also a native species of wild grape found in forested and mountainous regions (though again, they are so sour as to be inedible when eaten alone).

Wine isn't a new thing to the Japanese, either. The consumption of wine was first observed by Japanese residents when Jesuit priests from Portugal resided in Nagasaki in the 16th Century. Locals practicing Christianity were so taken with its flavor that it became a popular import. However, it would not be until the Meiji Period, when Japan's feudal isolationism ended, that winemaking would become a profession in and of itself. Thanks to pioneers returning from their travels in Europe with vine cuttings and winemaking knowledge in hand, a new industry was born.

In the postwar era, winemaking really took off in Japan and demand for Japanese wines began to grow. Innovative winemakers then successfully cultivated species of grapes and wines that were suited to the Japanese palate. This hit its stride in the 70s-80s and since then, Japanese wines have shown increasing promise both domestically and internationally.

Take a stroll through a local Winery in Sendai to get a first hand glimpse into winemaking in Japan.



"Rice wine"?  
"Plum wine"?  
"Japanese wine"?  
What's the difference?!



Photo by Shutterstock - funny face

In recent years, new terms have emerged to distinguish various Japanese liquors from others. For example, "nihonshu"



Photo courtesy of ByFood

(which is commonly just called "sake" in the west) is sometimes referred to as "Japanese rice wine". "Umeshu", a type of plum liquor, is sometimes called "Japanese plum wine".

The "wine" label, in this case, is a little misleading as the process of making either nihonshu or umeshu is nothing like the process of making wine!

Sake's production

process bears similarity to wine-making, but there are still several differences that set it apart. When making sake, there are only three ingredients— rice, water and a special type of mold called "koji" that is vital to the fermentation process. Unlike wine-making, yeast is not involved and the rice does not need to be crushed or blended prior to being added to the barrel or at any point during the process (although the rice lees or "sake-kasu" are filtered away and often used in Japanese cooking).

As for umeshu, it too is not produced like a wine and is more akin to fruit-infused liquor. Rather than the plums themselves fermenting, they are instead steeped in 35%-proof or stronger liquor with sugar or honey for several months. This practice is not unique to Japan— in fact, using alcohol to preserve fruit has been practiced by cultures across the globe for centuries. In Japan, the alcohol of choice for making umeshu is often "shochu", made from sweet potatoes.

However, when we talk about "Japanese wine", we are indeed talking about wine made from grapes, pressed and fermented with yeast right here in Japan. It is important to keep in mind that this production process is much newer to Japan and very different to



Sake



Umeshu

that of nihonshu and umeshu.

Interested in Japanese sake? Tour of a Sake Brewery in Kyoto to learn all about Japanese rice wine.



## Wine-growing regions of Japan

Although wine is being grown increasingly across Japan, today we will be focusing on three top producers of wine in Japan; Yamanashi, Nagano and Hokkaido prefectures.

### • Yamanashi



Photo by Shutterstock - kt-wat

Yamanashi has long been a prolific producer of wine grapes in Japan and accounts for nearly a third of the country's wine production. Wine-making in Yamanashi also has a long history of 150 years. In fact, Yamanashi was the very first region in Japan to produce wine in 1877, thanks to pioneers bringing home wine-making techniques from Europe in the Meiji period.

Yamanashi prefecture sits at the foot of Mt. Fuji and its most famed wine-growing region is the town of Katsunuma. With rich volcanic soil and relatively low humidity, Katsunuma's potential as a wine region has been well-established for over a century. It was indeed here, after all, that Japan's first winery opened in 1877 (today it is part of the Mercia wine group in Japan).

The region's signature "Koshu" grape, cultivated here in Japan, is particularly beloved by Japanese winemakers as its lightly acidic flavor creates wines that pair beautifully with traditional Japanese cuisine— sashimi and sushi in particular.

Katsunuma is only about an hour's

ride from Tokyo, making its wines in the Koshu Valley (from where the Koshu grape takes its name) a popular choice with restaurant sommeliers. There are a huge number of wineries to visit here, so if you are a wine connoisseur looking for an exciting day trip out of Tokyo, we recommend doing some winery-hopping in Katsunuma!

### • Nagano



Photo by Hattie Richardson byFood

Nagano prefecture is another sizeable producer of wines in Japan. In addition to wineries, Nagano already has a national reputation for growing delicious dessert grapes, notably Japan's famous "Kyoho" grape. Like Yamanashi, its wine making history goes back over a century, with the first winery in the region established in 1902.

