



美酒王國

Akita Saké Breweries and Their Stories

Institute for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration
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Cover page: ears of rice ready for harvest, photographed by Hisashi Ito

Back cover page: representative saké labels of the 35 breweries in Akita

Table of Contents

Prologue: Akita as the Kingdom of Transcendent Saké 4
Introduction to the English Edition and Acknowledgments 7
The 123's of Saké Brewing 9
Official Categories of Saké 10
History and Culture of Saké in Akita 11
Thirty-Five Stories of Akita Saké 14

AKITA-HOMARE (Akita Homare Shuzo Co., Ltd.)

AMANOTO (Asamai Shuzo Co., Ltd.)

ARAMASA (Aramasa Brewing Co., Ltd.)

AZAKURA (Azakura Brewing Co., Ltd.)

CHITOSE-ZAKARI (Kazuno Meishu Brewing Co., Ltd.)

CHIYOMIDORI (Okuda Brewing Co., Ltd.)

DAINAGAWA (Bizen Shuzo Honten)

DEWA-NO-FUJI (Sato Brewing Co., Ltd.)

DEWATSURU (Dewatsuru Brewing Co., Ltd.)

FUKUKOMACHI (Kimura Brewery Co., Ltd.)

FUYUKI (Fukunotomo Shuzo Co., Ltd.)

GINRIN (Naba Shouten Co., Ltd.)

HARUKASUMI (Kuribayashi Brewing and Co.)

HIDEYOSHI (Suzuki Brewing and Co.)

HIRAIZUMI (Hiraizumi Hompo Co., Ltd.)	Post-scriptum 165
HOKUSHIKA (Hokushika Brewing Co., Ltd.)	Map of the Saké Breweries in Akita 167
IPPAKU-SUISEI (Fukurokuju Brewing Co., Ltd.)		
ITTEKI-SENRYO (Akitaken Hakko Kogyo Co., Ltd.)		
KARIHO (Kariho Brewing Co., Ltd.)		
MANSAKUNO HANA (Hinomaru Brewing Co., Ltd.)		
NOSHIRO (Kikusui Brewing Limited Partnership)		
OKUSHIMIZU (Takahashi Syuzo-ten Co., Ltd.)		
RAKU-IZUMI (Nishimura Brewing and Co.)		
RANMAN (Akita Meijyo Co., Ltd.)		
RYOZEKI (Ryozeki Shuzo Co., Ltd.)		
SHIRATAKI (Yamamoto General Partnership Co.)		
SUIRAKUTEN (Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd.)		
TABITO (Maizuru Brewing Co., Ltd.)		
TAIHEIZAN (Kodama Brewing Co., Ltd.)		
TAKASHIMIZU (Akita Shurui Seizoh Co., Ltd.)		
TENJU (Tenju Shuzo Co., Ltd.)		
YACHIYO (Yachiyo Shuzo and Co.)		
YAMABUKI (Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.)		
YUKI-NO-BIJIN (Akita Jozo Co., Ltd.)		
YUKI-NO-BÔSHA (Saiya Brewing Co., Ltd.)		

Prologue: Akita as the Kingdom of Transcendent Saké

Saké brewing begins with the cultivation of saké rice at a time when the surrounding mountains are still covered in snow and the fields have white scattered patches remaining. Butterbur sprouts peek out from beneath the snow, signaling that spring has arrived. When cherry blossoms dance in the wind and meltwater from the mountains runs cold and pure, saké rice



farmers begin preparing the land for the new year's harvest.

The rice planting season is marked by the arrival of new leaves on the trees and thawing of the frozen waters.

The beautifully arranged planted

seeds continue to grow in straight lines until arriving at the valley's slope. Meanwhile, awaiting the arrival of summer, the saké that has been stored in the breweries quietly continues to mature. With the sounds of excitement from summer festivals echoing in the distance, the rice plants quickly grow. As midsummer nears, ears of grain begin to appear beneath the relentless sunshine amidst a sea of flowing greenery.

As autumn arrives and the Akita night sky is painted with color by the greatest fireworks festival in Japan, one can only hope that all the planted seeds endure the autumn storms and fully ripen.



Once the rice stalks begin to hang heavy and create images of a golden sea, the harvest season has officially arrived. The harvested rice is polished until it is pure white and then steamed. As the vapor builds in the brewing room, or

sakagura, the *kôji* is made filled with the aromatic scent of steamed rice. Once it ferments, the year's *shubo* is ready. This is the busy season for saké brewers, especially since the brewing process continues steadily until spring.

The height of winter is Akita's coldest and cleanest season. It is also the best time to make top-quality saké. During this chosen season, *Daiginjô* is prepared. Inside the snow-covered *sakégura*, wrapped in silent white snow, the only noise is that of the soft sound of fermentation. The Akita approach to making *moromi* is to allow the fermentation process to occur slowly at low temperatures, after which high-quality saké is created by a team of devoted brewers. With this realization, Akita's long winter nears its end and



the warming waters announce the arrival of spring. As the snow melts from the mountains and soaks into the ground, the natural layers of earth act as filters creating rich and pure groundwater. This blessing becomes the source for the new year's saké brewing. Due to Akita's long history of high-quality saké born from

the abundance of nature's blessings, it has earned the unique name "The Kingdom of Transcendent Saké."

Shinichiro Kodama
Chair of the Akita Saké Brewers Association

Introduction to the English Edition and Acknowledgments

This book is a translation of *Bishu Okoku Akita (Akita, The Kingdom of Transcendent Saké)* published in September 2015 by Mumyosha. The publishing project was initiated by Mr. Mitsuaki Homma and Prof. Yutaka Takemura, who later became members of the *Bishu Okoku Akita* editorial committee, in cooperation with Akita Saké Brewers Association. Mr. Homma is a former member and Prof. Takemura is a current member of the Center for East Asia Studies (renamed the Institute for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration [IASRC] in April 2015) at Akita International University. The publishing project of *Bishu Okoku Akita* and its English version, *Akita Saké Breweries and Their Stories*, has been an important part of the IASRC's activities.

While the IASRC promotes interdisciplinary academic collaboration in Asian studies, it also reaches out to local communities in Akita and connects the subnational region of Akita to the supranational region of Asia. Publication of the present book is a way to share the culture and history of Akita with people around the world. Since saké is the centerpiece of traditional life and culture in Akita, simply put, to understand Akita's saké is to understand Akita's people. Thus, we have collected the stories of 35 breweries from Akita Prefecture that make the most-representative saké brands. These stories form the history of saké brewing in Akita.

We submit this book to the judgment of readers with our sincere hope that it not only provides the best accounts of the cultural heritage but also reveals our level of pride in this particular field.

Japanese non-proper nouns are, in principle, placed in italics, while proper nouns are presented in normal font. Frequent Japanese expressions, such as *kôji*, *shubo*, *moromi*, *daiginjô(shu)*, *ginjô(shu)*, *junmaishu*, and *futsûshu*, are explained in the following two pages. Long vowels in Japanese are spelled with a circumflex, unless other usage is established (e.g., Tokyo not Tôkyô). Finally, saké brand names are written in small capital letters.

We are grateful to the brewers, who kindly offered their stories, and to Mr. Kodama (Chair of the Akita Saké Brewers Association) and his colleagues, who generously provided their assistance throughout the editing process. In addition, we owe much gratitude to Ryan Herrmann, Ryoko Ieda, Arisa Oka, Misato Tamaki, and Misa Shoji for their Japanese-to-English translation and to Takeshi Akiba for advising us on the English-editing work. We would like to thank Enago (www.enago.jp) for the English language review. Furthermore, Yuko Kon's contributions for all of the administrative aspects were vital in bringing this book project to fruition.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this publication was made possible through the generous funding from the Hokkaido-Tohoku Regional Economic Research Institute.

Akita, January 31, 2016
Tetsuya Toyoda and Yutaka Takemura
Editors for the English version

The 123s of Saké Brewing

(1. *Kôji*, 2. *Shubo*, and 3. *Moromi*)

After hulled rice is polished and steamed, there are three stages of fermentation and transformation: 1) transformation into *kôji*; 2) transformation into *shubo*; and 3) transformation into *moromi*.

1) *Kôji* is steamed rice inoculated with *kôji* mold. Rice is converted into sugar, which feeds *kobo* (saké yeast).

2) *Shubo* (the yeast starter), also called *moto*, is a mixture of rice, *kôji*, and water with a high concentration of yeast cells. In order to suppress the development of bacteria, lactic acid is necessary. The traditional method (the *kimoto* or *yamahai* method) uses lactic acid in the air, while the modern method (the *sokujô* method) manually adds lactic acid.

3) *Moromi*, also called *tsukuri*, is a mash of steamed rice, *kôji*, and water added to *shubo* in which parallel fermentation occurs. This fermentation consists of *kôji* converting rice to sugar and yeast converting sugar to alcohol.

Once the *moromi* is completely fermented, it is passed through a press to separate out saké lees. The saké is then filtered, pasteurized, and placed in cold storage where it matures before being bottled.

Source:
Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association "Brewing Process,"
<http://www.japansake.or.jp/sake/english/sake-basics/process.html> (technical details are omitted).

Official Categories of Saké

(National Tax Agency Notification in 1989, revised in 2003)

Ginjô(shu) or “carefully brewed (saké)” is made with rice grains from which more than 40% of the outer layer has been removed by milling. Fermentation occurs slowly at lower temperatures; therefore, it takes longer. Distilled alcohol equivalent to up to 10% of the weight of the polished rice may be added unless specified as *junmai* (pure rice) *ginjô*.

Daiginjô(shu) or “great *ginjô(shu)*” is made with more highly polished rice from which at least 50% of the outer layer has been removed by milling. *Junmai* (pure rice) *daiginjô* is the highest-grade saké.

