

# Tohoku Sake Awards 2023

November 10, 2023

Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology

Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau

## 1. Outline

### (1) Purpose

The purpose of The Tohoku Sake Awards (*Tohoku Seishu Kanpyokai*) is to improve further the quality and brewing technique of sake brewers in the Tohoku region under the auspices of the Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau, thereby contributing to the sound development of the sake brewing industry.

### (2) Review of 2023

The Tohoku Sake Awards is annual event that showcases sake brewers possessing the best brewing techniques in Japan, whose high-quality sake has been brewed with great care during the winter, and meticulously managed and matured during summer.

This year, 148 sake breweries in the Tohoku region's six prefectures entered 143 samples from 125 breweries in the *ginjo-shu* category, and 134 samples from 118 breweries for the *junmai-shu* category.

The *ginjo-shu* category showcased well-balanced sakes with gorgeous fruity aromas and a smooth, rich taste. In the *junmai-shu* category, various kinds of ingredient rice were used, and the sakes had rich personality and flavor characterized by acidity and umami.

Many breweries were damaged when the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011 devastated the Tohoku region, as well as by natural disasters such as large earthquakes and heavy rain after that. It is also difficult to find a brewery that has not been affected by the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these, all of the sakes entered in the Sake Awards are of a very high quality and signify the huge progress being that sake breweries in the Tohoku region are making toward recovery as they continue to step up to new heights. We are confident that breweries in the Tohoku region will overcome any difficulties that arise.

We hope that people who enjoy sake from Tohoku and support the breweries will spread throughout the world, and not just be limited to Japan.

## 2. Entry

### (1) Qualification for entry

Licensed *sake* breweries located within the jurisdiction of the Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau (i.e., Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Akita, Yamagata, and Fukushima prefectures)

### (2) Eligible *sakes*

*Sake* from the below-mentioned categories that were produced from the entrant's own production site located within the jurisdiction of the Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau during the brewing year of 2022.

### (3) Categories

#### a *Ginjo-shu* category

*Ginjo-shu* as stipulated in the "Labeling Standard for the Manufacturing Process and Quality of *Sake*" (NTA notice #8, November 22, 1989)

#### b *Junmai-shu* category

*Junmai-shu* as stipulated in the "Labeling Standard for the Manufacturing Process and Quality of *Sake*" (NTA notice #8, November 22, 1989)

### (4) Number of entries permitted

Each licensed sake brewery can submit up to two entries in total for the two categories. The number of entries for one category cannot be more than two.

## 3. Quality Examinations

### (1) Schedule

-Preliminary examination: October 3-4 (Tues.-Wed.), 2023

-Final examination: October 6 (Fri.), 2023

### (2) Process

The jurors assess the quality of each sample by sensory evaluation. All examinations are blind and administered by category. In the preliminary examinations, each sample is examined for individual attributes to clarify a sensory profile and overall evaluation is given based on a five-step scoring method. After this preliminary process, the highest scoring entries are selected for the final examination. In the final examination, the chosen sakes are evaluated by a three-step scoring method.

### (3) Evaluation policy

Overall quality is determined based on the following style-based categories:

a *Ginjo-shu*: well-balanced flavor, characteristic aroma, and delicate taste

b *Junmai-shu*: refined flavor with *umami* (savoriness) and round texture

#### (4) Quality evaluation jurors

Jurors were selected from a pool of experts, including:

- Academics in the field of sake brewing
- Staff members from the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB)
- Staff members from prefectural brewing-related organizations
- Sake experts and manufacturers recommended by the prefectural sake and shochu makers' associations of the Tohoku region
- Technical officers from the Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau

