



INTRODUCING TAKAMINE WHISKEY

Revival of a 19th century American experiment

Fukuoka, Japan – April 27, 2021 – Honkaku Spirits is proud to announce the US debut of [Takamine Whiskey](#), an 8 year-old, 80-proof, 100% barley, koji-fermented whiskey, which was awarded a Gold Medal at the prestigious San Francisco Wine & Spirits Competition (2021). Jokichi Takamine, a Japanese chemist living in Illinois, was the first to apply koji fermentation to American whiskey in the 1890s. With an SRP of \$99/750mL, Takamine is distributed by Winebow, a national leading distributor of fine wine and spirits, and is currently available for sale in fifteen markets: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, Washington D.C., and Wisconsin.

Koji (*aspergillus oryzae*) is a mold that grows on grains, breaking the starches into sugars which yeast can then convert into alcohol through fermentation. Koji has been used in Japan for more than 1,200 years to make sake as well as soy sauce, miso, shochu, and other familiar umami-laden Japanese specialties. In fact, koji is the national mold of Japan.

Koji fermentation is Japan's alternative to malting. Takamine realized that koji fermentation saccharifies grain more than twice as efficiently as malting. In 1891 he patented his Takamine Process and began experiments with the Illinois Whiskey Trust. Shortly thereafter, the building in which the experiments were taking place burned to the ground under mysterious circumstances. Not dissuaded, in 1894 the Trust began producing whiskey using the Takamine process. Sadly, the following year, the Trust was busted and Takamine's koji-fermented whiskey never made it to the American public.

Despite this second setback, Takamine transformed his koji know-how into medical innovation, becoming the preeminent Japanese businessman in early 20th Century America. Long devoted to Japanese-American relations, in 1912 he donated 2,100 cherry trees to Washington, D.C., which still bring joy to visitors every spring.

Takamine Whiskey was revived by [Shinozaki Distillery](#) (Asakura City, Fukuoka, Japan), which has been making traditional Japanese alcohol since the 1800s. The mash bill is 100% pearled 2-row barley: 40% koji-fermented and 60% steamed. A 2-day koji propagation is followed by a 2-stage open fermentation, then a double pot-still distillation to a barrel proof of 86.7%. The whiskey is then aged in virgin American oak and ex-bourbon casks. No color is ever added.

The Takamine Family Trust, which had never before approved use of the Takamine name for a commercial product, granted the Shinozaki family permission for the revival of Jokichi's 19th century

American experiment. The April release of Takamine 8 Year Old Whiskey is just in time for the 109th blooming of the DC cherry blossoms.

“Winebow is honored to represent Honkaku Spirits, starting with Takamine whiskey,” says Richard Driscoll, Executive Vice President of Spirits at Winebow. “We are thrilled to bring Jokichi Takamine's legacy of whiskey making back to the U.S. This is an exceptional product with an incredible story, and we cannot wait to introduce it to our customers throughout the country.”

About [Honkaku Spirits](#): Founded in 2020 in the midst of a global public health crisis, Honkaku Spirits is the first portfolio devoted exclusively to koji-fermented spirits including *honkaku* (authentic) shochu, Ryukyu Awamori from Okinawa, and koji whiskey from Japan. Working exclusively with family-run distilleries, Honkaku Spirits is devoted to introducing the best traditional Japanese spirits to America. The company is led by Christopher Pellegrini, author of [The Shochu Handbook](#), the first English language book about Japan’s indigenous spirits, and supported by ambassador Stephen Lyman, author of [The Complete Guide to Japanese Drinks](#).

About [Winebow](#): Winebow is a national importer and distributor that offers a dynamic portfolio of fine wine and spirits from around the world. Since 1980, the company has represented some of the most established properties in prominent growing areas, as well as a new generation of winemakers and distillers who are dedicated to innovation and quality. Winebow’s national distribution platform comprises 19 markets that cover 65 percent of the wine consumption in the U.S. Winebow Imports, representing over 100 estates from Europe and the Southern Hemisphere, balances its impressive growth with a culture of specialization and excellence. With a commitment to exceptional service, Winebow strives to be the best partner to its customers and suppliers, and to inspire a passion for fine wine and spirits nationwide. For more information, please visit www.winebow.com

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