

# Batsugun Shuzo

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### THE HISTORY OF KUMA SHOCHU

WHAT IS

Kuma Shochu: Born from the History, Climate & Culture of Hitoyoshi-Kuma

### **Abundant Water & Unique Climate**

The Kuma Valley is located at the southernmost tip of Kumamoto Prefecture, deep in the mountains of Kyushu. The cool waters of the Kuma River—famed for its rapids—nourish the fields, while the valley's distinctive climate and significant temperature variations create one of the prefecture's prime rice-growing areas. The frequent dense fog in the region allows for fermentation and storage at relatively low temperatures, which helps give Kuma Shochu its refreshing aroma. The soft water from the Kuma River system is ideal for shochu making and helps enhance the gentle sweetness of the rice. The rich aroma and deep flavor of Kuma Shochu can only be produced in the Hitoyoshi-Kuma region.

### **Tradition & Evolution**

Rice shochu production in the Hitoyoshi-Kuma region is believed to have started about 500 years ago. Distillation techniques were supposedly brought over through trade with southeast and continental Asia. Today, 27 distilleries preserve the traditional techniques honed by their predecessors, offering a variety of flavors that have evolved over time.

In 1995, Kuma Shochu was designated as a Geographical Indication by the National Tax Agency, establishing it as a world-class shochu brand and attracting attention from around the globe.

Must be made with rice (including rice koji) grown in Japan

KUMA SHOCHU? [Mash must be made with Hitoyoshi-Kuma water and shochu must be distilled in a pot still and bottled in Hitoyoshi-Kuma.]

You must be 20 or older to drink. Do not drink and drive.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy and breastfeeding may affect the development of the fetus or infant. Drink in moderation. Please recycle.

# KUMA SHOCHU - WORLD-RENOWNED PREMIUM SPIRIT

# Batsugun Shuzo 抜群酒造





## BATSUGUN SHUZO (Taragi)

# Diligently making shochu you'll want to end every day with

#### **HISTORY**

#### Breaking away from the pack

"We chose this name because we want to make high-quality shochu that's leagues ahead of the rest."

These are the words of Tatsuhiko Nishi, the third president of Batsugun. It was his grandfather Tsuneichi, a leader of forestry and agriculture, who entered the packed world of shochu in 1923 to compete with the over 50 other breweries in the Hitoyoshi-Kuma area. At the time, industry modernization brought along a dramatic increase in lumber demand for coal mining timbers, railroad ties, pulp for paper, utility poles, and more. Amidst this, the town of Taragi became a lumber hub in Hitoyoshi-Kuma, attracting people, commerce, and capital. Shochu became the go-to way to welcome these newcomers.

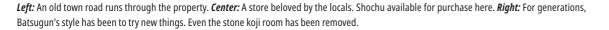
Although sweet potato shochu flourished after the war due to rice shortages, the past 50 years were dominated by rice shochu. The desire of Batsugun's founder to create delicious rice shochu is carefully preserved to this day.

Since installing a vacuum distiller in the 1970s, over 90% of Batsugun's shochu is vacuum distilled. Souvenir shops have contributed greatly to sales. Sweet cask-aged shochu sold in *tokkuri* carafes are available in souvenir shops throughout the prefecture and are popular with tourists.













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#### ABOUT US

# Anything and everything for quality

Although most distilleries in Hitoyoshi-Kuma make shochu in the coldest period of winter, Batsugun also makes batches in spring and fall, as well. Batsugun focuses on koji production as they believe it is critical to making good shochu when using vacuum distillation. To that end, instead of using a traditional stone koji room, they use automated equipment to make sure the koji is consistent. The temperature can't go below 15°C even in the middle of the night, or else the koji mold will not fully propagate throughout the rice.

The type of koji mold used depends on what product it will be used for. The



robust shochus.



**Upper left:** The chimney to the rear of the distillery was supposedly in use until the 1960s.

**Upper right:** Ex-sherry casks, most of which were made in southern Europe, are used for aging.

*Left:* Bottles are reused for Batsugun shochu. This kind of recycling is well-established in the community.

*Right:* Making koji requires precise temperature control.

vacuum-distilled Batsugun is 100% white koji mold, and the atmospheric-distilled Kuro Koji Batsugun uses the Kawachi NK black koji mold. To take advantage of the individuality each koji brings to the product, Batsugun spares no effort to make koji that will produce savory, sweet, and

Batsugun's goal: a shochu that you want to end every day with and will never get tired of. To achieve this, they strive to increase quality, but they also must work equally hard to balance the cost. To keep customers coming back, they make sure to make delicious shochu that isn't too expensive. In this way, they work ceaselessly to achieve their ideal shochu. Batsugun uses new equipment and puts great effort into koji and fermentation so that they can bring out sweet and savory flavors in their shochu.



Batsugun protects the environment with a mind for careful use of limited resources because their shochu ingredients and employees benefit from nature's gifts. They hold over 10 workshops a year with local kids, where they clean and recycle collected bottles, and they also occasionally hold shochu education classes for kids.