There are four regions in Nagano that produce wine, all of which boast the same rich soil, high altitude and cool temperatures as Yamanashi. What is unique about Nagano, however, is that its climate lends very well to growing popular European wine grapes such as Merlot and Chardonnay. As such, you can expect many of the wines coming out of Nagano to have labels with a name known to even those unfamiliar with wines! If you'd like to learn more about other specialties from this area, check out this blog for **What to Eat in Nagano**.

Try a bottle of award-winning wine from Nagano!



What to Eat in Nagano

### • Hokkaido



Photo by Shutterstock - Kansuu

With its frigid winters, Hokkaido might be the last place you'd expect to find vineyards! But did you know that Hokkaido's climate is actually extremely close to famous wine-growing regions of France, such as Champagne and Alsace?

With low humidity all year round and swings in temperature between day and night that bolster the natural sugar content of fruit and vegetables,



→ Hokkaido is a surprisingly perfect place to grow wine grapes. When wine-growing began in Hokkaido in the 70s and 80s, most growers chose hardy German grape varieties, like Kerner or Zweigelt. With climate change, however, Hokkaido wineries have started to find they can even branch out into French species of grape, like Pinot Noir.

Within Hokkaido, the two top producers of wine are the Yoichi region and the Furano region. Wines from Yoichi have made quite a splash in recent years, with some even **winning prizes at international wine competitions**. In both areas, there are a number of wineries you can visit to taste local wines for yourself. Many also have restaurants attached that will allow you to sample their wine with a perfect meal pairing. Our own reporter experienced this at Domaine Takahiko in Yoichi– take a look at **this video** for more!

Enjoy a bottle of **muscat wine from Hokkaido**, available on byFood’s market.



Winning prizes at international wine competitions



Hokkaido fine wining video



Muscat wine from Hokkaido



**Our recommendations  
(You heard it through the grapevine...)**

If you truly want to call yourself a sommelier of Japanese wines, then you simply must visit Daizenji in Koshu, Yamanashi.

Daizenji is often colloquially known as “the grape temple”. It is said to stand in the place where grape-growing first began in Japan in the 8th Century. The monk who founded the temple here had the medicine Buddha appear to him, holding a bunch of grapes. Aside from its connection to grape-growing in Yamanashi, it is a spectacular temple with a main hall that is almost a thousand years

old. And of course, you can go to see the grape-bearing Buddha for yourself (although the one on display is just a replica to keep the original safe). What better way to show your appreciation for Japanese wines than to head to a place where they are sacred?

As for my personal choice of wine, it is hard to say as there are just so many to choose from! So shop around, do any tasting that you can and see what wine takes your fancy. My one tip is that you simply must pick up a bottle of Japanese white wine for the next time you plan to have fish at home. As discussed, many Japanese wines are geared towards the Japanese palate. Fish is a huge part of Japanese cuisine, so it stands to reason that Japanese wines will pair wonderfully

with any fishy dish.  
You can take a look at **byFood’s online shop** for a selection of wonderful wines from some of the regions covered in this blog!



byFood online shop



**A grape future ahead**

Like so many of Japan’s forays into Western cuisine, Japanese wines show incredible promise. It is quite astonishing that Japanese winemakers have taken ancient winemaking techniques and have applied their own innovations to create a brand new world of wines that has not only managed to hold the attention of its own nation but the world at large, too.

As with all of the food and drink we cover in our blogs, you simply have to try it if you get the chance. So if you’re feeling curious, skip the sake at the sushi bar– ask the chef what Japanese wine pairing he recommends instead.

*byFood is a platform for food events in Tokyo, with over 80 experiences to choose from and a fantastic resource for learning about Japan’s thriving food culture! What’s more, byFood runs a charitable outreach program, the Food for Happiness Project, which donates 10 meals to children in Cambodia for each person who books a food event through our platform!*

