

Testimonials for John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course

Richard Auffrey reviews this Sake course on, *The Passionate Foodie*, "I had certain preconceptions about him and the course. I expected much from the course, and was pleasantly surprised to find that it even exceeded my expectations. John was a superb instructor and the course was wonderful, refining and expanding my existing Saké knowledge. The class was comprehensive, detailed and John added plenty of interesting anecdotes. The tastings were especially compelling, with intriguing comparison tastings that truly assisted you in understanding the complexities and differences within Saké brewing. For anyone seeking a solid and firm knowledge base of Saké, this course receives my strongest recommendation. Read more, [here](#)."



Anna Lee Iijima shares her experience of attending "*The Sake Professional Course*" with an article in [Wine Enthusiast Magazine](#). Read about each day of the course from an attendee's viewpoint and learn how Anne ended her 3-day experience and became a Certified Sake Professional.

"I went to New York thinking I knew a lot about sake, but after attending John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course, I realized I had barely scratched the surface. Three days and 100+ sake tastings later, I have a plethora of new knowledge and an even deeper appreciation for sake. From rice varieties to koji to the effects different water has on the final product, every aspect of sake brewing is explored. John is an excellent teacher and communicator, and truly an expert in all things sake. ***I highly recommend this course for anyone who has a passion for sake.*** I greatly appreciate the effort and heart John put into making this course a meaningful and worthwhile experience and I can't wait to further my knowledge in Level 2!"

Karise Murayama
LosAngelesSake.com

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." Indeed, John has inspired me throughout my journey learning about sake. Beginning with his book, "Sake's Hidden Stories" I became fascinated with the attention to detail that goes into making excellent sake. It was a natural progression, then, for me to attend his Sake Professional course and I am so glad I did. It had everything from detailed sake brewing techniques, to extensive sake tastings, to lively discussions of all aspects of sake and the sake industry. If you are serious about sake then you don't want to miss this course.

Michael G. Emmons, App Apps, LLC 2009
Creator of the iPhone Sake tasting app

“In my role as Director of Education for Fedway Associates Inc., I have completed coursework from the Society of Wine Educators, the Wines and Spirit Education Trust and the Guild of the Sommelier. What do all these institutions lack? A course on sake! Thanks to John, ***I now have knowledge of all things sake and an incredible resource for information to share with our sales' force and their customers.*** Our portfolio includes over ten breweries and sales continue to grow so the need for comprehensive information is vital. It's not too bad to brag about passing the test either! John's teaching style is informative and casual but the salient points are clearly communicated and the handouts are well organized to make presentations easy to assemble. Whether you work in retail, restaurant or distribution, this class is peerless for sake education. Hope to see you in Japan for part 2!”

Gerry Peserchia, 2009
Fedway Associates

“I wasn't sure exactly what to expect from this course, but having sat-through as well as taught many wine courses (at all levels), I assumed it'd be similar. ***I was wrong!***

Let me explain: the primary reason I began teaching wine (and other beverage) was because, obsessed with wine, I attended many lectures, seminars, etc. Without fail, I witnessed a parade of dry-as-toast, droning, wine nerds who, though profoundly knowledgeable, failed to pass ANY knowledge on to their audience. It was as if their goal was to let everyone know how much THEY knew about wine, rather than espousing the goal of passing that knowledge on and creating passion and excitement for fledgling wine folks.



Having been familiar with John Gauntner's "Sake World" for many years ([Sake World](#) is a GREAT reference for those looking for a one-source site for all things Sake), I knew that the potential certainly existed for another non-learning experience. I could not have been more wrong. John's course was evenly-paced, intense, challenging and entertaining! He covers Sake in a "soup to nuts" fashion, without becoming mired in the minutiae (which I'm certain ...and hopeful...will come with the second level). John CLEARLY demonstrated his deep level of Sake knowledge, but filtered the information in a manner that inspired, rather than intimidated, an amateur like me.

Being on the wholesale side of the beverage business, my wine knowledge has only rare application in day-to-day calls. Because of John's course, however, I've already found that a working knowledge of Sake has huge benefits in everyday sales conversations! So far, there is nothing I learned in John's course that I've been unable to use, if needed, in the streets. For those, either in the beverage industry or aspiring to be in the industry, **this course IS A "MUST"**.

