

Up to now & From now on

A Story Matured on Grapevines



Kyotoh Area
Wine Resort Promotion Council
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Kyotoh Area
Wine Resort Promotion Council

JAPAN HERITAGE
A Landscape Interwoven with Vineyards:
Kyotoh Area, Yamanashi Prefecture

Grape Cultivation

The fruits of grape farmers' careful work and effort throughout the year

Japan Heritage: "A Landscape Interwoven with Vineyards: Kyotoh Area, Yamanashi Prefecture" (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2018)
Introducing a story matured on grapevines

January to February

Pruning

Cutting off old branches, with an image of how you want the new branches to grow.

November to December

Pest control & soil preparation

Although the harvest is over, there is still work to do, such as pest control and fertilization for the following year.

September to October

Harvest

Harvest the grapes, according to their color and sugar level. The Koshu variety may be harvested later in some areas.

July

Bagging and shading

As grapes mature they become more vulnerable to disease, so bag or shade each bunch, which will mainly protect against the effects of rain.



Harvesting

June

Berry thinning

Remove excessive grape berries from clusters that look to be growing too big. Decide the final quantity of berries and thin all the clusters accordingly.



Shading

June

Gibberellin processing

This is the time for gibberellin processing, to produce seedless grapes. Rain renders the process ineffective, so pay careful attention to the weather.



Berry thinning

June

Cluster thinning

In large grape bunches, only the clusters at the tips tend to mature. So cut off the unnecessary clusters one by one with scissors.



Cluster thinning

March

Preparation for budbreak

Induce branches to grow evenly along trellises and eliminate overwintering pests.

April to May

Shoot thinning

If all new shoots are left as is, the plant may grow unevenly so its important to thin out unnecessary shoots.

It is estimated that grape farmers walk the length and breadth of their fields a total of 20 to 30 times every year. After tending to every branch, bunch, and berry, when the grapes ripen and the season of harvest arrives, the fruits of their labor are delivered to bring joy to numerous expectant consumers.

April~

Pest & disease control

As shoots grow, pests also become active, so its necessary to perform pest control and monitor plant growth daily.

May

Induce new canopy growth

Pull the new branches along the grapevine trellis where there is new growth. The work of guiding the leaves to grow evenly along the trellis is difficult.

May

Disbudding

Naturally, multiple bunches of grapes grow on each branch. Buds are removed to reduce this to just one or two bunches per branch which promotes stronger growth.



Grape flowers bloom in June

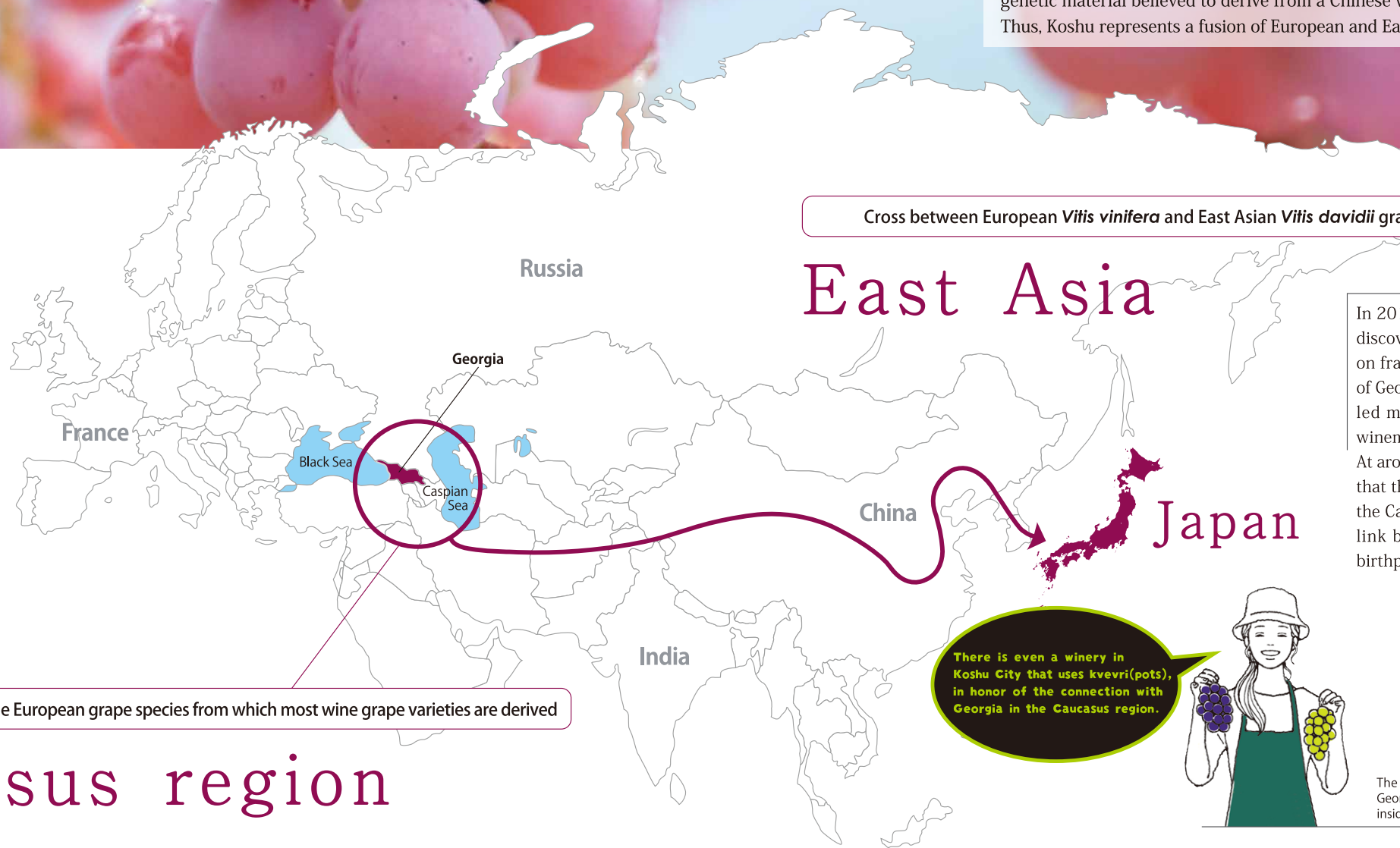


Koshu Grapes

What is “Koshu”? And where did it come from?

“Koshu” is a grape variety unique to Japan. It is also the essential ingredient of “Koshu wine,” which is recognized as a “Japan Heritage Constituent Cultural Asset.” What are the roots of this reddish pink grape variety?

According to the findings of a DNA analysis conducted by the National Research Institute of Brewing in 2013, reported at a conference of the American Society for Enology & Viticulture (Japan Chapter), the Koshu variety of grapes is a cross between the European common grape vine *Vitis vinifera* and the East Asian wild vine species *Vitis davidii*. The European common grape vine is reported to originate in the Caucasus region, but in addition to this DNA, Koshu also contains genetic material believed to derive from a Chinese wild grape vine. Thus, Koshu represents a fusion of European and East Asian grapes.



Birthplace of *Vitis vinifera*, the European grape species from which most wine grape varieties are derived

Caucasus region

In 2017 it was announced that scientists had discovered evidence of fermented grape wine on fragments of pottery found in the country of Georgia in the Caucasus region. This finding led many to believe that the practice of winemaking originated in the Caucasus. At around the same time, a DNA analysis found that the Koshu grape variety also has roots in the Caucasus. These findings establish a close link between Koshu, Koshu wine and the birthplace of winemaking in the Caucasus.

There is even a winery in Koshu City that uses kvevri(pots), in honor of the connection with Georgia in the Caucasus region.



The kvevri earthenware pots were traditionally used in Georgia for winemaking. The wine ferments and matures inside the pots, which are lined with beeswax.

Theories Legends

How long ago were "Koshu" grapes first cultivated?



Medicine Buddha statue (Important Cultural Property) at Daizenji Temple, Koshu City

Early Nara period (year 718)

Koshu is a grape variety indigenous to Japan that has been cultivated for a long time, most notably in the Kyotoh district. There are various legends about its origin. One legend points to the bunch of grapes held by the Medicine Buddha statue at Daizenji Temple in Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City (whose main hall is a National Treasure). A famous monk of the time, Gyoki, is said to have carved the Buddha image based on a dream he had while visiting the area. According to the legend, the statue was enshrined at the temple, Gyoki began growing grapes, and grape cultivation in the area expanded.

Considering that grapes were brought to Japan from China along with Buddhism, as a medicinal plant, this legend about the origins of Koshu as a grape-producing district makes sense.



