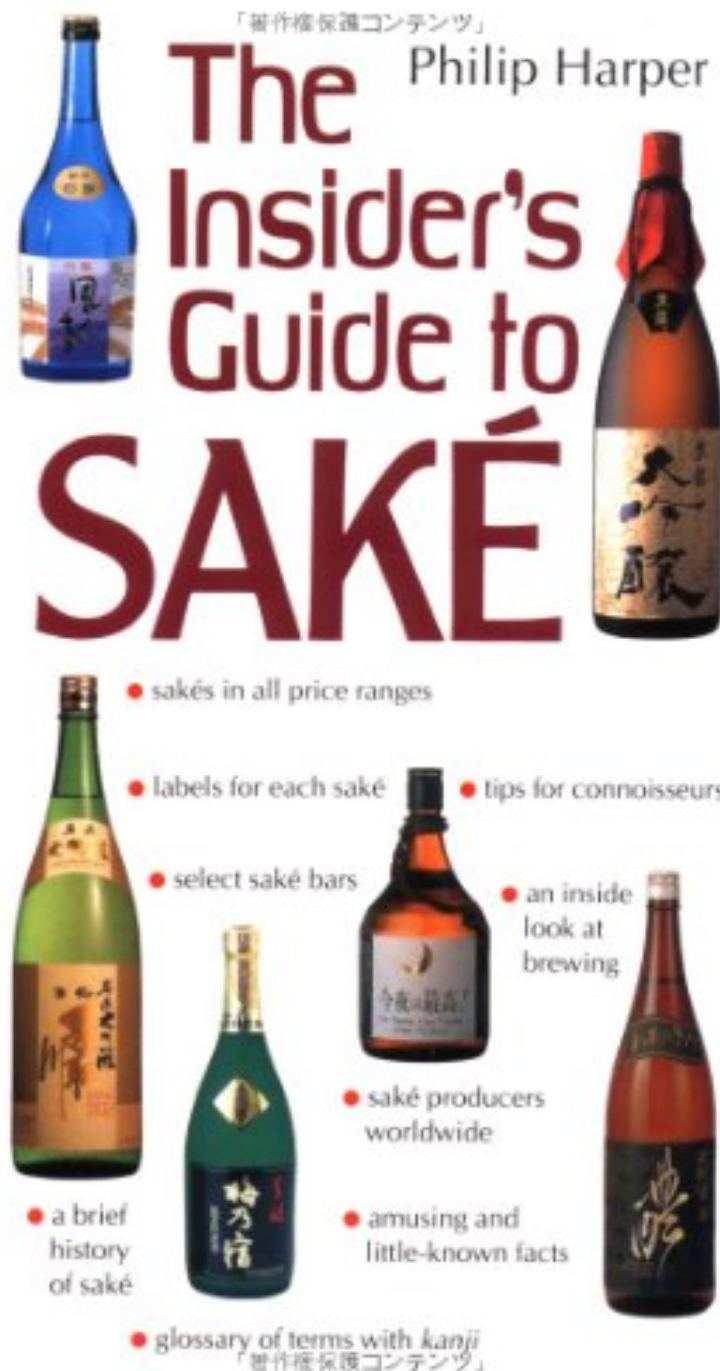


## The Insider's Guide to Sake

Philip Harper

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# The Insider's Guide to SAKÉ

Philip Harper

- sakés in all price ranges
- labels for each saké
- tips for connoisseurs
- select saké bars
- an inside look at brewing
- saké producers worldwide
- a brief history of saké
- amusing and little-known facts
- glossary of terms with *kanji*

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**Philip Harper : The Insider's Guide to Sake** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Insider's Guide to Sake*:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Everything You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask About Sake By A. Silverstone Not only is this a very readable book about Japanese sake, but it is written by an American who moved to Japan and entered the closed world of kura-bitō (sake brewers) and became one himself. Harper describes the history of sake, how it is made, where to buy it, and what to buy. And what is equally helpful is that it is in a vest-pocket-sized book that you can carry with you when traveling, going to a restaurant or shopping for sake. This book is for the sake connoisseur and novice alike. The process of making sake is more complex than wine (it requires 2 microorganisms, not just yeast). Moreover, through all the variations of rice processing, fermentation, types of clarification, aging, fortification, there is a large array of sake classification, whose terms are all in Japanese. Harper breaks through the fog and clearly lays out the differences among all these. He also describes the different flavor profiles that goes with each one. Other useful sections include a large listing of recommended sakes with their labels reproduced for easier recognition, lists of restaurants in the US and Japan, retailers in the US and Japan, major producers, and web links. All in under 250 pages. This is one of the most useful books on sake you can buy.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Dr V Gio Nguyen Best buy! 18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Please don't heat the sake! By Zack Davisson I am glad that Philip Harper wrote "The Insider's Guide to Sake." What you have here in this little book is everything a person needs to begin their exploration into the inscrutable world of Sake. Like many alcohols, Sake is a beverage of wildly variant qualities. Some is made to be cheap and get you drunk quick, some is made to savor and enjoy. Of course, approaching a Sake label with little Japanese ability makes it difficult to discern the difference. Even if the label is translated, the meaning is not readily clear. What makes a good Sake? What qualities should I be looking for? This book takes that exact frame of mind, leading the novice through all stages of Sake production from rice growing to brewing methods, both traditional and modern. Sake is quality-graded by the government, and by the end of this book a drinker will be able to choose with confidence between a Junmaishu, a Hinjozu or the ultra-sake Daiginjo. A few other benefits of this guide are a sake alphabet, with facts and useful tidbits of information spread throughout the book in alphabet format. The tasting guide offers a brief glance at a hundred or so of the available 1,000 plus Sakes. I found this to be a very useful starting place, allowing me to make an informed choice at the Sake store. (The book also shows you how to recognize a quality Sake seller. a very useful piece of information.) Depending on where you live, the sake restaurant guide is useful. All in all, this book picked my interest in sake and transformed my casual curiosity into a full-blown investigation. Don't go into a sake shop without it!

