

Traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making

- Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan -



Some photos provided by Shirakawa Village.

Sake made by this knowledge and skills plays essential roles in Japanese social practices, rituals, ceremonies and many other events in daily life.

In order to bear and transmit to the future generation, Preservation Society of Japanese *Koji*-based *Sake* Making Craftmanship and other communities hold seminars, symposiums, promotion activities, and so on.

In Mar. 2022, Japanese government nominated it to be inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO. It will be examined in Dec. 2024.

Through the inscription of this element, dialogue and exchanges are expected to increase within Japan and abroad.

Traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making is Japanese representative culture established with delicate sensibility and refined skill in a long history.

Reminding this culture once again and utmost support for the achievement of inscription on the Representative List of UNESCO would be much appreciated.



Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan



Bun-chan, official mascot of Agency for Cultural Affairs for PR magazine

About traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making



Sake, Japanese alcoholic beverage made from grains and quality waters, is deeply rooted in Japanese culture.

Traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making, having the essential feature “using *Koji*”, was basically established over 500 years ago and has been developed depending on the climates and environment of respective region in Japan and passed down to the production of *sake* such as *Nihon-shu*(brewed liquor), *shochu*, *awamori* (distilled liquor), *mirin* (Liqueur for cooking), etc.

In Dec. 2021, Japan government registered it as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (Property) for preservation and utilization.

* *Koji* is cultured *koji* mold on steamed grains, which has enzymes to convert the starch of the raw material into sugar.



Three key elements of traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making

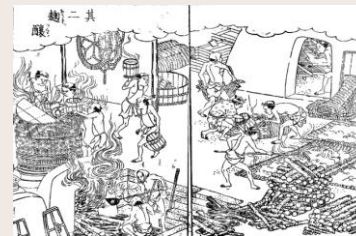


1, Processing raw materials



Washing and steaming raw materials suitable for *sake*-making.

2, Making *Koji*



Determining growth of *koji* mold and controlling *koji* conditions by hand. This process is very important because *Koji* greatly affects the quality and type of *sake*.

3, Controlling fermentation in the mash



Determining condition of mash and controlling multiple parallel fermentation* by hand in order to achieve desirable quality of *sake* without additives.
* The unique process wherein saccharification (converting starch into sugar) and alcoholic fermentation (converting sugar into alcohol) occurring simultaneously in the mash. Due to this process, *sake* achieves higher alcohol contents (approximately 20%) than that of wine and beer.



For detail information about traditional knowledge and skills of *sake*-making, please check out this movie (3min.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y31Snml7OmE>