Tim Hirota
Southern Wine and Spirits

“If you are ready to take the next step in your fascination and love of sake the only way to go is up with John Gauntner. Consider the professional sake tasting course a graduate education as you explore the essence of sake from such an elevated perspective. ***This course tied in a perfect blend of understanding, appreciation and sheer fascination.*** Sake is indeed an art form and the professional sake tasting program provided me the proverbial ability to "pull the curtain back on the wizard" in terms of understanding the nuances and quirks that make this industry what it is. Whether you are a beginner or self-taught junky the SPC provides you the rarest of all perspectives on the inner-workings of an age-old profession that is exploding onto the global stage. ***John Gauntner is a once-in-a-lifetime tour guide and professor wrapped up in an enjoyable and personable package.*** In a word the professional sake tasting program is purely 'enjoyable' and an experience that will energize you for the rest of your life.”

Beau Timken, 2003

Owner/operator of True Sake, the first sake-only retailer in the United States

“As a producer of an alcohol-focused, educational television program, it was imperative that I gain as much information about the subject of sake as possible. My initial approach to learning this art was to gain knowledge by working in a sake brewery in Japan for the 2009 sake season. Once I completed my brewing internship program, I found that I was capable of producing one style of sake. However, I was not fully educated in the variety of the many different styles, regions, history or the nuances of the business industry as a whole. After partaking in John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course, where he passionately touts that "No sake stone left unturned" I realized he was not overstating. ***During this extensive and intensive course, there was truly "no Sake stone unturned."*** I feel with this program, together with my time brewing in Japan, I am well rounded in this subject matter and find that John's course will serve me well whether I use the knowledge for TV production, importation, sales or brewing.”

Richard Gummoe, 2009

Executive Producer, Boy Meets Girl TV

“What differentiates a great teacher from an average one is an innate and developed ability to balance fact with nuance. In his course, John displayed tremendous precision of thought supported by a nuanced and granular understanding of the global sake industry. John is a thought leader in the sake industry supported by his in-depth knowledge of the industry, access to a wide and deep network of industry professionals, and a lucid understanding of when the answer to a sake-related question is "It Depends" and when it is black and white. John's class is a well designed thoughtful class that can serve as a solid building block for someone interested in getting involved in the sake industry.”

Akshay Shetty, 2009

New York

“The Sake Professional Course is excellent because it covers both the theory and tasting of sake in excruciating detail. The material and class is organized very well which allowed me to dramatically increase my knowledge of sake in just 3 days of lectures. John also does a great job of injecting life into the material as well with industry stories & nuances that you would not be able to simply find in a book. One of the absolute highlights of the class is also how well the tastings are broken down. Tastings hundreds of different sakes without any organization over 3 days would just feel chaotic; however John does an excellent job of breaking them down in logical and thematic segments. This allowed me to really develop or train my palate to be able to taste everything from different rice types to regionally. ***If you really are interested in improved your theoretical sake knowledge and to begin learning how to taste sakes I highly recommend this class.***”

Ben Neidhart



“In June of 2010 I had the distinct pleasure of taking John Gauntner's Sake Professional Level 1

Course in San Francisco. We were promised "no sake stone left unturned," and John-sensei more than lived up to his word. The course was a very intense 3-day journey into everything sake, from harvesting of the rice through every step of the processing, to bottling, shipping, tasting, and enjoying.

Throughout the course John-sensei's incredible in-depth knowledge and passion for the subject kept our attention and made the course interesting and exciting. ***The three days went by too quickly, and I was very sad when it was over.***

Before taking the class I had read several books about sake and had even ordered and studied John-sensei's educational products from his [Sake World web site](#). I wondered if I had anything else to learn that I didn't already know. But ***reading and self-study only goes so far***. Johnsensei's insider knowledge gained from years of experience of being intimately involved in the sake industry in Japan add so much life and detail not available in any books, resulting in it being well worth the time and effort to take the Sake Professional Course. I'm hoping to take the Level 2 class when it's offered next year.

If you want to learn absolutely everything there is to know about sake, whether it be for business reasons or personal interest, ***I heartily recommend taking John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course***. It's time well-spent on a fascinating subject taught by the foremost authority on all things sake.”