Photo by Hattie Richardson, byFood

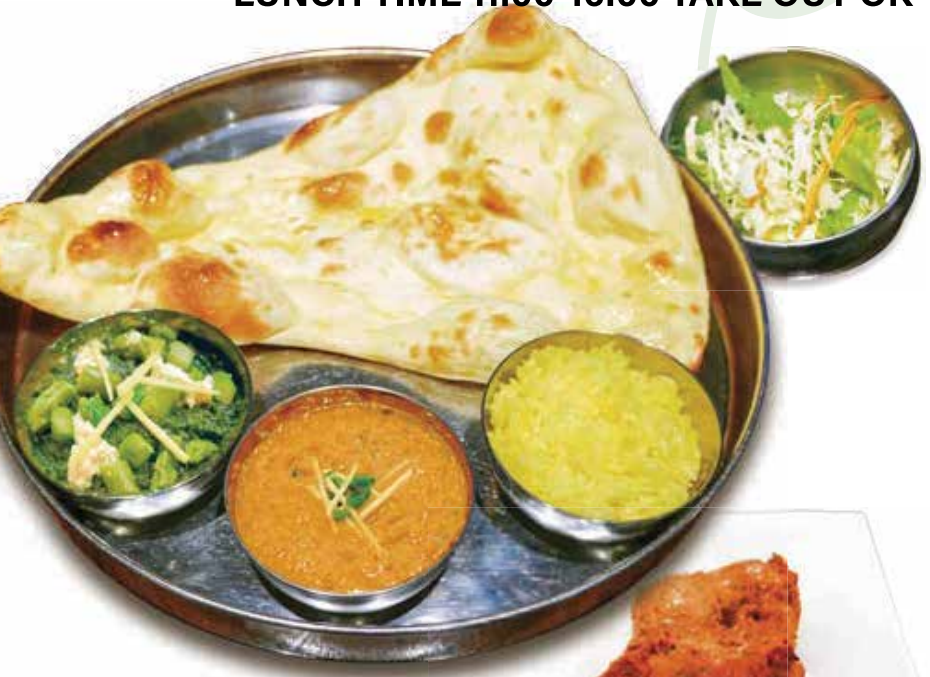
# A Taste of Japan



**FOR HEALTHY,  
HERB & SPICE LOVERS.**

LUNCH TIME 11:00-16:00 TAKE OUT OK

NEW VEGAN CURRY now available  
with healthy herbs and greenery for the spice lover in you!!!!



**Two Curries Set**  
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**With Chicken Tikka**  
**¥1,250** (Included Tax ¥1,375)



**A taste of  
Yokosuka  
you'll  
never  
forget**

We ensure that in every dish we prepare, we add the best herbs and spices specially handpicked from Nepal and India. With our belief deeply rooted in the Eastern philosophy, we regard every customer as a god, and make sure in every way that we treat them as one. Our 5-star experienced cooks and chefs ensure the food looks as good as it is healthy. Once you come and visit us, we are confident that you will make plans to come again. We eagerly await the opportunity to serve you our delicacies!!

RESTAURANT INFO





Photo by Instagram - smith\_mgmg

# 1 Giant sushi

If you're into sushi, but it's never enough, you need to take a seat at Wakasa Sushi in Mitaka. Shell out a few thousand yen notes and you'll receive an assorted platter of nigiri that is WAY bigger than regular sushi. Lifting each piece to your mouth with chopsticks is the first challenge; polishing off the whole selection is the next one!



Photo by kkhowptr

# 2 Gold-leaf ice cream

Feeling fancy? This soft serve is the thing for you. Covered in real, edible gold leaf, it is a literal taste of wealth. Kanazawa in Ishikawa Prefecture is actually the place known for this shiny treat, but you can find it in Tokyo too, at Kinpaku Sweets in Asakusa.



Photo by Instagram - amyfoodclub

# 5 Ghibli cream puffs

For fans of Studio Ghibli, a trip to Tokyo isn't complete without a stop at Shirohige's Cream Puff Factory near Shimo-kitazawa. Here, you can meet—and eat—Totoro cream puffs to your heart's content. If that doesn't fill you up, there is pasta on the menu too.



Photo by Instagram - tokyomuncher

# 6 2D coffee and cake

Ever wondered what it would be like to exist in a comic? The 2D Cafe in Shinjuku will give you an idea. Everything, including the food, has a two-dimensional appearance, and the cafe's color theme is black and white.

It all makes for amazing photo opportunities, but the coffee, cakes and pastries are delicious, too.



Fans of gyoza—Japanese dumplings—will love the abashi for a meal that, well, might be a bit unreasonable. One jumbo gyoza (which they have on the menu) is 12 inches in diameter. Other jumbo items on the menu include a 12-inch ramen bowl in under an hour and it's free, but



Photo by byFood

# 10 Flaming shaved ice

At an unassuming little cafe near Kichijoji Station, you can order a very unique kind of kakigori—a shaved, flavored ice dessert—one that comes in flames. You read that right: this kakigori gets set alight, creating a visual spectacle that simmers down into a delicious dish of mousse, cookies and the like, beneath the icy exterior. Cafe Lumiere also offers a full food and drink menu.

