

Sake Professional Course Level II: Advanced Sake Professional Course
February 13-17, 2024 in Japan
General Information

Greetings,

I hope you are all well. You are receiving this email either because you have expressed interest in SPC II 2024. The course will run from Tuesday, February 13 to Saturday, February 17, 2024. The cost for the course will be JPY215,000 or USD\$1500, with lodging and transportation and *some* meals separate. Payment for the courses will be due on December 15.

I am currently taking reservations for the course. A good number of people have already expressed interest in taking the course, and there are a limited number of spots. I will do my best to be fair and appropriate to all. However, there are several factors (like commitments to individuals stretching back a year, and strict limitations on the number of participants) that must be taken into consideration as well.

There is much to be covered, and in this email you will find information:

- 1) Regarding Payment for the course
- 2) Regarding Logistics Overall
- 3) Regarding Hotels / Accommodations
- 4) Regarding the Venue: JSS
- 5) Regarding Trains, Busses, Getting around
- 6) Information on Testing
- 7) The Daily Schedule
- 8) Odds and Ends

With no further ado:

1) Regarding Payment for the Course

As you likely realize, the tuition for the course is JP215,000. If paying in USD that will be US\$1500 based on the average recent exchange rate. Payment for the course is due by Friday December 15, 2023. There are two methods of payment being accepted.

Method 1: To Pay to Japan, via Bank Transfer

You can remit payment to the Japanese bank below through domestic or international wire transfer. For an *international* wire transfer only you will need to add JPY 2500 yen for processing fees inside Japan, so you will need to wire JPY217,500. Your understanding and cooperation are appreciated on this! Details for this method are below.

Method 2: To Pay in US by US dollars

I can also accept payment in US dollars to a US account.

Method 2a: by check.

You can do this in two ways, one, with a check for US\$1500 made out to Sake World Inc. and mailed to my address in Japan, which is:

John Gauntner
〒248-0003 Kanagawa-ken Kamakura-shi
Jomyoji 1-4-4

(Yes, that is correct, I am requesting that you mail a check in USD to me in Japan. Long story.)

Method 2b: by credit card

However, payment can also be made with a credit card through Paypal, to sakeguy0494@gmail.com. If you have a Paypal account already, feel free to pay via credit card through Paypal. If you do NOT have a Paypal account and still would still like to pay via a credit card, I can send you a Paypal invoice which will let you pay by credit card via Paypal without opening a Paypal account. If you would like to pay in this way, please let me know by email.

Should you choose to pay via Paypal, if you are sending it from within the US, the tuition will be US\$1555 to cover Paypal's charges. Your understanding is appreciated. *If you are sending it from a country other than the US, Paypal charges will vary. Please use an online Paypal fee calculator to determine and then add the Paypal fees. Thank you in advance for the effort.*

NOTE: should you have special conditions or requests related to the format or timing of payment, I am open to hearing them. Please let me know if this is the case.

Also I can provide invoices and/or receipts for those that need them, so just let me know.

As a reminder, the tuition includes the course, an *electronic* version of the manual that you can print yourself if you choose, all sake tasted during the course, as well as dinner and sake Monday through Friday, and the right to take the Level I examination either in Japan during the course. The tuition does NOT include airfare, train or taxi fare within Japan, hotel costs, breakfast or lunch. If there are any questions on this please feel free to ask, of course.

For those paying to Japan, the banking information is:
Mizuho Bank Kamakura Branch (Branch number 760)
Normal account: #1738388
Account name: John Gauntner
Address: 11-35 Onari, Kamakura, Japan, 248
Bank Telephone: (81)-467-23-1155
International Banking Information: Swift Code: MHCBJPJT

Again, at the risk of being redundant, if sending from an overseas account, please wire the amount of JPY217,500, as the bank here will take JPY2500 for the wiring charge. If your bank takes a piece too, you will need to account for that as well. (Note, this does not apply to transfers from domestic banks within Japan.)

