



Edition ①

Seasonal Terms and Japanese Sake

Toso / Nenshu Spiced Sake (served at New Year's)/ Drinks to Celebrate the New Year 〈January〉

To name a New Year's alcohol, of course it's the "otoso". It's a drink to purify the year's ill-will, to ward off sickness, and to encourage a long life. The official name is "tosenmeichi" and it is made by steeping things used in natural remedy traditional Chinese medicine such as Atractylodes (asian flowering plants in the sunflower family) Japanese pepper Sansho, Chinese bellflower, among others into Sake and Mirin.

Traditional Opening of the Sake's Barrel 〈January〉

Japanese Sake was previously carried in barrels. The opening of the Sake barrels was a means for praying for health and happiness along with wishing for good fortune on a new journey. In Japan, the word "break" is said to be a taboo word so instead of saying "break the barrel" it is referred to as "open the glass" because looking into a Sake barrel from the top resembles looking into glass.

White Sake (Shirozake) 〈March〉

A vital component of Girls' Day (March 3rd) is White Sake which is not to be confused with Sweet Sake. White Sake is made of a sweet rice wine called Mirin, Shōchū, steamed mochi rice, and malted rice called Kōji is added and it is set to ferment for a month, then the final product is mashed and has become a proper alcohol. Amazake, on the other hand, contains almost no alcohol.

Cherry Blossom Viewing Sake (Hanamizake)

〈April〉

Rumor has it that cherry blossom viewing started in the Nara Period (710-794 AD) by the nobles and became a thing for the common people to enjoy in the Edo Period (1603-1867). Rakugo is a traditional Japanese comic story telling method. In a Rakugo called "A Poor Man's Cherry Blossom Viewing", the comic Haiku phrase stating "what kind of cherry blossom am I without Sake" came about and from that time on, cherry blossom viewing and Sake became a set.



Japanese Sweet Flag Plant Sake (Ayamezake) 〈May〉

The refreshing scent of the Japanese Sweet Flag plant is said to ward off bad spirits. The leaves are shaped like a sword which makes it a vital aspect of Boys' Day (May 5th). The leaves are used from the Araceae family plant, not to be confused with the Iris family plant having the same name in Japanese.

Becoming Summer Sake (Natsugoshinosake) 〈June〉

There is a purification rite performed twice a year for clearing away impurities and for praying for sound health. Here, on the last day of June there is a summer purification rites ceremony held at a shrine. Ordinary people used to bathe their horses and cattle in the river for the summer seasonal festival. Both of them were ceremonial rituals. Naturally, there became demand for alcohol.

Eel Sake (Uzake) 〈July~August〉

In Japanese language, Eel Sake is not called Unagizake, but rather Uzake. An eel dipped and broiled in a soy-based sauce is placed in a Sake cup, followed by warm Sake being poured onto the eel. As the Dashi flavoring is leaving the fish, the drink is enjoyed. It is the eel version of "Hirezake" which is a hot Sake with grilled fish fins. This alcohol is said to increase stamina.

Obon / Summer Festival 〈July~August〉

The summer festival has a strong relationship with Obon and there are memorial services for ancestors, in addition to a large number of events for protection against a summer plague. Recently there is an increase of summer festivals that don't necessarily have a meaning, but this is a place that people gather. Alcohol is a necessary social-lubricant.

Chrysanthemum Sake (Kikuzake) 〈September〉

With having the March 3rd's Girls' Festival and the May 5th's Boys' Day, the next of the 5 seasonal festivals is September 9th's Chrysanthemum Festival. It's a day for clearing away ill will and wishing for perpetual youth and longevity. It's called the Chrysanthemum Festival and on this day people enjoyed the Chrysanthemum Alcohol at dinner parties with a flower pedal of the Chrysanthemum floating in the drink.

Sake for Moon Viewing Parties (Tsukimizake) 〈September~October〉

In the Heian period (794-1185 AD), there was moon observing, however, people in the old days did not pay much attention in particular to the full moon but rather enjoyed the various shapes of the moon. In autumn, it is the season of "hiyoroshi" which is Sake that is brewed in winter, pasteurized, aged over the summer, and distributed in autumn without a second pasteurization. Imitating people of the past, people enjoyed various different colors or autumn alcohol together with the various colors of the autumn moon.