Carl T. Geenen

“I took the Sake Professional Course in NYC in summer of '09. The course was thorough and fun with many of his interesting personal experiences in the Japan's sake world. ***I was amazed with not only John's extensive knowledge of sake but also his knowledge of Japanese culture, geography and history to go along with it. (He is more Japanese than I am!)*** Broad selections of sake were offered for tasting in the class to understand the differences of all kinds which I have never been able to experience before.

Another thing to mention was his passion of teaching. He was always attentive to anyone's questions in very approachable and kind manner. No questions were unanswered. I enjoyed the course very much. I would strongly recommend this course to anyone who is interested in learning about sake in depth. Looking forward to taking level 2 in Japan as soon as it becomes available.”

Iori Kataoka , 2009

Shuraku Sake Bar and Bistro / Zest Japanese Cuisine, Vancouver B.C. Canada

"No sake stone left unturned is the perfect description for this course. John goes into great depth and covers all of the intricacies that make up the wonderful ambrosia that is sake. Everyone who is lucky enough to take this course will leave it feeling that they are among a handful of people in the United States and around the world that have a real understanding of all the many facets that make up sake. ***John keeps the material interesting for both total sake neophytes as well as those who have a more advanced understanding of sake.*** John's manner is approachable and open and his teaching style is clear, and he is able to make even the most mundane facts interesting. I highly recommend this course to anyone wanting to explore the world of sake."

Blake Spahn, 2009

CEO, Ty Ku

“John's method of teaching both the "short answer" and the more "technically advanced" covers all ranges of people who one may be trying to educate. ***There is nothing in the Sake World that John does speak of.*** It is as comprehensive in the history, to brewing process, to culture, and to the tastings of almost 100 different Sakes that could not even imagine is paralleled. I highly recommend John's class no matter your Sake knowledge. You will learn, be entertained, and come out with a great understanding that Sake needs to be promoted to rid of the misconceptions and to clear the mystery behind this ancient beverage.”

Avery Martin, 2009

New York

“(John’s) course is essential for anyone that is truly passionate about sake. It is the necessary well rounded education on a topic that appears simple yet has so many underlying complexities that are necessary to understand for true appreciation. The course simplifies complex processes and pieces things together in a very cogent way that allows even the layman the ability to wrap their head around the topic. While the course goes in depth on the brewing process what is truly fascinating are the anecdotes used and historical facts that tie the topics together and keep the subject matter fresh and relevant. I thoroughly enjoyed the class and would recommend it to anyone.”

Kirk Spahn, 2009
Ty Ku

“The Sake Professional Course was extremely worthwhile and informative. An A to Z of sake. John is a first rate instructor; both his passion and knowledge are consistently conveyed throughout the course. The material is very well organized and approachable, yet sufficiently in depth. ***This is a "must attend" for anyone who wants to really understand sake.***”

Andrew T. Chrisomalis, 2009
COO, Ty Ku

"The Sake professional Course covered all aspects of sake, from brewing to tasting and provided the context for understanding the geographic variations of sake. ***John Gauntner is a superb lecturer who makes the subject of sake fascinating for all.***"

Mary Goetter, 2009
President, International Education Services, LLC

“I had the good fortune of taking the Sake Professionals' Course because the distribution company that I work for had the opportunity to send 1 person to the course because of our relationship with TYKU. Before taking the course I knew nothing about sake, beyond knowing that I enjoyed drinking it. ***The course not only demystified sake, but in fact I now feel as if I can hold an engaging high level conversation on the subject.*** Being a bit of a wine geek, I appreciated the high technical level of the course, particularly in reference to the production methodology and some of the chemistry, etc. Also, because the students were generally more advanced than I in their sake studies, I very much enjoyed and appreciated the fast pace of the class. I feel I learned an incredible amount and am so excited to continue to drink sake and expand my experience with sake.”

Jordan Lari, 2009
Empire Merchants



"John Gauntner's sake course is surely the most comprehensive available. For anyone wanting to learn everything there is to know this is the course for you!"