Lastly: *should you choose to pay by wire transfer to Japan, please let me that you will do so, and please let me know about when you will wire it.* The bank here is pretty strict about payments from overseas, so I need to let them know in advance.

As a reminder, payment is not due until December 15; however, you can pay earlier if you prefer. I will send the course manual and study materials once payment is confirmed.

2) Regarding Logistics Overall

Before launching into the details of things like hotels, trains, busses, payment for them, getting around, and morning and mid-day meals, please allow me to present the overall premise.

With the proliferation of information about being in Japan and getting around Japan, combined with the widespread use of smart phones and the use of English in Japan, we will be asking students to handle much of the logistics for the course on their own. We will of course do our best to support, help and provide all the necessary information!

With that as the background, students will be handling their own reservations and payments for hotels. We will provide a list of hotels that are close to the venue in Tokyo. Likewise, students will be responsible for finding their own way to the venue using addresses and written directions that we will provide, assisted of course by those pesky but indispensable smart phones that we all carry.

Most evening meals are covered as part of your tuition, as is the sake that we will enjoy with them; so we got you covered then. But you will be responsible for your own breakfast and lunch at any of a whole range of restaurants near the venue during the course.

The Sake Professional Course is an educational program, rather than a sightseeing tour. As with any educational program, we will handle the educational part, and participants will handle their own their personal logistics, albeit with as much support as we can feasibly provide. *Please be sure you are comfortable with this before committing to the course.* Your understanding and cooperation are appreciated.

3) Regarding Hotels / Accommodations

You will stay in Tokyo from Monday February 12 (the night before the course) checking out on Sunday, February 18, the day after the course ends

Due to the increasing number of inbound tourists in Japan, it is strongly recommended that you make hotel reservations as soon as possible.

The list of recommended hotels in Tokyo and other relevant information can be found downloaded at a link found here: <https://sake-world.com/sake-professional-course/spc-level-ii-february-2024/>

4) Regarding the Venue: JSS

Classes will be held on the third floor of the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers's Association, basically "sake central." Please find a hotel within a reasonable distance of this venue. Again, we have provided a

list of recommendations posted on the website at the link above. The JSS is located in the NS Toranomom Building, 1 Chome-6-15 Nishishinbashi, Minato City, Tokyo 105-000, phone 03-3501-0101 Here is the address in: 〒105-0003 東京都港区西新橋 1 丁目 6 番 15 号 日本酒造虎ノ門ビル

Their website is here: <https://japansake.or.jp/sake/en/jss/information-center/>

Monday February 12th is a national holiday, and class will begin at 9:00am sharp on the morning of Tuesday, February 13th, on the third floor of the JSS building. Therefore, you will need to make reservations for yourself for Monday night to Saturday night, checking out Sunday morning in Tokyo. If you want to or need to arrive earlier and/or stay later, please handle this on your own.

Next: Please let me introduce Ms. Shima Enomoto, cc'd here as well, a fellow ASP sake expert (among many other talents!) that splits her time between the US and Japan, and who will be assisting me with coordination of the entire course. She will be handling things like logistics, any train reservations, bus handling, lunch plans, and other little details. Her email address is enomotoshima@gmail.com, and she is cc'd on this email (whereas everyone else is b-cc'd). Please interact directly with Shima on all things related to logistics, and *please be sure to put ASP in the email subject line*. She and I are in constant contact so nothing will get lost. She will be in touch directly with you as well and a gazillion other things related to coming to Japan.

Note Shima will also set up an online questionnaire wherein you can indicate any dietary or other restrictions, as well as provide the name of your hotel. Most communication will be done using email, but if you can install WhatsApp that would be helpful too.

Shima will be soon in touch with those that are attending, and it is imperative that you respond to her in a timely manner.

