Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) Level 3 Award in Sake Practice Exam Sample Study Guide

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Questions

1. What is a potential consequence of high acidity in sake?

A. It can make the sake overly sweet

B. It enhances balance with sugar levels

C. It decreases fermentation strength

D. It reduces overall flavour

2. Which criteria are generally used to grade rice in sake production?

A. Moisture level and the percentage of broken, cracked, dead, or under-ripe grains

B. Color and texture of the grains

C. Size and weight of the rice grains

D. Flavor profile and aroma characteristics

3. How does climate affect sake production?

A. It has no effect on sake production

B. It can influence fermentation and flavor profile

C. It primarily affects the aging process

D. It determines the types of rice that can be used

4. How is sediment disgorged from an individual bottle of sake?

A. By pouring it out slowly

B. By shaking the bottle

C. By freezing it and then opening

D. By using a centrifuge

5. What technique can help achieve the correct moisture level when soaking rice with a low polishing ratio?

A. Using hot water for soaking

B. Soaking in large batches

C. Timing the soaking with a stopwatch

D. Soaking rice overnight

6. What is a key function of yeast in fermentation?

A. To produce carbon dioxide only

B. To transform sugar into alcohol

C. To prevent spoilage of the product

D. To enhance the taste profile of the beverage

7. What is the primary nutrient that Kōji provides to yeast during fermentation?

A. Amino acids

B. Vitamins

C. Alcohol

D. Carbon dioxide

8. What happens to rice if the temperature is too hot?

A. The grains become harder to handle in the brewery

B. The yield increases significantly

C. The flavor improves dramatically

D. The grains produce more sugar

9. What is an alternative method for removing sediment from sake?

A. Filtration under low pressure

B. Transferring to a pressurised tank

C. Given time to settle

D. Using a powdered filter

10. Why do sake brewers build fermentation batches in stages?

A. To enhance the flavor complexity of the sake

B. To allow yeast to dominate quickly and reduce spoilage microorganisms

C. To make the fermentation process more economical

D. To simplify the brewing process

Answers

1. B
2. A
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. B
7. A
8. A
9. B
10. B

Explanations

1. What is a potential consequence of high acidity in sake?

A. It can make the sake overly sweet

B. It enhances balance with sugar levels

C. It decreases fermentation strength

D. It reduces overall flavour

High acidity in sake plays a critical role in enhancing the balance with sugar levels. When sake possesses elevated levels of acidity, it creates a dynamic interplay with the sweetness derived from residual sugars. This interaction is essential for achieving a well-rounded flavor profile that prevents the sake from tasting flat or overly sweet. High acidity can also contribute to a refreshing quality, making the sake more vibrant and lively. A well-balanced sake, where acidity works harmoniously with sweetness, is often more enjoyable and can offer a more complex tasting experience. This understanding highlights how acidity functions not just as a separate attribute but as a key player in the overall balance of flavors within sake, underscoring the importance of acidity in crafting quality brews.

2. Which criteria are generally used to grade rice in sake production?

A. Moisture level and the percentage of broken, cracked, dead, or under-ripe grains

B. Color and texture of the grains

C. Size and weight of the rice grains

D. Flavor profile and aroma characteristics

The correct answer focuses on the specific criteria that are essential in the grading of rice for sake production. In sake brewing, the quality of the rice is paramount, and it is assessed based on its moisture level and the percentage of broken, cracked, dead, or under-ripe grains. These factors directly influence the quality of the sake produced. Moisture level is crucial because it affects the rice's ability to absorb water during the washing and soaking processes, which is critical for successful fermentation. The integrity of the grains also plays a significant role; broken or damaged grains can lead to inconsistent cooking and poor starch conversion during fermentation. Thus, assessing the condition of the rice ensures that only the best quality grains are used, which is fundamental to producing premium sake. In contrast, while color, texture, size, weight, flavor profile, and aroma are all important elements in various aspects of rice or final sake evaluation, they are not the primary criteria for grading rice in the context of sake production.

