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An introduction to Sake thanks to FOODEX

Interview with Ms. Catherine Ruchti, in charge of Consumer Service and Marketing at FOODEX

Could you please introduce Foodex to our readers?

FOODEX was founded in 1992 in France. At the time, Japanese food was not as popular as it is today. The founder believed in the potential of Japanese products in Europe.

In 2002, FOODEX expanded its business and created its Swiss subsidiary. It was FOODEX's first subsidiary outside of France.

In 2010, FOODEX was acquired by Takara Shuzo. Takara is a leading Japanese company for alcoholic beverages & seasonings in Japan and abroad.

Both companies have benefited from this acquisition. Takara Shuzo has increased its presence in Europe through FOODEX's presence in eight countries and FOODEX is enjoying Takara Shuzo's financial strength as a producer, distributor and exporter.

Who are your customers?

FOODEX is clearly a "B2B" company (business to business). Our main customers are restaurants and grocery shops; Japanese ones of course, but also Asian and Western ones. Thanks to our extended experience, we can help customers to choose products according to their specific



Ms. Catherine Ruchti during a sake matching event in Bern

needs. Nevertheless, if anybody finds something on our website he/she would like to try, he/she can contact us and we will help him/her to find the nearest shop where this particular product is available.

In your everyday business, what are the latest trends?

Ramen is clearly booming. A few years ago, it would have been challenging to find some in Switzerland and now Geneva for instance has six dedicated shops ; even more, if you count non-dedicated places that have Ramen or noodle soup on their menus. Pop culture certainly helped to popularize it, but I

think Ramen also contributes to answering a growing demand for quality fast food at a reasonable price.

Another trendy Asian specialty starting these days is the Bao burger. Bao buns are originally from Taiwan. The bread is steam baked and you can put more or less anything in it like you would for a burger. With an affordable price, and easy to prepare and eat, it has a good potential as a street-food top seller.

Finally, a trend that embraces all sorts of specialties is the fast-growing demand for organic food. People are paying more attention to what they eat. Organic food already represents a significant part of the market in Switzerland.

Is it correct to say that Japanese food is becoming quite popular in Switzerland?

It is indeed. In Switzerland, I would say that the trend for Japanese food started 10 years ago and probably really boomed 6 years ago. Sushi is still the most emblematic Japanese specialty you will find here, but you will also find Tempura and Ramen. In addition, many western chefs have integrated Japanese ingredients. The Ramen phenomena we

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discussed before shows that the market is clearly not saturated and that Japanese food still has great potential.

Sake however is still difficult to find outside of Japanese restaurants or grocery shops. Why is that?

Today, Sake is still considered an “exotic beverage.” People don’t know it very well and often have some misconceptions about it.

It is part to my job to democratize this excellent product by answering questions, but also giving advice on how to match it with foods. I don’t see any reason that might prevent Sake from becoming a popular product in Switzerland. Many products were once considered exotic too, but they are easy to find everywhere now. Think about vodka, tequila or even pizza. Twenty years ago, eating raw fish in Switzerland was kind of crazy thing to most people, but today you find them in supermarkets.

In a way, Sake is very similar to wine. From simple, raw materials (rice and water) you can create infinite variations.

With what products does Sake match well?

Actually, you can match Sake with plenty of things. It goes well with Japanese food, of course, but it also fits well with an Indian curry or Thai food. With regard to Swiss specialties, it goes very well with cheese; we just had a matching event, but also with raw meat and chocolate. It is even possible to enjoy Sake with a raclette or fon-



Daiginjo
大吟醸

Ginjo
吟醸

Kimoto
生酛

Genshu
原酒

Tokubetsu
特別酒

Nigori
にごり

Junmai
純米

Namazake
生酒

Tijoshu
時醸酒



De Niigata à l'ouest du japon, d'Akita au nord du japon et de Shimane tout au sud, nous vous proposons parmi les plus belles cuvées de saké japonais. Rosé, non filtré, non pasteurisé, doux, « full body » ou liguoreux, la palette des saveurs et des arômes est très riche.

Countless possibilities to combine the many existing varieties and methods.

due. Like wine, you have all sorts of Sake, with an incredible variation in taste. It can be sweet or dry. Many are better to drink chilled and some warm. There is even sparkling Sake available!

Sake can also be used as an ingredient in cocktails or in cooking.

Have you any suggestions?

Sake is already an important ingre-

dient in many Japanese specialties. There is no limit here. People can follow their intuition. I would just go for Sake made to be used in this way, because it would be a pity to use very good Sake for this purpose. Sake for cooking is quite common and less expensive. For cocktails, it is probably a matter of balance. Many people would tell you that Sake should be en-

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joyed pure, but I have tried some very good cocktails where Sake brought a subtle Umami taste.

