



Wine and Dine at SADOYA Restaurant Real D'or — Winery, Restaurant, and Wine Boutique —

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Wine and Dine

This well-known phrase can be traced back to Europe during medieval times, as meals served with wine were considered to be “lavish”. Whether you ‘Wine and Dine’ with a close friend, a lover, or even alone—you can’t deny the wine’s ability to enhance the meal’s flavors. Japan is often associated with sake, or rice-based alcohol. Consequently, the image of Japanese wine may be a difficult one to render. However, when deciding where to wine and dine, Yamanashi, Japan should be an obvious first-choice. Out of all 47 prefectures, Yamanashi Prefecture boasts the highest wine production numbers. Yamanashi was officially declared, “Wine Prefecture” by Governor Nagasaki in August of 2019. Accompanying this declaration, efforts and funding have been on the rise with the goal in mind of spreading the word about Yamanashi’s delicious wine as a must-try—especially for tourists.

Why ‘Wine and Dine’ in Yamanashi?

When coming up against its daunting European competitors, Japan relies on Yamanashi for its vast acres of vineyards laced with juicy grapes and the wineries that transform them into corked bottles of exquisite wine. In fact, most award-winning Japanese wines are born from Yamanashi’s wineries. In 2019’s Japanese Wine Competition, eight of the twenty-one gold-titled wines were produced right here in Yamanashi. Luckily for me, I happen to be based in this beautiful Wine Prefecture, and ready to make the most of its scrupulous grapes and historical wineries.

Choosing a Location Convenient for Me

That’s right. I decided to embark on my own little ‘Wine and Dine’ journey in Yamanashi. I wouldn’t consider myself a wine connoisseur, so you could say I came into this journey with little-to-no experience under my belt. The one thing I am always told by Yamanashi residents is that I should start my journey in Koshu—the city home to the most vineyards and wineries in Yamanashi. These wineries have long-running histories and several joint restaurants which would make for great dining. Unfortunately, making a trip out to Koshu for an evening of wine and dining wasn’t a reasonable option for me. Many people don’t have access to the means of transit needed to make it out to the countryside and visit Koshu, so I wanted to find a winery located in the heart of the city.



SADOYA Restaurant Real D'or

SADOYA Restaurant Real D'or is a restaurant inspired by French cuisine that's conveniently located in Yamanashi's capital city, Kofu. From the North Exit of Kofu Station, you'll reach the restaurant in a comfortable, five-minute walk. There are several signs you can see with "SADOYA" written clearly that help guide the way. As I was strolling along, I suddenly found myself in front of the gate to a small, French-themed village surrounded by lush greenery. SADOYA is not only a restaurant, but rather a renowned winery, restaurant, and wine boutique all in one. With a history stretching over 100 years, SADOYA is now a household name when it comes to wine. However, the restaurant I had reservations to visit, Real D'or, was just recently launched by SADOYA in 2013.

Rather than going for the typical romantic setting—one of my closest friends, Nicole, and I made the reservation for two. We both work just minutes away from the station, so the restaurant's convenient location worked out nicely for us. SADOYA's French village-like atmosphere swept us off our feet. Needless to say, we're both very intrigued by places that look like they came straight out of a Ghibli film. Actually, we spent a fair amount of time simply admiring and walking around the SADOYA vicinity before finally stepping foot in the restaurant, Real D'or. Our chills from the wintry air were quickly melted by the warm Christmas decorations that greeted us in the restaurant's lobby. A Christmas tree, ribbons, presents, and even a small Santa Claus figurine brought about our festive cheer. After being charmed by the décor and atmosphere, we were ready to sit down for dinner.

Our seating was near the window, so we had a great view of the garden area, which was lined with intricate white chairs and a stone alter—surprisingly enough, Real D'or often hosts wedding ceremonies and receptions here at their restaurant. The dining area was nice and quiet...despite every other table being occupied (*it was a Wednesday night...*). According to the staff, Real D'or faces these high customer volumes especially during the fall and winter seasons. The customers ranged from families to intimate couples—one couple was actually celebrating a birthday via the restaurant's special birthday course. I was a bit envious when I saw the birthday dessert come out from the kitchen topped with a sparkling candle. *How romantic!* It's not hard to imagine why many people choose this restaurant to celebrate special occasions. In general, the reputation of any restaurant highly depends on its staff's hospitality, or *Omotenashi* in Japanese. With a staff like Real D'or's, we felt like nothing short of royalty.