Brad Paddock
Rock Sake

“Just back from three days of Sake study, tastings and discussions that reinforced many points, answered numerous unanswered questions and gave plenty of fuel to help me continue to spread the love for premium sakes. **John's depth and breadth of knowledge knows no bounds and he has this uncanny ability to capture all of us from all levels and backgrounds and in a very short period of time be able speak to all on the same level.** An excellent program that I wouldn't hesitate recommending to anyone, whether an industry professional or an interested consumer who wants to fuel their sake passion!”

Patrick Ellis
Blue Note Wine & Spirits Inc.

" *** out of five!"** I laughed, I cried, I drank sake until it came out of my ears! John

Gauntner's sake professional course is unlike anything else out there, a delicious and intensely focused, yet thoroughly enjoyable exploration into the world of sake. I came away with a far deeper appreciation, not just for sake, but for Japanese culture and cuisine as well. Highly recommended.”

Todd Eng, 2007
Owner-operator of soon-to-be-opened sake pub in SF

“Thank you for your dedication to the sake world in general. I thoroughly enjoyed your class, and received great benefits from the knowledge I was able to gain through your course. I knew very little about sake starting your course but grew a "love" and appreciation for this obscure beverage. Even as I write this, I just got done tasting sake from one of our vendors, and was able to distinguish between what he was selling me and what I knew (for sure) from taking your class. In other words I was now informed and was able to make an intelligent choice based on the knowledge gleaned from your course. **This course was invaluable to me.** On a personal note I am able to enjoy Asian cuisine (sushi, Thai, Chinese, etc.) paired with a sake of my choice, which enhances my dining experience.”

Robert Perry
GM-Khotan at Treasure Island

“Thank you very much! I can't tell you how much I appreciated taking your course. As I said before, I really respect your style of teaching. The manual was very thorough. Your lecture was replete with brewery stories which put the technical data in perspective. Your explanations were very clear as you guided us from simple to complex. The comparative tastings perfectly solidified my understanding of the subject matter. ***It's one thing to learn about sake, it's another to experience what was just learned.*** I have always taught people that the best way to learn about wine is to read and taste. I look forward to taking SPC 2. Thank you very much for allowing me to begin my journey in this wonderful world. On a side note, I have earnestly begun experimenting with non-Japanese food and sake pairings. I am enjoying the umami-to-umami (U2U) connection.”

Jonathan Davis, Las Vegas, 2009
Southern Wine and Spirits, Las Vegas

“I was exposed to premium sake 25 yrs. ago by a Japanese sushi chef, who taught me the correct way to eat and enjoy all Japanese food. He would occasionally get a bottle brought to him by someone returning from Japan. Nobu-San would share and explain what I was having but it was confusing and a little hard to understand.

I now work in a wine store owned by two Master Sommeliers. We have always been a leading edge kind of store and started carrying premium sake almost ten years ago. We stumbled through learning what we could from some articles and suppliers info until we became aware of your book and subsequently your enthusiasm for sake. One of the owners has taken your course in New York and two courses in Japan; her enthusiasm has driven our sales and an ever expanding selection of sake. I attended the class with the other owner so that we could begin to keep up with Sally.

The way you presented the vast array of information in a clean and logical order opened my eyes to so much I had taken for granted. Sake is liquid art and as such is very subjective, however understanding the history, materials and techniques can make for a much more gratifying experience.

As the buyer for the store ***I now have the ability and desire to choose and present a broader and more interesting selection of sake's and to educate and inform our customers to another interesting and exciting beverage choice.*** Domo! Sensei!!”

Jeff Mathews, 2009
The Boulder Wine Merchant

“The course was great! John was his usual fountain of sake knowledge when teaching. The 90 or so bottles we tasted covered a wide range of styles, rices, yeasts, ages, etc. There is certainly ***no better opportunity in the US to taste and evaluate such a collection with such all-star instruction.*** Overall it was a great experience - ***highly recommended*** for anyone interested in sake.”

Wayne Belding, 2009
The Boulder Wine Merchant

“This is an excellent and comprehensive class on sake. I don't think there was a "stone unturned" or a question un-answered, and the tastings were some of the most thoughtful I have ever encountered in the wine/sake/beverage business. We compared rice varieties, yeast strains, regions, pressing techniques, temperature differences, and quality levels, and the sakes chosen for these tastings demonstrated the differences and made sense. ***John is an amazing teacher, and does a great job of explaining a very complicated beverage in understandable steps.*** I recommend this class to anyone interested in sake, regardless of their profession. Very inspiring and eye-opening!”

