

# A toast to beer

[PR]

**For many Japanese people, whether they're having a drink in their local or at home, the drink of choice is beer. The drinking culture in Japan varies quite markedly according to the seasons and the mood of the drinker, which makes for a committed and enthusiastic appreciation of their beer.**

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"Kampai!" All over Japan, people raise their glasses to this toast. The equivalent to the English "Cheers", Kampai literally translates to 'dry your cup', meaning, 'empty your glass to the last drop'. Of course it doesn't actually mean that you should scull your drink. Rather, it is a general wish for health and happiness, and an indication that the festivities should commence.

As in Australia, beer is extremely popular in Japan. However, in a country where the shifting seasons are such an important aspect of life, the varieties of beer and the ways of drinking change in response to the time of year. For example, during the summer, beer gardens spring up in unusual places like parks or on the roofs of department stores – anywhere one might enjoy a drink and a bite to eat. Each season people gather in beer gardens for a cold beer, to such an extent that they could be regarded as being emblematic of summer. Seasonal beers, such as the autumn beer Aki Aji, are also produced in Japan. It features the use of 1.3 times more malt and is made with six percent alcohol (slightly higher than most beers) to enhance the taste of the accompanying food, particularly in autumn. Available exclusively in the autumn months, from a highly celebrated brewer boasting a history of more than a century, Aki Aji is one of Kirin Brewery's long selling favourites.

As a reflection of the popularity of beer, a selection of alternatives from the usual varieties are available, such as *Happoshu* beer, which is sold at a comparatively low price due to a lower amount of malt. Another beverage, *The Third Beer*, maintains the flavour of beer, but with different ingredients. Finally, there is a refreshing and thirst-quenching alcohol-free beer, created with drivers in mind. In response to demand from consumers, Kirin Brewery launched the world's first alcohol-free beer, Kirin Free, in April 2009, which has become extremely popular since its debut.

Behind the popularity of Japanese beer is of course the unquestionable quality and taste – a taste that, thanks to this renowned Japanese brewery, can now be enjoyed in Australia. *Kirin*, which uses premium Australian malt, is produced in a South Australian Brewery owned by Lion Nathan, which is a subsidiary of Kirin Brewery. Made from a single first pressing of the wort, with no artificial



Kirin Brewery's autumn limited edition Aki Aji (Autumn Taste), emblazoned with the colours of autumn.



Kirin Brewery's *Kirin*, available in Australia. The combination of the vivid green bottle and Japanese characters 'Megumi' (恵み, meaning 'Blessing') are striking.

The website of *Kirin*, which attracts a following of various subcultures, introduces pubs which stock *Kirin* and the first press brewing method.



additives or preservatives, Kirin Brewery's unique brewing method produces a clean, flavoursome beer with a smooth characteristic depth. Furthermore, with a light palate and the hint of sweetness from the malt, *Kirin* is popular even amongst those who dislike the bitter character common to beer. In 2007, Kirin Brewery brought out new packaging fitting to its premium beer, and with a flavour that maximises enjoyment of the malt characters, *Kirin's* popularity continued to soar and, in 2008, *Kirin* sales in Australia were double that of the previous year. Based on the current trend, 2009 sales are expected to increase again.

In a class of its own... Kirin Brewery's smooth and exhilarating *Kirin*. Let's "Kampai!" to this premium beer!

Information and Photos:

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