

**SAKE BREWING INTERNSHIP AT DAIMON SAKE BREWERY,  
MAKER OF MUKUNE & TOZAI-SAKE, IN OSAKA, JAPAN  
"THE BEST WAY TO LEARN SAKE IS TO MAKE SAKE"**

Presented by **Yasutaka Daimon**

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■ **Introduction: Message from Yasutaka Daimon**

It was 11 years ago, in 1997, when a group of premium sake brewers from a number of regions founded an association to start promoting sake abroad. The association was named the Sake Export Association. Its objective was to introduce sake – not only its flavor but also its long history and rich culture – to the world. Member breweries were all with generations of distinguished history, and prided themselves as the makers of premium sake. In each brewery, the skills in sake-making have been developed, maintained, polished and handed over many generations, and considered family pride – often for more than hundred or two hundred years.

Fortunately, I was involved in the association as one of the founding members. Back then, however, to make premium sake accessible in the U.S. and the rest of the world seemed like a grand dream – ambitious and out of reach. Although I was hoping to achieve the dream, I was not sure when and how we can get there. The other thing is that I was not interested in just selling more bottles abroad. What I wanted was much more complex than that: I wanted the world to understand the rich tradition of sake, and to develop a much deeper appreciation.

Today, our dream no longer seems too ambitious or unrealistic. The world is embracing and appreciating sake in a way that was simply unimaginable as recent as ten years ago. In the U.S., for example, consumers used to have a pre-conceived notion that sake had to be served hot. This misperception existed in the U.S. for quite some time. As we know, today, the Americans and the Europeans are enjoying premium sake served cold. They are becoming increasingly knowledgeable, sophisticated and enthusiastic about sake; and some even enjoy debating the difference among various types or brands of sake. This is exactly what we were dreaming of. In a way, the dramatic growth we saw in ten years even exceeded our own expectation.

Such a quick and extraordinary development wouldn't have been possible without the tremendous support we got from those who understood and shared our aspiration, such as sake importers and distributors in the US, vendors, liquor shop owners, professionals in culinary industry, Japanese Embassies and Consulates, various organizations and individuals who helped both our marketing and

educational outreach efforts through events like seminars and sake-tastings. Without their guidance, support and encouragement, we wouldn't be even remotely close to where we stand today.

Thanks to the efforts over a decade or so, we now have a great number of sake lovers and liquor-related professionals outside Japan who study the art of sake with passion. The level of their interest is remarkable, their learning curve is extremely steep, and the number of such students of sake is growing fast. It's been some time since we started receiving inquiries from some of them, asking whether there is any way for them to learn and experience the process of sake-making so that they can understand it better. As you can imagine, for a sake brewer, nothing gives more pleasure than this, and I have been wondering how I can best respond to such inquiries. It is why I came up with the idea of a hands-on, practical internship program at Daimon Sake Brewery in Osaka.

What I would like to achieve through this program is to prompt more serious interest in sake, to facilitate understanding of the rich and complex world of sake, and to provide a unique and useful opportunity for the participants to experience the sake production in an intimate way. I am hoping that this tiny yet exciting project would serve as a stepping stone for us for the next ten years, from where we can jump to reach even more ambitious goals.

This program excites me personally, and means a lot to me. I was born in 1948, as the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of Daimon Sake Brewery, which was founded in 1826. In the late 1960s, I was a backpacker for a few years, walking around in Europe, North Africa and Asia, where I met and learned from a great number of fascinating people. This experience truly opened my eyes to the world, and ultimately made me decide to take over the family business. In addition, this experience as a backpacker, and my command of English helped me a great deal in the sake outreach effort in the U.S. and Europe. I enjoy communicating and working with those from different corners of the world. I will be most delighted to lead this training program as a chief navigator to the sake world, and to assist the participants learn about sake, and about Japanese culture, which could be rather challenging without good support. I personally consider this as my privilege and my mission.

We look forward to receiving many enthusiastic applicants.

#### ■ **Background of Premier Sake Breweries in Japan**

Traditionally the central figure in sake-making has been Toji (master brewer). These highly skilled brewers are often migrant workers, who work at certain sake breweries in winter and go back their hometowns as the production season is over. However, because of the changing lifestyle in the contemporary Japan, the situation has changed, and it has become increasingly difficult for breweries to attract and secure human resources, particularly young people. Since about twenty years ago, some

have been arguing that the production system led by Toji will be gone sometime soon.