Morgan Hartman, 2009
Vine Connections LLC

”Having the unique opportunity to learn about sake from John was truly enjoyable and memorable. The amount of knowledge he has gathered over the years in a field that is not so easy to access, especially for non-Japanese, is amazing. ***I highly recommend taking this intense course if you are in any way interested in sake.*** Tastings are also very well done, always with a very specific purpose, whether to showcase regional styles, sake rice types, even serving temperatures and vessels. It was great to ***taste almost 100 sakes in three days***, especially those that are impossible to find in the US. This enriching experience was hard to beat and I am certain my sake program with over 120 labels will immensely benefit from it.”

Dieter Xiao, 2009
General Manager, Shibuya Restaurant, MGM Grand Las Vegas



“One with the lot! ***John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course is the one stop, be-all and end-all, look no further, insight into the world of sake.*** From the basics through to the nitty gritty, all points are covered and it's one hell of a ride. During the first section of the course, each day participants are skillfully guided through the tastings and technical in the classroom, then masterfully unleashed into the world of izakayas and sake bars at night to put their newfound knowledge to the test. John is always there for you, with his limitless knowledge and unyielding passion for one of the world's great drinks. His expertly prepared class notes, extensive tasting hints and well considered evening haunts make this course a must do for anyone who has more than passing interest in sake. The excursions into the world of sake brewing and the kura visits are worth their weight in gold, an experience you would not be able to enjoy by any other means.”

Andre Bishop, 2007

Owner, Izakaya Chuji Japanese Restaurant Chain, Melbourne, Australia

“I am the gallery manager for Lesley Kehoe Galleries, dealers in fine Japanese works of art. In January 2007 I was fortunate enough to attend the sake professional course in Tokyo. The course was a thorough and enlightened introduction to the many guises of Nihonshu. Unlike many of the attendees, I am not involved professionally in the beverage industry however this was no barrier to John presenting a clear and balanced presentation of the available information. The range of sake on tasting was extensive and represented a huge variety of styles. ***I came away from the course on massive high and would not hesitate in recommending this course.*** Become a 酒人(sake person)!!”

Trevor Fleming

Lesley Kehoe Galleries, Australia

“If you've been bitten by that alluring sake bug like I was ten years ago, and you want to take a deeper dive into this "drink of the gods" for your professional development or purely as a personal quest, take John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course. As an avid sake enthusiast and restaurateur, I found tremendous value in this course. Over the intensive course, John will guide you through an engaging tour of this wonderful beverage that is as complex and fascinating as wine - - from the history and tradition thousands of years old, to visits to modern day sake brewers where you will have the privilege of seeing the brewing process in action. The "classroom" education is reinforced by tastings of numerous sakes. John's anecdotes and stories, collected over decades of his immersion in the sake world, add vivid texture to the course. And of course, it is sake after all, so your fellow classmates are pretty much guaranteed to be fun and come from a host of interesting backgrounds.

If you like sake, love sake, want to learn about it for your professional or personal development, or even have a slight interest in digging deeper than admiring those beautiful labels, take the Sake Professional Course.”

Nancy Cushman, 2006

Proprietor & Sake Sommelier of O Ya Restaurant in Boston, MA

“I thought I already knew a lot about sake. I was wrong. We tasted many amazing sakes not available in Canada, and many that were brought in from Japan. Mr. Gauntner's articulate lectures were very enjoyable, and he delighted us with many anecdotal moments from his experiences in Japan. John Gauntner's course mantra is 'Leave no sake stone unturned'. It was indeed enlightening to know that what I knew was the equivalent of a grain of sand'. Thanks John!”

Michael Tremblay

Event Coordinator, ki modern japanese + bar

“Considering whether to take John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course is a no brainer.

When you complete the course, you'll be a sake aficionado schooled by one of the great sake experts in the world, who'll have personally guided you through numerous tastings and brewery tours in Japan. It's a unique opportunity not to be missed by anyone with a keen interest in sake.

John's passion for sake is evident in his books and articles, which are wonderfully written and informative, but they're nothing compared to being in the same room listening to this guy talk. From the basics of how sake is made, to the nitty-gritty of yeast strains, to his many enjoyable sake anecdotes and observations, John's enthusiasm is palpable and inspiring.