# 11 Ridiculously cute latte art



Photo by Instagram - insufferableratman

If you think you've seen good latte art, think again. The kitties, dogs and other creatures that grace the top of your coffee at Reissue in Shibuya will blow your caffeine-powered mind. Choose from 2D or 3D art, and watch your favorite animals and anime characters come to life. Cat bus cappuccino, anyone?



View Coffee art Video!

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# Must-try local food in Tokyo

...e ramen. Ghibli-inspired cream  
...are just some of the “viral foods”  
...are taking TikTok and the like

ne



Photo by Instagram - shino.bm

## 7 Jumbo gyoza

...plings—will want to pop into Kagurazakahonten in Iid-  
...ht just make them pop. This restaurant is known for its  
...umbo gyoza is said to be the equivalent of 100 regular  
...enu, too).  
...u include ramen and fried rice. Finish your jumbo meal  
...be warned—no help is allowed!



Photo by Instagram - darthr0se

## 2 Rainbow toast

...another big name in the cheesy bread game is Le  
...n Harajuku, where you can bite into a rainbow  
...n you order a grilled cheese sandwich. Their appro-  
...ely named Rainbow Cheese Sandwich is the lunch  
...oice for all the cool kids in central Tokyo.  
...ere’s a tip: have a friend snap a pic as you pull the  
...wich apart—then dig into that colorful goodness  
...offline and on. The shop does rainbow soft serve  
...if you’re after dessert.



byFood



Photo by Instagram - mynote\_mm

## 3 10-yen cheese bread

An old favorite among Japanese folk, this gooey  
cheese-filled bread in the shape of the 10-yen coin  
makes for a fun and photogenic snack. There are  
stores across the country, but to find the best of the  
best in Tokyo, you’ll need to ask an expert (hint: us).



Photo by Instagram - eatekimasu. eatterasshai

## 8 Blue ramen

Tuck into a bowl of chicken noodle ramen with  
a difference: the light and clear soup is a delicate  
blue hue. Kipposhi in Shibuya serves up a range  
of different chicken noodle bowls, in colors rang-  
ing from blue to muscat (topped with the name-  
sake), peach, pink, soy-brown and more.

They also do a line of creamy chicken ramen  
and sea-bream ramen, as well as limited-edition  
seasonal menu items.



View  
tasting blue  
ramen Video!

## 13 String ice cream parfait

Chacha Futatsume in Asakusa is known for  
their special string chestnut ice cream: an epic  
ensemble of finely laced matcha deliciousness  
around ice cream, adzuki paste and  
sponge cake. It’s not that well known  
among visitors, yet, but it will  
be soon!



Photo by Instagram mist\_3650



Photo by Instagram - traveling\_myriam

## 4 Rainbow cotton candy

You might have spotted it in pho-  
tos of Harajuku: this rainbow cotton  
candy is big in both the popular sense,  
as well as size—it’s bigger than your  
head! In addition to the iconic “Hara-  
juku Rainbow”, the Totti Candy Fac-  
tory serves up other color combina-  
tions, as well as heaps of other sweets.

Try it: Get your hands on some  
rainbow cotton candy as part of the  
Kawaii Food Tour in Harajuku.



View  
KAWAII  
Japanese  
food Video!



Photo by Instagram - about\_yeye

## 9 Magical cocktails

If you’re after an absurdly fancy sundowner, Bar Centi-  
folia in Azabujuban should be your next port of call. This  
place is known for the beauty of both their drinks and their  
interior.

Sit down at the sleek wooden bar and let the bartender  
whip you up something special. If you’re lucky, it’ll come  
shrouded in a cloud of smoke, glitter and other elements of  
magic! One thing to note—you’ll need to book in advance.

Explore other unusual Tokyo bars on the exclusive  
Members Only: Sips & Secrets in Ebisu tour.



Photo by Instagram - c\_nishikawa\_3

## 14 The Japanese pudding that broke the internet

Hekkelun is a little mom ‘n’ pop (now grandmom and  
grandpop) shop in Toranomon that’s been in the coffee  
and pudding business for half a century. Their jumbo pud-  
ding, or purin, has taken the internet by storm—and yes,  
it really is as delicious as it looks. They also do simple  
sandwiches, if you feel like something savory.

Still hungry? Explore our full range of Tokyo food  
tours and Tokyo restaurants.





TOKYO

# It tastes as good as it sounds

Beginning with an Eric Clapton guitar, Hard Rock Cafe owns the world's greatest collection of music memorabilia, which is displayed at its locations around the globe. For fans of music, great food and good times, Hard Rock is the go-to restaurant to get that authentic American diner-inspired cuisine wrapped in a unique musical experience. So, it's time to strike up the band! Events, like great music, are born to inspire others. At Hard Rock Cafe, we pride ourselves on delivering an exceptional experience with a rock 'n' roll twist for each and every one of our guests.