Honjôzô(shu) or “fully brewed brew” is made with rice grains from which more than 30% of the outer layer has been removed by milling. If more than 40% has been removed, it is called *tokubetsu* (special) *honjôzô (shu)*.

Junmaishu or “pure rice saké” is made without adding alcohol. If more than 40% of the rice grains’ outer layer has been removed, it is called *tokubetsu* (special) *junmaishu*.

Futsûshu or “ordinary saké” is any saké other than *daiginjô*, *ginjô*, *honjôzô*, and *junmaishu*, which are together called *tokutei-meishu* (special-designation saké). Of the saké consumed in 2014, 70% was *futsûshu*.

Source:

Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association “Types of Sake,”

<http://www.japansake.or.jp/sake/english/sake-basics/type.html> (technical details omitted).

History and Culture of Saké in Akita

Akita’s saké brewing industry has a long history. Twenty-seven breweries (more than two-thirds of the existing breweries) have been operating for more than 100 years. Akita’s excellent rice production provides ample rice to brew saké, and its long snowy winters offer an abundance of pure water. With such good rice and water, it is no surprise that a significant number of saké breweries have been established in Akita.

During the Edo era (1603–1868), Akita saw the development of its mining industry, which, in turn, boosted that of the brewing industry. Northern Akita included copper mines at Kosaka and Osarizawa, while southern Akita had the Innai Silver Mine, the largest silver mine in Japan at that time. The mines in Akita fed more than 7,000 miners directly and, together with the local residents, 15,000 people were directly or indirectly affected. The mining towns prospered even more than the castle town of Kubota (modern-day Akita City), the capital of the Akita Domain (which roughly corresponds to modern-day Akita Prefecture). Since the mining towns in the mountains offered little entertainment, it was quite natural that saké became one of the basic necessities of everyday life. Subsequently, the demand for saké invigorated the brewing industry in Yuzawa, Yashima, and oth-



er areas surrounding these mines, which, in turn, helped establish new breweries in addition to the existing ones.

According to the Akita Domain's report to the Tokugawa government at Edo in 1618, there were 746 brewers in the domain. The brewing industry was an important sector in the local economy. When the government ordered a nation-wide restriction on saké production in the early 18th century, the Akita Domain asked for an exemption since "such restrictions would cause harm on residents in the cold province." The protective measures taken by the Akita Domain formed the basis of the saké brewing industry's development.

In the early 20th century, Akita's saké gained a national reputation through competitive fairs. The first national biennial competitive saké fair was held in 1907. At the fourth fair in 1913, RYÔZEKI won an honor prize for the first time as a saké of Akita. It was also named one of the eight best sakés out of 2,801 sakés submitted for tasting by 2,054 breweries throughout Japan. Virtually overnight, RYÔZEKI became a nationally known saké brand. At the 14th fair in 1934, seven saké brands out of the 10 best were from Akita, including TAIHEIZAN, which won the grand prize. Through these national competitive fairs, the entire country began to recognize the high-quality products from the breweries of Akita.

When we talk of the modern history of Akita's saké, we cannot omit Masatsune Hanaoka (1883–1953), who arrived at Akita in 1918 as an official engineer of the Sendai Tax Supervision Bureau. He significantly contributed to the improvement of brewing techniques and the education of brewers in Akita. Hanaoka also established the Akita style of low-temperature, long-period fer-

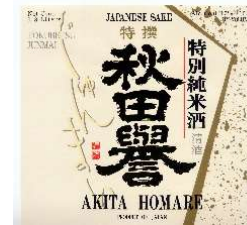
mentation. He was an enthusiastic educator who organized training sessions for master brewers and the sons of brewery owners from 1923 on. These sessions also enabled personal exchanges and information sharing among brewers, thus consolidating the brewing culture in Akita. Hanaoka was later appointed an official engineer of the Akita Prefecture, after which he continued to contribute to Akita's brewing industry.

In recent years, with the development of yeast AK-1, "Aki-taryu-Hana Kobo" (flower-yeast Akita style), which provided a high level of fragrance and richness, 25 Akita breweries received 26 gold prizes at the 79th Annual Saké Awards in 1991. This was the best record among the 47 prefectures in that year. In the same year, AKITA-SHUN-GINJÔ, brewed with AK-1, entered the market and revolutionized Akita's saké.

Akita's saké, which has ranked high in national competitions throughout modern times, received 13 gold prizes at the 103rd Annual Saké Awards in 2015 (ranking fourth best among the 47 prefectures). The International Wine Challenge (IWC) awarded the Champion Saké Trophy to YAMABUKI of Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery Co., Ltd. in 2009 and to *daiginjô* FUKUKOMACHI of Kimura Brewery Co., Ltd. in 2012. Akita's breweries have clearly proved and will continue to prove that their high-quality products are the best in the international market.

Hitoshi Takahashi, Director of the Institute of Brewing
Akita Research Institute of Food and Brewing

Thirty-Five Stories of Akita Saké



AKITA-HOMARE (秋田譽)

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Akita Homare Shuzo Co., Ltd. was established in 1944 in Honjô City in accordance with the Industrial Reform Act. Approximately 10 breweries in Honjô City and Yuri County (currently Yurihonjô City) merged into a single company. Most of them had a long history dating back from the late Edo era

to the early Meiji period. The name AKITA HOMARE (“Akita's Honor”) describes the goal of the company, which is to one day become a brand worthy of representing the honor and pride of Akita.

Honjô City is famous for the folk song “Honjô Oiwake.” The brewery is located downstream on the Koyoshi River where “Honjô Oiwake” was born. Izumi Town (*izumi* means “water spring”) was formerly the name of the area where the brewery currently stands. As the name describes, subsoil water from Mount Chôkai pours out from various areas around the town into natural springs. A 600-meter tube is connected to one of these springs (that the company owns), which allows the brewery to use rich natural water resources in each saké-making process.

Akita Homare Shuzo extended its market to Hokkaido in an earlier period. After the Meiji government was established in the late 19th century, Hokkaido became a hot spot for coal mining until the 1980s. The brewery gained much popularity amongst miners, and they consumed large quantities of Akita-Homare.

The philosophy of Akita Homare Brewery is that “Brewing is like artistic creation.” This perspective can be seen in each aspect of the brewing process, such as the selection of rice according to type (e.g., hard, soft, etc.), the choice of yeast, and various brewing methods.



At the same time, the brewery pursues a more liberal view on saké and challenges old customs. In other words, saké should be seen as not only traditional but also a modern drink. One significant development since the brewery's establishment was the change of taste from a sweet saké to a dry saké. The reason for this change was the increase in shipping volume to urban areas, where consumers favored dry saké. Another feature of this brewery's products is the commercialization of *junmaishu* and *ginjôshu*, which was decided after conversations with distributors who were keen to provide consumers with products they would truly appreciate.

Currently, the AKITA HOMARE brand has a market in New York and Hong Kong. It has received good reviews from both Western and Chinese restaurants. One of the products, *junmai ginjô* KAMÉ-NO-O-TSUKURI, is made from the rare, legendary brewing rice “Kamé-no-O.” The history of this rice dates back to 1893 in Shônai Town, Yamagata Prefecture. History says Kameji Abe

found three rice plants standing tall while all the others were damaged by the cold weather. Some say these miraculous rice plants survived due to genetic mutation. With considerable effort, Kameji successfully cultivated the gathered seeds. In 1925, it reached its “golden age” as the prominent rice breed of the Tohoku region (the northernmost part of mainland Japan). However, since it had little resistance against pests and chemical fertilizers, it was unsuitable for mass production. Therefore, it soon lost its status over other breeds of rice with high-yielding abilities. “Kamé-no-O” rice did not see the light of day again until 1983, when a brewery in Niigata Prefecture brilliantly revived this species. *Junmai ginjô* KAMÉ-NO-O-TSUKURI, made with “Kamé-no-O” rice, is a popular gift.

Another of Akita Homare Shuzo's most famous brands is AKITA BIJIN (“Akita's Beauty”). It can be purchased as both *ginjôshu* and *junmaishu*. AKITA BIJIN makes an impression through its sweet aroma and moderate dry taste. This saké is made with rice harvested in Akita and natural spring water. A well-known Akita brewing method is used in which the saké is slowly fermented under a low temperature. This process gives it a mild, soft touch.

Another product Akita Homare Shuzo brews is *shôchû* (Japanese hard liquor made from grains and vegetables through single distillation). During the process of making saké, byproducts such as rice flour and saké lees generally remain. The company uses them to make a *honkaku-shôchû*, a full-fledged *shôchû*, which is considered a blessed byproduct of saké brewing. The *honkaku-shôchû* produced here is called CHISUI (*chi* means “knowledge” and *sui* means “water”), which comes from a Buddhist term that describes the



knowledge of the *tathāgata* (Sanskrit word for those who mastered the teachings of Buddhism or Buddha himself). In other words, it refers to being as clear and pure as water. CHISUI is a *honkaku-shōchū* with 41% alcohol and no added water. Its elegant touch has made it a popular gift item.

Words from the *Tōji* (the Head Brewer):

For brewing saké, we owe much to the power of rice, the blessing of natural spring water, and Akita's fermentation yeasts which are respectively suitable for *ginjōshu*, *junmaishu*, and *honjōzōshu*. These three pillars help us brew our products. We also emphasize a wholesome, natural fermentation process. Currently, we aim to fuse three aspects into the image of our saké: 1) the unique climate of Akita; 2) the low-temperature brewing method; and 3) the excellent skills of the brewers.



AMANOTO (天の戸)

by Asamai Shuzo Co., Ltd.

