

## TO HEAT OR NOT TO HEAT

Temperature matters when it comes to saké appreciation.

If you've only tried saké piping hot and hated it, you've probably never had good saké before. If you're a saké connoisseur who insists on only drinking saké cold, you're probably missing out too.

Confused? The reality is that most quality saké can be enjoyed at a variety of temperatures, but shines most with gentle chilling and heating.

In the United States, the ubiquitous hot "house" saké poured from tank-style warmers in restaurants is often subjected to days of harsh simmering. Though many insist that heat masks flaws in cheaply made saké, serving any kind of saké too hot (or even worse, cooked) can dull aromatics and make saké feel heavy and flat.

Modern, ultra premium saké (*daiginjo* style saké, for example) made with painstakingly milled rice and finely tuned yeasts is generally consumed chilled because its subtle textures and fruity aromas are too delicate for heating.

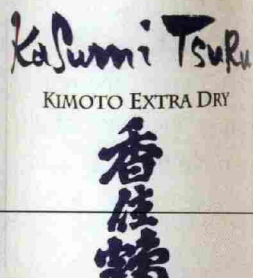
But historically in Japan, most saké was indeed served warm. Particularly for more rustic saké made from less delicately milled rice (non-*daiginjo* styles labeled simply *ginjo*, *junmai* or *honjozo*) with a richer mouth feel and higher acidity, gentle application of heat using a water bath can bring forth an array of aromas and flavors, and dramatically alter texture.

To experiment, I tasted the Kasumi Tsuru Ltd., Kimoto Extra Dry (Hyogo); \$26/720 ml. Imported by Joto Sake LLC. ([joto-sake.com](http://joto-sake.com)) served three ways: chilled to 55°F, at room temperature (roughly 68°F), and gently warmed to 107°F.

It's a *honjozo* saké (made with a small amount of added alcohol) brewed *kimoto* style, thus, an earthier, gamier saké often influenced by wild yeast and bacteria. Chilled, it was aromatically subdued, but refreshing, with a slight salinity. At room temperature, it became increasingly fragrant of underripe honeydew with a smoother, savory palate. Gently warmed, it wafted of freshly steamed rice and dried mushrooms. Heat made the texture feel rich and round, with a velvety heft that lingered on the tongue.

Deliciously rewarding at each temperature, it's an experiment easily replicated at your local Japanese restaurant, or at home.

—ANNA LEE IJIMA



For more  
on saké, visit  
[winemag.com/  
sakebootcamp](http://winemag.com/sakebootcamp)