It was remarkable to meet others--from different countries and walks of life--and bond via our mutual love of sake. It made me realize just how far-reaching this drink's popularity and influence has spread outside of Japan.

The course allowed me to truly understand, by seeing first-hand, the depth of tradition and care that goes into the craft of sake-making, which has only further enhanced my interest and appreciation for nihonshu.”

Elise Gee, 2006

Sake Educator

“Hiroko and I couldn't have had a more thorough immersion in all aspects of sake than that which we experienced at with the SPC this past January in Tokyo. I can't imagine how any course on sake could have been more comprehensive and, equally important was that the material was presented in the most articulate, easily understandable and absorbable fashion...not so easy for a subject fraught with complexity and inextricably intertwined with thousands of years of Japanese culture. This is THE definitive course of study for anyone who is passionate about sake and/or involved with serving or selling it. We cannot thank you enough for giving us the foundation necessary to launch our shop in NYC!”

Rick Smith & Hiroko Furukawa, 2007

Sakaya...New York's first shop specializing in sake



“What a lucky person who has the opportunity to meet the Sakeguy! John Gauntner is extremely well versed in all aspects of Nihon-shu, the national beverage of Japan. His presentations, tastings, courses, as well as books and numerous articles attest to a lifelong commitment and love of all things Sake. If you have a desire to know more about this exquisite elixir; John can de-mystify, add clarity and enhance your appreciation. He is an excellent teacher, never a dull minute, and well worth twice the price for all that is imparted in any of his educational venues. The Professional Course brings together all aspects of Sake. It is presented in a simple, logical and straightforward manner. A beginner is not befuddled, and the more seasoned Sake aficionado is not left wanting. All material is well presented, made interesting to professionals in the field and laymen alike.

I found his Level I Course to meet my needs. Being of a longtime resident of Japan, but nonfluent in Japanese, socially engaged, but not as knowledgeable about my now first preferred alcoholic beverage. I am now very comfortable hosting my Sake parties, and speaking about Sake with more authority than I had before. ***I most highly recommend this course to anyone having more than a passing interest in Sake as a beverage and to gain insight into one theme in the Japanese way of life.***”

Mike Brenyo, D.D.S., Las Vegas 2009
Yokosuka Japan

“John's course is a must for anyone interested in sake. I strongly suggest getting in as soon as possible because the interest in sake and John's classes get's bigger every year. His approach to teaching the ways of sake is down to earth and very comprehensive. I use what I have learned on a daily basis with my staff and clientele. It was an honor to be in the presence of someone so knowledgeable and so humble. It is easy to see why the Japanese sake community loves him so. I look forward to taking the advanced class in February of 2008. Thank you John for being a wonderful sensei and a hell of a guy.”

David A. Roth, 2007
General Manager Koji -Yakitori - Sake - Bar, Hartford CT.

“John Gauntner's "Professional Sake Course" was a fabulous learning and tasting experience. His deep knowledge, passion and understanding of sake (in all its beautiful vagueness) is evident to all who take his course. John's intention to "leave no sake stone unturned" over the three days of intensive study and tasting exceeded expectations. The sake industry, hotel and restaurant professionals in attendance conveyed to me the level of talent seeking out John's take on the world of sake.”

Phil Heyser, Las Vegas 2009
CS,SSI

“The saki course was great and anyone who is passionate about saki or in the industry will strongly benefit from the course. Except for your books finding good solid info about saki for the English speaker can be a difficult task. The course not only sheds light on all the ins and outs of saki production from the grain to the bottle but also has numerous tastings designed between/after the lessons. We tasted over 90 sakis in three days and this really helped me open my mind to the different flavors and possibilities in the world of saki. The course itself is very well organized; you also receive a great handbook with all the info from the lessons. John is a good and patient teacher, who takes time for all students' questions and is thorough in his explanations. If it's saki you're into, there is no better place to go. Kampai.”