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Asamai Shuzo Co., Ltd. is located in the Asamai District of Hiraka Town, which lies at the center of the Yokote Basin in the southern part of Akita Prefecture. The Yokote Basin becomes fertile due to the Minase River and

the Naruse River, whose sources are in the Ou Mountains. Some of the water from these rivers goes underground and re-emerges to form a cluster of natural springs, called *Bivanuma Springs*, in the Asamai District. The area has good-quality rice and abundant spring water, thus making it a perfect location for saké brewing.

The brewery was established in 1917. The founder, Sōkō Kakizaki, named his saké AMANOTO ("Heaven's Door") after the following ancient poem:

*Amanotowa shizukani akete Kamijiyama, sugino aobani hikage
sasu miyu.*

"As the heaven's door slowly opens on Mt. Kamiji, I see the sunbeam shine on the green leaves of the cedar trees."

This poem implicitly refers to the mythology of the Sun Goddess. The brewery uses an icon of a *magatama* (a comma-shaped di-

vine bead) on the bottles to illustrate the divine origin of the name AMANOTO.

The brewery has experienced various twists and turns during its history. In 1943, it was forced to close down due to a national policy of mergers and the abolishment of selected companies. However, the local people's petition made the government reconsider its decision, and the brewing license was reissued in the following year.



In the 1980s, the brewery experienced financial difficulties, and its *ginjō* brewing was suspended for five years. However, Hidemori Kakizaki, the then-senior managing director (who became the president of the company in 1996), resumed *ginjō* brewing in 1988. This gave the brewery a new thrust for development, even if, despite its renewed efforts, the brewery continued to struggle. In 1990, when the Akita Research Institute of Brewing announced the discovery of highly fragrant yeast called "AK-1 Akitaryu-hanakobo," Asamai Brewery decided to brew saké with this new find.

In the same year, Kōichi Moriya, who had been working at Asamai Brewery, was appointed *Tōji* (head brewer). Subsequently, the brewery received gold prizes at the annual national new-brewed saké fair five consecutive times from 1991 to 1996 (the annual national new-brewed saké fair was not held in 1995). Moreover, the brewery's award-winning saké was brewed with only local rice from Akita ("Miyamanishiki" rice and "Gin-no-sei" rice), which was an achievement never before seen in the brew-



eries of Akita. *Tōji* Moriya became nationally recognized for his brewing achievements and for his 1995 book titled *Natsuta-Fuyuzō* (*Summer in Rice*

Field and Winter in Brewery), which described his struggles during saké brewing.

The brewery's motto is: "Saké is born of rice fields." Asamai Brewery has kept this reminder ever since it experienced a rice shortage in 1993 when a cold summer and the saké rice-distribution system used at that time made it impossible for the brewery to use high-quality saké rice produced in the local area. In order to prevent another disaster in the future, Asamai Brewery initiated its policy of purchasing all the saké rice grown by participants of the Hiraka Town Saké Rice Study Group. As a result, the brewery established its practice of "producing *junmaishu* (pure rice saké) only with saké rice produced within five kilometers of the brewery."



In 1996, Asamai Brewery began brewing *tokubetsu-junmaishu* AMANOTO UMASHINE. Since 2005, only saké rice grown with reduced amounts of pesticides and chemical fertilizers has been used thanks to the cooperation of the Hiraka Town Saké Rice Study Group. In 2010, the brewery received a gold prize for saké brewed with "Akita Sakékomachi" rice in a national new-brewed saké fair for the 10th time, after which the brewery decided to produce only *junmaishu*.

This turn to *junmai* brewing did not tarnish the quality of its products, and Asamai Brewery received another gold prize at the national fair in 2012. In 2013, Hidemori Kakizaki passed away at the age of 55; his younger brother, Tsuneki Kakizaki, took over as president.

Asamai Brewery should be noted for more than *junmai* brewing, particularly due to its use of two brewing techniques. First, it practices a process known as *zenryō-gentei-kyūsui* ("controlled

water absorption for entire amount of rice”), which consists of the following steps: neatly polishing the rice; weighing the rice and water in small increments; allowing the rice to evenly absorb the water; and steaming the rice in a large Japanese pot. Second, it utilizes a method known as *kanzukuri* (“brewing during a cold season, which is the most favorable condition for saké”), which is practiced with handmade *kôji* during the coldest part of the winter season. In addition, the *moromi* is squeezed in a large, old-style tub, and the saké is then bottled without filtering so it maintains a rich rice taste.

The representative brands of the brewery include:

Tokubetsu junmaishu AMANOTO UMASHINE

Junmai daiginjô 35

Junmaishu JUN-KARA (“Rich and Dry”) AMANOTO

Junmai daiginjô NATSUTA-FUYUZÔ (which is a challenging saké, even for *Tôji* Moriya)

In addition, the brewery performs advanced saké brewing using black *kôji* and white *kôji*, which are usually used to brew *shôchû* (a Japanese distilled beverage with up to 45% alcohol). This is another example of the innovations undertaken at this brewery.



Words from the Representative:

The origin of human activities in the Yokote Basin is so old that it dates back to the Jomon era. The rice cultivation culture, formed during this long history, is a treasure created by the fertile land

of this region and the efforts of the people who have patiently continued living in this area that experiences heavy snowfall. We strongly believe saké, in the same way as the rice cultivation

culture, can be truly delicious when nature and human beings work in harmony. We would like to continue providing the world with bottles of saké produced by combining the powers of water, rice, and human beings.

Scene of the Stories



“Nanohana Road” & cherry blossoms in Ogata-mura



ARAMASA (新政)
by Aramasa Brewing Co., Ltd.



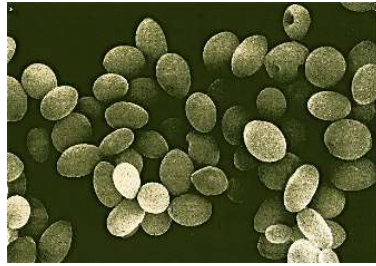
Aramasa Brewing Co., Ltd. was founded in 1852 by Uhei the First at Shijūken-Kawabata (currently Ōmachi 6 in Akita City), which is near Kubota Castle, the main castle of the Akita Domain. The saké brand name comes from the word *Shinsei Kōtoku* (新政厚德), meaning “new politics with profound virtue.” This was the slogan of the Meiji government, which came to power in 1868. The two letters, which read *Shinsei*, can be also read as ARAMASA, the brewery's name and its saké brand name.

The fifth generation head of the brewery, Uhei Satō, gave new life to the brewery. He studied zymurgy at the Osaka Technical School. Masataka Taketsuru (who later became the founder of



Nikka Whisky) was at the same school, and he was a good rival for Uhei. It was said that their class had two prodigies: “Taketsuru from the West and Uhei from the East.” Subsequently, “K-6 yeast” was discovered when Uhei was the president of Aramasa Brewery.

In 1939, an engineer from the National Tax Agency visited the brewery and separated K-6 saké yeast from its *shubo* (yeast starter). K-6 yeast was then cultured at the National Institute of Brewing and ultimately distributed to about 10,000 breweries throughout Japan. After the discovery of K-6 yeast, other yeasts discovered earlier were abandoned.



This brought about an important change in saké brewing in Japan. Until then, reputed saké-producing towns were mostly located in western Japan, including Nada (Hyogo Prefecture), Fushimi (Kyoto Prefecture), Hyogo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Kôchi, and Fukuoka. However, after the discovery of K-6 yeast, the center of production gradually moved from the west to the east. K-6 yeast was born in a cold region with powerful fermentation and mild flavor. The *ginjô*-type of saké could be brewed only with K-6 yeast, which became available throughout Japan.



K-6 yeast was also important for the national budget, especially because this saké yeast was the only one in use from 1937 to 1945. Throughout that period, the government desperately needed to collect taxes. Approximately one-tenth of the national governments' revenue depended on liquor taxes. The quality of K-6 yeast stabilized saké production, which, in turn, provided consistent revenue for the government during times of great difficulties.



Today, the National Institute of Brewing continues to distribute K-6 yeast, and it has become the oldest saké yeast currently in use. New yeasts have been discovered since then, but their DNAs are close to K-6 yeast. Conversely, K-1 to K-5 yeasts, which are no longer in use, have very different DNAs. Thus, K-6 yeast is considered the "Eve of all saké yeasts."



Aramasa Brewing Co., Ltd. continues to brew with only K-6 yeast and rice produced in Akita. In addition, since K-6 yeast was discovered at a time when saké was usually made with rice, *kôji*, and water without adding alcohol, Aramasa Brewery continues to do so (*junmai zukuri* or "pure rice brewing"). Moreover, while many breweries add lactic acid to yeast in order to culture yeast starters (*moto*), Aramasa Brewery maintains an older brewing style similar to that used in the past. This has led to rare, pure saké brewing without any auxiliary materials.

The representative brands of Aramasa Brewery include:

NO. 6, which provides the pure taste of K-6 yeast with no filtration

ARAMASA YAMA-YU (“Yu” is the first syllable of Yusuke Satô, the current head of the brewery), which is brewed in wooden buckets

AMA-NEKO (“Flax-Colored Cat”), which is characterized by fresh sourness

HINOTORI (“Bird of the Sun”), which provides rich flavor and sweetness

Words from the Representative:

We believe the mission of Aramasa Brewing Co., Ltd. is to produce pure rice saké steeped in rich diversity from a time when saké celebrated its most glorious days.



AZAKURA (阿櫻)
by Azakura Brewing Co.,
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In 1886, there were eight breweries in Yokote City. One of them, Shiragiku Hompo, located in Kaji Town, was owned by Harukichi Tamba. It was an old brewery established in the Edo era. In 1918, Sukewemon Maeda took over the business and established it as Azakura Shuzo Co., Ltd. with a capital of 150,000 yen. The company's name is derived from the symbol of the city, Yokote Castle (also known as “Azakura” Castle). Eventually, the Maeda family handed its business over to Magozaemon Ishikawa, who was related to them by marriage, because the Ishikawa family had been running the Ishimago Miso-Soy Sauce



Brewery in Yuzawa since 1855 and the two families had much in common based on their respective levels of expertise in the brewing industry. Since then, Azakura Brewery has continued its development. In 1971, Azakura Brewery absorbed Yokote Meijo Co., Ltd. and its saké brand of AKITA-ZAKARI, which is still being provided to consumers.