What are the main varieties of sake?

Let's start from the very beginning. Sake is an alcoholic beverage made from water and rice through a fermentation process. It is relatively similar to the way beer is produced; the use of yeast starts the process. Even if the list of ingredients is very short, there are countless parameters that can be changed that affect the final taste. This is why there are so many different varieties. The quality of Sake essentially depends on three points, *Waza-Mizu-Kome*: the knowhow of the master, the quality of the water and the quality of the rice (and level of polishing).

The first distinction is between the two grades of Sake: Futsushu and

Tokutei-Meishoshu; respectively, ordinary Sake (table wine) and premium Sake (controlled and protected).

For the premium Sake, you have different categories depending on the level of polishing of the rice (the more you polish the rice, the purer the taste will be) and whether or not alcohol can be added to the Sake.

If the alcohol comes only from the fermentation process, with no adjunction, the Sake will be called "Junmai". For polishing, there are three levels: at least 30% of polishing (Honjozo), at least 40% (Ginjo), at least 50% (Daiginjo). Daiginjo grade is considered to be the premium Sake, but is also the most expensive since you can use only 50% or less of the rice to brew.

So, a "Junmai Daiginjo" is considered to be the purest Sake you can

find. Nevertheless, many other parameters influence the taste of Sake, making it a very personal choice in the end.

What sake do you recommend for someone that is new to it?

Sparkling Sake might be a good way to start. It is easy to drink and very affordable. Some are quite dry and are similar to prosecco. I would also suggest Kokushi-Muso "Cocoo" from Takasago Shuzo. It is very pure and clear Sake from Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido. During Hokkaido's long cold winter, their Sake is literally matured under the snow. It comes in a half-liter bottle which is better for people who are not used to Sake, because once the bottle is opened, Sake should be stored in the fridge and drunk quickly (within one or two weeks under refrigeration).

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New standards for more readable and usable displays

In November 2018, METI newly established 21 standards and revised 11 standards of the Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS).

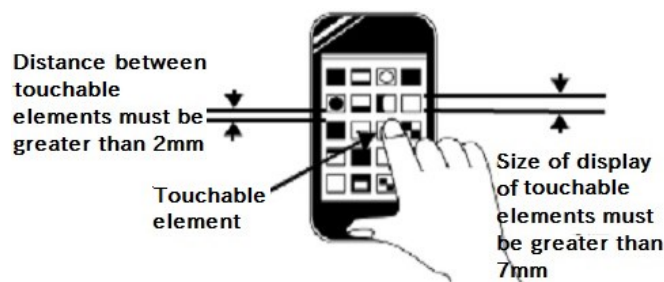
The Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS) is a collection of national standards stipulating the criteria for products to be sold in Japan, including their types/scales, quality/performance and safety.

Among other things, METI revised the JIS for accessibility of telecommunications equipment in order to make such devices usable for everyone, including the elderly and peo-

ple with disabilities. The revision set the minimal size of the touchable elements on displays as well as the minimal distance between two touchable elements.

Swiss companies providing solu-

tions to address aging societies should pay attention to those challenges. JIS are monthly updated. Additional information is available on [METI's website](#) and [JIS's Committee](#)



動向

SITUATION

活動

ACTIVITY

Osaka will host the 2025 World Expo

On November 23rd, the Member States of the “Bureau International des Expositions” (BIE) chose Japan to host the World Expo in 2025. Osaka-Kansai’s Expo will take place between May 3rd and November 3rd 2025 under the theme *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*. “The Expo project, based around the co-creation of a future society to address global challenges, has a strong resonance with the international community,” said Mr. Vicente G. Loscertales, Secretary General of the BIE. “After the memorable success of World Expo 1970, we look forward to seeing a World Expo once again come to life in Osaka, Kansai,” he added.

For the record, the 1970 Expo had a record high number of visitors, with 64.2 million people attending the event.

This time, the government expects 28 million visitors to the Expo and a \$17.6 billion boost to the economy.

With the Tokyo Olympic Games in

2020, the Osaka World Expo in 2025 and potentially the 2030 Winter Games in Sapporo (Hokkaido), the next decade will be very animated in Japan.

The website of the Expo:

<https://www.expo2025-osaka-japan.jp/en/>



Agenda

- ✓ Business opportunities and challenges for industrial SMEs in Japan
December 4th, St. Gallen, 16:30-19:30
Free of charge but registration is mandatory. [Full program](#).
If you want to attend but have not register yet, please send us an email at swg@jetro.go.jp

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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