Anyone who has ever been to Japan has probably fallen under the spell of a soothing cup of sake at one time or another. An encounter with Japan's favorite libation is bound to be memorable, yet despite its growing popularity worldwide, information on this eminently drinkable beverage remains scarce. Written by a British expatriate who has spent more than seven years brewing sake in the exacting traditional method, *The Insider's Guide to Sake* is the consummate introductory handbook. It unravels the history and intricacies of this exotic drink, and provides an extensive list of restaurants and retail outlets in Japan, the United States, and Europe where the beverage in all its variety can be found. In *The Guide* you will discover over 100 sakes for all tastes and pocketbooks, tips for beginners and connoisseurs alike, and a knowledgeable explanation of the brew-master's skills. Labels and specs for each selected sake are displayed in a concise, easy-to-follow format. Whether you are a gourmet, a wine lover, or just enjoy the occasional thirst-quencher, *The Insider's Guide to Sake* offers a fascinating, broad-ranging introduction to this compelling refreshment in a refreshingly compelling manner. Features\* firsthand, authoritative information \* slim, portable size (to use at restaurants or retailers) \* slips easily into bag, pack, or briefcase \* handy "cheat sheet" helps you select the best sake \* all types of sake discussed \* labels deciphered \* sake-tasting tips \* regional sake map \* sake sites on the Web

"A lively, clear guide to a subject just waiting to be discovered by the inscrutable West." -- New York Times From the Publisher AN ONLINE INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR Q. Could you tell us a little about your background? "I grew up in Cornwall, in the far southwest of Great Britain. Celtic blood may partly explain my passion for fine inebriants. I prepared for a career in sake brewing by studying German and English literature at university, before coming to Japan (with the initial intention of teaching English) in 1988." Q. What motivated you to write this book? "When I first started drinking sake about a dozen years ago, my Japanese was next to nonexistent. The early period of my sake-drinking career was exhilarating, but not without frustrations. These were mainly to do with the difficulty of terminology. Beautiful as sake labels are, they are often very difficult to read. Even the simple task of ordering a drink in a restaurant is tricky when everything is written in Japan's notoriously complicated script. English information would have been a blessing, but there was very little about. So, in a sense, the book was written for the me of twelve

years ago." Q. Could you tell us a little about the contents of the book? "As well as tasting notes of over 100 specific brands of sake, the book contains an overview of sake's long history, and a description of the remarkable process by which it is made. At the rear, there are reviews and listings of retailers, restaurants, and izakaya in Japan and abroad. A thorough index and glossary are useful features, as is the compact list of vital terms and measures, tucked into the endpapers." Q. What do you see as the centerpiece of the book? Why is the book important? "The meat of the book is the Sake Sampler, a survey of more than 100 sake brands, with tasting notes, and information on the policy and history of individual breweries. Photographs of each label enable nonreaders of Japanese to find the sakes easily, and the book is compactly formatted, so it can be easily carried on drinking or shopping exhibitions. How important is it? As a lover of sake (rather than as the author) I'd say, as a practical guide, it is second to none. Q. What did you yourself learn from writing the book? "I was reminded constantly of the huge range of styles of sake." Q. What would you like readers to take away with them after reading this> book? "If readers come away infected with the delight in sake that has helped me keep my nose to the grindstone in a traditional brewery for the last decade, I would be delighted." Q. What people or books were influential in the writing of your book? "My uncomplaining wife did enormous amounts of unpaid work. The books of Japanese sake critic and writer, Matsuzaki Haruo, were an inspiration and a tremendous resource. If he wrote in English, I don't think I'd have the nerve to bother. The understated prose of Charles MacClean, and his apt evocations of the delights of Scotch whisky have also been a model for me." Q. What are your plans for the future, in terms of new books or other projects? "New sake books in the pipeline, in English and Japanese. For English, watch this space!" Q. Is there anything else the reader should know? "Everyone should be acquainted with fine sake." About the Author PHILIP HARPER came to Japan in 1988 as a participant in a Ministry of Education program that placed native English speakers in public schools. In the course of three years' teaching, he contracted sake fever after encountering premium ginjo sake for the first time. Fascinated by the complexity of flavors of the beverage, and by the traditions of the sake world, he started working nights in a specialist sake bar. In 1991, he joined the brewing staff of Ume no Yado, a small, traditional brewery in Nara Prefecture. Since then, he has spent every winter working from before dawn until after dusk (and during peak periods long into the night) in the centuries-old pattern of brewery life, apparently the only non-Japanese member of this insular industry. In the off season, Harper resumes his sampling of the offerings of Japan's seventeen hundred breweries, and periodically writes or lectures on sake. His articles have appeared in the Mainichi Daily News, Kansai Time Out, and the Japanese tea-ceremony magazine Tanko, among other publications.