RESTAURANT INFO




TOKYO

Show your Military ID to get 10% Discount.  
\*Alcoholic Beverages Exclude.




# ALL BUZZ ALL BEATS.

# A Taste of Japan



Classic Cuts

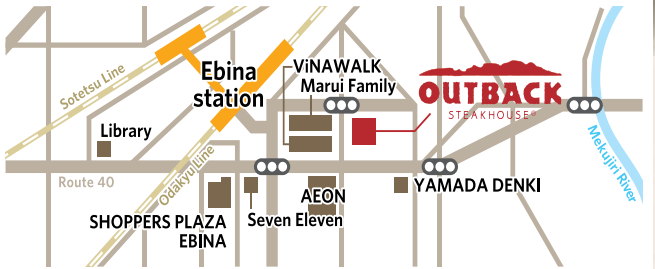
# VICTORIA'S FILET MIGNON



**Ebina** Tel. 046-292-4286

3 minutes walk from "Ebina" station of Odakyu Line and Sotetsu Line

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**Shibuya** Tel.03-5459-7751

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**Shinagawa Konan** Tel.03-6718-2761

**Ikebukuro** Tel.03-5928-1391

**Makuhari** Tel.043-213-3256

**Maihama** Tel.047-700-9031

[www.outbacksteakhouse.co.jp/en](http://www.outbacksteakhouse.co.jp/en)



# A Steak experience crafted just for you!

Outback Steakhouse starts fresh every day to create the flavors that our mates crave most. Our signature steaks are seasoned, hand-carved to order and grilled to perfection. Our specialty is Slow-Roasted Prime Rib offered during weekend dinnertime. But there's so much more to enjoy, including our famous Blooming Onions. So, come and enjoy our authentic American food and let us make you feel at home. Or, get your food to go and enjoy it relaxing at home. Even easier, order through Uber Eats, with delivery available from our Shinagawa Takanawa and Shibuya Ikebukuro locations.

RESTAURANT INFO





## Lots of tasty options at Sky Plaza Misawa

Pizzeria Massimo, a restaurant specializing in Neapolitan pizza and located on the 1st floor of Sky Plaza Misawa, offers a wide variety of delicious pizzas, as well as Hawaiian Huli Huli Chicken and Lani Chicken. At Dem's Café, also located at the Sky Plaza, you can enjoy snacks and desserts, including churros, pretzels and tapioca drinks. Inside the Aomori Prefectural Misawa Aviation Science Museum, stop by Jack & Betty II for tasty hot dogs and hamburgers. And during special events, there is a food truck outside that serves up some tasty treats.

**DEMZU CAFE**

(Open Hour)  
Open weekdays  
11:00 - 19:00  
(Closed)  
Every Wednesday

(Open Hour)  
Open weekdays & Sundays  
11:00 - 19:30  
Fridays & Saturdays  
11:00 - 20:00  
(Closed)  
Every Tuesday

**Jack & Betty II**  
AVIATION & SCIENCE MUSEUM, AOMORI

(Open Hour)  
Weekday 11:00 - 16:00  
Sat, Sun & Holiday 11:00-16:30  
158 Kitayama, Misawa-shi, Aomori-ken, 033-0022

**Jack & Betty**  
Festival Food Truck at Sky Plaza

# A Taste of Japan



**THE NEW SANNO**

## Cooking up positive vibes, **tasty** bacon at New Sanno

As a chef, I'm in no position to tell sailors about "smooth sailing and calm seas." But, with my skillset, I hope to bring troops a moment of relaxation and respite while enjoying a weekend brunch with a fine beverage in hand. We've all been there, having a perfect day with good company, delicious food, good tunes and sunshine. How do I bring that inside to create a meal that can uplift your spirits? Is it bacon centric, healthy avocado heavy, powerful grains, ethnic spice? I vote all above, and a nice glass of bubbles to wash it down! – Kevin Connell

### RESTAURANT INFO





PIZZA HUT LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100

(Delivery 1130-2030)

Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings  
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and multiple drinks.

Atsugi 1000-1900

(Delivery 1600-1830)

Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings  
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and multiple drinks.



LIVE MÁS

TACO BELL LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100

(Drive thru and Dine In)

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts,  
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.



Atsugi 1000-1900

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts,  
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.

Sasebo 1000-1900

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts,  
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.