Michael Opalenski, 2009
B. United

“In the world of sake, understanding the dynamics can seem vague and obscure. Sake, unlike other forms of alcohol, is a process that not many are capable of explaining because it is far more complex than most. ***John has the unique ability to uncover the veil of the sake world as he guides us through the lose translation and dimensions of the process itself.*** The course not only goes in depth regarding the fundamentals of sake, it also teaches you to use your senses to guide you through understanding the various types of sakes there are and the history behind them. The experience not only left no stone unturned, but generated the stepping stones I needed to become a better success at my workplace as well as build the confidence to better educate and understand a trade that I’ve grown to love. Taking this course is like traveling to a far off country to understand its culture you never come back as the same person. With that said, I look forward to experiencing taking level 2 in Japan.”

Bernadette Stanton, Las Vegas 2009
Sake specialist at Hachi, Red Rock Resort, Las Vegas

“Just wanted to let you know how fantastic I thought the Sake Professional Course was. The tastings were first-class; I'd never seen so many different types of sake all together in one place before. I didn't expect to have so many sake to taste and study and was pleasantly surprised. The instruction was clear and easy to follow. Everything was presented in a logical order and was great for someone who knew absolutely nothing about sake. ***As a sommelier and bartending instructor everything I learned is really going to take my career to the next level and help me offer something totally unique to my students and clients!*** Thanks John! Looking forward to Level II.”

Kristy Koehler
Vancouver, Canada

“Having lived in Japan for more than 25 years I remember John's first sake articles in the English language newspaper. Long before all the world's information became “google-able” I patiently waited each sake article. I remember thinking, ***“This man is interpreting the ‘Rosetta stone’ of sake”!*** He is making perfect sense of the hieroglyphics on sake labels and installment after installment he is explaining the intricacies of a product whose sophistication I so appreciated, but could not easily articulate.

John's books were added to the newspaper clippings. And as I prepared to leave Japan and return to my native New York it was John's writings that made me eager to learn even more and become part of the niche of sake lovers and sake professionals. When I heard of the Sake Professional Course I could not resist. John breathed life and a fiery passion into all the words in his articles and books. The pace of the class demanded one's full attention. And taste buds needed to be set at Orange Alert so as not to miss the subtle nuances of the awesome selection of fine sake John prepared for us to taste.



I was able to parlay 25 years of professional experience in Japan and the invaluable lessons of the Sake Professional Course to secure a wonderful job in the trade. And I refer to the text and to John whenever I have a question. In Japan they say that it is rude for a student to “praise” a teacher. So I will paraphrase a Buddhist teaching, ***“I rely on the teacher; the teacher relies on me”*** Meaning that just I relied on the excellence that I knew the teacher would bring to the course. I want John to be able to rely on me, his student to disseminate correct information and maintain the integrity, passion and joy of sake he so generously shared with all of us in his Sake Professional Course. I am forever indebted.”

Linda Noel Kawabata
USA Brand Manager Akita Sake Promotion and Export Council

“Sam Calagione, the founder of Dogfish Head Breweries once said, "The only teachers worth listening to are those who realize that you might have something to teach them, too." ***John is one of these great teachers, his passion for sake is amazing and infectious, and his array of accumulated knowledge is vast.*** He remains approachable and open-minded which ensures that he and his students always keep learning and having fun. The best way to learn is to do; the course embodies this spirit and is not only a way to receive a formal sake education, but perhaps the only real way to receive a genuine understanding of the subject.”

Yoed Anis, June 2010

Austin Texas

“The three day Level I Sake Professional Course intensive was exactly that, intense! I had no idea there was so much depth and detail concerning the production and brewing of sake. I have been in the Food and Beverage Industry for over 10 years. I have spent most of that time in New York City and Las Vegas as a bartender, but I have never been exposed to or needed to learn about the world of Sake. I was just awarded my Certified Specialist of Spirits in July of 2009 and promoted to Master Mixologist of MGM Grand Hotel and Casino, yet still no exposure to sake, until your course. ***I found your understanding and depth of knowledge to be remarkable.***

Likewise, your course material and approach to teaching, while probably not for the novice enthusiast, was very comprehensible for the Beverage Professional student. ***I found myself not only learning, but becoming excited about this new found knowledge.*** As we progressed through the material and days I started making the connections within the process and found myself less bogged down by the language barrier. In short, it all started making sense. I was amazed at how much knowledge could be attained in the allotted amount of time. Apart from the classroom material, I had never been exposed to the number and styles of sake in the tasting module. I appreciate the structure of the daily tasting as each one focused on a specific theme. We had geographical tasting, rice varietals tasting, quality difference tasting, and vintage tasting and as we moved through each one you not only gained appreciation for the different styles, but you also began to understand the difference and impact of each decision in the brewing process.