New Year's Eve Sake (Joyanosake) 〈December〉

On New Year's Eve, Japanese people listen to the sound of the 108 chimes of the bell while looking back on the year. In Nara and Kyoto, Good Luck Alcohol (fukushu) is given out at temples. If you like alcohol, how about paying homage to a temple with some Good Luck Alcohol? Your worldly desires will be washed away by the Good Luck Alcohol as the temple bell is rung 108 times on New Year's Eve.



Sake Drunk while Viewing a Snowy Scene (Yukimizake) 〈December~February〉

Yukimizake is a custom of enjoying the snow while drinking alcohol. It is said that Heian period poet Murasaki Shikibu also enjoyed this custom. Because just looking at the snow is not satisfying enough, there became a name for the alcoholic beverage to be enjoyed while enjoying this view. This drink is enjoyed by putting some fresh snow inside of a Sake cup and then pouring Sake on it.

October 1st is Japanese Sake's Day. Japanese Sake brewing has been known for starting in the month of October, with the opening of the new Sake jars being represented by the Chinese Kanji character for "Rooster" "酉" (10th Zodiac symbol of the 12-year Chinese Zodiac Calendar) which was established by the Japanese Sake Brewing Central Association Club.



Edition ②

Turning Point Sake (Fushimenosake)

Sekkunosake (Seasonal Festival Sake)

At the turning point of the seasons, the imperial court held a banquet which spread to the general public and became “Seasonal Festivals” and are now fixed annual events. They were originally dinner parties so alcohol was accompanied with these events.

三々九度 Sansankudo (3, 3, 9, times)

A Shinto style wedding is a ceremony where a bride and groom vow to become a husband and wife. A ritual is performed 3 times with 3 different Sake cups, making a total of 9 interactions, therefore having the name (3, 3, 9, times) The numbers 3 and 9 were known to have good fortune in ancient China, leading to the start of this style of ritual in Japan.



Chigirinosake (Promise Sake)

A pledge is a solemn promise and a vow. In order to obtain a strong bond between a husband and wife without relying on a blood relationship, alcohol has been used around the world as a sacrifice to the gods. In Japan, Sake and a Sake cup are both used at a pledge ceremony so it's called a “pledge made over Sake cups” “盃事” (sakazukigoto). At wedding ceremonies, the (3, 3, 9, times) is one of the “pledges made over Sake cups”.



Genpukutosake (Male Coming-Of-Age-Ceremony and Sake)

The male coming-of-age-ceremony is a rite of passage where a boy becomes an adult man. It is called this because the boy changes his hair-style and clothes to that of an adult, in addition to putting on a traditional cap worn by the Shinto clergy. This custom spread to the general and connects to the coming-of-age-ceremonies now. Of course, a ceremony like this calls for Sake. By drinking the adult's alcohol, a vow is made into adulthood.

