Producing sake in France, a young venture company from Japan is attempting to share the great taste and potential of sake with the world.

Founded in 2016 with the idea to turn Japanese sake into a worldwide alcoholic drink, WAKAZE established the Kura Grand Paris sake brewery in 2019. It won the Platinum Award in the junmai (pure rice) category of the Kura Master 2020 sake competition, as well as the Silver Award at the International Wine Challenge 2020 for the "C'est la vie" sake produced in Paris. The sake brewery uses local ingredients to produce sake that defies conventional norms.

WAKAZE

Imai (left), master brewer at Kura Grand Paris, and Inagawa (right).

The CEO of the start-up company, INAGAWA Takuma, once stumbled across some exceptionally fine sake, enabling him to dispel his preconception that the drink equated simply to strong liquor. Passionate about expressing his love of sake to the people of the world and especially in France where he had previously studied, Inagawa set up WAKAZE in 2016, together with IMAI Shoya, who himself comes from a family of sake brewers and was trained at Japanese breweries. The company then went on to establish the Kura Grand Paris sake brewery in the outskirts of Paris in 2019.

“I want to produce sake that is loved by the local people,” asserts master brewer Imai. It is extremely difficult to produce sake in a completely different environment with different ingredients, such as French rice, water, and yeast. Yet, with all sorts of information at his disposal—from Edo-period literature to the latest theses and articles—Imai is constantly on the lookout for ways to produce sake that suits the region. What the company is really aiming to do is to make sake brewing “open-source.” By making sake-brewing techniques available to the world, the start-up hopes that everyone can enjoy sake that is—like beer and wine—tailored to their specific part of the globe.

The types of sake WAKAZE produces are popular with local people not just for their reasonable prices, but also because, due to their versatility, they can be enjoyed on any occasion. As well as pure rice sake, WAKAZE offers other craft varieties, including sake brewed with locally sourced citrus fruits, and a sake matured in cognac casks. Each of the sake variations comes with a recommended pairing and fresh cocktail ideas, making sake more accessible for everyone. “Our mission is to get more people into sake and dispel the mistaken notions surrounding the beverage. We want to expand the sake market and create opportunities to learn more about the diversity of not only sake, but Japanese food too,” reveals Inagawa.

Breathing such new life into sake brewing, WAKAZE will no doubt go on to expand the possibilities of the drink and revolutionize Japanese cuisine around the world.

REVOLUTIONIZING SAKE FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

Producing sake in France, a young venture company from Japan is attempting to share the great taste and potential of sake with the world.