Fujikiri Festival at Daizenji Temple

The annual Fujikiri Festival held at Daizenji on May 8, known as one of Kanto's "Three Great Strange Festivals," offers the stirring spectacle of men competing to grasp a snake-like vine of wisteria (fuji). This event is said to have begun after an incident in which local inhabitants were saved from disaster. Daizenji Temple has a long and deep association with grapes—grapes have been cultivated for centuries within the grounds, for example—and for local grape farmers the festival marks the start of the most intense period of vineyard work.



Daizenji Temple (main hall is a National Treasure; the temple itself is a "Japan Heritage Constituent Cultural Asset")



Some elderly locals refer to Koshu grapes as hon budo, meaning "regular grapes." Regardless of their origin, the fact remains that this variety of grapes is unique to this part of Japan.



Mature Koshu grapes, also known as hon budo ("regular grapes") by some locals

Kamakura period (year 1186)

Another legend dates back to the early days of the Kamakura period. Supposedly, when a man known as Amemiya Kageyu of Kai Province (today's Yamanashi) performed a rite at the Sekison-jinja Shrine, located in Jonohira on Mt. Chausu (now in Kami Iwasaki, Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City), he discovered a grape plant that was quite different to yamabudo, the local variety of wild grapes. He apparently took the plant home, considering it a gift from the gods, and proceeded to cultivate it in his yard.

The story goes that five years later the grape plant started bearing fruit, and after a long process of creative cultivation, it resulted in the birth of the grape variety we know today as "Koshu." This legend can be viewed as evidence of the claim that grapes have been grown in this pocket of Japan since long, long ago. The mere existence of such legends undeniably testifies to the long history of "Koshu."

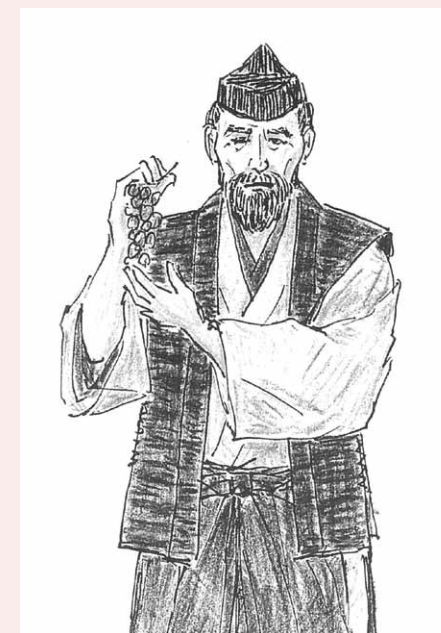


Illustration of the legendary Amemiya Kageyu (From "Budo no Kuni Bunkakan" published by Koshu City)



The Katsunuma IC (Chuo Expressway) is visible at the bottom center of the photo. Jonohira, near the summit of Mt. Chausu, from the legend of Amemiya Kageyu, is out of view beyond the left edge of the photo. The vineyards of Kami Iwasaki (Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City) extend along the foot of the mountains. Further beyond lie the fruit orchards of Fuefuki City.

Theories Legends

Were grapes grown in the time of Takeda Shingen?



Illustration of a Chinese medicine doctor Tokuhon (From "Budo no Kuni Bunkakan" published by Koshu City)

First record of bamboo grapevine trellis in the Sengoku to early Edo period

An important turning point in the history of grape cultivation is the use of bamboo trellises, which replaced the previous method of growing vines naturally under the eaves of houses and in the corners of the fields. There are various legends concerning this innovation. In one famous story, a Chinese medicine doctor by the name of Tokuhon, said to be living in Kai Province (now Yamanashi) around the late Sengoku to early Edo period taught people how to make bamboo trellises for growing grapes. This is believed to be the first mention of growing grapes using bamboo trellises. Tokuhon apparently prophesied that Koshu grapes would one day become a profitable local agricultural crop. There are various theories about Tokuhon's existence and what he did and said. In one account, for example, he served as a retainer of warlord Takeda Shingen. In any case, pictures of trellised grapevines started appearing in the Edo period. Thus, the grape cultivation using bamboo trellises seen in photographs from the Meiji period existed at least as early as the Edo period.



An illustration of a bamboo grapevine trellis from "Minobu Sankei Koshu Dochu Hizakurige," a late Edo period document. It shows how grapes were sold to travelers.



A photograph of grape cultivation with bamboo trellises, believed to date from the late Meiji period

Grape cultivation starts to develop with the advent of bamboo trellises. Over time grapes become an important agricultural crop.

The Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins, said to be where the Takeda clan lived, and its surrounding vineyards

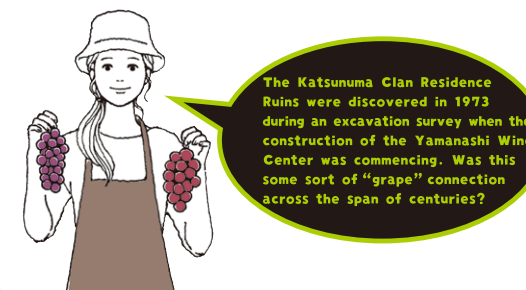
The Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins in Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City, designated a national "Historic Site," is now a historical park. This site is believed to have been the home of Takeda Nobutomo, the younger brother of Takeda Shingen's father, Nobutora. It is supposedly from this base that Nobutomo commanded the people of Katsunuma. Farmland survey records of the early Edo period confirm that "Koshu" grapes were cultivated in the area of this residence, then known as "Gosho." There is even a story that Takeda Shingen expressed appreciation for locally grown grapes he had been offered. Incidentally, it is said that at a place called Natsuyake, near Gosho, there was a medicinal herb garden belonging to Daizenji, the temple that features in legends about the origins of Koshu grapes. Knowing that Koshu grapes were cultivated in the early Edo period, it is quite likely that they were grown during the Sengoku period too, which means that Takeda Shingen may well have eaten and enjoyed them.



The restored east quarters of the Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins

Grape connections!
The ruins of the Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins and construction of the Wine Center.*

* The Yamanashi Wine Center is now the Wine Technology Division of the Yamanashi Industrial Technology Center. It is located on the east side of the Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins.



The Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins were discovered in 1973 during an excavation survey when the construction of the Yamanashi Wine Center was commencing. Was this some sort of "grape" connection across the span of centuries?



Katsunuma Clan Residence Ruins in Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City, a nationally designated "Historic Site." It is an aerial view from the west side, showing building ruins, canals, gardens, and other details.

Post Town Koshu Kaido

Let's Go to Edo! Grape Culture Connected by the Koshu Kaido.

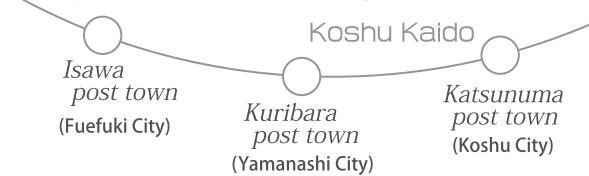


"Shokoku Dochu Shonin Kagami" (traders' directory) (1827)
Part of the Koshu Kaido Dochuki (Koshu Kaido travel journal).
The records of Katsunuma post town can be seen.



Scene of grape picking in Edo period
from 8-volume "Koeki Kokusanko"
(agricultural reference) (1859)
(From "Budo no Kuni Bunkakan"
published by Koshu City)

Establishment of the Koshu Kaido and relay stations connecting to Edo



By the time the Edo Shogunate took shape, construction of the five highways from Edo had begun, and the Koshu Kaido also extended westward from Edo. In the early Edo period, Katsunuma post town (Koshu City), Kurihara post town (Yamanashi City) and Isawa post town (Fuefuki City) were established as relay stations in the Kyotoh district, which led to rapid growth in the flow of people and goods to and from Edo. In the middle of the Edo period, markets opened up and there are records of theatrical performances, and in addition to the flow of people and goods, a highway culture was developing that people coming from Edo could enjoy. This relationship between Edo connected by the Koshu Kaido and grapes continues to this day.



Illustration of "Katsunuma post town" in the Kanbun era(1661-1673) (From "Budo no Kuni Bunkakan" published by Koshu City)
Katsunuma post town, located about 124 km from Nihonbashi, had one officially appointed inn, called "kedaya," two sub-honjin, and 23 inns by the end of the Edo period, as well as tea houses, shops and so on that served travelers. We can assume that it served as a gateway for those traveling from the Kofu Basin to Edo, or from Edo to the Kofu Basin, and attracted both people and goods. Grapes began to move back and forth, and it is thought that the tourist culture of presenting grapes to the Shogunate and grape picking from Edo also began during the Edo period.

