

Shochu-Distilling Process



1 Making koji

When rice or barley are steamed and coated with mold starter, *koji* mold begins to propagate in the mix. The mixture is called *koji*. This process takes about two days.



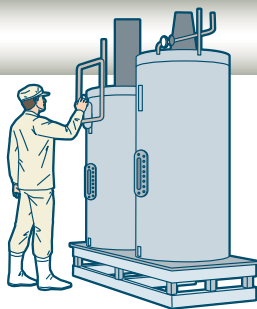
2 First fermentation

Water and yeast are mixed in with the *koji* and left to ferment for approximately one week. Yeast and acid, purely cultivated in this first fermentation, will ferment the *moromi* (main mash) in a safer manner in the second fermentation (see step 3 below) when the principle ingredients are added. The success of the first *moromi* is crucial in determining the quality of the final product.



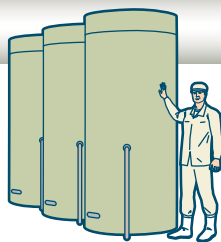
3 Second fermentation

The steamed main ingredients (potatoes if *imo-jochu*, rice if *kome-jochu*) are mixed into the first *moromi* described above in step 2 and left to ferment for approximately two weeks. For *imo-jochu*, particular attention is paid to the quality of *satsumaimo* (sweet potatoes), so any imperfections that may spoil the taste are removed. The ingredients are then put into a large steamer and steamed and crushed for use in the second fermentation.



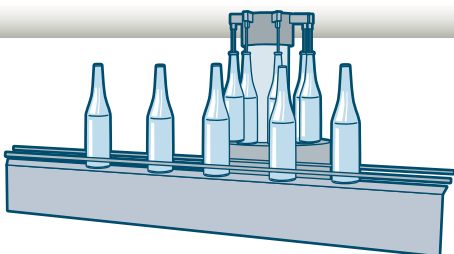
4 Distillation

The fermented *moromi* (main mash) is boiled in a single distilling machine, with the vaporized product of this process then cooled and collected in liquid form. The *moromi* has the distinctive color of the ingredients, but the *genshu* (the raw *shochu*) is clear.



5 Aging

Due to the initial harsh taste, the *genshu* is aged for several months and only released for sale once the taste softens.



6 Bottling

Depending upon the main ingredients, raw *shochu* has an alcohol content of between 36% and 44%, so water is added to lower this, normally to 25%.