

Sake Classifications

| Higher grade ↑ Lower grade | Rice Milling (Seimai-Buai) | After fermentation, distilled Alcohol is: | | Translation | Premium ↓ |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|--------------|
| | | Added | or Not added | | |
| | 50% or less | Dai-ginjo [Dye-Guin-Jaw] | Junmai Dai-ginjo [Jyun-My-Dye-Guin-Jaw] | "Dai-ginjo" is ultra-super premium | |
| | 60% or less | Ginjo [Guin-Jaw] | Junmai Ginjo [Jyun-My-Guin-Jaw] | "Ginjo" is super premium | |
| | | Tokubetsu Honjozo [Toe-Koo-Bet-Sue Hon-Jaw-Zaw] | Tokubetsu Junmai [Toe-Koo-Bet-Sue Jyun-My] | "Tokubetsu" means special. | |
| | 70% or less | Honjozo [Hon-Jaw-Zaw] | Junmai [Jyun-My] | Premium | |
| | > 70% | Futsu-shu (or Regular sake) | ----- | "Futsuu" means regular. | |

The classification is based on how much you polish rice and whether or not distilled alcohol is added. As you see from this table, the more the rice is polished, the higher the grade of sake.

If the rice polishing rate is 50% or lower, the sake is called Dai-ginjo.

If it is 60% or lower, then the sake is classified as Ginjo.

If it is 70% or lower, then it is called Honjozo.

Another thing you should know about the classification is whether distilled alcohol has been added to sake or not.

If no distilled alcohol is added, it is called Junmai, which means pure rice.

If you find Junmai as a prefix to grade of sake, it shows that no alcohol was added to the sake, like Junmai Daiginjo and Junmai Ginjo. Junmai Honjozo is called simply: Junmai.

These eight boxes (Daiginjo, Junmai Daiginjo, Ginjo, Junmai Ginjo, Tokubetsu Honjozo, Tokubetsu Junmai, Honjozo and Junmai) are legally classified as “Premium sake” in Japan.

Premium sake is required to indicate its rice polishing rate on the bottle. Every bottle shows the degree to which the rice has been polished.

Futuu-shu or regular sake is all of the other sake that is not classified as premium under the Japanese law.

It is not allowed for regular sake to be labeled as a premium sake grade such as Ginjo and Junmai. It is like our “vin ordinaire” or table wine.