Japan's Wine, Recognized by the World

The Stories of 6 Wineries That Earned International Acclaim



INTRODUCTION

Why Japan's Fine Wines Are Winning Global Attention

Not so long ago, “Japanese wine” was mostly consumed at home. In recent years, though, a warming climate has opened new land to viticulture, and tireless producers have pushed quality forward — and one after another, their wines are now winning medals at the world's leading competitions.



A Growing Trophy Case

More Japanese wines are winning gold and platinum medals every year at international competitions such as Decanter and the IWC.



World-Class Winemaking

Producers bring home knowledge gained abroad and refine techniques that express the terroir unique to their own land.



The Value of Scarcity

Small-batch production creates “phantom wines” whose rarity only adds to their international standing.

SELECTION CRITERIA

About the 6 Wineries Featured Here

Among the many excellent wineries across Japan, this deck features 6 flagship brands chosen specifically for their international recognition and track record of awards.

International Competition Awards

Medals and top scores at prestigious contests such as Decanter and the IWC

Recognition from Critics and Media

Name recognition among overseas wine publications and critics

A Distinct Philosophy, Consistent Quality

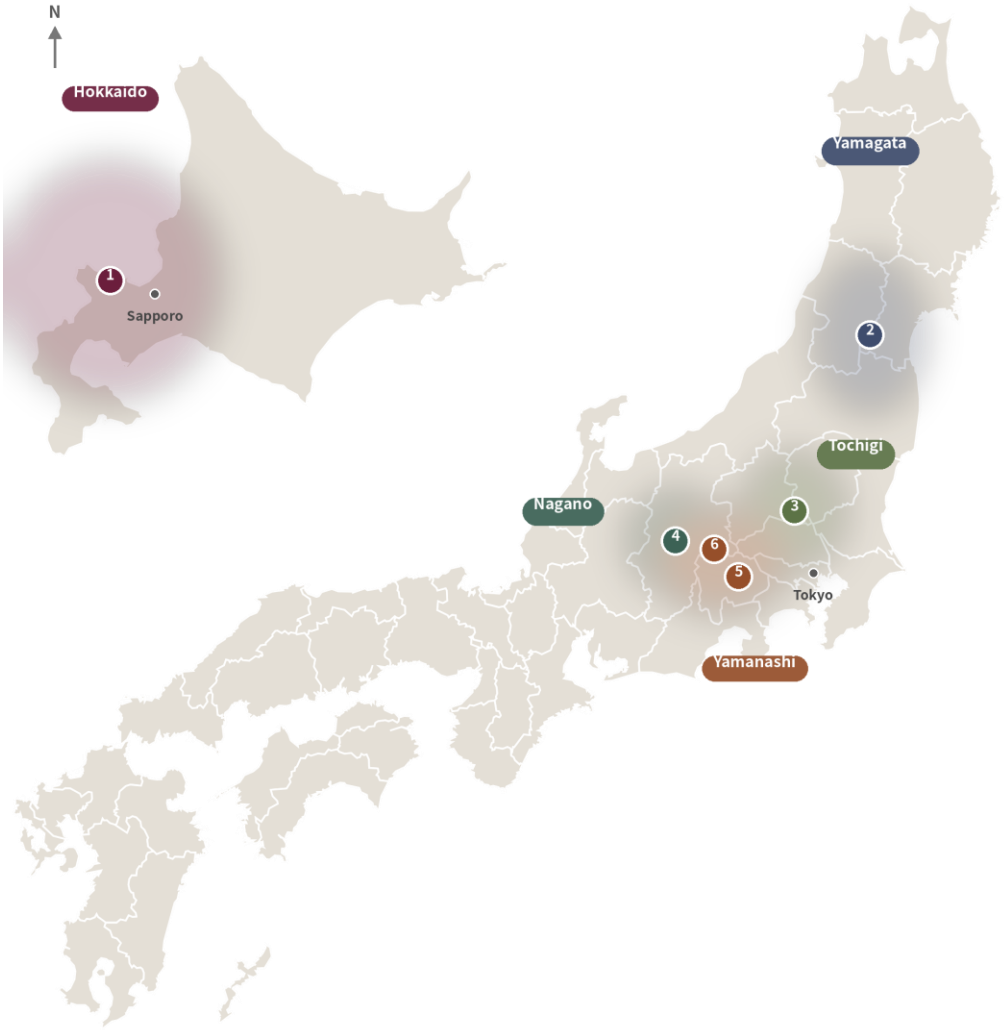
A devotion to terroir and craft that shows through in every bottle

