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WHAT DOES THE DATE ON A SAKE BOTTLE MEAN?

There is no expiration date on sake!

The dates on the labels (or sometimes on the screwcaps) indicate when the product shipped from Japan—usually just the month and the year (like 05/07). Additionally, sake cartons are all marked with the day/month/year that the sake shipped so that warehouse stock rotation can be done more easily (i.e. you don't have to open the box and search for the date on the label). This is the only way to tell the age of inventory.

OK, so what does the date mean?

It tells people approximately how old the sake is, though it is certainly not exact because you still don't know when the sake was made. We find sake is at its freshest within the first 18 months from the ship date. It starts to lose its true character as it gets older than that. It surely doesn't mean it expires on that date, it just gets older and a little rougher around the edges. Some sake drinkers actually like it that way!

When is sake too old?

In a perfect world, nobody should get sake shipped to them with an older date than their last shipment. We are shipping fresh sake from Japan every 2-3 weeks. Fast-movers are on almost every order, and slower movers are on almost every other. The important question to ask is: is inventory being properly rotated so that the oldest product is being used first. Making sure this happens should ensure your customers are getting and selling the freshest sake possible.



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