As stated earlier, Azakura Brewery is located in Yokote City, which is known for heavy snow and *kamakura* (Japanese igloos). Its saké is made using Akita's famous long-term, low-temperature fertilization method under the exquisite skills of Sannai *Tôji* (highly skilled brewers from the Sannai District in Yokote City). The excellent balance of the rich aroma and delicious flavor gives a mellow touch to all Azakura Brewery's brands, thus realizing the brewery's aim to make high-quality saké in which people can taste the locality in each sip.

Pure, clear water is supplied by the melted snows of the Ou Mountains. The excellent rice provided by farmers in Akita include "Misato Nishiki" rice and "Gin-no-Sei" rice, with "Kame-no-O" rice provided by contracted farmers in Ogata Village. In addition, the brewery uses "Akita Saké Komachi" rice,

revived "Fukuhibiki" rice," and other types of rice. The brewery's pursuit of making top-quality saké does not stop here. They polish the rice within their own company, while most other breweries consign this process to other



factories or farms.

The company's main products include:

junmai daiginjô genshu AZAKURA MISATONISHIKI

daiginjôshu AZAKURA

Junmai daiginjô genshu AZAKURA MISATONISHIKI is made from 100% precious Misatonishiki rice. Using the brewery's own grounding techniques, the rice is polished so only 38% of the grain remains. A masterpiece of the brewery's *Tôji*, it has an elegant, glamorous fragrance and a complex taste structure.

In recent years, limited quantities of special brews have also been successful, including:

Tokubetsu junmai muroka genshu nakadori genteihin ("special pure-rice, non-filtered unprocessed saké, middle and best portion in the pressing process, limited edition") AZAKURA

Nakadori ("middle and best portion in the pressing process") *junmai ginjô* AZAKURA

These limited brews have a fresh taste, a vivid tart accent, and a refreshing aroma.



Words from *Tôji* (Head Brewer) Toshio Terui:

I first stepped into a brewery in January 1962. In those days, harsh snow at Sannai made it difficult for men to find jobs, and many

of them went to breweries as seasonal workers. It was often the case that more than one member in a family worked at a brewery in the winter. Three men from my family (my grandfather, my father, and I) worked at breweries at the same time for several years. It was an important source of income for my family. My grandfather had the experience of working as a head brewer (*tôji*) for many years, and he taught me all the important aspects related to being a brewer, such as that the brewery must be kept clean at all times and that whenever your seniors call you, you must have a good response. The work at the brewery started very early in the morning, but since everyone taught me well and cared for me, I had a good experience overall. In 1968, I joined Azakura Brewery.

In 1988, the head brewer retired. Then, out of the blue, the president of the brewery said, "You are now our head brewer." After much consideration and hesitation, I decided to accept the offer. Until then, I was simply following instructions. I still remember feeling that weight of responsibility that I initially felt on a daily basis. I was the youngest of the brewery's brewers, and I was not entirely sure what I was supposed to do. However, I somehow handled the new role and assumed my responsibilities thanks to my colleagues, who had been working diligently. Teamwork is indispensable in saké brewing.

The customers are also very important. At in-store tasting events and other meetings, I also learned much from them. When I am asked what I believe is most important in saké brewing, I always say it is the "voice of the customers." Without customers, there is no saké brewing.

Finally, Akita is a country of rice and saké. Rich water, good rice,

and people's warm hearts help brew excellent saké. With this belief in mind, I begin another day of brewing.

Scene of the Stories



Kakunodate: A weeping cherry tree in bloom

“Ohanami” Party along “Hinokinai River”, Kakunodate



CHITOSE-ZAKARI (千歳盛)
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Due to the brewery's strenuous efforts to improve brewing techniques since its foundation in 1872, it received nationwide formal recognition in 1938 when its saké won an honorary prize at the national bi-

ennial competitive fair. The brewery kept up its steady progress after World War II as a local brewery of Kazuno with priority given to quality. Subsequently, it earned high distinctions, including a grand prize at the competitive fair in Akita Prefecture. The company aims to become a local brewery with strong bonds with the regional people. Therefore, since 1991, the brewery has used the name Kazuno Meishu Brewing Co., Ltd., to represent Kazuno City. Mosuke Tamura, the founder of the brewery, named its main saké brand CHITOSE (“1000 years”) with a prayer for eternal youth and longevity. In 1922, the name was modified to CHITOSE-ZAKARI (“prosperity for 1000 years”) to signify prosperity in the world and people’s longevity.

Kazuno City, the home of the brewery, is located in the north-eastern part of Akita Prefecture. The area includes many tourist attractions, such as the Towada Hachimantai National Park

(which includes untouched, primitive nature and has earned the nickname “volcano museum” due to its plentiful volcanic landforms and phenomena) and Yuze Onsenkyô (Yuze Hot Spring Village; “Yuze” meaning a rapid stream of hot water); Oyu Onsenkyô (Oyu Hot Spring Village), which was designated by the Nambu domain (which ruled the area during the Edo era) as a recuperative hot spring location; and the Oyu Stone Circle, which comprises precious ruins from the Neolithic era. The area also offers traditional folk performing arts such as the “Hanawa Bayashi” Festival (Hanawa Music Festival). Kazuno City and its neighboring Kosaka Town have also enjoyed prosperity since early modern times due to the Osarizawa and Kosaka mines. Many engineers and their families moved into the area, after which cultural facilities, such as swimming pools and meeting places, were constructed, thus making the area one of first in the prefecture to enjoy modern civilization.



The advantages of the brewery’s surrounding environment include a brisk climate and fresh water during severe winters, which enable the brewery to practice *kanzukuri* (brewing in the cold). In addition to Kazuno City’s climate, which is the coldest in Akita Prefecture due to its location in a deep mountain basin, the semi-basement structure of the brewery facilitates the maintenance of low temperatures without air conditioning throughout the year. The water used for brewing comes from underground aquifer in the Shirasu Plateau, which is part of the Ou Mountains. Furthermore, the water is rich in substances that help fermentation, such as phosphoric acid and chloride. The brewers are grateful for the advantages of this location, which is suitable for saké brewing.

The brewery’s philosophy is that the virtue of saké brewing is to slowly take care of saké through significant efforts. The brewery uses small equipment so the brewers can easily manage and focus on the smallest details. The room for *kôji* is located upstairs, and it has good humidity control. It is also perfect for growing *tsukihaze kôji* (a type of fermented rice covered with spots of mold). Since the room for *moromi* is in a semi-basement made with clay, the brewer can adjust the temperature of the fermenting rice without it being affected by the outside air. While the basic taste for this brewery should be fresh and dry, the brewery’s goal is to allow each saké to have unique characteristics.

Other than CHITOSE-ZAKRI, the brewery takes many of its saké brand names from local places. For example, *Daiginjô KAGAMIDA* takes its name from the fertile rice field area in Kazuno City. Made from the regionally harvested “Akita Saké Komachi” rice, it has a brilliant scent and rich mellow taste.

Junmai ginjô HANAWA-BAYASHI is a locally popular saké with an extra fruity fragrance and deliciousness. Its name is taken from the name of a regional festival registered by the government as an important, intangible cultural asset. The Hanawa-Bayashi Festival is an important event for the people of Kazuno because it “is the flame that keeps heating the local passion.”



MANZA-NO-MAI is named after the Manza historical site, which is part of the Ôyu Stone Circle from the Jomon era (the Neolithic era in Japan). A dark reddish, purple saké made from ancient rice grown in the region, it creates a nostalgic atmosphere. Although the saké meter value is -13 (which means it contains high amounts of residual sugar), its acidity, which is twice as high as ordinary saké, gives it a fresh, unique taste that is somewhat similar to wine.

In addition, the brewery produces other saké brands, such as SATAROKU (the name of a legendary hunter), UGENKYO (a traditional music piece from the Hanawa Bayashi Festival), and KIRIBAYASHI (another traditional music piece from the same festival).

Words from the Representative:

We always aim to brew saké that the local people love, and we place importance on maintaining our relations with local communities and visitors of Kazuno. Kazuno is located next to the Towada Hachimantai National Park, and many visitors frequent the area. In addition to the hot springs, we believe local saké plays an important role in relaxing and refreshing these visiting guests. With our priority on quality, we as a local brewery aim to further improve our saké in order to continue impressing visitors and to provide the local people with a sense of pride.



CHIYOMIDORI (千代緑)
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Chiyomidori Brewery was created during the Emppo period (1673–1681) in the early Edo era. Seeking water and rice suitable for brewing, Jûemon the First moved from Kyoto to

Akita. One day in the early summer, inspired by the landscape around his brewery, he composed the following *haiku* (Japanese poem):

Wakaba hayuru shiho no yamayama Chiyomidori

“The everlasting green of young leaves are vividly shining on the surrounding verdant mountains.”

The representative saké brand of the brewery, CHIYOMIDORI, was named after this poem.

Since then, the brewery was rebuilt a number of times due to a fire during the Boshin War (1868–1869) and other reasons. The current building dates back to the early Showa period in the second quarter of the 20th century. The current head of the brewery is the 18th generation.

