



Deluxe all-koji fermentation, a beautiful spirit that brings out a dish's flavor

MATSUYOI

A deluxe shochu varietal made entirely with koji. With a fragrant aroma, light flavor, and a deep full-bodied palate, it can play the perfect supporting role at dinner to bring out the umami taste in the likes of sashimi or steamed dishes.

Ingredients: rice, koji
ABV: 28%
Distillation Method: vacuum



Easy to drink and never gets old, the go-to Kuma Shochu

HAKUTAKE

Synonymous with vacuum-distilled shochu, Hakutake revolutionized Kuma Shochu. The mild flavor and smoothness going down sets it apart to create a shochu that you'll never tire of. Best mixed with hot water.

Ingredients: rice, rice koji
ABV: 25%
Distillation method: vacuum



A flowery ginjo aroma, rich with the umami of rice

HAKUTAKE KAORU

A fruity and flowery ginjo aroma meets the distinctive sweetness and body of rice shochu. Remarkable balance of the aroma and flavor; a drink shochu newcomers can casually toss back.

Ingredients: rice, rice koji
ABV: 25%
Distillation method: vacuum

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THE HISTORY OF KUMA SHOCHU

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.

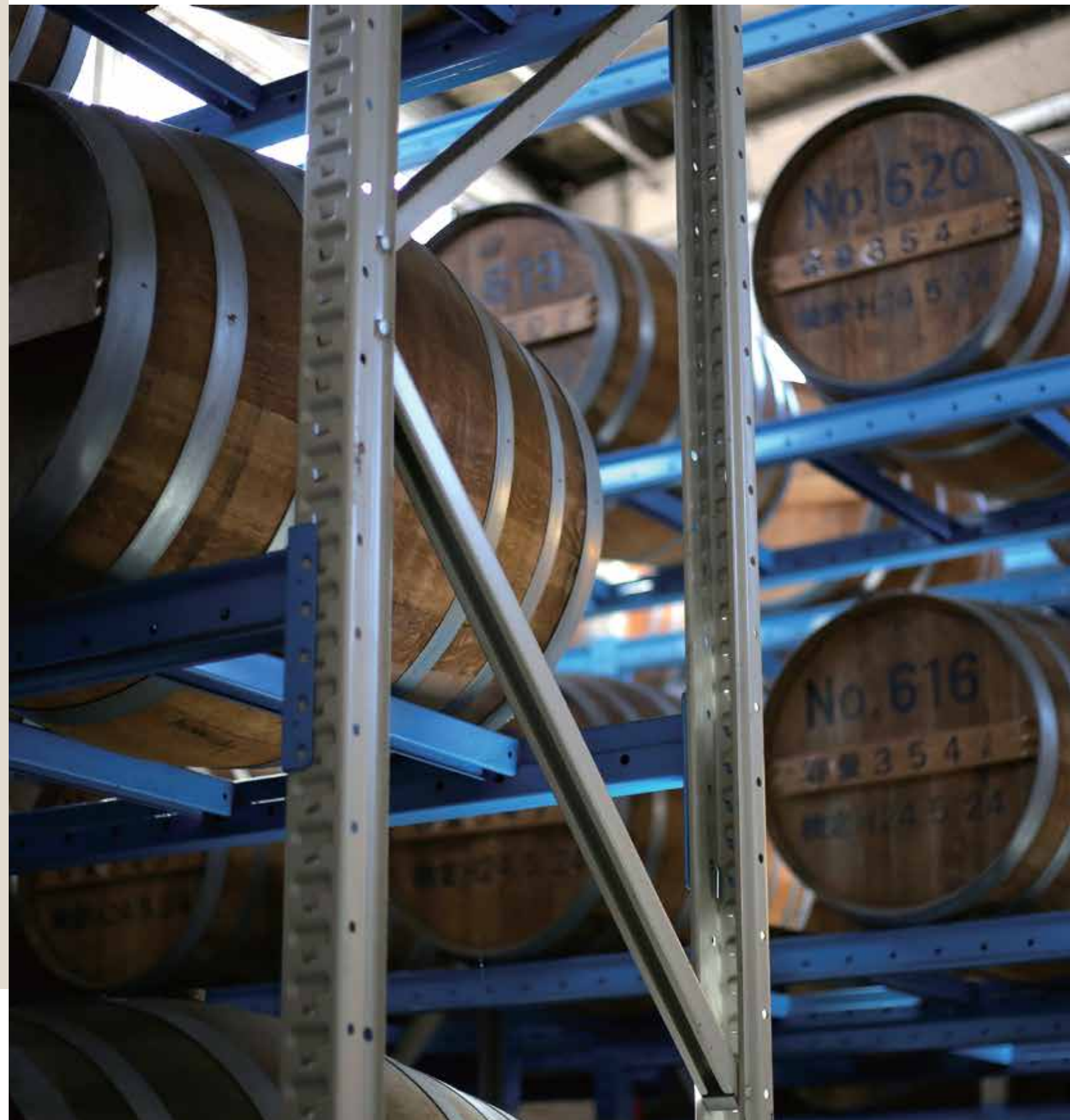
In 1995, Kuma Shochu was designated as a Geographical Indication by the National Tax Agency, establishing it as a world-class shochu brand and attracting attention from around the globe.