All together, as a professional in the industry, ***I found this course invaluable at increasing my knowledge and comfort with a product that up until now was completely foreign to me.*** I now feel effective at recommending sake to our guests and being able to decipher any sake label. I would like to thank John for his passion and tireless devotion to his craft. To openly offer your knowledge and expertise to others is a tremendously humbling gift. Repeatedly throughout the course John expressed how each of us “own him” now, but I think that is a reciprocal feeling. It is all of our responsibility to spread the knowledge and passion John has been so kind to impart and therefore he “owns” a team of ambassadors around the world. In closing, ***I would recommend this class to all industry professionals as well as any sake enthusiast.***

Kent Bearden, CSS

*Master Mixologist, MGM Grand Hotel
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA*

“Thanks for being the best guide possible into the realm of Sake. You are an engaging presenter and an expert from whom I learned a ton. I was a hundred percent impressed with the course experience.”

Kenneth Stutz
Stutz Company Inc.
Piedmont, CA

“I thoroughly enjoyed the Sake Professional Course with you in San Francisco, this summer. I knew that I had absorbed a great deal of information during the tastings and lectures, but was pleased with how events unfolded on my return. I arrived back to the heat of Dallas and was a guest at a going away party for one of our Aikido instructors. I was promptly given the sake menu at the sushi restaurant and admonished to pick good sake for the group! I was obviously being put on the spot (they knew where I had been!) and the pressure was on to perform. I was pleased to be able to look at the sake selection of around 10 sakes and recognize each one. I was able to answer the group’s questions and select a few bottles to meet everyone's tastes (we decided on the Tokubetsu Junmai (high milling rate of a ginjo), the Dai Ginjo and the Nigori sake). Everyone was pleased with the selections and I left feeling that my time and money with you had been well spent. I look forward to returning to Japan and joining you for the brewery tour and level two class!”

Dr. Nick Chamberlain, June, 2010
Chamberlain Studios of Self Defense
Dallas, TX 75220

“I participated in John Gauntner's Sake Professional Course January 2006. In my perception, ***this is the best way for a non Japanese speaker to get a proper understanding of sake, and I would strongly recommend anyone with a dedicated interest in sake to take this course.*** It is however, important to take the whole course, including the visits to the various breweries, as this gives a broader understanding of the cultural and technical aspects of sake and sake brewing. The 5 days of which my course took place, was extremely tiring, as the day's itinerary was packed. This is however a good thing, as I felt I did nothing but living, thinking and doing sake for 5 days. I cannot write about this course, without mentioning the dinners which followed every day's classes. This included everything from restaurants to Izakayas where the meals, the sake and the atmosphere were absolutely wonderful.”

Kjetil Jikiun, 2006
Head Brewer, Nogne O, Det Kompromisslose Bryggeri AS, Norway

“If you are looking to enhance your knowledge on saké and experience first hand all that you need to possibly learn and taste, this course has it all...and much more! John made sure all the critical points on saké brewing and more were extensively covered during the course and was extremely accommodating in fielding the numerous questions thrown his way. The ultimate professional!”

Les Pung
Elk Grove CA

“Everyone can learn from John's course -- from home brewers to bar managers to distributor professionals. The course is well structured and covers everything from the core basics to a detailed exploration of the production process, which is critical if you want to educate others about the intricacies of Japanese saké. Advanced topics include issues that you can find very little about, including slow brewing yeast starters, the chemistry of saké and a look at the regional variations across the country. Tasting is a key component of the course and John does an excellent job of selecting sakés to demonstrate key points throughout the course. I wouldn't hesitate recommending this course to anyone interested in saké. John is sincere in that he wants to create a network of people who can educate the world about saké and dispel many of the myths that have held the category from gaining widespread acceptance in the mainstream market.

Jim Andrews
Founder/CEO, Wasabé Beverages Inc

John's course was fun and informative! He definitely knows his sake and consequently, now so do I.

Craig Dahlberg, 2009
moto-i in Minneapolis