In order to respond to such a change, recently, many breweries redesigned their production style to a new one. Under the new system, the owners, their sons and daughters, and non-migrant employees of the breweries get involved in the production much more directly, and sometimes become Toji themselves. Today, about a third of breweries in Japan shifted to a non-traditional sake production system, which is less dependent of Toji. Daimon Sake Brewery is one of them, and restructured its production style in 2007. It is when I took over the role of Toji, in addition to my existing role as the owner.

Traditionally, years of experiences and inspiration of each Toji was considered the most critical and valuable element which determined the quality of sake. Today we are trying to make equally high-quality sake by applying scientific approach, advanced technology, sophisticated production facility, and contemporary management technique, which allow us to achieve high quality, stable production, and to replicate the flavor that was maintained by Toji over generations.

#### ■ Objectives and Contents of the Internship Program

It is a week-long training program, and we will accept three (3) participants per one session. You will experience On the Job Training, by working side by side with the employees of Daimon Sake Brewery during the course.

Shikomi of sake traditionally completes in four consecutive days. Basically, this is the way it works:

Wednesday: 1<sup>st</sup> stage: Soe-Shikomi

Thursday: Odori : No Shikomi, to let Moromi to grow.

Friday: 2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Naka-Shikomi

Saturday: 3<sup>rd</sup> stage: Tom-Shikomi. Completion of Shikomi.

You will participate in this process as one of the team members. In addition, during the stay, you will be involved in as many sake-making activities as possible, such as Koji-making, Moto-Shikomi or Moromi Pressing. Please see the attached for more details.

#### ■ What We Ask For the Participants

This program is designed for those with substantial knowledge about sake, its production process, and basic terminology. Therefore, the program is focused on the practical training on the site. In other

words, the time we spend on theory will be very limited.

Fluency in Japanese is not a pre-requisite. However, in order for you to have smooth communication with the employees of Daimon Sake Brewery, we do encourage you to come with basic knowledge of daily conversation and terms in Japanese.

We will do our best to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but the facility we provide for this program is rather simple and modest. We will provide meals and private rooms with AC, but the rooms are small, and with shared bathrooms.

Although this is basically designed as a week-long program, an extension is an option. If you would like a longer, more in-depth training, we can certainly discuss and explore other possibilities, including a long-term training and/or formal employment. This will depend on your qualification, skills, potential and goals. In addition, we would be happy to provide an introduction to fellow sake breweries, via our close network across Japan. We hope you to make the most of this unique opportunity, for your personal and professional growth, and hope that you would take the experience at our brewery with you to wherever you go.

This program is of course open to anyone who is interested, and we will welcome both men and women. Lastly, the most important thing that I would like to ask you is to take part in this program with respect to the way we conduct our daily life and work at the brewery. The way we live and work in the brewery is a critical part of the sake-making process. I believe you can learn a lot by being in the brewery, waking up and spending time with our employees – probably as much as you can learn from the training itself if not more.

■ **Schedule for the 2008-2009 Season**

For this season, the basic schedule is as follows:

1. February Session #0902: Starting on February 9, 2009
2. March Session #0903: Starting on March 9, 2009
3. April Session #0904: Starting on April 6, 2009

■ **Sample Travel Schedule from the U.S.**

For the participants coming from the U.S., the basic itinerary will be as follows:

Day 1: Sunday: Depart from the U.S.

Day 2: Monday: Arrive in Kansai Airport in Osaka, and to Daimon Sake Brewery

Day 3: Tuesday: Orientation

Day 4: Wednesday: See the attached  
Day 5: Thursday: See the attached  
Day 6: Friday: See the attached  
Day 7: Saturday: See the attached and farewell party at Mukune-tei.  
Day 8: Sunday: Closing meeting, and free time.

Depart from Kansai Airport, and arrive in the U.S.

Please see the attached for more details of the training program.

■ **Additional Activities**

We would like to secure some time so that we can take you to well-known Izakaya, sake bars and Japanese restaurants. Also, if interested, you can take this opportunity to visit Kyoto and Nara - both are not far from where we are located. Please understand that each participant is expected to cover these additional expenses.

■ **Cost**

Each participant is asked to cover his/her roundtrip travel expenses from where s/he lives to Daimon Sake Brewery. The training program, accommodation and meals are provided for free.

I hope many people find this program exciting, and look forward to receiving many applications. All of us at Daimon Sake Brewery are most grateful for your interest and time. We look forward to seeing you in MUKUNE Village, Osaka.

■ **Advisors and Supporters of the Program**

I would like to thank following friends for their warm support. Without their guidance and advice, I would never have been able to launch this project.

Beau Timken	Owner, True Sake, San Francisco	<a href="http://www.truesake.com">www.truesake.com</a>
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