Transportation of grapes to Edo and processed foods made from grapes as souvenirs

The existence of Edo, with its Koshu Kaido and post towns, greatly influenced viticulture. "Koshu" grapes, which came to be sold in Edo, were normally transported by horse, and given that the volume of distribution increased, it can be assumed that the number of producers also increased in the mid-Edo period. What's more, processed foods made from grapes emerged in the Edo period, with the most popular among travelers from Edo being "grape pickles," in which individual grapes were wrapped in shiso leaves. In addition, there were processed foods like "raisins" and jam, in those days made by boiling grapes in honey. Not only were grapes sent to Edo, but people coming from Edo would also eat grapes and buy processed foods (made from grapes) as souvenirs, giving rise to a business akin to today's grape picking tourism.

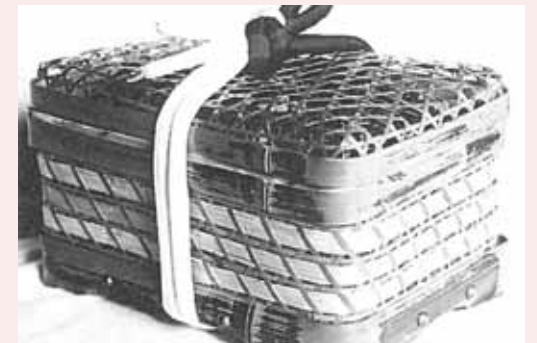
Was "Tsuki no Shizuku" created during the Edo period?



"Tsuki no Shizuku" are individual "Koshu" grapes wrapped in molasses. It is said to have originated in the Edo period when a confectioner accidentally dropped some grapes into a pot of molasses.



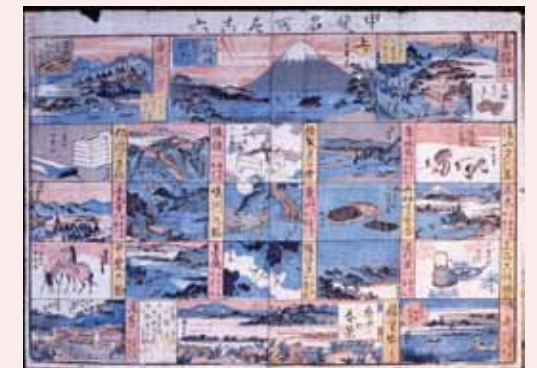
Modern "Tsuki no Shizuku"



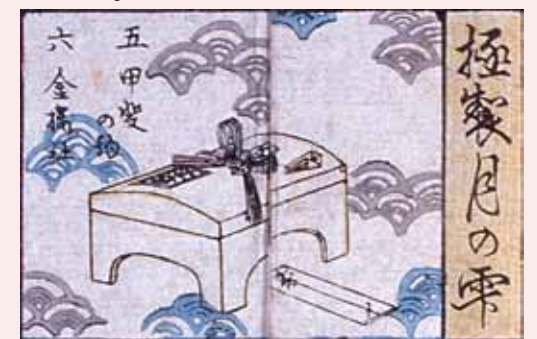
A replication of a basket used for presenting grapes to the Shogunate in the late Edo period



Picture of "grape pickles" in the Koshu Dochuki (original from the Edo period)



[Above] "Tsuki no Shizuku" appears in the "Famous Places of Kai" board game from the Edo period (middle of the second row from the top).
[Below] Enlarged view of "Tsuki no Shizuku" above.



Flowering

The birth of wine

Liberated! The story of grapes and wine.

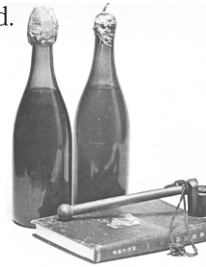


Masanari Takano (left) and Sukejiro Tsuchiya [Ryukun] (right), who studied viticulture and wine production techniques in France. The silk hats the two are wearing in the photo taken in Troyes, France, were a gift from the Meiji Emperor.

1877

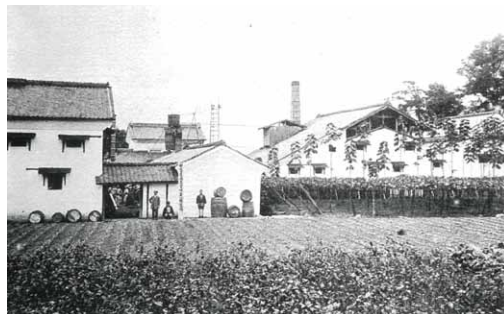
Dai-Nihon Yamanashi Budoshu Kaisha, the first corporate winery in Japan, was established in Iwasaki, Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City, in Meiji Year 10 (1877). From there, Masanari Takano and Sukejiro Tsuchiya (later known as Ryukun), the two men who have become a symbol of Koshu City and feature in wine glass designs, were sent to France to study viticulture and winemaking techniques. As this mission symbolizes, winemaking and grape growing in the Kyotoh district of Yamanashi Prefecture changed and developed considerably in the Meiji period.

The first wine made by the two young men after returning to Japan from studying in France, and "Budo San Setsu," written by Masanari Takano.



In the early Meiji period, a culture of wine drinking did not yet exist among the Japanese, and Dai-Nihon Yamanashi Budoshu winery struggled to achieve sales. The company went out of business in Meiji year 19 (1886).

After that, Ryukun Tsuchiya and Kotaro Miyazaki took over the fermentation facilities, and continued making wine. In addition, in Meiji year 21 (1888), they established a sales office, "Kai-San Shoten," in Tokyo's Nihonbashi area, to sell the wine and continue the path of winemaking. Later, Kotaro Miyazaki opened "Miyazaki Winery" in his private residence and developed many products. He even managed to combine a tourist vineyard with his winemaking business.



Miyazaki No. 1 Winery (early Taisho period)



Interior of a wine cellar made by Ryukun Tsuchiya

In the early Meiji period, when the first wine was made in Japan, people began to enjoy grape picking as a tourist activity. Pictures from this period show people sitting relaxed under grape trellises, sometimes with wine bottles on the table and sometimes not. Although the culture of wine was not yet established, we can sense that it was growing as the presence of wine gradually became more common alongside grapes in the Kyotoh region.

Regarding viticulture, in Meiji year 12 (1879), a wealthy local farmer by the name of Sakuzemon Amemiya replaced the bamboo used for trellises with iron rods. Furthermore, in Meiji year 31 (1898), Kangoro Wakao, Katsunuma's postmaster at the time, invented an iron wire trellis using posts and supporting wires, and the method of putting up the trellis has been handed down to the present day. This groundbreaking idea led to the construction of trellises on slopes, creating a distinctive landscape of vineyards throughout the district.

When Japanese wine was first produced and developed in the Meiji period, viticulture also entered a new era.



Trellis cultivation handed down from the Sengoku period. Nowadays, trellises are commonly built from concrete posts and wire.



Figure showing grape cultivation in Kai Province (from the Catalog of Products from Various Provinces). Believed to depict a grape picking scene in the early Meiji period.



The painting "Budo Yuran no Zu" by Japanese artist Ichiu Ueno, born in Kamiiasaki, Katsunuma-cho. The picture, which depicts a scene of grape picking with wine bottles on the table, is believed to date from the mid Meiji period.

"Adirondack", a grape variety popularized in the Meiji period

The research and popularization of viticulture by Masanari Takano, who studied abroad, and Saneshige Takano, from the same town, were also significant achievements of this period. The grape variety called "Adirondac," which gained popularity at that time, is only produced in small amounts today, but the wine made from that grape is loved even now as a wine that provides a taste of history.



If you look for wine made from the "Adiron" grape, you may hear stories about the Meiji period.



"Adirondac"

Expression

Wishes and Thoughts

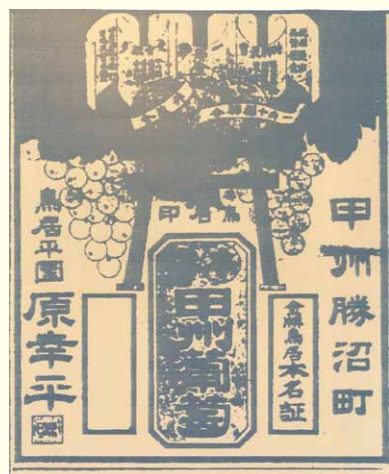
Wrapping paper for grapes

The beginning of the emphasis on the authenticity of origin

When buying grapes as souvenirs, you can often see grape baskets for sale at tourist vineyards. In the olden days, bamboo baskets were used, but later in the Showa period, they began to be replaced with plastic baskets. Since the Meiji period, these baskets have also come with a sheet called "kakegami (wrapping paper)," showing the place of origin and store name. The wrapping paper, which is said to have started with the words "Honba Mibudo (genuine grapes from the place of origin)" printed on it, may have been created from an awareness of the people at the time to promote the place of origin of grapes and develop them as original brands.



