

Heaven's saké! Rice wine brewed in Britain

Valentine Low

When Yoshihide Hashimoto opens Britain's first saké brewery next year, there will be one crucial difference between how the rice wine is made here and how it is made in Japan.

It won't be the rice, which will be specially imported from Japan. It won't be the brewing process either, which is strictly traditional.

Instead, the big difference will be when the brewing can be done. In Japan they usually brew in the winter only, but British summers are so damp and cold that Mr Hashimoto will happily brew all year round.

Thank goodness, it seems, for the British weather.

His company, Dojima, which has been making saké for 300 years, is investing £9 million after buying Fordham Abbey Estate in Cambridgeshire.

There it will be building not only a brewery, but also a visitor centre and bar to educate an ignorant British public in the intricacies of saké making. That will include overturning misconceptions such as the idea that saké is a strong drink best served warm.

The brewery will, however, not be entirely traditional: the family is considering making sparkling saké, which is becoming increasingly popular with the young in Japan.

The Hashimoto family, which paid more than £3 million for the Fordham estate in March last year, said they chose it because it was close to where the two youngest of their six children had been attending school. Their daughter has just done her A Levels at King's Ely, and their son has finished his GCSEs at the King's School, Canterbury. Mr Hashimoto divides his time between Japan and a flat in London.

Noriko Tomioka, the project manager, said that building work would start this month, and the first saké would go on sale some time next year. The estate will have the capacity to produce up to 60,000 bottles a year.

She said: "Saké in Japan is normally made in the winter months. They don't like it hot. But Mr Hashimoto has experienced a couple of summers here, and he thought it would be OK to produce saké in the summer."

She said



Fordham Abbey in Cambridgeshire will import rice grown by Japan's first lady, Akie Abe, who visited the estate with the Japanese celebrity chef Daisuke Nishio

Fruity, honeyed or cloudy...

Ginjo

Made with rice grains from which more than 40 per cent of the outer layer has been removed. Has a fruity fragrance

Junmai Daiginjo

Regarded as the highest grade saké

Koshu
Matured for a long time, it can acquire a honeyed flavour

Namazake
Unpasteurised saké. Requires refrigeration and has a shorter shelf life than regular saké

Genshu
No water is added after

pressing. Other sakés are diluted to lower the alcohol content from 18-20 per cent down to 14-16 per cent

Nigorizake
Cloudy saké. It is passed through a loose mesh to separate it from the mash, but is not filtered. Before serving, the bottle is shaken to mix in the rice sediment and turn the saké cloudy

How to make it

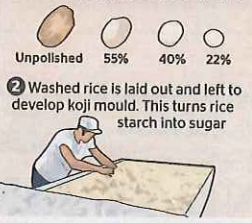
1 Saké rice is polished and washed; the level of polish determines certain aspects of the saké. It is then soaked in water and steamed to soften rice

2 Washed rice is laid out and left to develop koji mould. This turns rice starch into sugar

3 A shubo yeast is made and mixed with koji rice, steamed rice and water, creating moromi. Yeast converts koji-made sugars into alcohol

4 Once fermented, the moromi mixture is pressed, separating the saké lees (sediments) from the saké liquid

5 Saké is then filtered and pasteurized, before being left to mature. It is diluted to lower strength and pasteurized again then bottled



The rice will be imported from Japan, grown on a farm owned by the wife of Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister. However, the company plans to use local water, obtained from a bore hole that will be dug on the premises.

The first saké breweries outside Japan were set up in Hawaii and Brazil to serve Japanese immigrants there. Since then others have opened in North America, Norway and Spain.

A Scottish company, Arran Brewery, had hoped

to become the first in the UK to begin producing saké. Gerald Michaluk, the managing director, said recently: "I was in a bar on the Isle of Arran and I noticed Japanese whisky on the shelf, and I wondered... if we made a saké, would the bars in Japan stock it?"

However, the company's plans were set back after the proposed site in Dregghorn, north Ayrshire, was repeatedly vandalised.



they hoped to overturn a number of misconceptions about saké. "Everybody says that it is very strong, because it looks like vodka. But it is not. They also think it should be drunk warm. But quality saké is much better cold."

The company plans to produce two or three types, including unpasteurised. "The shelf life is very short. I don't think anybody in this country would have tasted it. They are also thinking of doing sparkling saké for the younger market. It is new, and quite popular in Japan with the younger generations."

Late meals triple blood pressure risk

Chris Smyth Health Editor, in Rome

People have been warned not to eat late at night after a study found that it tripled the risk of high blood pressure.

Dinner should be eaten no later than two hours before bedtime, advise scientists, who insist that when we eat could be as important as what we eat.

Previous research has emphasised the importance of a good breakfast in staying healthy, and the latest findings underline that eating is best done early in the day.

Almost 10 million people in Britain have high blood pressure, which increases their risk of conditions such as heart attacks and strokes. Blood pressure usually drops at night, but in many patients this does not happen and these people are particularly prone to further heart problems.

"If blood pressure doesn't drop by

more than 10 per cent at night this increases cardiovascular risk and these patients have more [heart attacks and strokes] and more chronic disease," said Ebru Özpeltit of Dokuz Eylül University, in Turkey, who led the research.

In the first study of its kind, her team found that "non-dipping" high blood pressure was much more likely in people who regularly eat within two hours of going to bed.

They studied 721 patients with high blood pressure, half of whom had the non-dipping kind. After adjusting for age, weight and other risks, they found that people who reported eating late at night were 2.8 times as likely to suffer from the condition, they told the European Society of Cardiology's congress in Rome.

Dr Özpeltit said that late-night eaters were not bingeing on junk food but simply delaying dinner or snacking on nuts

and fruit. Although the study could not prove a link, she said that animal studies have suggested that eating at night interferes with the body clock and stimulates the production of hormones such as adrenaline that affect blood pressure. She emphasised that dinner should be eaten no later than 7pm.

"If we eat late at night, the body essentially remains on high alert as during the day, rather than relaxing for sleep, and stress hormones are secreted causing blood pressure not to decrease during sleep," she said.

She said that mealtimes were a key factor. "We must define the ideal frequency and timing of meals because how we eat may be as important as what we eat," she said.

"It is not as important as obesity and it is not as important as diabetes, but we found it was more important than salt consumption in our analysis."

Musicians back appeal over Blurred Lines plagiarism

Ben Hoyle Los Angeles

Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke have recruited more than 200 musicians to back their attempt to overturn a plagiarism verdict against their hit *Blurred Lines*, the biggest song of 2013.

In March last year a jury in Los Angeles ruled that Williams, Thicke and the rapper T.I. (aka Clifford Harris Jr) had copied Marvin Gaye's classic 1977 party record *Got To Give It Up*, a decision that sent tremors through the music world. The performers were ordered to pay \$5.3 million to Gaye's family.

The three men are now challenging that verdict before the US ninth circuit court of appeals, arguing that the ruling

followed a "cascade of legal errors". They argue that the trial should have focused on sheet music — the only thing protected by the US Copyright Act of 1909 — and not a comparison of the two sound recordings.

An additional legal brief was filed this week signed by 212 supporters. They include members of Earth, Wind & Fire, Tears for Fears and the Black Crowes.

The brief reflects anxiety at how the ruling potentially punishes songwriters for being "inspired by prior works". The jury was wrongly allowed to be influenced by perceived similarities in the "feel and 'groove'" of the two songs, the artists suggest, pointing out that Gaye himself was influenced by others.