

Welcome Remarks by H. E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
for "Refreshing perspective - Women's voices on the future of Sake & Wine -"
on 25th September 2023

Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all this evening to Japan House London, the epicentre of Japanese culture in the UK. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your participation in today's event hosted by the Government of Japan.

As many of you may well know, Japanese sake, with its long history and refined flavour, perfectly embodies Japanese tradition and culture. In this sense, it is quite important for us to promote Japanese sake to the people here with the aim of deepening their understanding of Japan and further reinforcing the partnership between our two countries. That is why we are taking every opportunity to serve Japanese sake at the receptions and other events at the Embassy of Japan in the UK so that a lot of guests from various sectors and backgrounds will be able to experience and appreciate sake.

In December 2021, "traditional sake brewing" became a registered intangible cultural property under Japan's Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Since then, it has not only enabled sake brewing to be protected as a cultural property but has also increasingly heightened the momentum to protect expertise in sake brewing across Japan. Following this, in March 2022 the Government of Japan submitted a proposal for "traditional sake brewing" to be awarded the status of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO will evaluate the proposal and make a decision in the autumn of 2024. I am looking forward to hearing a positive result in this regard.

Against this backdrop, I feel delighted to hold today's event to enhance awareness of "traditional sake brewing" in the UK for the purpose of promoting dialogue between Japanese and British stakeholders. I am particularly pleased that we will have two leading female brewers to the talk-show later, both of whom are undoubtedly key figures in their respective long-established industries involving the production of sake in Japan and wine in the UK. They are expected to discuss the similarities and differences between Japanese sake and wine as well as their vision for and future trends of their sectors. I trust this symposium will give you a deeper insight into sake brewing and help you to enjoy Japanese sake and culture more than before.

When it comes to pairing sake with food, I am pretty sure that it goes well with British and other cuisines from around the world. However, it cannot be stressed enough that sake is a perfect fit with Japanese cuisine, in particular seafood products.

On the subject of seafood, I must refer to a certain topic which has recently attracted considerable public and media attention. In August, following the start of the discharge of Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) treated water into the ocean, the Chinese Government took a unilateral decision to suspend all imports of Japanese seafood products without any relevant scientific evidence.

The Government of Japan regrets this action very much, which goes against the international trend of easing and eliminating restrictions on food imports from Japan following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station in March 2011. Therefore, it has been taking every possible opportunity to lobby strongly for the urgent repeal of this regrettable measure.

The restrictions on Japanese seafood are of course having a highly unfavourable impact on the livelihoods of Japanese fishermen. I would like to ask you gathering here today to support them and the people of eastern part of Japan as a whole by

appreciating the safe and delicious Japanese seafood, including scallops and yellowtail, which will be served very soon.

Last but not least, I am pleased to announce that the Government of Japan is currently holding promotional events for Japanese sake at shopping centres, supermarkets and liquor stores here in London, such as Westfield Stratford City, Whole Foods Market and Tian Tian Market. I hope you can enjoy one of these events before they end soon.

Thank you very much indeed.