A Place in Japanese Wine History

Producers whose names mark turning points in the industry's story

MAP

Where the 6 Wineries Are Located



1 **Domaine Takahiko**

Hokkaido — Yoichi

2 **Takeda Winery**

Yamagata — Kaminoyama

3 **Coco Farm & Winery**

Tochigi — Ashikaga

4 **Chateau Mercian**

Nagano — Shiojiri — Kikyogahara

5 **Grace Wine**

Yamanashi — Katsunuma, Koshu

6 **Kisvin Winery**

Yamanashi — Enzan, Koshu

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT 01 / 06

Domaine Takahiko — The Philosopher Behind a Phantom Pinot Noir

Founded in 2010 on a hilltop in Yoichi, Hokkaido. Devoted entirely to Pinot Noir, made through natural fermentation with wild yeast.



~15,000

Bottles produced per year — a scarce label famously hard to get hold of



Winemaking Philosophy

A commitment to natural fermentation with wild yeast; since 2015, red wines are made with no added sulfites.



The Vineyard

About 9,000 organically farmed Pinot Noir vines across 13 clones, on a hillside at 60m elevation.



Recognition

Earned the top “5-star” rating at the 2018 Japan Winery Awards. Its signature “Nana-Tsu-Mori” bottling is famously hard to find.

Takeda Winery — The Old Guard That Graced a Summit Table

Founded in the Meiji era in Kaminoyama, Yamagata. The winery moved to its current site in 1934, and the 4th generation turned it into a wine specialist.

A Turning Point

4th-generation owner Shigenobu Takeda studied soil analysis in Bordeaux, France, and steered the winery toward wine as its sole focus.

Reform

5th-generation owner Noriko Kishihira, who took over in 2005, drew on her training in France to introduce reduced-pesticide farming and wild-yeast fermentation.

Honors

In 2008, “Domaine Takeda” was officially served at the Toyako G8 Summit. It has held 5 stars in the Japan Winery Awards since 2018.

1920

The year it obtained its fruit-wine manufacturing license — over a century of history

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT 03 / 06

Coco Farm & Winery — A Steep Slope Cleared by Young People

Ashikaga, Tochigi. A winery born from a steep hillside cleared by students with intellectual disabilities, working alongside their teacher.



38°

The grade of the steep slope the students cleared over two years



How It Began

In 1958, special-education teacher Noboru Kawada wanted “a place for students after graduation,” and turned a mountainside into farmland together with them.



Winemaking

Grapes are hand-farmed with minimal pesticide use. Bottles such as the rosé “Kokorozashi” carry labels that reflect the students' handiwork.



Honors

In 2000, its sparkling wine was chosen as the official toast at the Okinawa Summit state banquet, bringing the winery to the world's attention.

Chateau Mercian — The Monument of Japanese Wine

Began growing Merlot in Kikyogahara, Shiojiri, Nagano. Its “Kikyogahara Merlot” proved Japanese wine's ability to the world.

Origins

The Mercian brand launched in 1949. In 1966, “Mercian 1962 (White)” won Japan's first international gold medal.

Terroir

In 1970, Merlot cultivation began in Kikyogahara. A cool climate and clay soil give the wine its concentrated character.

Recognition

The winery has kept winning at international competitions, including the Decanter World Wine Awards and the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Competition.

1989

The year “Kikyogahara Merlot 1985” won a Grand Gold Medal at the Ljubljana International Wine Competition

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT 05 / 06

Grace Wine — The Old House That Raised Koshu to a World Standard

Founded in 1923 in Katsunuma, Yamanashi. Under its 4th generation, it built an international reputation and elevated Koshu, Japan's signature grape, to world standards.

6 Years

Running streak of Gold medals for its Koshu at the Decanter World Wine Awards (since 2014)

A Pioneer

In 1983, it produced Japan's first Geographical Indication wine. In 2000, it was listed as Japan's representative wine in the World Atlas of Wine.