The Kyôwa District of Daisen City lies in the Senboku plains,

which comprise the largest rice-producing region in Akita Prefecture. The conditions of the area are perfect for brewing. It has a clean environment with a thick snow cover and cold temperatures in the winter. The Karamatsu Shrine, which is a well-known shrine at which hopeful soon-to-be parents pray for safe childbirth, is located across the street from the brewery. Approximately 40,000 people visit the shrine each year. The shrine has an approach lined with Japanese cedar trees that are more than 350 years old. It has an exceptional structure; while most shrines establish their main buildings on higher grounds, this building is built on lower land than the entrance. Thus, visitors must walk down the approach. Around 1900, production at a nearby Arakawa mine was at its peak, and casks full of saké were carried there in carts on a daily basis. During that time, Chiyomori Brewery also reached its highest production period. Such prosperities at the mine can be seen at the Taiseikan Museum. This brewery uses purely cultivated yeast based on the



idea that the flavor of saké is mainly determined by the quality of the rice, yeast, and water used during the brewing process. AK-1 (“Akityu hanakobo”) and K-9 are the yeasts mainly used at this brewery. It is said that even if the same types of rice and



yeast are used, each brewery creates its own unique taste. Yeast fungi float in the air or inhabit fruits and nectar, but some types, called *kuratsuki kôbo* (“brewery-attached yeast”), have lived on the ceiling boards, ceiling joists, and mud walls of breweries for a long time. Every brewery produces different types of *kuratsuki kôbo*, and each set creates a scent and taste that are unique to each brewery.

By getting into the brewing tanks, the *kuratsuki kôbo* add an extra flavor to the saké, which makes the saké characteristic of the brewery. The brewery’s main building is more than 90 years old. Throughout its history, the skills of the workers and the quality of the *kuratsuki kôbo* have developed alongside one another. Today, these two heritages collaborate to create the high-quality saké of CHIYOMIDORI.

In 2012, *kuratsuki kôbo MS3* (yeast separated from *kuratsuki kôbo*) was discovered behind a thick joist of the brewery’s fermentation room; it is currently used to brew *junmai daiginjô*, *junmai ginjô*, and *junmaishu*. In addition, the head brewer, who is also the managing director, is aiming to improve and diversify the qualities of the brewery’s saké. He brews not only classic *junmai ginjô* but also saké with a fruity, fresh flavor. This brewery is currently creating saké that meets consumers’ needs by adopting new types of yeast developed by the brewing laboratory, such as types scented like apples and bananas. At the same time, however, the mellow, mild flavor of CHIYOMIDORI continues to be maintained by the *kuratsuki bunri kôbo MS3*.

Representative names of the saké from this brewery include: *junmai ginjô JUEMON NO SAKÉ*, *junmai daiginjô MS3*, and *junmai daiginjô SP*.

Junmai ginjô JUEMON-NO-SAKÉ is the most representative of the Chiyomidori Brewery. It has a mellow fruity fragrance typical of fermented rice, and it is full of clear, fresh deliciousness from the rice itself.

Junmai daiginjô MS3 is brewed with *kuratsuki bunri kôbo*; its smooth, mild flavor goes well with meals.

Junmai daiginjô SP is brewed with yeast called *Akita komachi kôbo* special, which was developed by the brewing laboratory of Akita Prefecture. The characteristics of this saké include a fresh, fruity fragrance of fermented rice and a rich, melon-like deliciousness.



Words from the *Tôji* (the Head Brewer):

The yeast affects the flavor of saké the most. With great care and effort, we use seven to nine types of yeast to brew high-quality saké. Please try several of our brands to compare them and determine your favorite flavor.



DAINAGAWA (大納川)

by Bizen Shuzo Honten

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An ancestor of Bizen Shuzo Honten was a sailor. Approximately 300 years ago, he and his family moved from Bizen Province (present-day Okayama Prefecture) to Dewa Province (present-day Akita Prefecture) and established a business in marine products transported by Kitamae-Bune (a Japanese freight vessel). This is considered the origin of the Bizen family. Some say their origin goes further back to the Murakami pirates who were powerful in western Japan during the 15th and 16th centuries.



The brewery was founded in 1915 when Saiji Bizen asked his son, Yutarô Bizen, to brew saké. They must have inherited the entrepreneurship from their ancestor, who left Bizen Province and started a business in Akita, a location far away from their origins. Subsequently, Bizen Brewery began its operations, after which it soon gained a high reputation for its products.



Mansuke Tsuchida, a member of the House of Peers, named Bizen brewery's saké DAINAGAWA after the Dainagon River, which flows across the Ômori District of Yokote City (Ômori Town until it merged with Yokote City in 2005). Like the river itself, DAINAGAWA has become the pride of the town. It was then that the brewery's motto was born: "Make something that is enjoyed, such as delicious saké, and have it become the glory of the town."

The brewery is located in Ômori in the southern part of Akita Prefecture. Ômori began in ancient times as a local trade town that flourished as a hub for water transportation. At the port, people exchanged many agricultural products, including rice and marine products, through the Kitamae route. During the Sengoku era (the Age of Civil Wars), Onodera Michitaka, the fourth son of Onodera Yasumichi, built Ômori Castle and made it the stronghold of the area. During the Edo era, the Satake Higashi family, a branch of the Satake family, was entrusted with managing the land. They promoted building weirs and reservoirs to develop new fields. The area maintained its importance during the Meiji era, during which commercial activities were developed. Currently, they have brick storehouses typical of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



DAINAGAWA is brewed amongst the rich nature of the region, and the local people have a high affection for saké. Ômori Town is situated at the foot of the sacred mountain of Horowa, where Shimotsuki Kagura ("Divine Dance of November"), one of the most important intangible folk culture assets designated by the government, is practiced every year. Subsoil water for DAINAGAWA runs down from Mt. Horowa through the natural diatomite filter, which is unique in Japan.

The brewery uses Akita-grown saké rice. For *junmaishu* and higher categories of saké, rice from contracting farmers is used. They choose the yeast that best for Akita Saké Komachi rice, which was developed by the brewing laboratory of Akita Prefecture. The brewery uses local products as much as possible for brewing. In addition, employees prepare the materials with their own hands, which is an ancient method, and all the malted rice is prepared using the *futa-kôji* method. As for the yeast mash (*moto*), the brewery mainly uses *sokujômoto* ("fast fermentation"). *Junmaishu* is brewed in a small tank (up to 1.2 tons), and the brewery uses traditional saké cask, which leads an excellent saké-pressing process that produces a high amount of saké lees. The new brew has a fruity flavor (with a little tartness) and a crisp, dry taste, whereas the matured saké has less sourness but plenty of body and a sharp aftertaste.

The main products from this brewery include:

Junmai daiginjôshu TÔJI, which has a superlative quality due to the use of Akita Saké Komachi rice and a 40% rice-polishing ratio

Tokubetsu junmaishu DAINAGAWA, which is the brewery's regular pure-rice saké made using local rice

Seisen DAINAGAWA, which is the traditional, carefully prepared saké that those in the region love

The brewery also makes *Ginjô junmaishu* SANNAI TÔJI and *Tokubetsu Honjôzôshu* SANNAI TÔJI. These are jointly planned products with Sannai village (known as "The Home of Tôji") and are produced in cooperation with the Sannai Tôji Association. They



are special sakés sold only in Akita Prefecture. In addition, the brewery uses "Menkoina" rice, which is grown (with reduced agricultural chemicals) in the Sannai area of Yokote City, and the natural water from Mt. Nangôdake.

Words from the Representative:

Bizen Shuzo Honten is the only non-corporate, individually run brewery in Akita Prefecture. Our business might be small, but we have always brewed saké with the goal of having it loved by those in the region. Because we emphasize using local ingredients, we use saké rice and yeast that are only produced in Akita. We will keep producing high-quality saké that is the pride of the region.



DEWA-NO-FUJI (出羽の富士)

by Sato Brewing Co., Ltd.

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Around the turn of the 20th century in Yashima (a town located in Yurihonjô City), there was a brewing association called the "Yûsei Union." This was the starting point of the DEWA-NO-FUJI

brewery. "Dewa no Fuji" is another name for Mt. Chôkai, the highest independent peak in the Tohoku Region, which is located on the border of Akita and Yamagata Prefectures. "Dewa" is the old name for the province covering most of Akita Prefecture and Yamagata Prefecture. "Fuji" comes from the fact that Mt. Chôkai greatly resembles the famous Mt. Fuji. Therefore, "Dewa no Fuji" directly translated means "Mt. Fuji of Dewa Province." The saké brand was named DEWA-NO-FUJI with the hope that it would be as outstanding as Mt. Chôkai itself.

In 1906, Kyûkichi Satô took over the brewing rights to start a family business as saké brewers, and the union was succeeded by Satô Brewery. Kyûbei Satô inherited the business from Kyûkichi, and he received technical training at the National Institute of Brewing. The third generation, Kyûichi Satô, enrolled in the brewery course at the Osaka Technical School (which is

now part of Osaka University). Both Kyûbei and Kyûichi dedicated themselves to improving the quality of saké and greatly contributed to the expansion of the market. In 1944, during World War II, Satô Brewery merged with the Yuri Liquor Production Co., Ltd. due to the Industrial Reform Act, becoming Yuri Liquor Production Co., Ltd.'s second branch factory in Yashima. In 1968, the brewery regained its independence as Sato Brewing Co., Ltd. The brewery celebrated its 110th anniversary in 2015.

Yashima Town is located on the northeast slope of Mt. Chôkai (which is 2,236 meters high). The town has been a distribution center for lumber and rice transportation since ancient times, and it flourished as the castle town of the Ikoma Domain. Due to its cold climate, heavy snow, and high-quality spring water, the town was suitable for saké brewing. In the late 19th century, the town was considered along with Yuzawa, Rokugô, and Araya as one of the major brewing towns in Akita, with 10 breweries in operation. Currently, Satô Brewery is one of the only two remaining.



