



## Selling Premium Ginjo Sake Is A Piece of Cake!

### General Sake Selling Tips

#### Be a leader in one of the hottest alcoholic beverage categories in the U.S.

- Japanese sake imports have GROWN an average of 20% per year for the last 4 years.
- Today's sake drinkers are YOUNG, UPSCALE, PROFESSIONAL and eager to discover new premium products.
- The rise in the popularity of ASIAN CUISINE is leading to increased demand for high quality sake. Premium sake is also being served in many NON-ASIAN restaurants.
- Most buyers WANT to carry premium sake but lack any knowledge of the product and have never been presented with high-quality Japanese sake packaged with easy-to-understand English nomenclature.
- EDUCATED WINE BUYERS will almost always like the taste & flavor of Ginjo sake.

#### Presentation tips

- Use a Wine Analogy: Speak in a language your customers understand
  - Premium sake is from premium sake rice varieties, not table rice. Premium wine is from premium wine grapes, not Thompson seedless.
  - "Prefecture" is the location of the sake brewery. "Appellation" is the location where a winery's grapes are grown
  - Sake and wine hand-crafted by small, family producers are superior to those from large, corporate factories
  - Better quality sake and white wines are made using low-temperature fermentation
  - Minimal manipulation occurs for quality sake brewing and winemaking, e.g., large brewers manipulate the chemical content of the water they use instead of using naturally pure well or stream water.
  - High quality sake and wines have no added flavorings, no preservatives, and no dyes. Sake has no sulfites.
  - Sake and wine match well with many types of food and cuisines, including beef, chicken, pork, seafood, cheese.
- Show 5 different sake, including one nigori (cloudy), but no less than 3 at a time.
- Choose a range of prices, grades, and styles – pick your favorites! Always show nigori last.
- Keep sake chilled so it is cool to the palate. Never hot or at room temperature. Refrigerated opened bottles will be fine to use until the end of the second day.

#### Your cheat sheet

Vine Connections was the first importer to develop a sake back label that clearly outlines all the important facts for describing or learning about each sake. These include:

- Brand
- Product Name
- Grade
- Flavor Profile
- Origin
- Rice Variety Used
- Relevant Brewery or Sake Fact

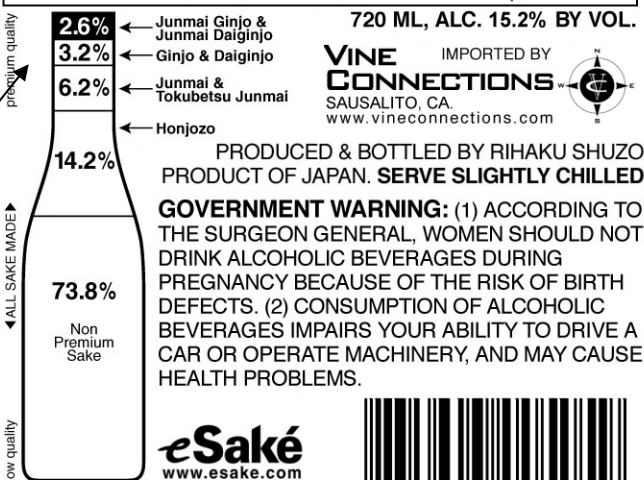
The bottle graph shows the % of each grade of sake produced in Japan, and the darkened area shows the grade level of the particular sake.

#### RIHAKU "Wandering Poet"

#### Sake

<b>Grade:</b> Junmai Ginjo	<b>Profile:</b> Full, Crisp, Flavorful
<b>Prefecture:</b> Shimane	<b>Rice:</b> Yamada Nishiki
Named for the 8th century Chinese poet Li Po (Rihaku in Japanese) of whom it was said "He drinks a bottle, and writes 100 poems."	

720 ML, ALC. 15.2% BY VOL.





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### *Selling Tips for Retailers*

#### Dominate the category by creating a premium sake section

- Locate the current section, i.e., know where the bad sake/plum wine.
- Find the location for a new premium set – away from the cheap stuff, out of the back corner, away from the dust bunnies!
- Explain how easy and inexpensive it is to display-Stack it, Rack it, Cold Box it!
- 720 ml (6-pack) and 300 ml (12-pack) sizes are available for almost all sake.
- Offer to create the new section and stock it. Make it easy for them. Give them an example. Shoot for at least 4 facings of 2 bottles each.
- Do some work for them. Be a leader and add value to the relationship.!