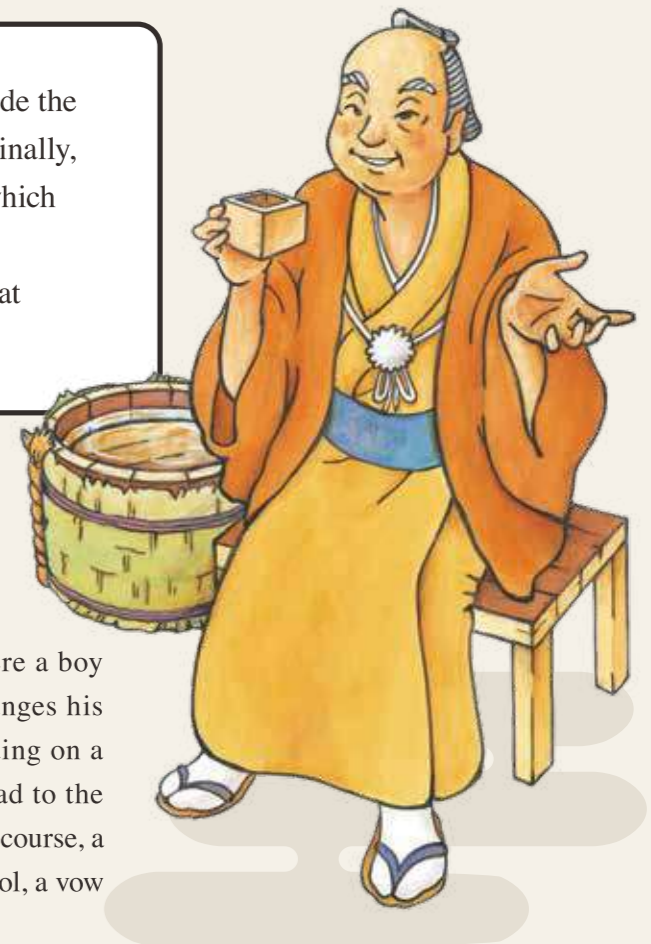
Sougitosake (Funerals and Sake)

However it varies depending on the region, at an all-night vigil over a body (wake) performed in Japan, Sake is served together with food after the funeral ceremony. In this way, Sake plays an essential part even at the time of someone's passing away by being served to the guests. Sake offered at this time is not only for the attendees to reminisce individually but also takes on the meaning of purification.

Matsurinosake (Festivals and Sake)

The word “matsuri” which means festival in Japanese, originally takes on the meaning of deifying or praying to a god. At this time, a Sake offering to the gods takes place (shinsen) and specifically an absolutely essential Sake used here is called “omiki”. Generally 白酒 “shiroki” is known but there is also 黒酒 “kuroki”, 清酒 “sumisake”, and 濁酒 “nigorisake” among others.

A happy event is said to include the essential Japanese Sake. Originally, alcohol was called “omiki” which means sacred alcohol. This naturally led people to drink at events such as festivals.



|| Entertaining People's Social Life Sake ||

Even though Sake was very scarce in the old days, the development of brewing techniques led to Sake being able to be easily enjoyed. Today, what used to be a sacrificial offering to the gods has become a fundamental part of our lives. Formerly, Sake used to connect the gods to the people, and now in modern society, it is a drink that connects people to each other and is loved by many people.



Edition ③

Japanese Haiku Related to Sake

酒飲みに語らんかかる滝の花

sakenomi ni kataran kakaru taki no hana ——— Matsuo Bashō

This is a Haiku that speaks about Nara Prefecture's Yoshino city's Ryūmon waterfall. Bashō wanted to tell this beautiful place by Haiku to his drinking friends because he thought they would be very impressed by the scenery here.

He made another Haiku related to this scenery: 龍門の花や上戸の土産にせん (ryūmon no hana ya jōgo no tsuto ni sen)
This Haiku is also related to Sake. By looking at these Haikus you can tell that Matsuo Bashō is a heavy drinker.

朝顔は酒盛知らぬ盛り哉

asagao wa sakamori shiranu sakari kana ——— Matsuo Bashō

This Haiku was written by Bashō in 1688 when he was 45 years old. He wrote it before one of his journeys that he wrote a book about called "Sarashikikō". Before Bashō left on his trip, a group of his followers gathered in the day and had a drinking farewell for him. In this Haiku, the Asagao flower (Japanese Morning Glory) is said to be conveying the message that now is not the time to be drinking but rather it is a time to bloom. And by the way, alcohol is for night time.

草の戸や日暮れてくれし菊の酒

kusa no to ya higuretekureshi kiku no sake ——— Matsuo Bashō

This is a Haiku about drinking the Chrysanthemum Sake with a floating pedal of the flower in the drink and praying for long life on September 9th. Living a secluded life, Bashō felt this celebration was overrated and not related to him at all. However, one of his followers Kawai Otokuni passed him a drink for this occasion. Unexpectedly, a celebration and Sake. Surely Bashō became happy.