Grape basket wrapping paper presumed to be from the Meiji period



Wrapping paper from mid Taisho period



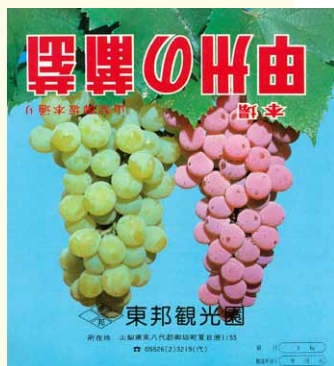
Wrapping paper from early Showa period



Wrapping paper from early to mid Showa period (estimated)



Wrapping paper from late Showa period



Wrapping paper still being used today



Wrapping paper still being used today



Wrapping paper for grape basket gifts from a tourist vineyard (used today)

Wine label

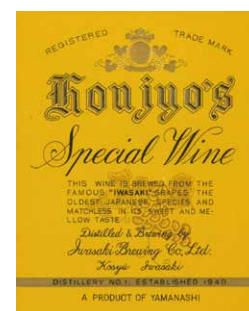
The beginning of the "Budoshu" design

The design of wine labels began with the birth of wine in the Meiji period, and expressed the individuality of each wine or drew on the atmosphere of foreign wine labels. The labels, which began the name "Budoshu" (Grape Alcohol) rather than "Wine," can be said to have changed to reflect the atmosphere of the times.

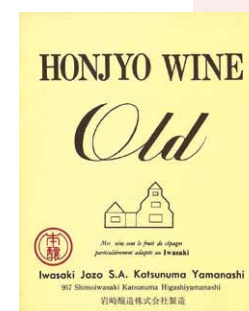
Wine label thought to be from the Meiji-Taisho period



Changing wine labels of the same brand over the years



Postwar to mid 1960s



1980 to around 1998



around 2003 to present

Ichinomiya Asama Shrine in Fuefuki City, where the wine is dedicated.

The dedication of wine to the shrine is a custom unique to this region and began from the wishes of the winemakers. Dedications have special characteristics.

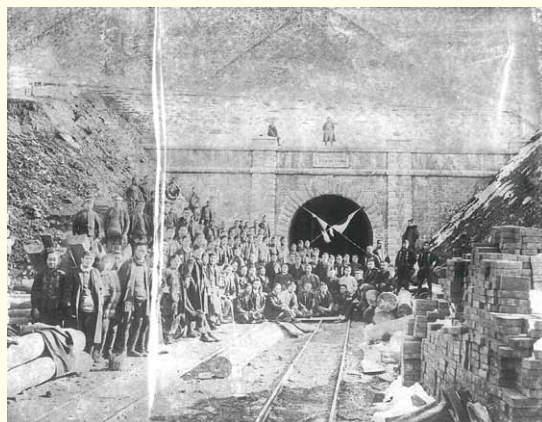
Before the agricultural work begins, many wineries dedicate a bottle of wine to Ichinomiya Asama Shrine, whose goddess, Konohana-sakuya Hime (Princess Blossom of the Trees), is the guardian deity of winemaking.



Transportation

Meiji - Taisho

The Grapes are Moving! People are Coming! Get on the train.



Tunnel opening ceremony of the Chuo Line's Oohikage Tunnel, Meiji year 35 (1902)



Of the tunnels in use when the Chuo Line opened, the former Fukazawa Tunnel is currently used as the "Katsunuma Tunnel Wine Curve." The 1,100 m long brick tunnel is valuable as a railroad culture heritage, and as a wine storage space, it provides an ideal environment for long-term wine maturation, with a year-round temperature ranging between 6 - 14 °C and humidity of 45% - 60%.



Katsunuma Station around Taisho Year 5 (1916)

1903

Apart from the Koubu Railway, which opened between Shinjuku and Hachioji by Meiji year 22 (1889), the need for a mountain railroad that ran through the interior of the country was called for in Japan, which was in a tense relationship with Russia at the time. This led to the decision to construct a railway that would connect through Yamanashi Prefecture as far as Nagoya. In Meiji year 36 (1903) the Chuo Line connecting Hachioji and Kofu opened, and as a result, the movement of people and grapes changed dramatically, and Yamanashi grapes became renowned throughout Japan.



The Wine Curve offers tours, and bottles of wine are stored in the tunnel. The tunnel that facilitated the development of grapes is now used for wine.

1913

Katsunuma Station (now Katsunuma Budogo Station) was newly constructed on the Chuo Line in 1913. This station was created in response to a petition from Katsunuma residents, who were transporting grapes all the way to the present day Enzan Station and Yamanashi City station in order to ship them to Tokyo. It can be said to have further boosted the shipment of grapes.

The movement of grapes and people, which changed dramatically due to the creation of post towns in the Edo period, ushered in an age of mass transportation thanks to the new power of railways, and continues to advance towards a new era.



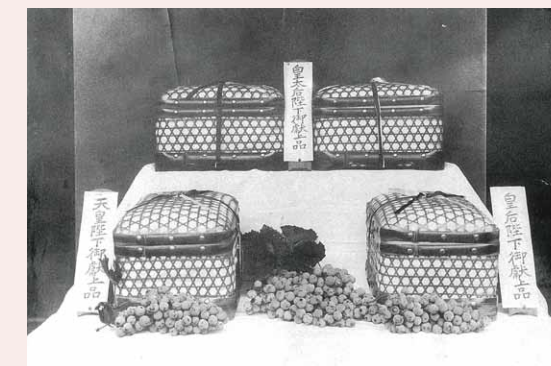
Grapes being packed into baskets, around Taisho year 10 (1921). Thanks to the mass transportation of grapes on the Chuo Line, grape production was finally able to flourish.

With the opening of the Chuo Line, grapes from the Kyotoh region rapidly expanded their sales channels, mainly in Tokyo, and have not only gone out into the world, but have also gradually attracted people to the region. The tourism activity of grape picking, which is thought to have started from the Edo period, grew to become a seasonal tradition for many more people in the Taisho period. It can be said that it was this period that consolidated the foundation of a major economic resource that continues to this day. Also, from the Taisho period to the early Showa period, viticulture and winemaking in the Kyotoh district became renowned throughout the country, and people who wanted to learn the skills and techniques necessary began to visit in large numbers.

The fact that people from all over Japan studied grape cultivation methods and winemaking while staying in the Katsunuma area led to changes in demand and changes in production volume, in addition to changes in the flow of information and people. This is believed to have had an effect not only on the Kyotoh district's subsequent development as a grape producing area and winemaking region, but also on its traditions.



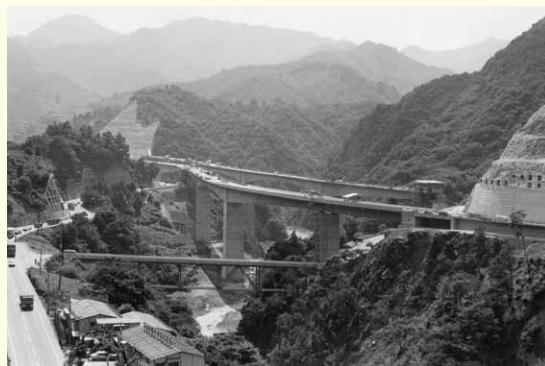
Grape picking scene from around Taisho year 10 (1921). Tourist vineyards gradually appeared.



Grape Presentation baskets believed to be from the early Showa period.

Travel Sightseeing by Car

Let's Go Grape Picking! Family Drive



Scene of the construction of Hikawa Viaduct on the Chuo Expressway in what is now Yamato-cho, Koshu City



The opening ceremony of the Chuo Expressway between Otsuki and Katsunuma in Showa year 52 (1977) (Katsunuma IC)



The Chuo Expressway, which opened so as to pass through the fan-shaped area that extends from Koshu City to Fuefuki City. When the private motor car boom began, the area near Katsunuma IC became congested.

