

Worth a Detour

Out-of-the-ordinary restaurants in out-of-the-way places

Hailing Hamburg

The ever-evolving Hanseatic city offers design inspiration

Work on the Wild Side

The extraordinary photography of David Yarrow explored

Japan's Rising Sons

A new generation of brewers giving sake a 21st-century twist

Clarins' Call

The French beauty firm stays true to its sustainable philosophy

A Glass For Every Dish

SAKE'S SPECTRUM OF FLAVOURS SATISFIES THE PALATE ALL MEAL LONG, SAYS AKIKO TOMODA, JAPAN'S LEADING SAKE SOMMELIER, WHO OFFERS THE PERFECT PAIRINGS FOR A SIX-COURSE MENU

First course: for toasting
Lightly Sparkling Junmai
Namazake AYA Summer
Toshimaya Corporation, Tokyo

Surprising as it may seem, there are still some sake breweries in the megalopolis that is the Japanese capital. Dating back to 1596, Toshimaya Honten is the oldest brewery in Tokyo, producing a range of sakes from *koku* (full-bodied) to *umami* (savoury), but here I would like to suggest a sparkling one. Crafted through "inside-the-bottle" fermentation, as with champagne, the delicately fine bubbles and the rich flavour of *koji* (an essential ingredient in sake production, steamed rice with *koji-kin* mould) mingle with a touch of fruitiness that works wonderfully for special occasions. It is a great match for canapés. toshimaya.co.jp

Second course: with appetiser
Dassai Beyond

Asahishuzo Co Ltd, Yamaguchi Prefecture

The increasing popular Dassai is a world-class brand, and the brewery's secret-recipe "Beyond Series" is the pinnacle of Japanese sake, its flavour profile sparkling like so many facets on a diamond. At its best when chilled, it should be enjoyed in a large wine glass. The flavour has notes of ripe apple and pear. It is great for toasting, but also works wonderfully with fresh oysters. asahishuzo.ne.jp

Third course: with fish
Modern Senkin Muku
Unfiltered Sake
Senkin, Tochigi Prefecture

This brewery was established in 1806, during the late Edo period of feudal Japan, and named after a mythological crane. The brewery has an especially large following in Japan thanks to its heritage, locally produced rice and spring water and its rare ability to introduce contemporary flavours in its bottlings. The charm of this Modern Senkin Muku is its fruity muscat taste that mingles with dryness. Chill the sake like white wine before serving in a wine glass. It works best with the first half of the menu, perhaps a white fish dish with creamy source or with shrimp salads. Available through ijzake.com

Fourth course: with a vegetable dish
Tsukasabotan Senchu Hassaku
Cho Karakuchi Junmai

Tsukasabotan Shuzo Co Ltd, Kochi Prefecture

Tracing its origins back more than 400 years, just before the Battle of Sekigahara in 1603, this bottle is thought to have been loved by Sakamoto Ryoma, the prominent figure in overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate in the 19th century. It ranks among the thoroughbred Japanese sakes that have been popular for centuries. "Senchu Hassaku" is the name of the famed eight plans (*hassaku*) Sakamoto drew up on a ship (*senchu*), that has become as a basis for the Meiji Constitution. Its allure is sharp and it has a crisp dryness that never bores. Excellent both chilled and warmed, it pairs well with fresh vegetable dishes. tsukasabotan.co.jp

Fifth course: with meat
Zuicho Kuromatsukenbishi
Kenbishi Sake Brewing Co Ltd, Hyogo Prefecture

Founded in 1505, Kenbishishuzo is a master brewery known for its robust, dry sakes that have never been misled by trends. This must-try is the five-year vintage made from the highest grade Yamadanishiki rice from Hyogo. Resembling the taste of amontillado, it is rich, full-bodied and intricate, lingering at the tip of the tongue before notes of sweetness and sharpness overtake the palate. This intense flavour is magical with top class butter-soft meat: local Kobe beef as a fillet steak, *sukiyaki* or *shabushabu* for instance. kenbishi.co.jp

Sixth course: with dessert
Yamahai 25° Junmai Aka-label
Kasumitsuru Co Ltd, Hyogo Prefecture

This brewery, formed in 1752, is one of the few remaining where the key bacterium in sake production, *lactobacillus*, is not artificially added, an increasingly common practice. At Kasumitsuru, existing *lactobacillus* in its *kura* environment – a specially maintained sake-making warehouse – are utilised in the method known as *kimoto-tsukuri*. This product is particularly special: it is an icewine-style Japanese sake, with a deep, refreshing sweetness. A wonderful pair for a slice of fruit tart, cheesecake or rich chocolates. Available through fukuchiya.co.jp

akikotomoda.com

