

A Brief History of Sake

The origin of sake has been traced back to 4800 BC along the Yangtze River Basin of China, but its substantive history and development is Japanese. Sake is the national beverage of Japan and its people have devoted centuries of painstaking effort refining this enchanting beverage.

In the 3rd Century BC, wet rice cultivation was developed in Japan and soon thereafter farmers began fermenting their rice into a thick, low alcohol, porridge-like substance that was eaten rather than drunk. In 689 AD, sake was formally elevated from a common man's drink when the Imperial Palace established a brewery. During the century that followed, sake gradually became a central component of Shinto religious practice and breweries sprouted up in temples across the country. By 1575, sake rice was being polished before being brewed and the market was gradually taken over by merchants.

Although sake is brewed in every part of Japan today, the art of sake brewing began in the south-eastern coastal region known as "Nada" in the Hyogo prefecture. Nada is the cradle of sake production because it is blessed with a unique water supply known as *Miyamizu* (Shrine Water). This spring water is filtered through the rock strata of the Rocco Mountains and is sourced from about 50 wells that have been in use for centuries. In the 17th, century it was discovered that sake brewed with *Miyamizu* tasted superior to sake brewed from other water sources. Ozeki is one of just a few breweries that have access to this coveted water source.