1977

In the fifth decade of the Showa period, when grape picking tourism and wine consumption driven by the wine boom were becoming established, major events occurred that had the greatest significance for the Kyotoh region since the opening of the railroad. The establishment of the Chuo Expressway Katsunuma IC in Showa year 52 (1977), and the opening of all roads on the Chuo Expressway in Showa year 57 (1982). The opening of the Chuo Expressway, which heralded the arrival of the automobile society, gave freedom of movement to individuals and significantly changed sightseeing styles.

Since it is only a 1-1.5 hour drive from Tokyo to the Kyotoh region, more and more people started to visit on a casual drive whenever they wanted, and areas along the old Koshu Kaido, which leads from the center of present-day Katsunuma-cho in Koshu City to Yamanashi City (now Route 411), became so crowded that heavy traffic jams occurred on weekends during the fall grape picking season.



You can see Mt. Fuji from many places along the Fruit Line.

And now, there are even more new ways to get around.
Fruit Line Cycling Course.

The Fruit Line, which straddles the cities of Koshu, Yamanashi, and Fuefuki, is a 45.7 km-long cycling course filled with wonderful scenery. Both sides of the road are replete with orchard scenery mainly consisting of grapes, and you can enjoy the sense of travel unique to an undulating course. There are quite a few riders who come to the Kyotoh region by car, but switch to a cycle from there, and after over 40 years since the opening of the Chuo Expressway, people's way of enjoying the natural beauty and sightseeing have also become more varied.

On a fine day, you can see Mt. Fuji from many places, and in addition to feeling refreshed, you are bound to feel a sense of fulfilment.



From the Fruit Line, you can see the traces of vineyards that were skillfully carved out using slopes and ridges, while enjoying the beautiful vineyard scenery.



The cycling road not only stretches a vast distance, but also has an elevation difference of 418m. Since many of the sections are on south-facing slopes, you can enjoy cycling even in winter on a relatively mild day.

Difficulties

Dabbling and development

Overcoming many difficulties in the quest for a new viticulture.

Today's popular grape varieties are cultivated as high-quality fruit products using techniques that have proven themselves through the long history of grape cultivation in Japan, estimated at between 800 and 1,300 years.

In the Meiji and Taisho periods, many grape varieties died not only from water damage and pests, but also from freezing and drying, and we can infer that continuous cultivation was fraught with difficulty. Thanks to technological innovation in the Showa period, American grape varieties with relatively strong resistance against pests were introduced and crossbred, resulting in the creation of a succession of varieties suited to the Japanese climate. At the same time, innovations in cultivation methods and the introduction of new technologies led to the further development of local viticulture. Black grapes that have enjoyed long-term popularity such as "Kyoho," "Pione" and "Shine Muscat," said to be delicious eaten with the skin, are the products of a long quest to manage climate and other factors.



Water damage

Large-scale water damage that occurred repeatedly, such as the great flooding of Meiji year 40 (1907)



The Hikawa River, devastated by floods since the end of the Meiji period (present day Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City)

Pests

Pests such as philoscia that wither grapes



A grape vine in 1922, withered by cold, dry weather

Vineyards that endured despite these obstacles led to post-war development

Post-war agrarian reform

In 1946, soon after the end of World War II, Amendment of the Agricultural Adjustment Act and enactment of the Law Concerning the Special Measures for the Establishment of Landed Farmers led to the dismantling of the landlord system.

Areas of tenant farmland belonging to absent landlords that exceeded a certain size were bought up by the government and sold at low prices to the tenant farmers actually working the land. In effect, most of these sharecroppers became independent farmers, giving them more incentive to boost production. In 1947, the Agricultural Co-operatives Law was enacted with the aim of increasing agricultural production capacity and improving the economic and social status of farmers. During the war, planting restrictions designed to increase food production led to a decline in the cultivation of fruit trees, but these restrictions were now lifted. Along with the changing circumstances of farmers, this enabled a new era of development in grape cultivation.

Delicious and resistant to pests
Introduction of new varieties
Varietal improvement



"Muscat Bailey A," a hybrid of American and European varieties, was introduced in Showa year 15 (1940). After the war too, there were calls for the development of varieties suited to the Japanese climate, e.g., by grafting onto pest-resistant rootstocks.

The Great Depression

Drop in consumption and decline in the number of tourists due to the Great Depression in Showa year 4 (1929)

War

World War I
World War II



Comfort grapes sent to the war zone Manchuria, around Showa year 10 (1935)

Establishment of training
Emergence of seedless grapes
Appearance of plastic greenhouses
New technology



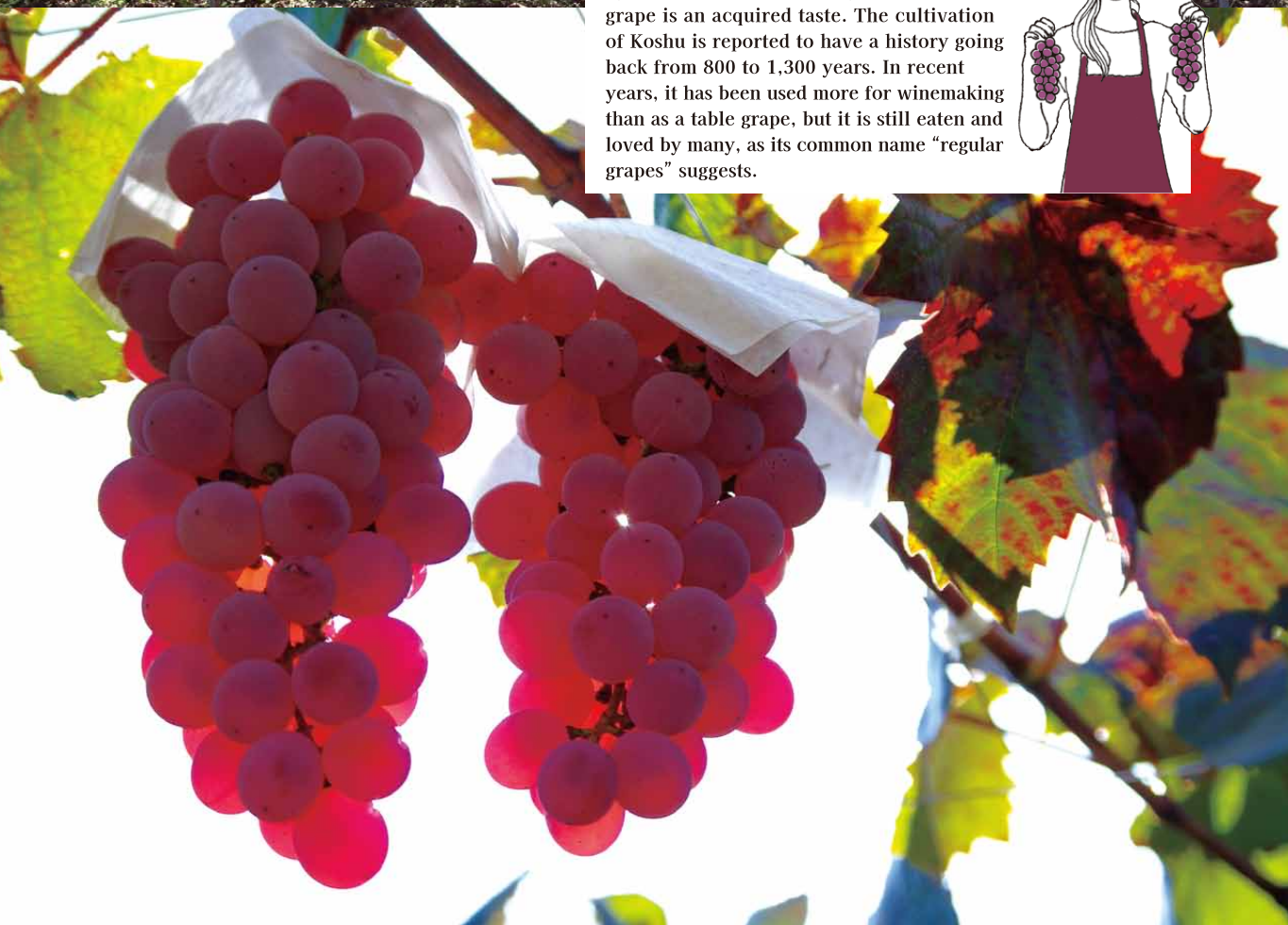
Cultivation in plastic greenhouses accelerated harvest time

Grapes Main Varieties



Koshu

Many local people regard Koshu as the most delicious grape variety there is. One reason often given is its "slight sourness," particularly enjoyed by older people, which may indicate that this grape is an acquired taste. The cultivation of Koshu is reported to have a history going back from 800 to 1,300 years. In recent years, it has been used more for winemaking than as a table grape, but it is still eaten and loved by many, as its common name "regular grapes" suggests.