## List of Jurors 2023

Name	Affiliations	Participating Examinations
HASEGAWA YUKO	AOMORI PREFECTURAL INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH CENTER, HIROSAKI INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE	GP, JP
OGURA AKIRA		GF, JF
ADACHI KAORU	NISHIDASYUZOUTEN CO.	GP, JP
SATO TAKUMI	HATOMASANUME CORPORATION	GF, JF
SATO NARUHIDE	IWATE INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE	GP, JP
HIRANO TAKAHIRO		GF, JF
SAITOH YOSHINORI	WASHINOO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
MIURA KENTARO	IWATEMEIJO CO., LTD.	GF, JF
HASHIMOTO KENYA	MIYAGI PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT	GP, JP
ITO KENJI	MIYAGI SAKE AND SHOCHU MAKERS ASSOCIATION	GF, JF
SATO YOSHIYUKI	HAGINO SHUZO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
GOTO MITSUAKI	SENDAI ISAWAKE KATSUYAMA SYUZO CORPORATION	GF, JF
ONO TSUYOSHI	AKITA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND BREWING	GP, JP
SHINDO SHO		GF, JF
SAITO MASAACKI	HIRAIZUMIHONPO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
SAITO KOTARO	SAIYA SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	GF, JF
KUDOH SHINPEI	YAMAGATA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	GP, JP
ISHIGAKI HIROYOSHI		GF, JF
JIN MASASHI	AZUMANOFUMOTO LIMITED COMPANY	GP, JP
WADA SHIGEKI	WADA SHUZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	GF, JF
TAKAHASHI RYO	INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE FUKUSHIMA PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT, AIZUWAKAMATSU TECHNICAL SUPPORT CENTRE	GP, JP, GF, JF
MUKAI HIROTOSHI	TSURUNOE SYUZO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
MATSUZAKI HIROYUKI	MATSUZAKISYUZO CO., LTD.	GF, JF
JOHN GAUNTNER	SAKE WORLD, Inc.	GF, JF
KUMADA CARLIN	YUTAKA SHOPPING KK	GF, JF
KANAUCHI MAKOTO	MIYAGI UNIVERSITY	GF, JF

Name	Affiliations	Participating Examinations
FUJII TSUTOMU	FUKUSHIMA UNIVERSITY	GF, JF
TSUJII MASAYUKI	NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF BREWING	GF, JF
SATO YASUTAKA	OFFICE OF ANALYSIS AND BREWING TECHNOLOGY, SENDAI REGIONAL TAXATION BUREAU	GP, JP, GF, JF
FUJITA DAISUKE		GP, JP, GF, JF
KATO YUKO		GP, JP, GF, JF

Abbreviations: GP, *Ginjo-shu* preliminary ex.; JP, *Junmai-shu* preliminary ex.; GF, *Ginjo-shu* final ex.; JF, *Junmai-shu* final ex.

#### 4. Awards

Entrants earning high scores in the final examination for each category are awarded an honor prize. The number of recipients of this prize is limited, and only those placing in the top one-third of all entrants in each category are eligible.

Of the top three rankings for each category, the “Grand Honor Prize” is awarded to those placing first in each category, and the “Special Honor Prize” to those placing second or third.

Certificates in English and Japanese are then presented to each of the prizewinners by the commissioner of the Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau.

#### 5. Brewing Techniques Workshop

##### (1) Date

This event is scheduled to be held on November 16 (Thur.), 2023.

##### (2) Location

This event is scheduled to be located at the 8th floor of the Sendai Joint Government Building A.

##### (3) Participants

Participants will be limited to sake brewers and technical guidance organization staff in the Tohoku area and jurors of the Tohoku Sake Awards 2023 who register in advance. To avoid overcrowding, the workshop will be divided into two sessions.

## 6. Statistics

### (1) Number of Entries

Prefecture	<i>Ginjo-shu</i>	<i>Junmai-shu</i>	Total
Aomori	11 (10)	9 (9)	20 (11)
Iwate	10 (10)	19 (15)	29 (17)
Miyagi	22 (18)	19 (16)	41 (23)
Akita	25 (23)	27 (24)	52 (26)
Yamagata	38 (32)	28 (26)	66 (35)
Fukushima	37 (32)	32 (28)	69 (36)
Total	143 (125)	134 (118)	277 (148)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

### (Previous Year)

Prefecture	<i>Ginjo-shu</i>	<i>Junmai-shu</i>	Total
Aomori	11 (10)	10 (10)	21 (11)
Iwate	14 (12)	19 (14)	33 (17)
Miyagi	18 (14)	21 (15)	39 (21)
Akita	23 (22)	24 (22)	47 (24)
Yamagata	35 (29)	28 (25)	63 (34)
Fukushima	36 (33)	32 (30)	68 (35)
Total	137 (120)	134 (116)	271 (142)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

(2) Number of Prizewinners (including Grand Honor and Special Honor Prizes)