3. How does climate affect sake production?

A. It has no effect on sake production

B. It can influence fermentation and flavor profile

C. It primarily affects the aging process

D. It determines the types of rice that can be used

Climate plays a significant role in sake production, particularly by influencing fermentation and the flavor profile of the finished product. Temperature is a critical factor during fermentation, as yeast activity can vary significantly with changes in climate. Warmer conditions can lead to faster fermentation rates and potentially more fruity or estery flavors, while cooler temperatures may slow fermentation and promote cleaner, more delicate profiles. Additionally, humidity levels can impact the moisture content in the air, which can affect the koji mold development, essential for converting starches in the rice into sugars. The effect of climate extends to the overall environment where the rice is grown, including factors like rainfall, sunlight, and seasonal variations. These environmental conditions can influence the quality of the sake rice, its starch content, and ultimately affect flavor and aroma compounds during fermentation. Other options do not accurately capture the breadth of climate's influence. Climate does indeed affect the aging process, but it's not its primary role in sake production. While climate can have some impact on the types of rice that can be cultivated, the predominant effect is on fermentation processes and flavor outcomes. Hence, option B encapsulates the essential connection between climate and sake production.

4. How is sediment disgorged from an individual bottle of sake?

A. By pouring it out slowly

B. By shaking the bottle

C. By freezing it and then opening

D. By using a centrifuge

The process of disgorging sediment from a bottle of sake is effectively achieved by freezing the liquid and then opening the bottle. This method, often referred to as "shocking," involves immersing the neck of a bottle in ice or using a freezing solution to rapidly lower the temperature of the sake in that area. As the liquid in the neck freezes, the sediment, which is generally denser than the liquid, becomes trapped in the ice. Once the neck is frozen, the bottle is opened, and the sudden pressure change forces the ice and sediment out, leaving a clearer sake in the bottle. This technique is particularly effective for sparkling sakes, such as nigori or any sake that has undergone secondary fermentation in the bottle, as it allows for the removal of deposits without significant loss of the product itself. It helps maintain both the quality and flavor profile of the sake, as other methods might disturb the delicate balance of flavors. On the other hand, slowly pouring out the sake can lead to sediment being mixed back into the clear liquid, while shaking the bottle would create agitation that could cause the sediment to blend back into the sake. Using a centrifuge, while effective in other contexts for separating liquids, is not a typical method employed in the sake

5. What technique can help achieve the correct moisture level when soaking rice with a low polishing ratio?

A. Using hot water for soaking

B. Soaking in large batches

C. Timing the soaking with a stopwatch

D. Soaking rice overnight

The technique that helps achieve the correct moisture level when soaking rice with a low polishing ratio is timing the soaking with a stopwatch. This method is crucial because rice with a low polishing ratio typically has more bran and outer husk, which can influence how quickly it absorbs water. By timing the soaking process accurately, a brewer can ensure that the rice absorbs just the right amount of water needed to achieve an optimal moisture level. Over-soaking can result in a mushy texture and undesirable flavors, while under-soaking can lead to hard grains that do not cook properly. Therefore, using a stopwatch allows for precise control over the soaking duration, which is essential for producing high-quality sake. While other methods such as using hot water or soaking rice overnight may seem beneficial, they do not specifically address the need for careful timing in the context of rice with a low polishing ratio. Soaking in large batches could also result in uneven moisture distribution and is not as effective for controlling the absorption rate. Thus, timing is the key factor in achieving the desired outcome.

6. What is a key function of yeast in fermentation?

A. To produce carbon dioxide only

B. To transform sugar into alcohol

C. To prevent spoilage of the product

D. To enhance the taste profile of the beverage

The key function of yeast in fermentation is to transform sugar into alcohol. During the fermentation process, yeast consumes the sugars present in the must or mash and converts them into ethanol (alcohol) and carbon dioxide through the process of anaerobic respiration. This transformation is crucial in the production of alcoholic beverages, including sake, as it directly affects the alcohol content and creates the characteristic flavors and aromas associated with the beverage. While yeast does produce carbon dioxide as a byproduct of fermentation, its primary role is not limited to this aspect. The prevention of spoilage is also important in the fermentation process, but it is primarily the alcohol produced that helps inhibit the growth of undesirable microorganisms, rather than being a direct function of yeast. Additionally, while yeast can play a role in enhancing the taste profile, its main function during fermentation remains the conversion of sugar into alcohol.