Creation of seedless grapes

Delaware

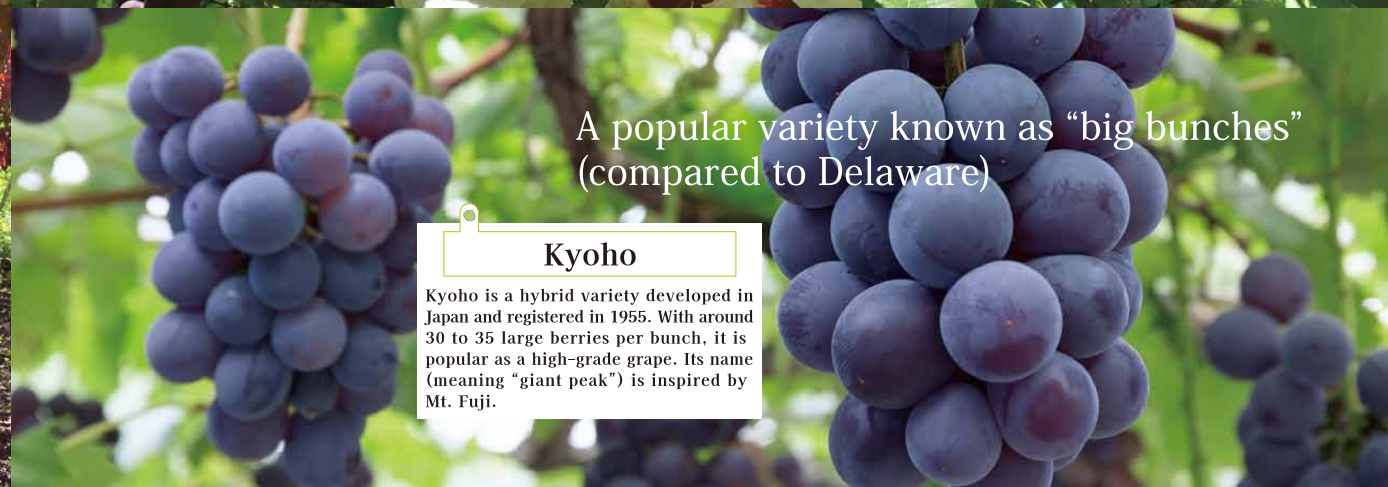
"Delaware" is a variety introduced to Japan from the U.S. in the early Meiji period. The popularity of a seedless version of Delaware helped to expand the consumer market and sustain grape farmers from the 1960s to the 1980s.



A popular variety known as "big bunches" (compared to Delaware)

Kyoho

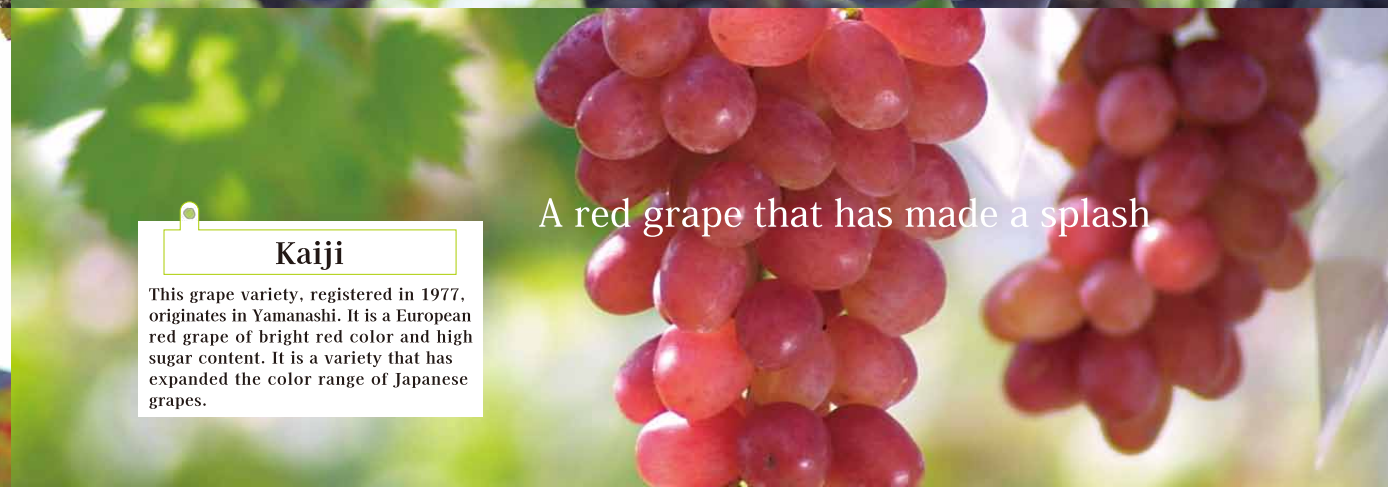
Kyoho is a hybrid variety developed in Japan and registered in 1955. With around 30 to 35 large berries per bunch, it is popular as a high-grade grape. Its name (meaning "giant peak") is inspired by Mt. Fuji.



A red grape that has made a splash

Kaiji

This grape variety, registered in 1977, originates in Yamanashi. It is a European red grape of bright red color and high sugar content. It is a variety that has expanded the color range of Japanese grapes.



A variety of unparalleled popularity

Shine Muscat

Registered in 2006, this variety has attained huge popularity in a short time. Apart from its sweetness, its appeal lies in the fact that it is eaten with the skin. This variety has helped to boost grape consumption in Japan.



Customs

Vineyard Scenery

Hands-on learning for junior high school students! Gibberellin processing for seedless grapes



A Koshu City Katsunuma Junior High School student participates in hands-on training in gibberellin processing. Traditionally, the students work with the Delaware grape variety.



The gibberellin liquid is colored red to make it easy to distinguish treated from untreated bunches. The treated bunches turn red. Nowadays, gloves are usually worn to prevent staining, but decades ago, many people in the area could be seen with red-colored hands during the processing season.

1977

Seedless grapes are very popular today, particularly the Shine Muscat variety, but how are seedless grapes produced? The answer lies in a processing technique that utilizes a plant hormone called gibberellin, developed in 1959. For over a half century, since 1968, the Koshu City Katsunuma Junior High School, located in an area of numerous grape farmers, gives its students the chance to undertake hands-on training in gibberellin processing of Delaware grapes. For several days, students help out participating farmers with the work of gibberellin processing.



Junior high school students listening to a farmer explain the work

This farming task involves soaking each and every bunch of grapes in a special cup filled with gibberellin liquid. It's a laborious task that involves long periods of holding up the arms. The timing is very important, too. Processing needs to be done twice, once before and once after flowering, and each time the work needs to be completed at once. The school program successfully matches the farmers' need to secure labor with the desire to give students an opportunity to learn about grape cultivation, an important local industry.

A story of community, grapes and wine! Sitting around a bottle of wine!



In the Showa period (1926-1989) the sight of people drinking wine from teacups was commonplace.

Wine in a teacup...

Although winemaking in Japan began in the Meiji period, it took a long time for the establishment of a proper wine culture. It is said that in 1899, after a poor harvest due to flooding, a local winery bought up grapes to help out local farmers. At the same time the municipality of Katsunuma-cho (Koshu City) took the initiative of promoting wine drinking at various kinds of traditional ceremonies. Gradually, as the spirit of "local production for local consumption" took hold, the custom of sipping wine around a table, over a meal or gathering, also took hold, replacing the use of sake rice wine.

At this time wine was typically bottled in large 1,800ml sake-style bottles known as issshobin, but after the wine boom that followed the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, standard 750 ml wine bottles became the norm. In the Kyoto region, however, the custom of communal drinking around the larger issshobin bottle survives to the present day. Locals also continue to refer to wine by the more formal name of budoshu ("grape wine").

The sight of people gathered around a large issshobin bottle and pouring each other teacups full of wine remains a unique and typically local one.



Typical 720-750 ml wine bottles (left) and two issshobin 1,800 ml bottle (right). The use of issshobin bottles for wine apparently began in the Meiji period. Since there was no production of wine bottles in Japan at the time, sake bottles were used instead.



In recent years, with a growing desire to experience local customs and culture, demand for wine in issshobin bottles has grown. Thus, the story of community, grapes, and wine continues to unfold.



Wine stores in the Kyoto region sell numerous wines in issshobin bottles.