Prefecture	<i>Ginjo-shu</i>	<i>Junmai-shu</i>	Total
Aomori	4 (4)	2 (2)	6 (4)
Iwate	4 (4)	7 (7)	11 (8)
Miyagi	2 (2)	4 (3)	6 (4)
Akita	7 (7)	10 (10)	17 (14)
Yamagata	15 (13)	7 (7)	22 (15)
Fukushima	15 (15)	12 (11)	27 (19)
Total	47 (45)	42 (40)	89 (64)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

(Previous Year)

Prefecture	<i>Ginjo-shu</i>	<i>Junmai-shu</i>	Total
Aomori	3 (3)	4 (4)	7 (6)
Iwate	4 (4)	9 (8)	13 (9)
Miyagi	4 (4)	6 (5)	10 (8)
Akita	9 (9)	6 (6)	15 (13)
Yamagata	12 (11)	7 (7)	19 (15)
Fukushima	11 (10)	15 (14)	26 (18)
Total	43 (41)	47 (44)	90 (69)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

## 7. List of Prizewinners

In regard solely to entrants awarded the “Grand Honor Prize” and the “Special Honor Prize,” tasting notes by two foreign jurors and some of the Japanese jurors are published.

### (1) *Ginjo-shu* Category

#### a. Grand Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Akita	AKITA SHURUI SEIZOH CO., LTD. GOSHONOGURA	8410001000388	TAKASHIMIZU
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.) <i>Melon and citrus-laced aromas intertwined offer the initial ginjo bouquet, and the flavor is a nice combination of sweetness and umami with a sharp acidity connecting them all together.</i></li> <li>• KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK) <i>Aromas of Muscat, honey dew melon and hints of chestnut. Juicy body with zesty acidity and a clean finish.</i></li> </ul>			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
<i>As well as notes of gorgeous white peaches and ripe sweet apples, there is a slight aroma reminiscent of refreshing green bamboo. The well-balanced smooth, full-bodied sweetness and sharp acidity leaves a pleasant finish and can be enjoyed for a long time.</i>			



b. Special Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Akita	SAIYA SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	6410001004787	YUKINOBOSHA KACHOGESSEKI
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
<p>• JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)</p> <p><i>Mellow apple notes in the aromas, followed by a very complex flavor that includes some earthy and woody notes, yet a very clean finish.</i></p> <p>• KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)</p> <p><i>Green apple, Japanese pear, and acacia flowers lead to a sweet palate with well-balanced acidity and a crisp finish.</i></p>			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
<p><i>Notes of white peach and lychee, clean and light apple and a sweet aroma of rice and Chinese quince. A mellow sweetness mixes with a sharp acidity. The finish has a slight bitterness and richness, completing the sake.</i></p>			

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Yamagata	SAKATA SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001006226	JOKIGEN
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
<p>• JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)</p> <p><i>Apple and peach aromas are most prominent. The flavors are all supported by a well-structured flavor profile, with richness as the main pillar. Plenty of breadth and depth with a nutty bold finish.</i></p> <p>• KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)</p> <p><i>Nose of unripe melon, lychee, and stewed pear lead to a sweet body with lively acidity and an exciting finish.</i></p>			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
<p><i>Notes of fresh citrus and white peach, with an aroma that is faintly reminiscent of apple and lychee. The soft taste and rich sweetness are well-balanced with a refreshing acidity and an elegant clean finish.</i></p>			

c. Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Aomori	MIURASHUZO CO., LTD.	4420001010349	HOUHAI
Aomori	HACHINOHESYURUI CORPORATION GONOHEKOUJYOU	8420001006418	JYOKU
Aomori	NAKAMURA KAMEKICHI CO., LTD.	1420001009988	TAMADARE
Aomori	NARUMIJOTEN CORPORATION	2420001009987	INAMURAYABUNSHIROU
Iwate	SENNKINNSYUZOU CORPORATION	5400001007081	RYUSENYAEZAKURA
Iwate	SUISENSHUZO CORPORATION	7402701000297	SUISEN
Iwate	HAMACHIDORI CO., LTD.	4400001007322	HAMACHIDORI
Iwate	NANBUBIJIN CORPORATION	8400001007847	NANBUBIJIN
Miyagi	ICHINOKURA CORPORATION	4370201000031	ICHINOKURA SHOKO
Miyagi	ZAO SHUZO CORPORATION	8370101001308	ZAO
Akita	AKITA SHURUI SEIZOH CO., LTD. HONSHAGURA	8410001000388	TAKASHIMIZU
Akita	HOKUSHIKA CO., LTD.	1410001006136	HOKUSHIKA
Akita	SATO-SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	7410001005231	DEWANOFUJI
Akita	TENJU SHUZO CO., LTD.	3410001005235	TENJU
Akita	TAKAHASHI SHUZOTEN CORPRATION	5410001008005	OKUSHIMIZU
Yamagata	DEWAZAKURA SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD. YAMAGATAGURA	5390001004452	DEWAZAKURA
Yamagata	YONETSURUSYUZO CORPORATION	8390001010456	YONETSURU
Yamagata	KAMENOI SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001007975	KUDOKIJOZU
Yamagata	TAKENO TSUYU SAKAGURA CO., LTD.	8390003000538	HAKURO SUISHU
Yamagata	EIKO FUJI SAKE BREWING COMPANY	8390001007782	EIKO FUJI