WHAT IS KUMA SHOCHU?

- Must be made with rice (including rice koji) grown in Japan
- Mash must be made with Hitoyoshi-Kuma water and shochu must be distilled in a pot still and bottled in Hitoyoshi-Kuma.

Takahashi Shuzo

高橋酒造



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.



Upper left: The name "Hakutake" (white peak), comes from the Shiragatake mountain range lining the Kumamoto and Kagoshima prefectural border. Removing "ga" (meaning "self") from "Shiragatake" signifies an effort to calm the peculiarities of flavor commonly found in the spirit, and thus make a rice shochu anyone can enjoy. **Upper right:** The factory houses a research lab where yeasts are selected and cultivated. **Left:** During secondary fermentation, rice is steamed for about one hour and then undergoes koji processing. **Right:** The numerous massive storage tanks lining the factory exterior are quite a sight.

■ TAKAHASHI SHUZO, TARAGI DISTILLERY (Taragi) ■

Driving the Kuma Shochu brand: A distillery continuing to innovate

■ HISTORY
Vacuum distillation disruption

Takahashi Shuzo is the distillery that made Kuma Shochu a household name not only in Japan, but throughout the world, leading the charge with its two major brands Hakutake and Hakutake Shiro. Upon its founding in 1900, however, it was small in scale and also produced miso and soy sauce.

Despite its over 100-year-long history of

making rice shochu, the turning point for the distillery didn't come until 1974, when it installed the revolutionary vacuum distillation stills. Takahashi Shuzo, through trial and error and with help from various local companies known to its president and factory head, was able to develop its own original vacuum distillation equipment. The flavor of shochu depends on the length of the neck on the still, so the distillers repeatedly experimented with this to

create a suitable spirit, using their top-selling brand at the time, the atmospheric-distilled Ichifusa-no-tsuyu, as a standard of comparison.

The appealing new taste born from the rapid shift to vacuum distillation led the distillery to soon dominate the shochu market. With this, the size of its factory also increased. Next came Hakutake Shiro, which further redefined how refreshing and easy-to-drink rice shochu could be.



Kuma River groundwater is used in the shochu production. Sacred offerings can be seen all around the distillery, particularly on water pumps and pipes. They signify the idea that even the best shochu distillers can't make delicious water.

■ ABOUT US
A dedication to fine rice and water

Amid rapid growth due to increased sales, in 1986, the distillery established the Hakutake Shuzo Research Institute in Hitoyoshi. An adjacent facility housed the bottling line of Takahashi Shuzo.

The distillery has consistently strived to protect the traditions of Kuma Shochu while continuing to innovate. In addition, its commitment to using rice, a symbol of Japanese culture, as a key ingredient has never wavered. Furthermore, Takahashi Shuzo is making great efforts to develop new distillation methods and brands, under the philosophy of using Japanese rice to make shochu, the only distilled spirit that is quintessentially Japanese.

One such project, which spent three years in the making, is Hakutake Kaoru. This spirit is made using a new strain of yeast, custom cultured as part of the product's development cycle, to provide it with a flowery, ginjo aroma. This all new flavor and peerless quality is thanks to a new approach to shochu-making that makes no compromises in ingredients, post-fermentation aging, and distillation management processes.

Takahashi Shuzo is looking into experimenting outside of the honkaku shochu space by developing other spirits and whiskeys. This distillery dedicated to fine water and rice continues to challenge itself.

Bubbles roil to the surface inside a secondary preparation tank, giving visual indicators of the chemical process underway. Using hand-made paddles, the brewers mix the mash of ingredients by hand for approximately two weeks.



A giant rotating koji production chamber, capable of holding three tons of koji. This facility controls the temperature and humidity inside, producing massive amounts of koji. This is just one example of how mechanization has evolved to maintain quality at pace with the increase in output.