



Japanese Sake – A Celestial Offering

Description

On December 5, 2024, UNESCO recognized Japan’s traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold as an **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**. This recognition brought a lot of happiness for the Sake lovers all over world and the celebration has been continuing ever since.

Towards this, as a budding Sake enthusiast, it was a great honour for me also to receive an invitation from **His Excellency Mr. Ono Keiichi, Ambassador of Japan to India** for a **Sake Soirée** at his home to celebrate this momentous achievement.

Welcome Address by the Ambassador



HE Me Ono Keiichi - Ambassador of Japan to India

The evening unfolded with an opening address by the Ambassador of Japan where he welcomed all the guests and shared his views about the Japanese Sake. He also mentioned about a special initiative by him - **to pair Japanese Sake with quintessential Indian Curry Dishes**, which was scheduled as part of the event. More about it later in this post.

Miss Sake Japan and India



Coming back to the event at Ambassadorâ??s residence, the evening was also graced by the presence of **Miss Sake Japan 2023** and **Miss Sake India 2024**. Attired elegantly in the traditional dresses of their home countries, they also wore their winning Miss Sake sashes. Both of them also participated in the conduct of the event.

A Celestial Offering

The talk by the Ambassador was followed by a presentation by **Miss Sake Japan 2023 Ms Kotoko Yamada**, who covered some interesting aspects about Sake including its origin and historical importance.



She brought out as to how the Sake is a Japanese alcoholic beverage traditionally made from fermented rice, with its origin going back to thousands of years. She mentioned about how **Sake was originally made to serve the Gods in Japan**. Mythologically, once such offering is accepted by the Gods, then it is followed by the consumption of Sake and food by the devotees.

The Tale of Genji

Let me a take a detour here, to go back in time, specifically to the 10th Century Japan, and talk about historic reference to prevalence of Sake in that era. **The Tale of Genji**, a **10th-century Japanese novel by Murasaki Shikibu**, is considered the world's first novel and a cornerstone of Japanese literature, exploring themes of love, loss, and the fleeting nature of life through the life of Prince Genji.



Prince Genji

The work is a unique depiction of the lifestyles of high courtiers during the Heian period. While not a central theme in the story, but still **Sake finds a mention in the story** in the context of court life and celebrations, reflecting the culture and customs of that period.

Although based on a fictional plot, still this novel clearly brings out the **prevalence of Sake in Japanese high society as early as the 10th Century**, which gives a huge historic and a cultural perspective to this **signature rice wine from Japan**.

Indian Food with Japanese Sake

Coming back to the event at the Japanese embassy, it was now time for tasting of Sake with Indian curry dishes, in accordance with the initiative suggested by the Ambassador himself.



I was honoured to share the round table with the Ambassador of Japan during the Sake tasting

Malabar Fish Curry with Otoro Sake

The first Indian dish to be served on the tasting table was the **Malabar Fish Curry**, which had a creamy curry made with coconut milk, curry leaves and spices from the Malabar region. This paired wonderfully with the extra dry and sharp **Otoro Sake**.





Otoro Sake with Malabar Fish Curry

Indian Curry Chicken with Junmai Goriki Sake

The next dish was the chicken curry made with a large amount of onions, with a balance of sweetness and spices. This paired beautifully with earthy umami rich **Junmai Goriki Sake**.





Junmai Goriki Sake with Indian Curry Chicken

The Lavish Sake Dinner

The successful Indian Food & Japanese Sake Pairing was followed by a lavish dinner spread out on a long table with Japanese food laid along one side of the table and Indian food on the other. A separate counter with a large stock of Sake bottles ensured a continued serving of the same. A lot of interaction and networking happened here over some scrumptious food and Sake and the evening ended on a happy note. Here are few snippets of the same.













Miss Sake India 2025

On the next day, we participated as audience in the pageant to select the Miss Sake India 2025, held at **The Japan Foundation** in Delhi itself. It turned out to be a keenly contested event where five finalist girls competed with each other for the coveted title. I would write a separate blog post on this event which also included a Sake tasting. As of now I leave you with some pictures from the event.







I do hope you liked reading this blog post as much as I loved writing it. Cheers, or rather as they say in Japanese: **Kanpai** !!