Every year, thick snow covers Yashima. It purifies the air, and the region is blessed with rich, clean water that is essential to making high-quality saké. The temperature of the area is another one of nature's bounties because it is perfect for saké brewing. Rice with the highest ranking in the market, which is harvested mostly in Akita, is used for the brewing process. All the conditions mentioned above are the

pillars of the two fundamental values of Satô Brewery: brewing delicious saké and providing products that consumers can trust.



The company takes pride in its established brewing methods, which have been passed down generation after generation. Sato

Brewery's saké ensures that its great saké will be enjoyed by all customers.

Approximately 95% of the brewery's production is saké from the DEWA-NO-FUJI series: DEWA-NO-FUJI SEISEN, DEWA-NO-FUJI JUNMAISHU, and DEWA-NO-FUJI TEN-NO-BIROKU DAIGINJÔ.

DEWA-NO-FUJI SEISEN (special selection) has a refreshing, sweet taste. This is a saké of high quality for a budget-friendly price. DEWA-NO-FUJI SEISEN can be enjoyed in many ways, including on the rocks (served straight with ice), chilled, room temperature, or warmed.

DEWA-NO-FUJI JUNMAISHU is a *ginjô junmaishu* brewed solely from Yamadanishiki rice (a prominent rice for saké brewing, also known as the "white diamond," which is often used for brewing the best saké available in Japan).

DEWA-NO-FUJI TEN-NO-BIROKU DAIGINJÔ is Satô Brewery's masterpiece. "Ten no Biroku," directly translated, means "a beautiful gift from the heavens," and it is another name used for saké or alcohol in general. This saké is also made from 100% Yamadanishiki rice. Saké is often recognized as a transparent, colorless drink. However, this is due to the filtering process before bottling. Up to the point of completing the fermentation process, saké has an opaque, creamy-white color. The saké at this stage is called *moromi*. Satô Brewery includes two special steps when brewing TEN-NO-BIROKU. The first step is called *tsurisage*, in

which the *moromi* is poured into a bag and then hung so it can be slowly filtered one drop at a time. It takes much more time than the usual brewing method, which pressurizes the bags so the saké drips faster. This technique is commonly used to brew luxury saké. The second step is called *nakadori* ("taking the middle"). It specifically uses saké collected approximately halfway through the dripping process. Many praise *nakadori* as being the best part of the saké made in a single batch since its balance of flavor and fragrance is perfect. DEWA-NO-FUJI TEN-NO-BIROKU DAIGINJÔ has a rich yet refreshing, aromatic taste, and it is recommended to be served cold or at room temperature.

Words from the Representative:

Our saké has a sweet, soft taste. You can enjoy our saké on the rocks, at room temperature, chilled, or warmed up to around 40°C. Each style has its own benefits, and you can choose your favorite one. We especially recommend drinking our products warm. This serving style is unique to Japanese saké. One great way to enjoy warm saké is to sip the drink with a meal. You will quickly realize that this makes dishes taste even better. It is also good for your health. We brew by hand and use a low temperature to ferment our saké. This method is special to Akita, and it has been adopted for the majority of our brewing processes. High-quality saké has the taste of Akita; this is the sort of saké we want to continue brewing.



DEWATSURU (出羽鶴)
 by Dewatsuru Brewing Co., Ltd.
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The founding family, originally from western Japan, moved to the Tohoku Region in the 17th century. The Itô family established themselves in Akita as landowners and village heads. In 1865, the 12th generation head of the family, Jûshirô Itô,

opened Yamato Brewery as a family business in Daisen City. Jûshirô harvested the locally cultivated quality rice, built a *kura* on his compound, and began brewing saké.

The following generation head, Kyônosuke Itô, turned the brewery into a corporation in 1913. The new name of the brewery and the name for its saké, DEWATSURU ("the crane of Dewa Province"), embodies the vision of making local saké as fine, elegant, and beautiful as a crane's wings. At the same time, Kyônosuke was also breeding horses, which were a necessary commodity during that period. Even today, stables and pastures are located in the compound. Kyônosuke also contributed to the region by cultivating the wilderness, creating new fields, and improving the arable land, thereby increasing rice production.



Dewatsuru Brewery is located in the southern part of Akita Prefecture between several large mountains. This location provides an abundance of fresh water, and the soil contains a wealth of

nutrients for crops, thus giving the rice produced in the area a particular tastefulness. This area is one of the best agricultural zones in Akita, and it has cold, snowy winters that are suitable for the Akita style of low-temperature, long-term brewing.

The process of making great saké begins by using quality rice. Consequently, the brewers at Dewatsuru are involved with cultivating rice in addition to saké brewing. In particular, the

brewers collaborate with local farmers to develop farming techniques that produce higher-quality saké rice. The brewery also uses natural groundwater from snowmelts. The mountains in the region have a large amount of foliage, and as the snow melts, water descends and makes its way underground. The many layers of the soil act as a filtering mechanism, creating pure, soft water. The distinguishing characteristic of the saké born from this pure water is its refined quality.



The name of Yamato Brewery is represented in one of its products, YAMATO SHIZUKU, which is made using the brewing style of the mid-19th century. YAMATO SHIZUKU is a distinctively local

saké made with saké rice (“Miyamanishiki” rice or “Akita Saké Komachi” rice) grown within 10 kilometers of the brewery by the brewery’s members and contracted farmers. The 12 types of saké (seven types available throughout the year and five available seasonally) in the YAMATO SHIZUKU series are all *junmaishu*, and they can be shipped directly from the brewery to liquor shops.



Some of major brands from the brewery include:

Daiginjô DEWATSURU HISHÔ-NO-MAI

Junmai daiginjô DEWATSURU HITEN-NO-YUME

Kimotoshikomi junmaishu DEWATSURU

Daiginjô DEWATSURU HISHO-NO-MAI boasts an impressive aroma and combines sharp flavor with suave taste.

Junmai daiginjô DEWATSURU HITEN-NO-YUME uses original Akita saké rice, Akita Saké Komachi, to create a full-bodied aroma and an exhilarating taste.

Junmaishu DEWATSURU KIMOTOSHIKOMI is carefully brewed with rice cultivated near the brewery. This saké has an amicable savor

coupled with an airy lightness that accompanies each sip.

Words from the Representative:

Dewatsuru Brewery believes quality saké is born from the harmony of the brewers engaged in the process. This has been the inherited credence of the brewery for generations. The brewers, who are fully committed to producing rice and saké, aim to create beautiful saké that will bring happiness to all those who drink it. The area surrounding the brewery is suitable for cultivating rice, and since it is also blessed with an abundance of precipitation, there is never any shortage of fresh, pure water. We are grateful to be blessed with this land, and we will continue to brew our delicious, vibrant saké.



FUKUKOMACHI (福小町)
by Kimura Brewery Co., Ltd.

Tel: +81-(0)183-73-3155



Email: kimura-shuzo@national-bu3.co.jp

Kimura Brewery Co., Ltd. was founded by Jirozaemon Kimura in 1615. The Kimura family head, Shigenari Kimura, was a retainer of the Toyotomi clan. The defeat of the Toyotomi clan by the Tokugawa clan marked the beginning of the Tokugawa era. The Toyotomi clan eventually perished in the Summer Campaign of the Siege of Osaka in 1615. However, Jirozaemon Kimura survived and fled to the Innai Silver Mine near Yuzawa, Akita. Since then, the Kimura family has produced saké. In 2015, the brewery celebrated its 400th anniversary.





The brewery previously used the name OTOKO-YAMA (“Mountain of the Man”). In 1881, when Emperor Meiji visited Yuzawa, Grand Chamberlain Sanetsune Tokudaiji took lodgings at Kimura Brewery, and OTOKO-YAMA was served.

He praised its quality

as well as its sweet, soft flavor, but he suggested that it should have a name that better represented its feminine taste: FUKUMUSUME (“Fortunate Maiden”).

The name was eventually changed to FUKUKOMACHI, which was derived from the “Fuku” from the previous FUKUMUSUME and “Komachi” from Ono-no-Komachi, the legendary beauty believed to have been born in Yuzawa.

Yuzawa, which is situated in the southern part of Akita Prefecture, is known for its extremely heavy snows. While snow makes everyday life difficult, it offers incomparably favorable conditions for saké brewing. Snow on mountains brings fresh, pure water in rice fields through natural filtration,



which, in turn, fosters rice that is good for brewing. During the brewing period, the ever-falling snow eliminates dust in the atmosphere. The pure winter air in Yuzawa makes it possible to brew the finest saké.

Saké is made from only two basic ingredients, rice and water, which are rather simple in taste. However, in the hands of brewers with exquisite skills, the two ingredients are turned into a fine drink with excellent fragrance, taste, and smoothness that can be proudly offered to the world. The brewing process at Kimura Brewery combines traditional techniques with cutting-edge brewing techniques using biotechnologies. The quality of the work at the brewery was recognized worldwide when *daiginjô* FUKUKOMACHI was honored with the Grand Prix Champion Saké Award at the “International Wine Challenge 2012” (IWC 2012).

Words from the Representative:

We are only a small brewery in snow-deep Yuzawa. However, our brewery does what it can, and we produce every single bottle of saké with love and sincerity.



FUYUKI (冬樹)

by Fukunotomo Shuzo Co., Ltd.

Email: info@fukunotomo.co.jp



Fukunotomo Shuzo Co., Ltd. was established in 1913 in Jingûji Town, which is located in Senboku County. Jingûji Town eventually merged with Kita-Naraoka village, and it is now called Kamioka Town. Although it is a relatively new brewery compared to those operating during Akita's long history of saké production, it has been in business for more than a century.

The name "Fukunotomo" is taken from the Chinese characters used in the names of the two founders: "Fuku" (good luck) from Shûichi Fukuda and "Tomo" (friend) from Tomogorô Takahashi. Fukuda was the first president of the company, and Takahashi was the brewery's brilliant *Tôji* (Head Brewer). The name of the brewery represents the cooperation between these two important figures in its history.



