



# Whisky: The Unexpected Japanese Expertise Hailed In America

When one thinks of the Japanese culinary world, Whisky may not be the first thing that comes to mind. But at the latest event hosted by Gohan Society at the French Culinary Institute, this beverage was exactly the topic of conversation. As it turns out, Japanese Whisky is creating a loud buzz in the imbibe world today. To demonstrate the significance of this trend, Gohan Society invited Flavien Desoblin from Brandy Library, Chef Suvir Saran from Devi Restaurant, and chief whisky blender Seiichi Koshimizu from Suntory to present a lecture and tasting which centered around Suntory's Yamazaki 12, Yamazaki 18, and Hibiki 12.

"We have never had a customer who was not satisfied with Suntory whisky, ever, and that is a true testament to Suntory's success," says Mr. Desoblin who opened the lecture. He explained that a few years ago, the refined quality of Suntory whiskies, achieved through tremendous efforts on the distiller's part in its innovation, would not have been appreciated in America, but with more people appreciating single malts, Japanese whisky, which is masterfully blended, is now highly in demand. In fact, "Japanese whisky is the California of wine business 15 years ago," he added. Leading this whisky revolution was Suntory.

Next up in the lecture was Mr. Seiichi Koshimizu who thoroughly explained Suntory's history and their devotion to creating something distinctly Japanese, while appreciating the Scottish tradition and origin. Suntory's history with whisky making began in 1923 when the original president, Shinjiro

Torii, an already successful wine and spirits importer decided to create his own distillery. His dream was to create "not Scotch," but "Japanese Whisky." He began by mastering the Scottish technique, then slowly adjusting it to the Japanese palate.

According to Mr. Koshimizu, "the uniquely Japanese flavor of Suntory's whiskies comes from many different factors including water, seasons (longer summer allows faster maturation) and types of wood used for the casks." His lecture was accompanied by a series tasting that included samples that came straight out of different casks and including one that uses a cask that formerly stored plum wine. "You will never find this in America," Mr. Koshimizu joked.

Finally, the lecture was concluded by

Chef Suvir Saran's demonstration of how Hibiki can be used in cooking, with his *Lemon Rub Sear Steak, Salad with Ginger Dressing, and Honey Shoyu Roasted Tomatoes*. "I wanted to showcase the depth Hibiki can bring out in food, with a multifaceted approach by contrasting it with shichimi on the tomatoes." The intimate setting allowed many who attended to linger on for a while afterwards to speak to the three lecturers. Learning behind the scenes of what goes into a single bottle seems to have given all audience members a newfound appreciation for the beverage.

#### The Gohan Society

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## Developing Japanese Whisky the Master's Way

Chief whisky blender at Suntory, Mr. Seiichi Koshimizu's devotion to creating a subtle, yet complex whisky that suits the Japanese palate has yet to cease, despite his award winning success. His devotion to whisky goes beyond ordinary, as his process starts with the cask factory where he himself takes part in choosing the right woods from the forest to create each cask he works with. Every part of the whisky making process requires painstaking attention to detail, such as the subtle blending that creates the smooth-



ness Suntory

whiskies are

known for. "The secret to the elegance of Japanese whisky lies in the fact that Japanese don't mind putting in the extra hard work to make it perfect," Mr. Koshimizu comments. With tradition, refinement, and innovation in mind, his artisanal blending skills are blowing the minds of whisky lovers from all over the world today.