5) Regarding Trains, Busses, Getting Around

You will be staying at one hotel in Tokyo, and on the morning of Thursday the 15th we will gather in front of the JSS office and board a bus that will take us to Nagano prefecture, where we will visit two breweries run by Miyasaka Jozo, the company that brews Masumi sake. We will enjoy lunch with sake as well, and that is covered by your tuition. We will return that evening by bus, but we will *not* have a group dinner that night; everyone will be on their own. Many will opt to study for the test the next day.

After the test on Friday, we will be taking a bus down to Kanagawa Prefecture to visit the very cool brewery Kumazawa Shuzo, brewers of Tensei sake, and enjoy dinner in their very interesting old kura building.

Shima will be in touch about this but we will gather your share(s) of the bus trips on Tuesday morning. Please bring yen in cash to pay for that, we are not able to process credit cards.

6) Information on Testing

Following the course, on Thursday afternoon, there will be an exam for the Advanced Sake Professional certification. It is an essay exam, and also has a tasting component to it. I will provide more information and study guides as we get closer to the date.

I may do it online using Classmarker, or I may print the tests out.

I will talk more about the test on the first day of class, and will do my best to make sure everyone is fully prepared. Toward this end, I will be sending a very helpful study guide together with the electronic version of the manual.

7) The Daily Schedule

Here is the basic schedule, listed here to help you visualize the days as I refer to them below.

| 2/12 Mon | 2/13 Tue | 2/14 Wed | 2/15 Thu | 2/16 Fri | 2/17 Sat |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| | 1 st day | 2 nd day | 3 rd day | 4 th day | 5 th day |
| | JSS:Tokyo Lecture day | JSS:Tokyo Lecture day | Visit by bus to Masumi in Nagano. | Morning test at JSS. Afternoon & evening visit to Tensei in Kanagawa by bus. | Visit to Izumibashi brewery in Kanagawa by train. Wrap-up after lunch. |

On day one (Tuesday) and day two (Wednesday) will have lectures, guest lectures, and tasting exercises. We will have dinner together both nights at a good sake pub in Tokyo. Day three (Thursday) we will take a chartered bus out to Nagano (about three hours) to visit Miyasaka Jouzo, brewers of Masumi, and visit both of their breweries. Lunch and lots of Masumi sake will be provided as well as part of the course. We will return that night by about 7 pm or so, and we will not have dinner together so as to let people mellow out, sober up, rest up, and prepare for the test.

On the morning of day four (Friday) we will have the test, and that afternoon we will take a bus to Kumazawa Shuzo, brewers of Tensei, in Kanagawa for a brewery visit and dinner in the very cool kura itself.

Day five (Saturday) we will take a train to visit one more brewery in Kanagawa, Izumibasho Shuzo, brewers of the eponymous sake Izumibashi. That evening will be an optional gathering of those that are interested at a yet-to-be determined pub in Tokyo.

8) Odds and Ends

We will be holding classes in the meeting room of the Japan Sake Brewers' Association and may have a few industry folks dropping by to say hi. But it is a very cool environment in which to hold sake classes.

This course will be fun, but it will be intense too. You will be all "sake-ed" out by Saturday night. In particular, we move a lot on Thursday and Friday, so please be prepared. It might be best not to stay out too late.

Dress code: The seminar for the course is casual. Please be comfortable. It can get cold in Japan in the winter, but this year all bets are off as it has been the hottest year on record here.

Important: We would like to strongly request and recommend that everyone download and become familiar with WhatsApp. We use it extensively during SPC the past couple of years. It lets students get to know each other, and communicate to us and the others about logistics and things like that. It can really help if someone is late or if something unexpected occurs. Please do install it and please let Mayu know your access number for the app. While it might not be an app you would normally use, please do install it if only for SPC. Thanks in advance!

While we have still a bit of time to go, it will pass fast. Please do prepare accordingly.

I am looking forward to meeting and working with you all. Please answer the questions below at your convenience, and be sure to contact me with any more questions or relevant issues.

Warm regards,
John