From ancient times, Akita has been blessed with rich, natural groundwater, the majority of which is soft water. However, due to its location in the prefecture's southeastern plains of Senboku, Kamioka Town has exceptional access to slightly harder water branching from the Omono River.



This water is used not only as the base material for the saké but also for the entire brewing process. Thanks to the abundant water resources and active rice farming culture of the region, this small town includes two saké breweries: Fukunotomo and Kariho.

As the *Tôji* for Fukunotomo Brewery, Tôgorô Satô has brewed saké for more than half a century. Masatsune Hanaoka (cf. "A History of Akita's Saké" in this booklet), the key person in the



history of saké production in Akita, was his master. Tôgorô strictly followed Hanaoka's brewing method and refused to cater to modern trends. From January to February, the brewery is covered in deep snow, allowing the saké

to be preserved in a perfect, stable temperature. The excellent air purity is also one of the benefits of such heavy snowfall. This suitable climate and the traditional techniques (which have been

carefully maintained according to the original style) are the two pillars of brewing. Under these conditions, *moromi* (unrefined saké) is slowly fermented over a long period. This brewing method gives the saké a magnificent, smooth taste.

FUYUKI is Fukunotomo Brewery's bestselling brand. It is a *junmai-ginjô genshu* (non-filtered pure-rice *ginjôshu*). One special feature unique to FUYUKI is that it is bottled without filtering, mixing, or adding any type of artificial adjustments. Another feature is that the rice used for this saké is not dedicated to brewing but to eating. These two characteristics allow customers to enjoy a more natural taste of pure, ready-made saké. As Kunihiko Ichiboshi, the former president of the company, stated, "What's good to eat must be good to drink, and the same goes for rice and saké." Therefore, under this belief, Fukunotomo Brewery uses regular rice that people generally eat for meals to make *junmai-ginjô genjoshu*.

KURAUCHI-GENSHU ("Non-Filtered Saké [Usually Served Only] in the Brewery") is another one of the brewery's original brands. It has a thick, heavy yet pleasant taste that leaves a strong impression. Served right after filtering, this untouched saké was originally something only brewers enjoyed. With one sip, it en-



chants all those who taste it and makes them come back for more. Due to its popularity, KURAUCHI-GENSHU was formally introduced as Fukunotomo's product.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

Who make good saké? We believe the answer is "humans." In order to gain the delicate flavor of saké, we *Tôjis* must be constantly aware of temperature management and the amount of moisture in the fermentation process. We run our brewery with a small team. President Ichiboshi also assigned himself as the factory manager so he can oversee the brewing process in addition to his marketing duties. Together, we challenge ourselves every day to create a saké that makes everyone say, "Wow!"



GINRIN (銀鱗)

by Naba Shouten Co., Ltd.

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Email:

info@jizakemonogatari.net



GINRIN, Naba Shouten's prize saké, is brewed in a reinforced-concrete building built in 1928. Although it is a two-story building, it is as tall as a usual four-story building, and visitors and workers can

clearly see Tsuchizakiminato ("Tsuchizaki port") in Akita City from the rooftop. Tsuchizakiminato is a port town, as the name shows, and in the Edo era, it prospered as a port of call for Kitamae Bune (trading ships on the coast of the Sea of Japan), which made frequent roundtrips between Hokkaido and Osaka. In the present days, factories and companies are located around the port, and commercial facilities are situated along the highway.

Minato Castle used to sit approximately 400 meters northeast of the brewery. It was once the main castle of the Ando clan, which ruled the area along the coast of the Sea of Japan from Akita to Aomori until the early 17th century. Currently, a shrine named "Tsuchizaki Shimmeisha" stands among the residential houses. The glory of Tsuchizaki as a castle town can still be felt in its ambiance, with more than 10 temples and many historic alleys

gathered in a small area.

The brewery was established in 1871. The founder, Saburoemon Naba, was originally a financier who moved from Muromachi in Kyoto to Akita along with the lord of Akita Domain, Satake. Saburoemon was a powerful merchant who established a business relationship with the feudal clan as a purveyor. Because it

was seen as virtuous, the Naba family worked as examiners of the feudal clan's saké-brewing endeavors. At that time, they proposed to the feudal clan that



its finances should be strengthened by promoting the brewing industry. Consequently, in 1815, the family was ordered by the feudal clan to establish a "brewing test station," which was similar to today's brewing laboratories. For this reason, the Naba family became involved in the brewing industry. Although the representative saké brand of the brewery at the time of its establishment was AKITAGAWA ("Akita River"), due to certain problems, such as registering the trademark, it was renamed GINRIN ("Silver Scales of Fish") in 1935 to promote good wishes and safe travels for the fishermen who thrived in the region.

This brewery uses moderately hard water with suitable amounts of minerals, which are favorable for fermenting saké. Its saké,



which is brewed through long, low-temperature fermentation, includes a flavor full of the rich deliciousness of rice. Moreover, the brewery further develops the quality of saké by using mostly "Akita Saké Komachi" rice, which is grown through contract farming in Akita Prefecture.

GINRIN ("Silver Scales of Fish"), the representative brand of the brewery, includes three types: *honjôzô* GINRIN (saké made from rice with outer layers 30–40% polished away); *futsûshu* GINRIN (saké made from rice with outer layers less than 30% polished away); and *karakuchi* ("dry taste") GINRIN. Characteristics common to all three types are freshness and dry deliciousness.

RYU-NO-NAMIDA ("Tears of a Dragon"), which was created in accordance with the modern diversification of food culture, is a light, sharp saké that goes well with various meals. It includes two types: *junmai ginjô* RYU-NO-NAMIDA and *junmai* RYU-NO-NAMIDA.

Another *junmaishu* produced at the brewery is *junmai KOMACHI-BIJIN* ("Beautiful Lady"), which is marketed with an image of a beautiful, snow-white, graceful woman blessed by the benefits of Akita. It has the deliciousness of rice, which comes from the blessings of Akita's natural surroundings. There are many fans of this particular saké throughout Japan.



The head brewer of the brewery, Katsuhiro Fujita, is relatively young, being in his 40s. However, he is from the Sannai District of Yokote City in Akita Prefecture and is one of the Sannai *Tôji*, (brewing experts from the Sannai District). His family business deals with *tatami*, and he is engaged in the forest industry during the summer. He naturally possesses a strong artisanal spirit. He became the head brewer when he was in his 30s, and the quality of his technique was proven with a series of four gold prizes at the national new-brewed saké fairs. He hopes to develop his brewing techniques further by adopting new technologies while carefully maintaining traditional methods.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

Saké brewing looks similar every year, but it is actually quite different. We cannot brew the same saké even if we do it the same way as in the previous year. We naturally brew saké while considering subtle differences in climate, the quality of rice, our minds, and the environment each year. By accepting and over-

coming all difficulties, the saké we brew is always brilliant. We will keep making significant efforts to brew saké that relaxes and pleases the hearts of drinkers. We would like to provide saké that consumers love and that follows the latest trends while maintaining precious traditions.



Scene of the Stories

Summer in Rice Field



Autumn



HARUKASUMI (春霞)
by Kuribayashi Brewing and Co.
Email: info@harukasumi.com



Kuribayashi Brewery was established in 1874 at Rokugô in the southeastern part of Akita Prefecture. The present head, Naoaki

Kuribayashi, is the seventh generation. The brand name was taken from the lyrics of a Noh song titled, "Hagoromo," which is usually sung on auspicious occasions. It includes the following passage:

*Haru-kasumi tanabikini-keri hisa-
kata-no-tsuki-no-katsura-no-hana-ya-saku*

"While the spring mist has settled here (on the Earth), flowers of tsuki-no-katsura [a legendary flower that was believed to exist on the Moon] must be blooming on the Moon."

Situated at the foot of the Ou Mountains, Rokugô includes dozens of natural springs. It is referred to as the "home of excellent spring water." The snowmelt from the mountains is filtered

through rocks, and it emerges as fresh, pure spring water, which supports the brewing industry in Rokugô. The cold spring water is also one of the main tourist attractions during the summer heat.

Rokugô is buried deep in snow during the winter. The highlight of Rokugô is the Kamakura (Snow House) Festival held in February.



Among the numerous events, the "Takeuchi" (Bamboo Pole Fight) is one of the strangest in Japan because it involves two groups of townsmen who hit one another with six-meter-long bamboo poles. Since the Middle Ages, Rokugô has prospered on the Ushû Road due to its rich rice and saké production. During the Edo era, there were approximately 20 breweries operating. Saké barrels in those days

were made from bamboo, which is believed to be one of the reasons why the "Takeuchi" started in Rokugô.

From the late 1970s to the 1990s, the brewery won many prizes at national and prefectural saké fairs under *Tôji* (Head Brewer) Seiji Kameyama. The brewery used K-9 yeast extensively and introduced techniques from all over Japan. It also began researching the possibility of using homemade original yeast. After Kameyama retired in 2008 after 60 years of brewing saké, Naoaki Kuribayashi assumed the responsibility for brewing.

While continuing the brewing tradition, the brewery staff members work hard on a daily basis.

Kuribayashi Brewery's saké is characterized by Rokugô's tender spring water, "Misatonishiki" saké rice cultivated by contracted farmers, and K-9 yeast, which brings an especially rich taste. "Misatonishiki" saké rice is an excellent hybrid of "Miyamanishiki" rice and "Yamadanishiki" rice, which is only available from farmers in Akita. Since the rice name was taken from the name of the town, many farmers in Misato grow "Misatonishiki" saké rice. At Kuribayashi Brewery, the rice is used mostly for *kôji*. The flavor of its saké, which is fully developed with Misato's water, rice, and K-9 yeast, goes well with Japanese cuisine.

