

## Firm focus on the future to build markets



Habikino City, Osaka, where vineyards stretch out across gently rolling hills. This is the home of the well-known ume fruit liqueur maker, CHOYA.

Founded in 1914, the company started out as a grape producer. After that, it expanded its business to include the production and sale of wine and brandy. Then came the 1950s, when a trip to Europe by the company's founder transformed its future.

“When he witnessed the home of grape growing and wine production, he was shocked by its efficiency and the high quality of the wine. At that time, war had just ended and products from all over the world began entering Japan. He thought that the time would come when domestic wine would not be able to compete,” says Hideyuki Morita, Deputy Director of the Planning and Public Relations Department.

This foresight was one of the factors that has made the company a national brand. Upon his return to Japan, the founder instructed the company to develop an alcoholic beverage that would become the cornerstone of its future business. What caught his attention was Umeshu (Ume Liqueur).



The exterior of the Choya Winery. In its early days, the company produced wine and brandy using grapes.

It was in 1959 that CHOYA started selling umeshu. However, it was a long road from there, and it took 20 years for the product to sell.

During that time, the company continued to support its umeshu business with revenue from its various existing businesses, including wine, brandy, and non-alcoholic beverages.

Business leaders may be tempted to soon give up on new businesses that are not producing results. However, CHOYA had faith in the future and carefully protected and developed its umeshu business.

This perseverance was another factor behind its success as a national brand.



Umeshu package from 1959, when it was first released.

In addition to this, since the 1960s, the company has also put great effort into PR, such as airing TV commercials featuring popular celebrities.

What makes the company a national brand is its commitment, as a manufacturer specializing in umeshu, to the authenticity.

CHOYA's umeshu is natural and authentic, using no additives such as flavorings or acidifiers. Since ume fruit are a product of nature, it is not easy to stabilize the quality of the liqueur. Moreover, because of the sharp fluctuations in ume harvests, it is difficult to procure a stable supply.

In order to overcome these obstacles, CHOYA works with ume producers to grow fruit that is suitable for liqueur from the ground up. It holds large amounts of raw umeshu made from large amounts of this high-quality produce, and by blending them together, it is able to provide and consistently deliver high quality product.

In 2015, umeshu made only from ume, sugar, and liquor, and without acidifiers, flavorings, or colorings, came to be classified as "Honkaku Umeshu (authentic umeshu)".

"Because we started out as a farming business, our corporate culture is based on a deep attachment to crops and its producers. Our management team always says, 'It's only because of the ume farmers that CHOYA exists.'"



"The CHOYA" series, a product that the company is focusing on for the global market.

CHOYA now has its sights firmly set on the global market. The product line that will lead this charge is “The CHOYA.” The name of this product expresses the company’s desire to create an established category of alcoholic beverages known as CHOYA around the world.

Meanwhile in Japan, the company has opened “Choya,” a store specializing in ume-based activities where customers can experience making umeshu and ume syrup. By introducing the traditional culture associated with ume, the company is working to expand the base of umeshu enthusiasts.



Choya, a store specializing in ume activities, where visitors can experience making umeshu and ume syrup.



The CHOYA Ginza BAR, a bar specializing in umeshu cocktails and non-alcohol cocktails, opened in November 2019.

When the founder was looking for an alternative business to wine, he called for the creation of a unique Japanese drink that could compete on the world stage.

Now that CHOYA has become one of Japan's quintessential brands, the company is stepping up its efforts to make this ambition a reality.



From left: Mr. Hideyuki Morita and Ms. Emi Sasaki

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CHOYA UMESHU CO., LTD.  
Deputy Director of the Planning and Public Relations Department, Hideyuki Morita  
Planning and Public Relations Department, Emi Sasaki  
<http://www.choya.com>  
Business: Manufacture and sale of umeshu and ume-related products