Switch to fruit production

The end of sericulture, the Tokyo Olympics and the beginnings of the wine industry



Scene of silkworms forming cocoons, known as obokohiki (c. 1920-1930)



Working at the task of obokohiroi in the silk production process (mid 1950s)

Sericulture in the Kyotoh district

The birth of the Japanese wine industry in the Meiji period was a significant development both for the prefecture of Yamanashi and the district of Kyotoh. However, the biggest growth industry of the time was not wine, but rather sericulture and silk reeling.

After the boom in international trade following the opening of Yokohama port, Japan's textile industry expanded rapidly. Many farmers in the Kyotoh district took up sericulture, with the number peaking around 1930.

Silk textiles woven in Yamanashi prefecture were known as "Kai silk," a brand that earned a high degree of popularity for its high quality. As demand rose, the volume of sericulture production in the Kyotoh district expanded accordingly.



A silk-reeling factory in Koshu City around 1948

However, with the arrival of cheap imported silk thread from China and other countries and the diffusion of synthetic fabrics, the number of local silk farmers started to decline rapidly from around 1960. Many silk farmers turned to growing grapes and peaches, which promised high profits. The Kyotoh district thus embarked on a new era as a center of fruit production.

From the rise of imported silk thread and synthetic fibers to the end of sericulture and the beginning of fruit cultivation



Hot spring water gushing from a vineyard toward a nearby river forms an open-air onsen hot spring bath



Grape picking as a tourist business expanded significantly (mid 1960s)

Isawa hot springs are born, after hot spring water gushes from a vineyard.

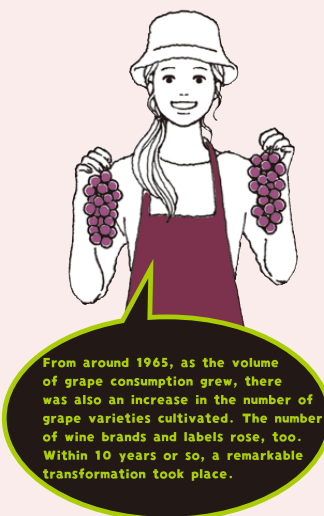
1961

In 1961 water from a simple alkaline hot spring began gushing from a vineyard in an area now in Isawa-cho in Fuefuki City, leading to the development of Isawa-cho as a hot spring resort town.

In surrounding areas, numerous farmers shifted their livelihoods from producing silk to growing grapes and running grape picking vineyards for tourists. Like this, the hot spring played an undeniably vital role in the area's development as a center of grape production.

1964

In 1964 the Tokyo Olympics were held. This huge-scale event coincided with a massive infusion of western culture and customs into Japan, which provided to be a major turning point in Japanese society. Later, following the 1970 World Expo in Osaka, as Japanese became more and more internationally minded, wine drinking had achieved mainstream acceptance. In 1973 wine consumption rose sharply, so this year is sometimes considered the "first year" of wine in Japan. It was this wine boom and tourism growth that drove the development of the Kyotoh grape growing district.



From around 1965, as the volume of grape consumption grew, there was also an increase in the number of grape varieties cultivated. The number of wine brands and labels rose, too. Within 10 years or so, a remarkable transformation took place.



The first wine sold under the "Koshu" label (1971)

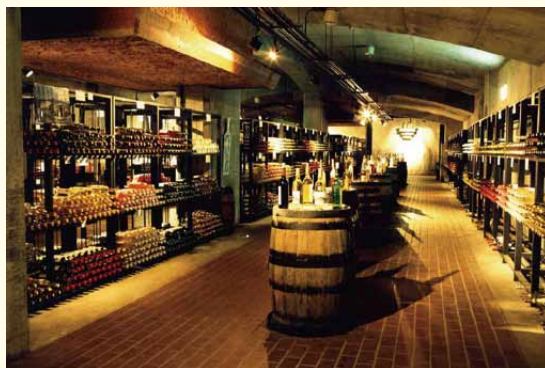
Development

Growth of a production area

Repeated wine booms and the development of a grape-producing region



The "Budo no Oka" wine cellars in Katsunuma, opened in 1975. The facility, which includes restaurants and accommodations, is located at the top of the small hill in the distance.



A wine cellar for wine tasting at "Budo no Oka," which contains over 200 different wines. Visitors can sample various wines by purchasing their own tastevin, a small wine tasting cup.

A Town of grapes and wine

In the early 1960s, a number of major Japanese winemakers set up facilities in the Kyotoh district. Later, after the wine boom of 1973, Kyotoh established an even stronger presence as a wine-producing area.

To assist with the development of the wine industry, in 1974 the Yamanashi Wine Center (now the Wine Technology Division of the Yamanashi Industrial Technology Center) was established in Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City. In the following year, the town of Katsunuma established Katsunuma Budo no Oka ("Grape Hills"), an authentic cellar facility for storing local wines. The succession of wine booms that occurred from the early 1970s to mid 1980s drove up local wine shipments. In parallel with this trend, shipments of table grapes from the Kyotoh district also grew. It is fair to say that the growth of the local industry was driven by the area's appeal as a grape-growing district, associated in people's minds with both wine and table grapes.

A hit product called dera

As table grape production started to grow sizably from around the 1960s, the most typical variety was the seedless "Delaware," known locally as dera. Although shipments peaked around 1979, this variety was seen as a hit product that made a substantial economic contribution to the local industry.

As the popularity of "Delaware" grew, expectations of table grape quality and new varieties rose too. Accordingly, efforts began at around this time to increase the variety of cultivars, as well as to make use of more advanced technologies.

Demand for high-grade grapes and Kyoho in Makioka-cho, Yamanashi City

From around the mid 1960s to the late 1970s, seedless Delaware grapes were popular, but there was also a growing demand for high-grade grapes. This demand was satisfied in large part by "Kyoho," a typical "black grape" variety. The Kyoho grapes of Makioka-cho in Yamanashi City are particularly renowned. The variety is well suited to the highland climate and the large day-night temperature fluctuations result in a sweet, rich flavor.

Grapes also came to be used as prestigious gift items. In the harvest season around Yamanashi, people typically receive gifts of grapes from all around their circle.



A bunch of Kyoho grapes can weigh 400 to 600 g, compared to just 150 to 200 g for Delaware.



The best conditions for cultivating Kyoho are usually found in vineyards along the mountains, where day-night temperature fluctuations are high.

▼ View from the terrace at "Budo no Oka" over Koshu, Fuefuki, and Yamanashi cities



World KOSHU

Koshu as a global brand. "KOSHU" goes international!



Vineyard in the Kyoto region [Autumn]

Terroir = characteristics of the land where the vineyard is located.

Terroir, which is regarded as important factor in wine, refers to the characteristics of the land. Even if it is the same "Koshu" grape, the soil and weather conditions differ depending on the region and location where it is grown, giving the wine a different background as its terroir.

Before the agricultural work begins, many wineries dedicate a bottle of wine to Ichinomiya Asama Shrine, whose goddess, Konohana-sakuya Hime (Princess Blossoms of the Trees), is the guardian deity of winemaking.



Vineyard in the Kyoto region [Summer]

