

LIVING GUIDE MORIOKA

MORIOKA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

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Have you tried Japanese *Sake*?

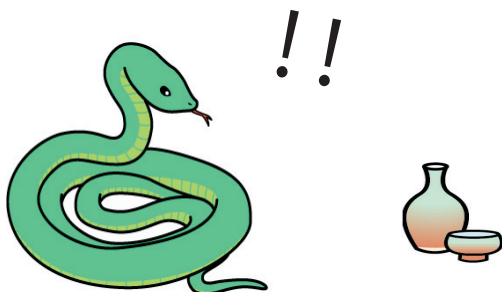
Every country has its unique cuisine. It also has a beverage that best suits their favorite dishes. Japanese cuisine goes best with Japanese *sake*. Have you tried one yet?

When it's getting colder at this time of the year, *sake* brewing starts. You may see part of Japanese culture by knowing about *sake*. Let's see what it is like.

Origin of Sake

Sake has been part of Japanese people's life for more than 1,200 years. A book compiled in 700's describes *sake*, alcoholic beverage made from rice. In the 8th century sake was brewed the same way as it is today. An ancient myth says that a hero fed *sake* to evil serpents to get rid of them. The *sake* mentioned here is said to be what we call "*sake*" today.

In Japan today celebrations are inseparable from *sake*. Originally, however, people made *sake* as an offering to Shinto deity. In later years people had *sake* in some seasonal rituals like "*matsuri*" (ritual events dedicated to Shinto deity, for which people in the community got together), celebrating the special occasions. The *matsuri* developed into merrymakings that Japanese people enjoy today.



Materials for *Sake*

Rice and water are essential materials for *sake*. The grains of rice suited for, however, are larger and softer than the rice we eat daily. Meanwhile the taste of *sake* depends on the quality of water, since water accounts for 70–80 percent of the ingredients of sake. *Sake* made from hard water tastes dryer, while the one made with soft water milder.

Another important element for making tasty sake is skilled brewers who can make the most of the materials. The brewer-in-chief who manages a group of brewers is called *Toji*. The brewer-in-chief in Iwate are called *Nambu Toji*. *Nambu* is the old name of the most part of present Iwate. *Nambu Toji* is known as one of the three greatest *Toji* in Japan, showing their excellent skills not only in Iwate but across Japan.

With its high-quality rice, water and brewers, Iwate produces various kinds of tasty Japanese *sake*.

Features of *Sake*

Japanese sake can be enjoyed both cold and warm. Unlike other alcoholic beverages, the temperatures of *sake* good for drinking range from 5 to 55 degrees Celsius. Sake comes in various kinds, depending on how it is brewed and what materials are used. They differ in tastes and aromas, and are suited to different foods.

As we have four distinct seasons in Japan, we have events or occasions for enjoying *sake* in each season: cherry-blossom viewing in spring, summer festivals and "*obon*", when we visit ancestors' graves, in summer, moon viewing in autumn, and New Year's days in winter.

Keep in Mind

Drinking alcoholic beverages is prohibited in Japan if you are under 20 years old.
Don't drive after drinking *sake* and other alcoholic beverages.

Information from the Morioka International Relations Association

Tour for Learning Disaster Prevention and Visiting a Sake Brewery

Do you have earthquakes in your home country? Have you ever experienced ones?

Why don't you join our program for learning beforehand how to prepare for earthquakes and what you should do when an earthquake occurs?

After learning about earthquakes, we will visit a local sake brewery and taste Japanese sake and culture.

Date/Time : 13:00, Saturday, December 2, 2006

Meet in front of the Morioka City Hall for the bus tour.

Places : Iwate Disaster Prevention Center (Yahaba), and *Azumamine Shuzo*
(a sake brewery in Shiwa).

Fee : Free

Phone : 626-7524 (Japanese only)

Email : moriintl@nifty.com (Japanese/English)

Contact us now for reserving your spot.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Illuminated Morioka Castle Site Stone Foundation Wall
(Mid December - Mid February)

Morioka castle, which was completed in 1633, was unfortunately destroyed about 140 years ago, with only the stone foundation remaining until today. The stone foundation wall is fantastically lit up during the cold season and warmly welcome visitors to Morioka.

- Hina Dolls Exhibit

In Japan families that have girls traditionally display *hina* dolls in ancient noble costumes for *hina matsuri* on March 3. In the old Japanese-style houses below hand-made hina dolls and old hina dolls that have been treasured from generation to generation in some families are displayed.

"*Hina Asobu*" at *Ichinokura-Tei* (Old residence of Ichinokura Family): from early February to early March. *Ichinokura-tei* is located at 19-24, Abetate-cho

"*Hina Matsuri*" at *Nansho-so* (Old residence

of a merchant): from late February to early March. *Nansho-So* is located at 13-46, Shimizu-cho

- *Hadaka Mairi*

This is a traditional event dating back to Edo Period (1603-1867). Men wearing only sacred ropes around his loin march through the town to local shrines to pray for rich harvest, health and safety for the year. When the men wear loincloth and ropes alone, like a sumo wrestler, it means that they have no weapons when visiting shrines.