The Winemakers

3rd-generation Kazuo Misawa pioneered exports; 4th-generation Ayana Misawa has led the push for international recognition since 2008.

Honors

“Grace Extra Brut” won a Platinum Award at the Decanter World Wine Awards in 2016.

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT 06 / 06

Kisvin Winery — A New Generation Takes On Koshu

Enzan, Koshu City, Yamanashi. A family that had grown grapes for generations began making its own wine in 2013.

Location

Its vineyards sit close to the heart of Koshu wine country, where it commits to small-scale, limited-volume production.

Varieties

Alongside its mainstay Koshu, it also grows cool-climate varieties such as Pinot Noir and Kerner.

Recognition

It has drawn support from wine lovers and sommeliers at home and abroad, growing into a rising brand watched by specialist media.

2013

The year it began in-house winemaking — a rising star led by a young generation of producers

AT A GLANCE

The 6 Wineries Compared

Producer	Location	Founded	Signature Grape / Label	Notable Recognition
Domaine Takahiko	Hokkaido — Yoichi	2010	Pinot Noir “Nana-Tsu-Mori”	Japan Winery Awards 5 stars (2018–)
Takeda Winery	Yamagata — Kaminoyama	1920 (license)	Domaine Takeda	2008 Toyako G8 Summit official selection
Coco Farm & Winery	Tochigi — Ashikaga	1980	Rosé “Kokorozashi”	2000 Okinawa Summit toast wine
Chateau Mercian	Nagano — Shiojiri	1970 (Merlot begins)	Kikyogahara Merlot	1989 Ljubljana Int'l Grand Gold Medal
Grace Wine	Yamanashi — Katsunuma	1923	Koshu	Decanter Awards — Gold, 6 years running
Kisvin Winery	Yamanashi — Enzan	2013	Koshu / Kerner	Rising favorite among enthusiasts worldwide

COMMON THREADS

What These 6 Wineries Share

Devotion to Terroir

A pursuit of flavors that could only come from one specific place — a thread running through all six.

Small-Batch, Artisan Craft

None of them chase volume; all hold the line on consistent quality even at small scale.

Generational Renewal

Each carries forward a founder's vision while continuing to bring in new techniques and ideas.

Proven on the World Stage

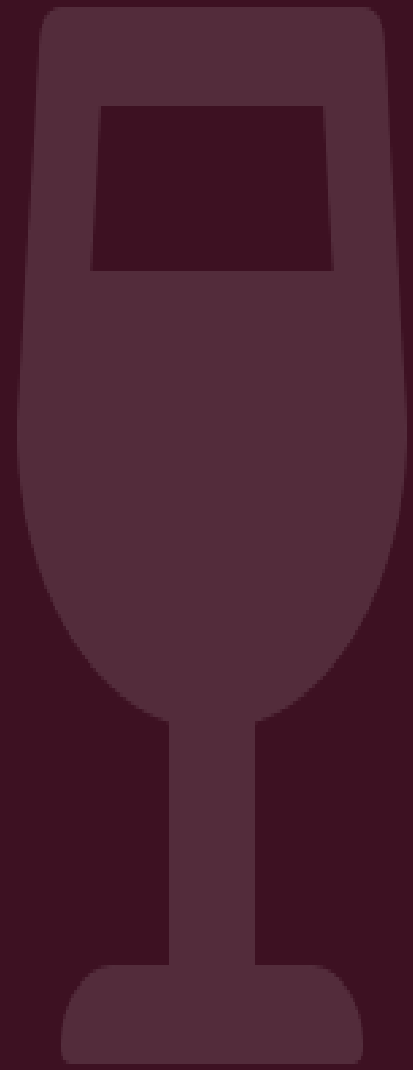
From award wins to summit selections, each has built its reputation through recognition abroad.

SUMMARY

Japan's Wine, Looking Ahead

Half a century since Kikyogahara's first challenge, producers across Japan are each chasing a wine that could only come from their own patch of ground. Down the path they've cleared, a new chapter in Japanese wine is unfolding.

“Rarity, and authenticity. That's the pride these wineries share.”



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