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Yamagata	KIKUISAMI CORPORATION	8390001006157	SANJUROKUNINSHU HITEN
Yamagata	SUGIISAMI WARABIOKA BREWERY LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	7390003000456	SUGIISAMI
Yamagata	FUMOTOI CO., LTD.	6390001006753	FUMOTOI
Yamagata	MATUYAMA SYUZO CORPORATION	8390001007254	MATUMINE NO FUJI
Yamagata	KOYASYUZO CORPORATION	9390001008714	HANAUYO
Yamagata	TAKAGI SHUZO CORPORATION	4390001009320	JUYONDAI
Yamagata	ROKKASEN CO., LTD.	3390001009511	TEMAHIMA
Fukushima	AKEBONOSYUZOU CO., LTD.	5380003001861	ISSHOUSEISYUN
Fukushima	OTOKOYAMASHUZOUTEN, L.P.	6380003001761	AIZUOTOKOYAMA KAI
Fukushima	SHIRAISHUZOTEN LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	3380003001772	BANDAIHOU
Fukushima	TSURUNOE SYUZO CO., LTD.	7380001017619	AIZU CHUJO
Fukushima	HANAHARUSHUZOU CO., LTD.	3380001026763	HANAHARU
Fukushima	SATOU SHUZOUTEN CORPORATION	7380002009846	FUJINOI
Fukushima	SENKOMA SYUZO CORPORATION	4380001010279	SENKOMA
Fukushima	MATSUZAKISYUZO CO., LTD.	8380001029290	HIROTOGAWA
Fukushima	HOMARE SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD.	3380001018703	AIZU HOMARE
Fukushima	YOSHINOYAMA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	8380003001941	AIZU YOSHINOYAMA
Fukushima	HIGASHINIHONSYUZO PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE	1380005003942	OKUNOMATSU
Fukushima	HIMONOYA SYUZOTEN CO., LTD.	1380001009456	SENKONARI
Fukushima	AIZU SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD.	4380001019114	TAJIMA
Fukushima	KOKKEN BREWERY CO., LTD.	5380001019146	KOKKEN
Fukushima	WATANABE KENICHI		KAITOU OTOKOYAMA

JCN indicates Japan Corporate Number

(2) Junmai-shu Category

a. Grand Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Fukushima	MATSUZAKISYUZO CO., LTD.	8380001029290	HIROTOGAWA
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
<p>• JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.) <i>Mild citrus and slightly sweet aromas lead into a full, rich and sharp flavor in which umami and acidity are the main elements, and in great balance together.</i></p> <p>• KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK) <i>Aromas of Muscat, unripe green melon, white flowers and French pear give way to a clean semi-sweet palate, fruity, zesty with a pleasant finish.</i></p>			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
<p><i>There are aromas of mint as well as banana and melon, with moderate acidity and a clean flavor, coupled with sweetness and a sharp finish. The balance of flavors is superb.</i></p>			

b. Special Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Fukushima	AKEBONOSYUZOU CO., LTD.	5380003001861	KIZUNAMAI KASUI
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
<p>• JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)</p> <p><i>Watermelon and fresh cream are expressed in the aromas, with a slightly rich and mildly sweet flavor profile following that, and all balanced by a bright acidity that tightens up the finish.</i></p> <p>• KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)</p> <p><i>Nose of Pineapple candy and powdered sugar move to a palate of candied Pineapple and pear, pleasant acidity and a sweet lingering finish.</i></p>			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
<p><i>The ginjo aroma is elegant, reminiscent of fruit such as matured melon and apple. The balance of an espresso-like bitterness and sweetness is wonderful. The flavors are full bodied.</i></p>			

