

WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Sake®

APPEARANCE

Clarity	<i>clear sake</i>	clear – slightly hazy – hazy (faulty?)
	<i>cloudy sake</i>	light lees – medium lees – thick lees
Intensity	<i>clear sake</i>	water-white – pale – medium – deep
	<i>cloudy sake</i>	colourless – slightly coloured – coloured (faulty?)
Colour	<i>clear sake</i>	colourless – lemon-green – lemon – gold – amber – brown
	<i>cloudy sake</i>	pure white – off-white – yellow – brown – grey (faulty)
Other observations		e.g. legs/tears, tiny bubbles, bubbles, red/pink tints

NOSE

Condition	clean – unclean (faulty?)
Intensity	light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – pronounced
Aroma characteristics	e.g. <i>ginjō-ka</i> , other fruity/floral, cereal/grain, lactic/dairy, sweetness, age, other

PALATE

Sweetness	dry – off-dry – medium-dry – medium-sweet – sweet – luscious
Acidity	low – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – high
Umami	low – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – high
Alcohol	low – medium – high
Body	light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – full
Mousse	delicate – creamy – aggressive
Flavour intensity	light – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – pronounced
Flavour characteristics	e.g. <i>ginjō-ka</i> , other fruity/floral, cereal/grain, lactic/dairy, sweetness, age, other
Other observations	e.g. balance, texture, finish
Finish	short – medium(-) – medium – medium(+) – long

CONCLUSIONS

ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY

Quality level	faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding
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THE SAKE IN CONTEXT

Identity	<i>Category: futsū-shu vs premium, ginjō vs non-ginjō</i> <i>Production methods: nama, kimoto/yamahai</i> <i>Special style: sparkling, koshu, kijōshu, nigori</i>
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Notes to students:

For lines where the entries are separated by a hyphen – You must select one and only one of these options.

For lines starting with ‘e.g.’ where the entries are separated with commas – These are entries that you should consider when writing your tasting note. You may not need to comment on each entry for every sake.



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WSET Level 3 Sake-Lexicon: *supporting the WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Sake®*

DESCRIBING AROMA AND FLAVOUR

Ginjō	banana, apple, pear, melon, lychee, pineapple, cherry, strawberry, aniseed, bubblegum, blossom, lily, rose
Fruity/floral (other than ginjō)	ripe banana, banana bread, fig grape, nectarine, apricot, plum, lemon, orange white flowers
Cereal/grain	rice flour, bran, steamed rice, porridge, toasted cereal, malt
Lactic/dairy	milk, cream, yoghurt, butter, fresh cheese (cream cheese, mozzarella), mature cheese (cheddar)
Sweetness	cotton candy, honey, sugar cane, brown sugar/molasses
Age (koshu)	honey, molasses, caramel, soy, dried fruits, coffee, chocolate, meat broth, clove, cinnamon, fenugreek, almond, walnut, pickled vegetables, soy sauce, bacon, compost
Other	nuts/beans coffee, chocolate, fresh hazelnut, fresh almond, chestnut, fresh walnut, roasted nuts, caramelised nuts herbs mint, basil, lemongrass, grass spices clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper other earthy, mushroom, hay meat (broth, ham, roast meat) Japanese cedar, oak aromas

COMMENTING ON TEXTURE, BALANCE AND FINISH

Texture and balance	creamy, silky, velvety, rich vibrant, refreshing, crisp, dryness (<i>tanrei karakuchi</i>) hints of bitterness (<i>nigami</i>) or astringency (<i>shibumi</i>)
Finish	<i>kire</i> (clean, crisp finish)

FAULTS

Open too long	staleness, oxidation, caramel, toffee
Nama-hine	pickled vegetables, caramel, toffee, rotten vegetables
Nama-hine-ka	malt, bacon, geranium, spices
Light damage	burned hair, sulfurous, musky
Microbiological spoilage	egg, rotting vegetable, compost, onion, sour milk, rancid cheese, sweat, sulfurous, sticking plasters
Other faults	damp cardboard (TCA), tinned sweetcorn (DMS), volatile acidity (VA) taints from production equipment (plastic, rubber, paper, metal, wood)
Palate defects	unpleasant bitterness, astringency, coarseness/roughness, poor balance

Note to students: The WSET Level 3 Sake-Lexicon is designed to be a prompt and a guide that you do not need to memorise. You can pass the tasting examination with distinction if you use the descriptors in the Sake-Lexicon but you do not need to limit yourself to these terms and the examiners will accept other descriptors so long as they are accurate.