Let's Dig In

Our course of choice, the *Marseille Course*, was filled with several unique, seasonal flavors. I ordered a Sommelier-picked,

wine-tasting course to accompany my dinner. Meanwhile, my companion for the evening, Nicole, chose to try her hand at Real D'or's non-alcohol drink selection. Our course



started off with a light seafood dish: thinly sliced Japanese horse mackerel topped with some greens, garnished with strawberry sauce, and served with a sparkling wine from the SADOYA winery.

Dry Sparkling, which was a sweet, sparkling wine, was a nice choice to pair with the appetizer.

The next two wines, *Horloge 2018* and *Takayamamura Chardonnay 2016*, came with the second item of our course: a simmered dish paired with a sweet broth. This warm dish was perfect for the winter weather, and full of nutritious ingredients: broccoli, olives, mushrooms, oysters, and some red snapper. The two wines had similar yet very strong flavors—their sour tastes went well with the sweetness of the broth. You can't go wrong with a classic like Chardonnay, but I preferred *Horloge 2018* for its floral aroma. While waiting for our next dish, we enjoyed the bread and olive oil that came to our table. Two very different textures of bread were brought to us—my favorite being the chewy sour-dough—*Yum!*

Finally, it was time for our main dish. Nicole and I chose to have wine beef stroganoff as the main dish of our course, in place of the course's original main dish. Adjusting your course menu like we did is possible if you're willing to spend a little extra to make it happen. At this point, I was three glasses of wine in to the meal, but my taste buds were still very much intact and ready for a bolder flavored wine to accompany the main dish that I was about to cut into. My final glass served was a SADOYA classic, red wine dating back 70 years, *Chateau Brillant Mur*. You could call it the cherry on top, because it was the perfect choice that harmonized with the rich flavor of the beef. Aside from just the beef, our main dish also had an array of seasonal vegetables served with it. Altogether, delicious.

At this point, I'd be lying if I didn't admit that Nicole and I were quite full. The final course items consisted of a light, winter persimmon ice cream dessert along with a simple cup of coffee. My mouth is watering just from remembering it! Now, I must express my thanks to the chef of our lovely course—*Merci*, Mr. Hiroaki Mori!

A Glass of Wine Fit for Each Meal —Leave it to the Sommelier

Without a doubt, the atmosphere, food, and service were all phenomenal, but I have to admit that the wine was what really brought it all together for me. How does a restaurant, who changes their course options to fit the season, select wines that fit each unique course? *Sommelier* is a French term for the wine steward(ess) of a restaurant who decides these wine-meal pairings. To earn the title of Sommelier, you must have extensive knowledge of both wines and cuisine—not to mention something that differentiates you from the competitive wine market of Yamanashi. Ryosuke Ogura is the name of Real D'or's Manager and Sommelier. When asked what impression Mr. Ogura wished our meal to have on us, he answered humbly, "I wish for you to enjoy the wine pairings of each course item in their own, unique way. For other customers who have traveled here from outside



of the prefecture, I want them to remember their experience at SADOYA as one of the many charms Kofu has to offer."

Some Final Thoughts

I can happily say that Real D'or thoroughly satisfied my appetite and quenched my thirst. Allowing the customer have Sommelier-picked wine-tasting options with their meal was genius—I took full advantage of this by opting for the wine-tasting course that offered four different wines. SADOYA boasts numerous awards for its original wines, notably the *MonCherVin* which brings in sales of over 100,000 bottles a year. SADOYA wines can be purchased at the wine boutique conveniently located at the Kofu location I visited. Tours of the SADOYA winery are also available for reservation if you're interested in the winemaking process. The dining options, like what we opted for, are very unique and require a lot of preparation, so reservations need to be made at least two days in advance. It's a closer option for those who live in the city, and you can easily hop on a train home instead of driving if you decide to enjoy a glass of wine or, you know, *four*. I mean, come on. We are in Japanese wine country after all! 🍷