

Hokkaido – Japan's new wine mecca

by Masahisa Abe

Wine production in Hokkaido began in the 1960s. Because of the snow and severe cold in Hokkaido, a species of wild grape known as Crimson Glory (*vitis coignetiae*) was first used, but now thanks to the cultivation of European grape varieties such as Kerner and Müller Thurgau from Germany, Hokkaido has quickly developed into the No.1 wine-producing region in Japan.

For the first 10 years after the turn of the 21st century, thanks to the staging of the Japan Wine Competition (JWC), the revisions in labeling and environmental changes surrounding wine production in Japan, added to the activities of young producers and cultivators aiming for world-class wine production at each winery, the quality of and attention paid to Japanese wine has sky rocketed.

The wine-producing region of Japan has shifted to Hokkaido, where conditions are suitable for the cultivation of authentic European wine grapes, prompting more and more wineries to open up in the region.

The most talked-about wine-producing region

As interest in food safety increases, the Japan Wine Competition has brought Hokkaido wine to the forefront of the public's awareness, and now the wine is not only coveted by Japanese wine enthusiasts but also plays an important role in linking Hokkaido's tourism and food industries. "Wine tourism" involving tours of wineries and vineyards is beginning to develop, and expectations are high for the role of Hokkaido wine in the future.

Compatibility of Hokkaido wine and cuisine

Surrounded on all sides by the ocean, Hokkaido is naturally a treasure-trove of seafood, but is also home to an abundant variety of other foodstuffs such as vegetables, meat and cheese. It has recently become known that cuisine made with ingredients produced in Hokkaido is best complimented by Hokkaido wine. The number of restaurants serving Hokkaido wine is slowly increasing, so next time you dine out, why not ask what brands they have?

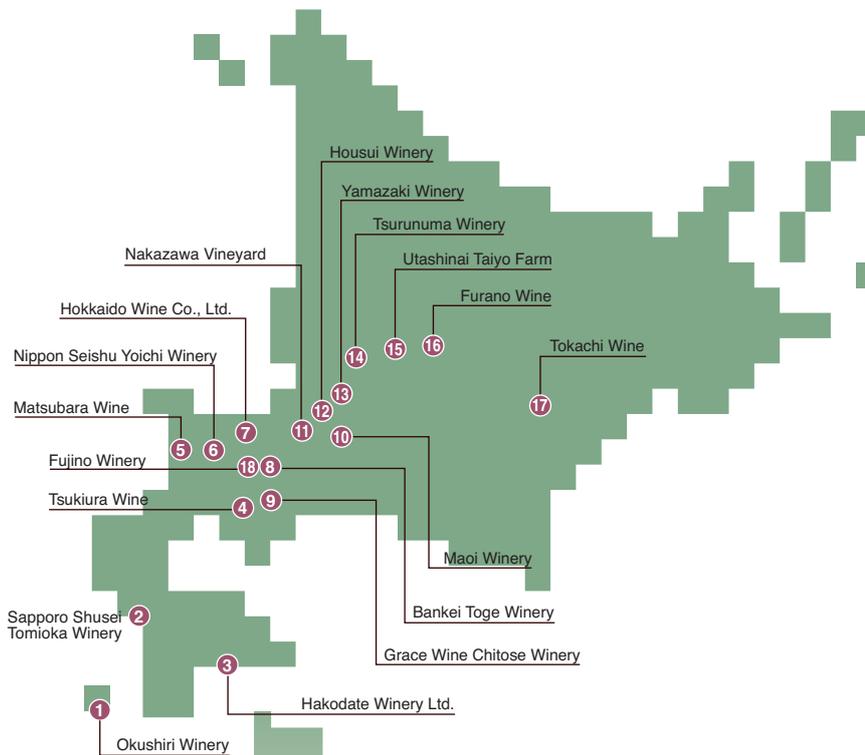
Where to buy



Marui Imai Department Store Odori-kan B2F
Minami 1-jo Nishi 2-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo
Tel: +81-11-205-1151
http://www.marui-imai.jp/sapporo/s_top/index.html/



Hokkaido Dosanko Plaza Sapporo Branch
JR Sapporo Sta. 1F West Exit Tel: +81-11-213-5053
http://www.dousanhin.com/shop/sapporo_jr/



北海道的葡萄酒

在講究食品安全、安心的風氣日漸盛行之下，歷經葡萄酒評鑑會的磨練使得品質愈來愈好的北海道產葡萄酒，不僅在葡萄酒愛好者間，也在結合飲食與北海道觀光的過程中，佔有非常重要的地位。此外遊覽酒莊及葡萄田的「葡萄酒莊之旅」也深受歡迎。

北海道的葡萄酒

在重視食品的安全、安心趨勢不斷高漲的今天，通過了各種競賽大會考驗的優質的北海道葡萄酒，不僅被葡萄酒愛好者所喜愛，而且成為北海道旅遊及美食的一個重要的組成部分。此外，巡遊葡萄酒釀酒廠及葡萄田的「葡萄酒觀光旅遊」也非常的受歡迎。



1 Okushiri Winery

Cultivation of Crimson Glory vine for wine producing purposes on the island of Okushiri began in 1999. Subsequently, the cultivation of other wine grapes also began and eventually in 2009 Okushiri Wine was born. A clear wine with a unique maritime aura.