酒飲めばいとど寝られぬ夜の雪

sake nomeba itodo nerarenu yoru no yuki ——— Matsuo Bashō

Even though Bashō lived separated from ordinary life on his own path towards enlightenment, while looking at the night time beautiful snow, he came to yearn for a friend to share a drink with. In addition, there aren't people who would meet up with him on a snowy night. He realized that even his greatest friend, alcohol, when drunk alone, made him want to be drinking together with other people.

十五から酒をのみ出てけふの月

juugo kara sake wo nomidete kefu no tsuki ——— Takarai Kikaku

Takarai Kikaku was one of Bashō's followers and was known as a heavy drinker. It was said Kikaku was already fond of alcohol from the age of 15. The harvest moon in Japan is on the 15th night of the month. In this Haiku, Kikaku makes play on his age of 15 years old, and the 15th night of the month. In Japanese, the harvest moon is called juugoya (15th night) and it is also called kefunotsuki (today's moon).

Different Haiku poets from various eras have composed large numbers of Haikus related to Sake. Haiku were composed by authors who were enjoying drinking while experiencing the seasonal festivals of the year and spending time out in nature.



酒をたべてゐる山は枯れてゐる

sake wo tabete iru yama wa karete iru ——— Taneda Santōka

Taneda Santōka loved alcohol and he was the son of an alcohol making family whose debauchee father and Santōka's own bad drinking habits caused the family company to shut down. In his later years, Santōka took a trip to western Japan dressed as a training monk. With the small amount of money he had, he bought Sake. This situation could be described as if he was eating alcohol (sake wo taberu), the circumstances of needing alcohol to survive and instead of buying food he bought alcohol with his limited money.



ほろほろ酔うて木の葉ふる

horohoro youte ko no ha furu ——— Taneda Santōka

Santōka explains the process of gradually becoming drunk using the Japanese onomatopoeic terms in sequence ranging from being slightly tipsy to being in an ugly state of emotions (horohoro, furafura, gudegude, gorogoro, boroboro, dorodoro). He said, "alcohol is the body's Haiku, and Haiku is the soul's alcohol" which seems very like Santōka.

婆々どのが酒呑に行く月夜哉

baba dono ga sakenomi ni iku tsukiyo kana ——— Kobayashi Issa

This Haiku conveys that even an unseemingly old lady who is not likely to go out for a drink, would want to go out at night because the moonlight is that beautiful. Perhaps the old lady was led by the mysterious power of the moon.

杉の葉のびんと戦ぐや新酒樽

sugi no ha no pinto soyogu ya shin shudaru ——— Kobayashi Issa

In Japan when an annual new brew of Sake is produced, the leaves of a Sugi tree are packed into a ball shaped figure called a "Sugidama" and is hung from the roof at the entrance of a Sake brewery. Originally, the Sake brewery hung the Sugidama ball as a display of appreciation to the Sake gods. Sake loving Kobayashi Issa saw the brand new Sugidama ball as a sign of new Sake being ready.

盃に散れや糺のとぶほたる

sakazuki ni chire ya tadasu no tobu hotaru ——— Kobayashi Issa

In Kyoto's Shimogamo Shrine grounds, there is a famous spot to escape the summer heat called the "Tadasu Forest". Surely the sight of many fireflies' light reflecting off the Sake in the Sake cup was stunning.



Maruhaku Kawaraban (Edo-Period Single Page Paper)

Edition ④

“酉” the Rooster (10th Sign of the Chinese Zodiac) Kanji Character Radical

酒 alcohol
(sake/shu 酉+3 Kanji strokes)

Because Sake is a liquid, the Kanji character for chicken was combined with the Kanji radical for liquid “氵” (sanzui). A long time ago, just the Kanji “酉” meant alcohol and “酉” was used for many other Kanji related to alcohol which led to the form of the character now. The meaning-bearing element of the character is not “氵” (sanzui) but rather “酉” (tori/yuu).