Here are some examples.

#### VINE CONNECTIONS GINJO SAKE “INSTANT PREMIUM SAKE SECTIONS”

<b>Set A:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tozai “Living Jewel” – Junmai</li> <li>2. Tentaka Kuni “Hawk in the Heavens” – Junmai</li> <li>3. Fukucho “Moon on the Water” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>4. Tozai “Snow Maiden” - Nigori (Cloudy sake)</li> </ol>	<b>Set B:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tentaka Kuni “Hawk in the Heavens” – Junmai</li> <li>2. Mantensei “Star Filled Sky” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>3. Mukune “Root of Innocence” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>4. Tozai “Snow Maiden” - Nigori (Cloudy sake)</li> </ol>	<b>Set C:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tozai “Well of Wisdom” – Junmai</li> <li>2. Nanbu Bijin “Southern Beauty” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>3. Kanbara “Bride of the Fox” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>4. Rihaku “Dreamy Cloud” - Nigori (Cloudy sake)</li> </ol>
<b>Set D:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tozai “Living Jewel” – Junmai</li> <li>2. Tentaka Kuni “Hawk in the Heavens” – Junmai</li> <li>3. Fukucho “Moon on the Water” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>4. Nanbu Bijin “Southern Beauty” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>5. Ginga Shizuku “Divine Droplets” – Junmai Daiginjo</li> <li>6. Rihaku “Dreamy Cloud” - Nigori (Cloudy sake)</li> </ol>	<b>Set E:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tozai “Well of Wisdom” – Junmai</li> <li>2. Rihaku “Wandering Poet” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>3. Mantensei “Star Filled Sky” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>4. Kanbara “Bride of the Fox” – Junmai Ginjo</li> <li>5. Ginga Shizuku “Divine Droplets” – Junmai Daiginjo</li> <li>6. Tozai “Snow Maiden” - Nigori (Cloudy sake)</li> </ol>	A retailer can put a premium sake section (4 facings x 2 bottles each to start) in his store for less than \$100 wholesale cost!

#### Offer the buyer extensive in-store support

- Attractive shelf talkers are available for all sake. →
- Empower the floor staff with some basic sake education.
- Encourage newsletter features, in-store tastings, and sake classes.





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### ***Selling Tips for Restaurants***

#### **How & Where to List It**

- Call it Chilled Premium Japanese Ginjo Sake to separate it from “the cheap hot stuff”.
- List it by Brand Name/Product Name/Quality Grade (like Junmai, Junmai Ginjo, Junmai Daiginjo)
- Create a sake list or section within the wine list with flavor descriptions or “tidbits” from our back labels
- Include the sake and a description on your premium cocktail list.
- Sake/food pairing directly on the menu, recommending a particular sake with a particular dish..

#### **How to Store it**

- Serve premium Japanese sake chilled from the wine cooler.
- Store in your cooler both before and after opening to maximize freshness. You can gas open bottles.
- Once opened, sake will remain fresh for up to one week.

#### **How to Serve It**

- No special glassware necessary. Serve in a sherry or dessert/cordial glass (4-6 oz), or small white wine glass (6-8 oz). Or use a martini glass with a garnish like boiled, salted edamame.
- By the glass: Customers will pay for quality if the cost per glass/flight isn't too high.
- A 720 ml bottle is 24.3 oz. Figure 6 pours per bottle (approx. 4 oz per serving).
- 300 ml (10 oz.) bottle serves 2 people nicely as a cocktail or with appetizers.
- More expensive sake should be sold with a 3 oz. pour (to keep the price/glass down)
- Sake “flights” are becoming popular and consist of 3-4 different sake, with a 1 -1.5 oz serving of each.
- Optimally, it should be poured at the table so the customer can see the premium packaging.

