

JAL Introduces Wine from Japan To Business Class

- Top Japanese Wines Added to First Class Wine List -

- JAL Wins Best First Class Red in 2006 Cellars in the Sky Wine Awards

Tokyo, February 15, 2007: Japan Airlines is introducing wine from Japan to its business class wine list for the first time.

The wine selected for serving in JAL Executive Class-*Seasons* on JAL's Japan-Europe routes is Aruga Branca Clarezza 2005, produced from the indigenous Japanese *Koshu* grape variety. "Clarezza" is made with the modern sur lies process, where the wine is left to age in the vat in contact with the lees or sediments through winter to spring. This pleasant pale golden dry white wine has a cloak of acidity well balanced with an invigorating fruity taste.

JAL will feature the wine throughout 2007 after receiving very positive reactions from European passengers in a two-week trial period on the Tokyo-London route in October 2006.



Clarezza comes from the Katsunuma winery of the Aruga family who have a 70-year history of wine-making in the Katsunuma district in Yamanashi Prefecture, now known as Koshu City, about 100 kilometers (62.5 miles) west of Tokyo.

Yamanashi is the home of the "Koshu" grape, indigenous to Japan and successfully cultivated here after its introduction from China 800 years ago. Until recently, wine produced from this grape was regarded as lightweight and undistinguished. But as a result of dedicated research into its aroma components and fermentation methods, some growers, especially the local Aruga family has achieved outstanding results.

One of the great merits of these new Koshu styles is their compatibility with Japanese food as well as with European cuisine – and especially with simply prepared seafood dishes.

New Japanese wines selected in JAL First Class

Apart from the new business class selection, JAL is offering two other Aruga Koshu varieties in their new 2007 first class wine list.

These are the Aruga Branca Issehara 2006 and the Aruga Branca Pipa 2003. Differences in 'terroir' produce slight differences among the Koshu grapes from various grape-growing districts of Katsunuma. This elegant wine from the single vineyard of Issehara in the district is fruity but "off dry" with a hint of sweetness.

"Pipa" is made first by fermenting specially selected Koshu grapes of concentrated fruit and fully developed acidity, then by maturing in French oak casks for six months to ensue a firm body.

In addition to the new range of Koshu white wines, JAL has also selected a Japanese red for the first class wine list, a Solaris Shinshu Komoro Merlot 2003

This comes from the Osato district of Komoro City on the Chikuma River in eastern Nagano Prefecture, where Manns Wine, a major Japanese wine-maker, has been growing Merlot grapes using special techniques to suit Japanese conditions. Only the highest quality grapes from the vineyard, amounting to a third of the average yield, are used in the vintage. The vineyard is covered for protection from the elements. The resulting wine, with a bouquet of vanilla from virgin oak casks, offers a sound and round aftertaste of fruit and tannin.

JAL Wins Best First Class Red in the 2006 Cellars in the Sky Wine Awards



Japan Airlines (JAL) has won the Best First Class Red category in the prestigious "Cellars in the Sky" wine awards organized by Business Traveller Magazine and Wine and Spirit Magazine (formerly Wine International).

During a two-day tasting held in October 2006, teams of experts from Wine and Spirit Magazine judged and compared wines from some 30 international airlines' First and Business class in-flight wine cellars to award winners across 14 categories.

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JAL won the category of Best First Class Red for the Château Pichon-Longueville Baron 1998 Pauillac. This classic deep red full-bodied Bordeaux wine has a complex bouquet of fruits and mushroom aromas, which promises a soothing and very satisfying finish.

JAL's first and business class wine lists feature a selection of over 20 wines from around the world to ensure that passengers always have a balanced and varying range of wines to choose from. Passengers can enjoy exquisite wines produced by the established vineyards of France, Germany and Italy, as well as from Japan and the New World including Australia, Chile, and the USA.

Wine production in Japan

In more and more parts of Japan, wine growers are producing high quality wines using cultivation methods to suit the quirky Japanese climate, combining traditional methods with the latest techniques and the results are beginning to be noticed internationally.

For example, for years many Japanese wineries have used overhead trellises for growing grapes. However now some growers have challenged this conventional wisdom by adopting vertical shoot growing systems used in Europe.

Today Japanese wine makers are producing varietal wines of great quality, including chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and merlot, and today wines from Japan are among the medal winners at international wine festivals and exhibitions. Among the better-known brands that have won awards is the Mercian Corporation, with sensational merlots from Kikyogahara in Nagano prefecture and luscious chardonnays from the Hokushin district in the same prefecture. JAL featured the Mercian 1995 Kikyogahara Merlot in First Class. Other leading makers producing good quality top of the line ranges include liquor giant Suntory, the beer-backed Sapporo Wines and Mann's Wine, a spin-off from Kikkoman Soy sauce.

The main center for domestic wine production is Yamanashi prefecture, west of Tokyo where there are about 80 of the country's 150-some wineries. Grape growing as a fruit crop had been carried on here for centuries but wine growing only started here 125 years ago as an alternative crop after a rice harvest failure. In 1877 two young men were sent to France to learn the arts of viticulture and winemaking, and that is generally considered to be the start of the Japanese wine story. Nowadays, there are wineries all over the country, from Hokkaido to Kyushu.

Yamanashi is also the home of the "Koshu" grape, indigenous to Japan and cultivated here for centuries. Until recently, wine produced from this grape was regarded as lightweight and undistinguished. But as a result of dedicated research into its aroma components and fermentation methods, some growers including the Aruga family winery have achieved outstanding results.

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In the last 30 years, more and more small wineries have started up, as the taste for wine in Japan in general has grown, boosted by overseas travel, diversification in diet habits and inexpensive imports.

But wine producers here face the difficult challenge of the Japanese climate, with its high humidity and prolonged rainy season.

Climate isn't the only challenge. Japanese wine producers face other formidable barriers. Japanese restaurateurs favor imported wines over domestic varieties. The cost of top quality domestic wines tends to be higher than many quality imports. Production of the top domestic wines is limited and supplies are hard to come by. As a result the profile of domestic wine in general is low and suffers from old prejudices based on poor quality production in the past.

These challenges will take a long time to clear and indeed some may never be overcome completely. But today Japan's domestic wine sector has never been so interesting and so active. Among the industry there is a spirit of cooperation and mutual regard in which the big companies are extending a helping hand to smaller, but high quality, producers. The enlightened attitude of some big companies is that by working together with smaller partners to raise the profile of quality domestic wines, they will all eventually benefit.

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