酌 pouring alcohol
(kumu/shaku 酉+3 Kanji strokes)

The character “勺” (shaku) was used in ancient China for the container used to pour alcohol. The Kanji for alcohol “酉” and for the action of pouring the alcohol “勺” combined to form the meaning to pour alcohol for someone “酌”. This Kanji also led to the meaning of pouring one’s feelings “気持ちを酌む” (くむ) (kimochi wo kumu). In other words, “お酌”(oshaku) pouring alcohol for someone is said to be an exchange of pouring one’s heart.



配 distribute
(kubaru/hai 酉+3 Kanji strokes)

The Kanji character “己” (kubaru/hai) is a hieroglyphic character representing someone kneeling down. The Kanji for “配” distribute is represented by someone kneeling along side of an alcohol bottle “酉”, setting a table, holding the alcohol bottle and making the action of pouring the alcohol from the alcohol cup.



酎 alcohol
(chuu 酉+3 Kanji strokes)

A 3-time brewed rich alcohol drink. This character 酎 is often associated with Shōchū “焼酎” but in Chinese the first character for Shōchū “烧” means high heat application while on the other hand, Shōchū is actually a distilled alcohol beverage. This is a familiar character in Japanese language, however this character has been just very recently added to the “Japanese Daily Use Characters” in 2010.

醉 drunk/feel sick
(you/sui 酉+4 Kanji strokes)

Actually the character “醉” meaning drunk/feel sick is a new simplified form of Kanji. Previously it was written as “醉”. The meaning of the character “卒” is not only for things coming to an end but also has the meaning of dispersion/being in disorder. The Kanji character “醉” took on the meaning of the heart/mind being disordered due to alcohol.



酢 vinegar
(su/saku 酉+5 Kanji strokes)

The Kanji character “夨” represents the meaning for sour. Vinegar is made by fermenting alcohol. The Kanji character for vinegar “酢” is created by the character “手” (hand) has been added to the character for alcohol “酉” creating “酢”. Vinegar was said to be “sour alcohol”. It is also said that vinegar has an ancient history that came to Japan from mainland China.

酬 repay/reward
(shū 酉+6 Kanji strokes)

When the word 応酬 (oushū-exchange) is heard, usually Japanese people think of things such as debate or discussion but actually this word 応酬 originated from alcohol exchange. In the China collection of poems called “The Classic of Poetry” the phrase “献酬”(kenshū-exchange of Sake cups) appears. An exchange of Sake between a host and a guest, the host offers the guest Sake, which the guest accepts and receives, then drinks, then is offered Sake again. This is a mutual exchange between the two.

酪 acidic drink made from fermented milk
(raku 酉+6 Kanji strokes)

In ancient Buddhism, the 5 flavors of Buddhism were: milk, acidic drink made from fermented milk, freshly curdled butter, sarpis (type of butter), and ghee were highly valued. The acidic drink made from fermented milk “酪” (raku) has no relation to alcohol but actually in ancient Mesopotamian language, it has the meaning of “濁り酒”(nigorizake unrefined Sake).

The early Chinese character radical “酉” (tori/yuu) is modeled after the oracle bone script several thousand years ago. The bottom of Sake bottles used to be tapered and the Kanji “酉” was used to represent Sake. This “酉” is used for about 70 different Kanji characters.



醫 medicine
(i 酉+11 Kanji strokes)

“醫” is the traditional Kanji used for “医”. As the character style shows, “毘” an arrow “矢” is covered “匚” and hidden inside and in front of that place is a spear “矛” as if holding the spear and seems to be shouting to cure the sickness. In addition, the character for “酉” (alcohol container) represents the container used to put medicinal herbs making medicinal herb alcohol.

釀 brew
(kamosu/jou 酉+13 Kanji strokes)

The vital points of brewing Japanese Sake are: 1st koji, 2nd yeast starter, 3rd brewing, and the final state is called “醸し”(kamoshi-brew). The character “裏”(jō-rise) has the meaning to mix/stir. Putting in the raw materials into the alcohol pot and mixing combined the characters “酉” and “裏” to get “醸す”(kamosu-to brew). In old times, Sake was made by chewing uncooked rice, combining it with saliva, and proceeding to spit it out to ferment. The verb for to chew in Japanese is “kamu” so the verb for brewing alcohol also became “醸す”(kamosu).