2 Sapporo Shusei Tomioka Winery

A winery with a history dating back to 1976. Authentic wine production techniques using Crimson Glory vine and European wine grapes produce a refreshingly acidic taste. The Hardamme, a wine made from cultivated nonnative Crimson Glory has a mysterious hue, distinctive bouquet and rich acidic taste.

3 Hakodate Winery Ltd.

Hakodate Winery produces a sharp white wine with a rich fruity bouquet and a red wine with a glamorous red-fruit aroma, both of which take advantage of the characteristics of grapes that grow in cooler climates.

4 Tsukiura Wine

Wine made exclusively from specially selected grapes cultivated in the company's own vineyards around the town of Toyako, the venue for the 2008 Hokkaido Toyako G8 Summit. A unique wine from a small winery that makes the most of the region's features.

5 Matsubara Wine

Matsubara wine, a reasonably priced table wine, is produced using methods that take advantage of the region's characteristics. Labor-intensive small-scale cultivation means that only limited amounts are produced. With a focus on a personal relationship with customers, built on trust, the aim is to create a table wine to be enjoyed regularly in the home.

6 Nippon Seishu Yoichi Winery

A newly opened winery that produces Yoichi Wine. The restaurant serves Italian cuisine made with Hokkaido ingredients such as Yoichi vegetables, along with a selection of 13 wines.

7 Hokkaido Wine Co., Ltd.

Hokkaido Wine Co., Ltd., which was established in Otaru in 1974, bases its production on the concept that "wine making is agriculture." With over 300 vineyards in 24 communities throughout Hokkaido, the company aims to produce high-quality wine at reasonable prices. Major brands include the Otaru series, Hokkaido series and Tsurunuma series. The Otaru Hatsushibori, made with grapes freshly harvested that year, is a popular "nouveau" wine with a flavor unique to that season.

8 Bankei Toge Winery

A small-scale winery close to urban Sapporo that maximizes the blessings of nature in its additive-free wine. Why not pop in to the winery, which overlooks its own vineyards?

9 Grace Wine Chitose Winery

The Chitose Winery was established in 1988 as the Grace Wine Company's (Yamanashi prefecture) second winery. Its first product, Kerner 1996 was followed by the sale of Pinot Noir in 2004.

10 Maoi Winery

A winery cultivating grapes and producing wine on the Maoi Hillside in the town of Naganuma. Production with particular focus on the use of Crimson Glory and Mountain Sauvignon.

11 Nakazawa Vineyard

Located in the hills approximately 30 km east of Sapporo, the vineyard cultivates varieties such as Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Kerner and Pinot Noir, but as yet only produced one variety of commissioned white wine from a blend of the harvested grapes.

12 Housui Winery

Handcrafted "snow country" wine from the snowy region, made with limited edition production techniques that helped raise the status of Hokkaido's wine. High-quality wine made only from grapes grown in the winery's own vineyards.

13 Yamazaki Winery

A winery established from the dream of independence of four generations of farmers. With an emphasis on creating a new form of farming culture for the region, the winery aims to produce high-quality wine in small quantities.

14 Tsurunuma Winery

Established in 1972 as a vineyard for the test cultivation of grapes imported from Germany, under the direct control of Hokkaido Wine Co., Ltd., the vineyard now covers an area of 447 hectares and is the most expansive in Japan. Highly efficient cultivation methods produce 8 varieties of grapes from which the highest quality harvests are selected for the limited edition Tsurunuma wine that is commercially available two years later.

15 Utashinai Taiyo Farm

This area was once an opencast coalmining region, and the mineral-rich slopes with their excellent drainage and similar climate to the Champagne and Alsace regions of France, are ideal for grape cultivation.

16 Furano Wine

A winery run by the local government of Furano, where the inland climate produces substantial differences between daytime and nighttime temperatures and long hours of sunlight, resulting in richly colored, sweet tasting grapes. Furano Wine is an acidic full-bodied wine available only in Hokkaido.

17 Tokachi Wine

Famous for being Japan's first local government-run winery, the history of Tokachi Wine began with the Crimson Glory vine. The dry table wine is characteristic of the north country Tokachi Wine, with its authentic, mature taste with an emphasis on quality.

18 Fujino Winery

Wine produced in the city of Sapporo. Trial-and-error experimental cultivation of species suitable for the soil and climate continued for over ten years since the spring of 2000, resulting in the development of vineyards cultivating a variety of grapes.