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Fukushima	HIGASHINIHONSYUZO PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE	1380005003942	OKUNOMATSU
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
<p>• JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)</p> <p><i>Slight banana and grapefruit notes lead into a delicate, fine-grained yet slightly tart flavor that is wonderfully representative of the sake of the Tohoku region.</i></p> <p>• KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)</p> <p><i>Ripe Pineapple, plum, lemongrass, and a hint of fennel seed lead to a palate of mellow fennel and cotton candy. A sweet palate with balanced acidity and clean sweet finish.</i></p>			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
<p><i>Gorgeous fruity notes of ripe berries. A juicy flavor with a strong sweetness. The flavors are mild.</i></p>			

c. Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Aomori	MIURASHUZO CO., LTD.	4420001010349	HOUHAI
Aomori	NARUMIJOZOTEN CORPORATION	2420001009987	INAMURAYABUNSHIROU
Iwate	SAKURAGAO SHUZO CO., LTD.	6400001000663	SAKURAGAO
Iwate	TSUKINOWA SYUZOUTEN CO., LTD.	3400002007322	TSUKINOWA
Iwate	WASHINOO CO., LTD.	8400001004101	WASHINOO
Iwate	SUISENSHUZO CORPORATION	7402701000297	SUISEN
Iwate	IWATEMEIJYO CO., LTD.	4400601000560	IWATEHOMARE
Iwate	HAMACHIDORI CO., LTD.	4400001007322	HAMACHIDORI
Iwate	NANBUBIJIN CORPORATION	8400001007847	NANBUBIJIN
Miyagi	UCHIGASAKI BREWING CO.	3370003001278	HOYO
Miyagi	ICHINOKURA CORPORATION	4370201000031	ICHINOKURA SHOZANTEN
Miyagi	KANENOI SHUZOU CORPORATION	9370201003145	WATAYA
Akita	AKITA SHUZO CO., LTD.	2410001001020	SUIRAKUTEN HYAKUDENBARE
Akita	AKITA SHURUI SEIZOH CO., LTD. GOSHONOGURA	8410001000388	TAKASHIMIZU
Akita	FUKUROKIJUSHUZOU CORPORATION	7410001003499	IPPAKUSUISEI
Akita	ASAMAI SAKE BREWERY	3410001008956	AMANOTO
Akita	HINOMARUJOZO CO., LTD.	6410001009167	MANSAKUNOHANA
Akita	SAIYA SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	6410001004787	YUKINOBOSHA CHOSETSU
Akita	TENJU SHUZO CO., LTD.	3410001005235	TENJU
Akita	AKITAMEIJYO COMPANY LIMITED	5410001005431	RANMAN
Akita	RYOZEKISHUZO CO., LTD.	6410001005595	RYOZEKI
Akita	DEWATSURUSYUZO CO., LTD.	6410001008202	DEWATSURU

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Yamagata	AZUMANOFUMOTO LIMITED COMPANY	4390002014534	AZUMANOFUMOTO
Yamagata	YONETSURUSYUZO CORPORATION	8390001010456	YONETSURU
Yamagata	EIKO FUJI SAKE BREWING COMPANY	8390001007782	MOMIJINISIKA
Yamagata	SAKATA SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001006226	JOKIGEN
Yamagata	SUGIISAMI WARABIOKA BREWERY LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	7390003000456	SUGIISAMI
Yamagata	WADA SHUZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	6390003000928	ARATAMA
Yamagata	TAKAGI SHUZO CORPORATION	4390001009320	JUYONDAI
Fukushima	EISEN SHUZO CORPORATION	6380001017280	EISIROU
Fukushima	OTOKOYAMASHUZOUTEN, L.P.	6380003001761	AIZUOTOKOYAMA KAI
Fukushima	SHIRAISHUZOTEN LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	3380003001772	ISASUMINOMORI
Fukushima	TSURUNOE SYUZO CO., LTD.	7380001017619	AIZU CHUJO
Fukushima	MIHARU SHUZO CO., LTD.	4380001007977	MIHARUKOMA
Fukushima	SATOU SHUZOUTEN CORPORATION	7380002009846	FUJINOI
Fukushima	WATANABE SHUZHONTEN CORPORATION	4380002013173	YUKIKOMACHI
Fukushima	HANAIZUMI SAKE BREWERY GENERAL PARTNERSHIP COMPANY	4380003002019	ROMAN

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