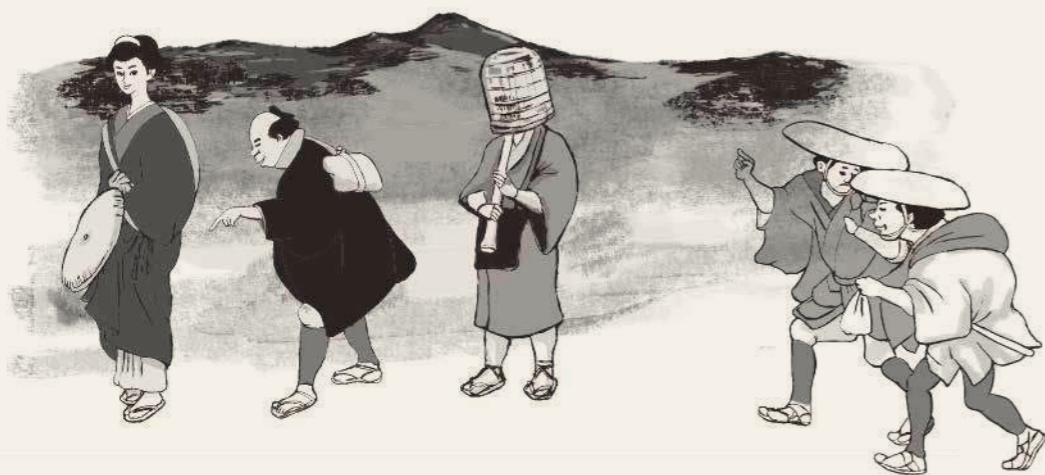
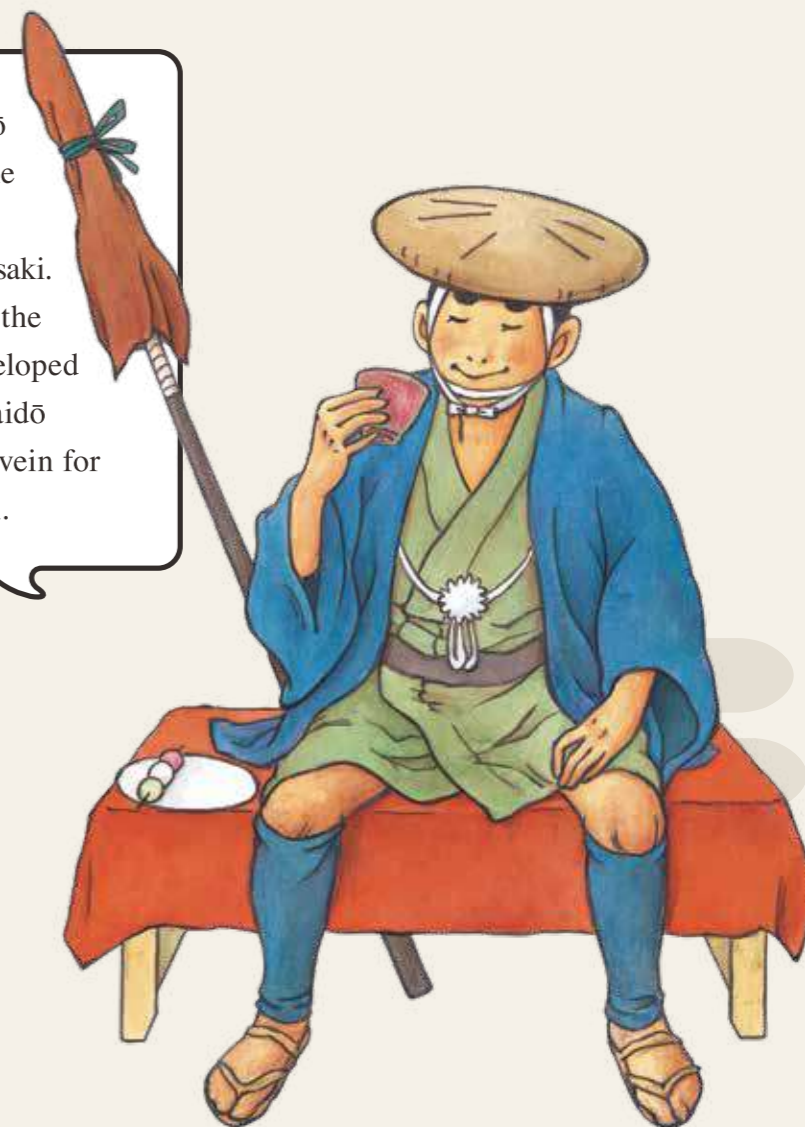
Edition 5