7. What is the primary nutrient that Kōji provides to yeast during fermentation?

A. Amino acids

B. Vitamins

C. Alcohol

D. Carbon dioxide

Kōji, which is a mold used in the production of sake, primarily serves to convert starches in rice into fermentable sugars through the action of enzymes. One crucial aspect of this process is that Kōji also produces amino acids, which are essential nutrients for yeast during fermentation. These amino acids contribute to yeast health and boost fermentation, leading to a more complex flavor profile in the final product. While vitamins are beneficial, they are not the primary nutrient utilized by yeast in the fermentation process; rather, they can support overall yeast health but do not directly fuel fermentation like amino acids do. Alcohol and carbon dioxide are byproducts of the fermentation process rather than nutrients provided to yeast. Therefore, the primary nutrient that Kōji provides to yeast during fermentation is indeed amino acids.

8. What happens to rice if the temperature is too hot?

A. The grains become harder to handle in the brewery

B. The yield increases significantly

C. The flavor improves dramatically

D. The grains produce more sugar

When rice is exposed to excessively high temperatures, it can adversely affect its handling during the sake brewing process. Specifically, elevated temperatures can lead to issues such as increased brittleness, making the grains harder to manage during milling and fermentation. This is particularly critical in the sake production process, as the quality and integrity of the rice are essential for the overall quality of the final product. The other options suggest improvements or enhancements that do not occur as a direct result of high temperatures. For instance, increased temperatures do not lead to a significant rise in yield, an improvement in flavor, or enhanced sugar production. In fact, high temperatures can interfere with the enzymatic processes that convert starches from the rice into sugar, which are integral to fermentation. Thus, handling becomes more difficult, emphasizing the importance of regulating temperature to maintain the ideal conditions for sake production.

9. What is an alternative method for removing sediment from sake?

A. Filtration under low pressure

B. Transferring to a pressurised tank

C. Given time to settle

D. Using a powdered filter

The method of transferring sake to a pressurized tank serves as an alternative technique for removing sediment. This process allows the sake to be under pressure, which aids in the separation of solid particles from the liquid. The sediment can be effectively pushed towards the bottom of the tank due to the pressure, facilitating a cleaner extraction of the liquid above. Using a pressurized tank can also help maintain the aromatic compounds and overall quality of the sake while reducing the risk of oxidation that could occur with other sediment removal methods. This technique is particularly valuable in preserving the delicate flavors of premium sakes, which is essential for high-quality production. Time to settle, a method indicated in one of the other choices, relies on gravitational forces to allow solid particles to naturally fall to the bottom, which can be effective but often takes longer and may not achieve the same level of clarity as pressurizing the sake. Similarly, filtration under low pressure or using powdered filters involves different techniques that, while effective in their own right, do not utilize the benefits derived from maintaining the sake in a pressurized environment.

10. Why do sake brewers build fermentation batches in stages?

A. To enhance the flavor complexity of the sake

B. To allow yeast to dominate quickly and reduce spoilage microorganisms

C. To make the fermentation process more economical

D. To simplify the brewing process

Sake brewers build fermentation batches in stages primarily to allow yeast to dominate quickly and reduce spoilage microorganisms. This method, known as "multiple parallel fermentation," involves gradually adding ingredients in a controlled manner, enabling the yeast to take hold and outcompete harmful microorganisms. By creating an environment where the fermentation process is managed carefully, the brewers can ensure that the desired yeast strains flourish, which is crucial for producing high-quality sake. This staged approach not only helps in achieving better yeast performance but also minimizes the risk of off-flavors and undesirable spoilage. It ensures that fermentation temperature and conditions can be optimized at different stages to support yeast health and activity throughout the process. Other options may suggest enhancements to flavor complexity, economic efficiency, or simplification of brewing, but the most critical purpose of staging is to foster a robust yeast population that secures the integrity and quality of the sake during fermentation.