2009 Establishment of KOJ

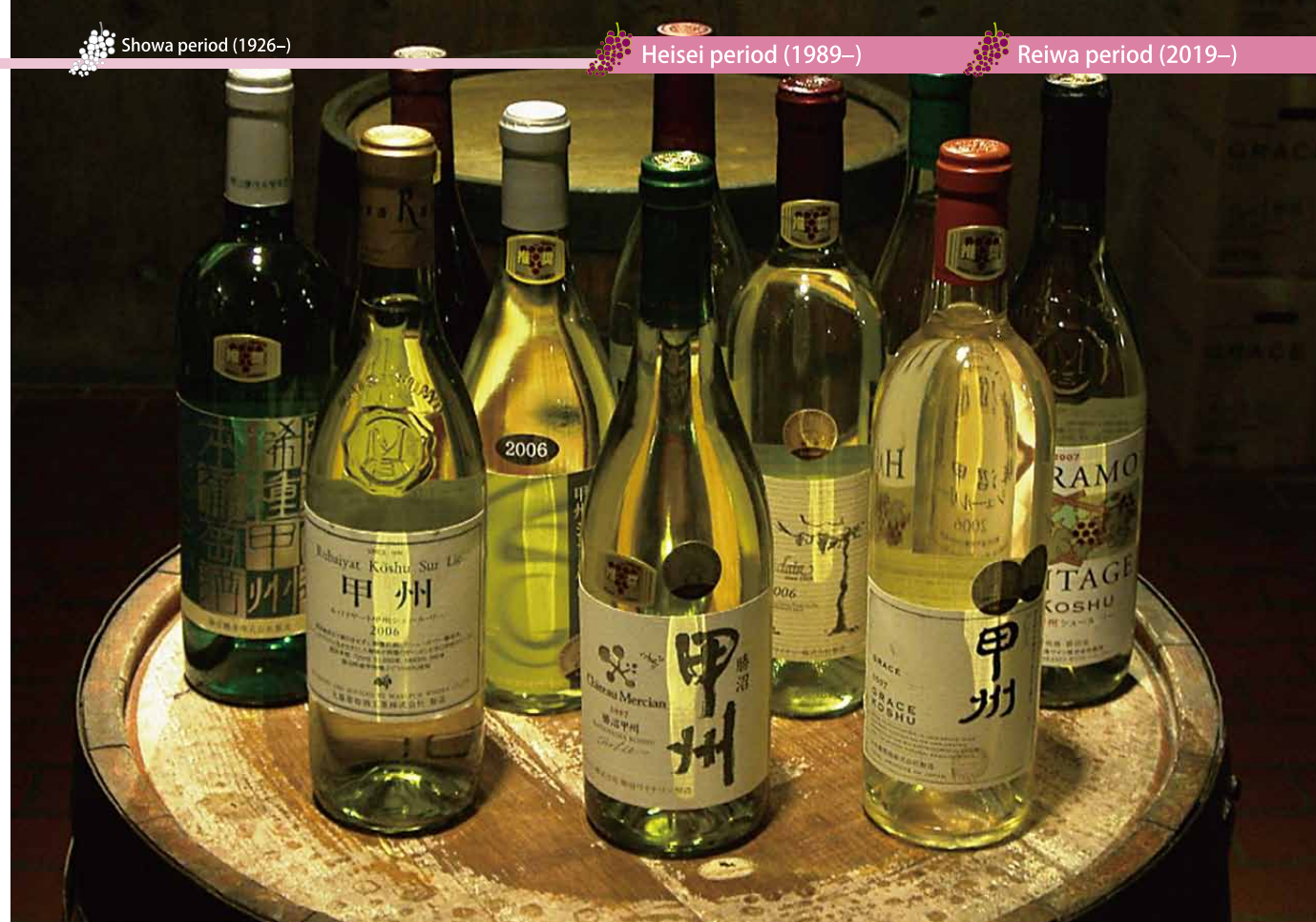
July 8, Heisei year 21 (2009), was also the time when Japanese food began to attract a lot of attention in the global food market. KOJ (Koshu of Japan) was established by 15 wine producers in Yamanashi Prefecture, Koshu City Society of Commerce and Industry, Koshu City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Yamanashi Prefecture Wine Makers' Cooperative. This organization, which was formed with the concept of "making Koshu wine recognized around the world," has three principal activities: "overseas promotion," "new product development," and "public relations." Focusing on PR in the UK, it aims to improve the quality of "Koshu," one of Japan's leading wines, in order to gain recognition and an appropriate marketplace in the global market.

2010 OIV registration

OIV stands for "L'Organisation Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin (International Organisation of Vine and Wine)," an international wine examining authority of great importance that unless a grape variety is registered by the body, it cannot be sold in the EU with the name of the grape variety on the wine label.

It was in June of Heisei year 22 (2010) when "Koshu" was registered as an OIV grape variety. After the preparation of characterization analysis materials and the application for registration, careful examination by the OIV resulted in Koshu being recognized as an international grape variety for winemaking.

Important factors behind this registration were the improvement in quality of the Koshu variety as a wine grape since the early 21st century, as a result of continual research and improvement, as well as the remarkable passion of all the stakeholders who strived for many years to bring international recognition to Koshu wines.



Wine made from "Koshu," a grape variety unique to Japan

Fuefuki High School holds a test winemaker's license, a rarity in Japan.



"Fuefuki High School (Fuefuki City)" High school students taking part in wine preparation using "Koshu" grapes grown on the high school's farm.

Unique feature of a university in Yamanashi. Study winemaking at the Wine Science Research Center!



The fact that you can study wine at high school or university is unique to Yamanashi. Methods such as cultivating the production area and maintaining it are also very important.

"University of Yamanashi" Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences, Department of Local Produce and Food Sciences, Special Course in Wine Science



The Future

with blessings

Picturing the grapes of the future



Conserving and handing down an inherited landscape

This landscape of vineyards, which has been preserved for so long, wears a different face each season and fills the hearts of people with an incomparable richness. At the same time, increasing growing difficulties due to climate change and a declining pool of young people willing to take over vineyards are posing new challenges.

How can this inherited landscape be conserved and passed on to future generations? People have started to tackle these difficulties, using a variety of new ideas, such as developing grape varieties better suited to the changing natural environment, training people to take over vineyards, and rebranding grape-producing areas.



"Black King" was registered in 2018. With its large fruit berries and vivid color, it is expected to reduce the coloration defects frequently reported in recent years due to high temperatures.



"Kai Berry 7" was announced by Yamanashi Prefecture in 2020. It is a cross between Sunny Dolce and Shine Muscat. It can be eaten with its skin and has the aroma of Shine Muscat. It is expected to be popular as a red grape.

In the blessings of making grapes

Fuefuki City

Held each year from November 2 at midnight to November 3

**Nouveau de Kampai
(Toasting with Yamanashi Nouveau)! Countdown**

A countdown event held from the evening of November 2 to coincide with the release of "Yamanashi Nouveau" on November 3. After raising a toast with all the participants at midnight of November 3rd, you will be able to enjoy "Yamanashi Nouveau" produced in Fuefuki City. There are many hot springs inns and hotels in the vicinity, and a large number of sightseers take part in the events, which come with accommodation.



Yamanashi City

Held each year on a Sunday in late August

Yamanashi Fruit Ride

A cycling event that takes place along the Fruit Line, which straddles the three cities of the Kyotoh region (Yamanashi, Koshu, Fuefuki). The event has gained popularity as an event geared towards cyclists that people can enjoy. The event is known for the grapes and peaches that are provided, as well as the Houtou (famous hotpot dish of Yamanashi) that is served at the finishing line.



Koshu City

Held each year on the 1st Saturday in October

**Koshu City Katsunuma Budo Matsuri
(Koshu City Katsunuma Grape Festival)**

A festival held each October that also serves as a harvest festival. Grapes and wine are served, and many people experience the joy of the harvest, as well as enjoy a stirring torii-yaki (firing of a torii gate). It has a long history, and the Grape Festival in its current form has been held since Showa year 29 (1954).



In the cities of Yamanashi and Koshu, there are also marathon events held to coincide with the grape harvesting season. It is great that there are so many events involving grapes and wine!

Cultural Property

Japan Heritage A Landscape Interwoven with Vineyards



In the eastern part of the Kofu Basin, vineyards stretch from the flat land to the slopes, creating captivating vistas that change with the seasons--with a carpet of deep green in early summer, and the shades of the autumn leaves reflecting the sun in the fall.

Thanks to the wisdom and ingenuity of our ancestors, land that was once rice paddies and mulberry fields was transformed into vineyards, and the wine produced in those vineyards has become firmly established in the region as an everyday drink.

The techniques and buildings that tell the history are handed down even today, and blend into the landscape of vineyards.



①Vineyard



②Wooden statue of Bhaisajyaguru



③Daizen-ji Temple



④Katsunuma Tomicho grapes
(the oldest existing Koshu grape variety)



⑤Koshu-style trellis cultivation



⑥Katsunuma's viticultural tools and winemaking tools



⑦Hikawa Dam group



⑧Katsunuma Dam



⑨Hikawa River flood control facility



⑩Grape storehouse



⑪Seihaku-ji Temple



⑫Ueno Family Residence



⑬Komai Family Residence



⑭Omura Family Residence



⑮Tsuruta Family Residence



⑯Miyazawa Family Residence



⑰Sato Family Residence



⑱ Winery with Japanese-style architecture that has the characteristics of a sericulture (silkworm-raising) farmhouse [Haramo wine]



⑲ Winery with Japanese-style architecture that has the characteristics of a sericulture (silkworm-raising) farmhouse [Katsunuma winemaking]



⑳ Winery with Japanese-style architecture that has the characteristics of a sericulture (silkworm-raising) farmhouse [Marufuji Winery Co., Ltd.]



㉑Historic winery



㉒Lumiere former underground fermentation tank



㉓Koshu Wine



㉔Wine



㉕Ichinomiya Asama Shrine