Saigoku Kaidō and Yokkaichi-Juku

The origin of the Saigoku Kaidō

Kaidō was the name of the road that had standby horses waiting at every station for the purpose of relaying people and mail documents between posts. In ancient times, depending on the size of the road (large/medium/small) there were various numbers of relay horses and Sanyōdō was the only “big” road. This main road went from Kyoto to Tsukushi’s Dazaifu and passed through Saijō here. In the Middle Ages of Japan (the Kamakura and Muromachi periods), the Sanyōdō was not clearly established, however in the early modern period of Japan (from the Azuchi-Momoyama period to the end of the Edo period), The Sanyōdō was regarded as the next most important road after the “Edo Five Routes” under direct control of the shogunate. It ranged from Sanjōdōri in Kyoto to Akamagaseki (Shimonoseki City, Yamaguchi Prefecture). Comparing it to ancient times and the Middle Ages, the route has changed and goes around many spots near the Setouchi coast and passes through castle towns and ports. There were 43 “Shukuba” (post stations during the Edo period in Japan, generally located on one of the Edo Five Routes or one of its sub-routes) and one of them was Yokkaichi-Juku. Roadside maintenance and control was entrusted by various fiefdoms and the feudal domain (Edo and early Meiji periods, precursor to current prefectures) ran inns and tea houses for government officials located in posts stations. This highway extends from Osaka to Nagasaki and it is popularly known as the “西国街道” (Saigoku Kaidō) meaning “west country highway”.

The Saigoku Kaidō was the name of the road that stretched from Osaka to Nagasaki. In the Edo Period, the sea routes had developed but the Saigoku Kaidō was a useful main vein for land transportation.



Sakagura Street’s History

During the Edo period, post towns spread along the Saigoku Kaidō, which stretches from east to west in front of JR Saijō Station. This road is now currently called “酒蔵通り” (Sakagura dōri) which is in the town of Yokkaichi. The Sanyō Railway opened in the middle of the Meiji era, and a stop “Saijō Station” was set up on the north side of the city. Around the same time, shops along the highway started brewing Sake one after another. In the Taisho era (1912 to 1926), three Sake brewing companies were started between the townscape and the railroad tracks, which were some of the few corporations at that time. These Sake breweries were built out of stone and had tall red brick smokestacks rising in the sky.

This is Japan’s Sake Capital

The Sake brewed at each Sake brewery in Yokkaichi dominated the outstanding award at the national Sake competition held at the Ministry of Finance Brewing Research Institute from the end of the Meiji era, and this area suddenly became famous throughout the country as a major brewing area. Today, Saijō is widely known to Sake lovers around the world. Since the groundwater here was medium-hard water, the ratio of water pumped to the steamed rice was increased to over a 1/1 ratio (in the old days, it was a 1/2 ratio), and fermentation was performed at a low temperature. This made it possible to produce smooth and elegant Sake, and in the early Showa era it became a major brewery called “Saketo Saijō” meaning Sake Capital Saijō. Currently, eight brands have been created and are loved by many people. In the spring, the Ginjō Sake (high-quality Sake brewed by low temperature fermentation from white rice milled to 60%) is examined at the Liquor Research Institute in the city, and in the fall, the “Sake Festival” is held, which is a collection of Sake from all over the country, and has been very popular.