#### **What to Serve It With**

- Sushi? Sure, but it goes well with French food, Spanish cuisine, American grill food and more.
- Goes well with raw oysters, smoked and cured fish, grilled or broiled fish, fried fish or seafood, paella, mild curries, and many other dishes. Also works with milder chicken or beef dishes!
- Like wine, it can be overpowered by very spicy or powerfully flavored foods, but it does go well with most wine-unfriendly foods such as artichokes & asparagus.

#### **Explaining It to Your Staff**

- Taste it with them so they know how different it is from other so-called “sake” they might have had.
- The best analogy: Ginjo sake is to regular sake what Single Malt Scotch is to cheap, blended Scotch, or what 100% Agave Tequila is to regular, cheap tequila.
- These sake are brewed, not distilled, and they are really not much stronger than wine.
- Don't sweat the names: they have already been translated phonetically from the Japanese. Just say it the way you see it.
- Premium sake offers a unique opportunity to impress customers with a memorable experience and a way to generate bigger tips.



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### *What Makes Vine Connections' Chilled Premium Japanese Sake Different?*

- Most sake being served hot at sushi bars in the US is NOT from Japan!
- Manufacturers in California and Oregon create cheap sake that is strictly for boiling at restaurants.
- Restaurants have to boil sake to remove unpleasant aromas & flavors and to smooth the texture.

In Japan, there are basically two types of producers: artisan brewers (like ours) and industrial manufacturers (like Gekkeikan, Hakutsuru, Ozeki). Here is what makes our sake different from theirs:

Artisan Ginjo Sake	Industrial Sake
<b><u>Premium Sake Rice</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Special strains of rice used only for sake production</li><li>• The rice equivalent of top Napa Cabernet grapes.</li><li>• Highly polished to leave just the pure starch core and remove non-fermentable impurities.</li></ul>	<b><u>Cheap Non-sake Rice</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Made from cheap rice (often table rice)</li><li>• Polished as little as 10% before brewing</li><li>• Leaves impurities behind that negatively effect the flavors and aromas of the finished sake</li></ul>
<b><u>Pure Natural Water</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water makes up 80% of finished sake.</li><li>• Use key natural sources: springs, streams, wells</li></ul>	<b><u>Manipulated Tap Water</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chemically adjusted in labs</li><li>• Produces lower quality sake than pure water.</li></ul>
<b><u>Hand-made Koji</u></b> (mold spore converts starch to sugar). <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Premium <i>koji</i> is made carefully by hand</li><li>• Made in small batches and tended to every 2 hours.</li></ul>	<b><u>Machine-produced Koji</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mold spores blown through plastic tubes</li><li>• Made in large batches.</li></ul>
<b><u>Special Yeast</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use special yeast isolated from own brewery</li><li>• Selected for aroma/flavor quality, not efficiency.</li></ul>	<b><u>Yeast for Mass Production</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selected for speed and efficiency</li><li>• Flavors and aromas are an afterthought..</li></ul>
<b><u>No Distilled Alcohol or Other "Fillers"</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Junmai-shu</i> or "pure rice sake"</li><li>• Only made with rice, water, <i>koji</i> mold, and yeast.</li></ul>	<b><u>Lots of Distilled Alcohol &amp; Other "Fillers"</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use distilled alcohol to "stretch" sake output</li><li>• Often add sugar, flavorings, and additives.</li></ul>



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### *Sake Grade Levels*

	<i>Sake Types at a Glance</i>	Rice Milled To:
 Increasing quality, price, fragrance, complexity. "Premium Sake."	<b>Junmai-Daiginjo-shu</b> <i>The pinnacle of the sake brewer's art!</i> 	At least 50% (50% milled away, often as much as 65% removed)
	<b>Junmai-Ginjo-shu</b> 	At least 60% (40% or more milled away)
	<b>Junmai-shu</b> (Note: Tokubetsu Junmai, or "Special" Junmai, is Junmai-shu made with either special rice or more highly milled rice.) 	At least 70% (30% or more milled away)
 Normal "Table" Sake	<b>Futsu-shu</b> (Normal "Table" Sake)	No Minimum Requirements

- Keep in mind that very often the differences between the sake of these various grades is subtle.
- Sake is generally not aged, although there are exceptions, especially lately.

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