Since 2011, the brewery has been producing saké with "Kameyama" yeast extracted from old brewing facilities built during the Meiji period. The Kameyama yeast combines the features of K-9 yeast and those of modern yeasts. Saké production using the Kameyama yeast is increasing each year. Through the addition of new techniques and specialties of the region, Kuribayashi Brewery is improving the quality of Harukasumi.

The brewery's main products include:



Junmaishu HARUKASUMI RED LABEL,
brewed with Misatonishiki saké
rice for *kôji*

HARUKASUMI GREEN LABEL,
brewed with Misatonishiki saké
rice for the entire process

HARUKASUMI WHITE LABEL, brewed with Kameyama yeast and Misatonishiki saké rice

Words from the *Tôji* (Head brewer):

I would like to make saké with special care by using precious local rice, water, and yeast from the brewery. While we undertake new challenges, we also want to maintain a quality that remains unchanged from generation to generation.



HIDEYOSHI (秀よし)
by Suzuki Brewing and Co.

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Email: info@hideyoshi.co.jp



The Suzuki family is descended from Chôbei Aburaya of Izawa Village in Isé Province (modern-day Mie Prefecture). The family moved to Akita in 1665 and began brewing saké in 1689. At that time, a guild

of wealthy merchants was located in Isé, and guild members' sons immigrated to Akita in large numbers to develop agriculture and commerce in the region.

The posthumous Buddhist name for the founder of Suzuki Brewery is registered in the local temple as "Dokuô-Ippo-Koji." While "Koji" simply means "a Buddhist who practices Buddhism at home," "Dokuô-Ippo" (独翁一步) literally means "an independent man with step-by-step (progress)." This name was given to qualify the life he lived. We cannot think of a better name for a man who immigrated to a remote country and struggled to establish a brewing business.

HIDEYOSHI was not the original name given to the company's saké brand; the first name was HATSU ARASHI ("First Storm"). The Satake family, which ruled the Akita Domain in the Edo era, was extremely pleased, and they gave the compliment "kono saké, hidete yoshi" ("this saké is outstanding!") After hearing

these words, Suzuki Brewery changed its brand name to HIDEYOSHI written in hiragana (Japanese alphabet). Eventually, the brewery became the purveyor for the clan. When the Meiji era began, the company decided to register the brand name using the Chinese character of Hidé (excellence) for Hideyoshi. Despite ongoing disputes with the breweries in Owari, where well-known Toyotomi Hideyoshi was from, the brewery received authorization from the government to use the name after a thorough investigation of its history.



The brewery is located in the northern part of the Senboku plain where two rivers converge. This area is blessed with rich, natural water resources suitable for brewing. The river port in the region was the terminal for the two major waterways in Akita: the Tama River and the Omono River. It also functioned as the Kitamae Bune ships' (merchant ships) main route in northern Japan. As a port town, the area enjoyed economic prosperity.

Near the end of the Edo era, Tomoshichi Hoshino from present-day Sawara City in Chiba Prefecture was invited by the government of the Akita Domain to improve saké-brewing techniques. Hoshino visited each town around the domain and chose the former Nagano Village (which is now part of Daisen City) as the ideal location for brewing. He even gave lectures at Suzuki Brewery. Many brewing experts (*Tôji*) learned from Hoshino's teaching. His disciples were known as "Nagano *Tôji*," and their names are inscribed on a stone monument at the Matsuo Shrine.

Suzuki Brewery owns four wells. One is a dry well with no water, and it functions as a moat. The others are each 10m, 25m, and 45m in depth, and each one contains three layers of groundwater. The variety of rich water resources are used in various ways. Although the water is soft, it includes the perfect amount of minerals, and it has a naturally sweet, delicious taste. The snow that falls in the plains along the Sea of Japan has a high liquid content. Therefore, one negative side to this geographical aspect is that when the brewery faces a year with heavy snowfall, it must bear an extremely large burden. The brewery comprises a cluster of historical buildings dating back more than 150 years. It takes a group of 10 people approximately one week to clear the snow from the buildings. Despite the hard work, such harsh weather is key to brewing good saké. Therefore, the brewers accept and feel grateful for the snow.



The brewery's main products include:

Daiginjô HIDEYOSHI, which sold very well during the first wave of the *ginjôshu* fad in the 1980s. It is still the signature brand of the brewery

Junmai ginjô SHÔSEI ("Voice of Pine Trees"), which was developed in the pursuit to create the best saké that could fit traditional dishes in Akita

Sparkling saké LA CHAMTE, which is brewed with modern fermenting skills in specially prepared facilities. It offers a fruity touch, refreshing flavor, and champagne-like brilliance. Ac-

According to the head of the brewery, this product proves that “a long history is made from a series of innovations.”

Words from the Representative:

Our predecessors accumulated more than 300 years of knowledge, and their numerous teachings have been passed down from generation to generation. However, all the knowledge the brewery has preserved can be summarized into one concept: “Be local.” We have achieved this goal by mainly focusing on three policies. First, more than 80% of our products are sold within the prefecture, and we have never lost our pride and honor in being the local saké of Akita. We strongly believe the best way to show our gratitude to our home region is by focusing on the local community.

Second, we put considerable effort into passing on traditions to the next generation. As the guardians of brewing techniques, we have the duty to teach future generations about our ancestors’ heritages and practices. This includes holding events dressed in *monpuku* (a kimono imprinted with the family or company’s crest) and *kamishimo* (a highly formal kimono). This is only possible with the support of our families and employees.

Third, our key focus in brewing is determining how well our saké matches the local cuisine. The dishes I have enjoyed ever since childhood have cultural value in themselves. Therefore, they are irreplaceable



treasures.

Managing precious natural benefits, protecting the local food culture, and providing various fermenting and preserving skills to the next generation are truly the aspects we honor.

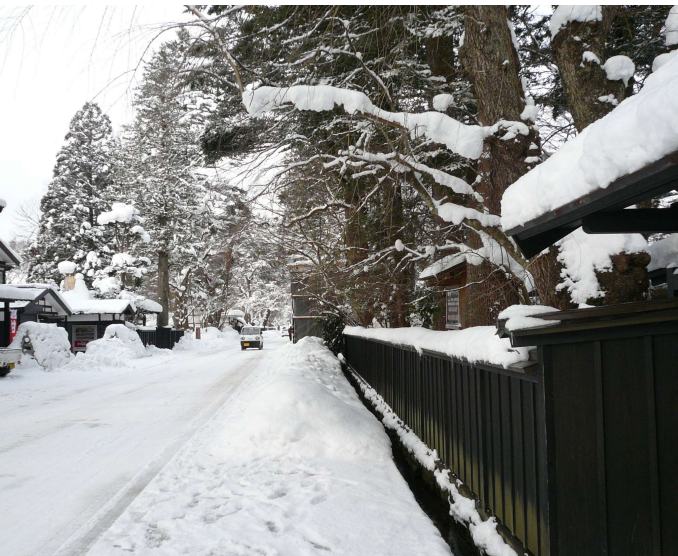


Scene of the Stories

Rice field under snow



Winter in Kakunodate



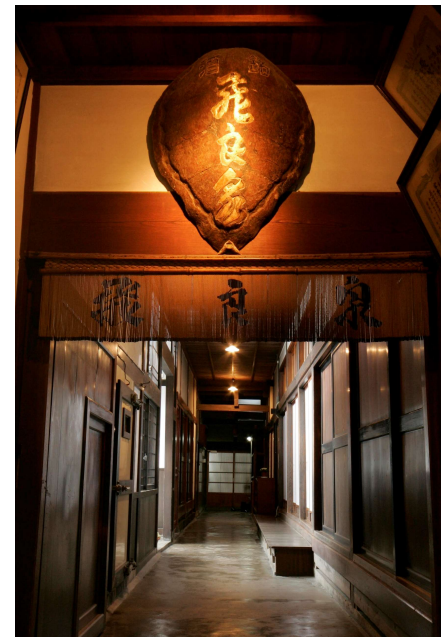
HIRAIZUMI (飛良泉)

by Hiraizumi Honpo Co., Ltd.

Email: info@hiraizumi.co.jp



Since its establishment in 1487, Hiraizumi Brewery has been committed to a simple principle. Rather than comparing itself to Japan's "elegant cherry tree abundant with exquisite blossoms," Hiraizumi's saké is the equivalent of "the beautiful simplicity of the fragrant, full-bodied puffy plum blossoms." With this philosophy, the brewery resolutely embraces the traditional method of saké brewing using natural yeast and local ingredients. Within this small brewery, the long-held homegrown tradition of making saké is continued and safeguarded.



With the turmoil of the Ônin War lingering, Ichibei and his family members moved from the Kansai Senshû area to Akita. They were initially engaged in agriculture. However, they soon discovered that the environment in this region was suitable for fermentation and saké brewing due to its proximity to the Sea of Japan and its four dis-



tinct seasons. During the middle of the Muromachi period, the second-generation successor strategically took advantage of these unique resources and began brewing saké. As the brewery's success grew, it established a business as a shipping agency, distributing sugar and textiles on the Kitamae sea route. By the middle of the Edo era, it was also shipping saké.

With the advent of the railroads during the Meiji period, Japan experienced a nationwide decline in the shipping business. The 22nd-generation successor decided to devote his efforts entirely to saké brewing. The 23rd generation, Kyôtarô Saitô, was convinced that quality saké could only be made using quality rice. This belief also led him to focus on improving agricultural methods as well as the livelihood of farming families.

The name of the saké brand and that of the brewery, HIRAIZUMI, comes from an incident involving a local 19th-century painter, Masuda Kyûboku. It is said that he sent a letter to his friend Ryôkan, a celebrated priest, and included a bottle of what he described as "a fountain of extraordinary quality" (飛びきり良い白い水). HIRAIZUMI (飛良泉) is a combination of the four Chinese characters used in Kyûboku's witty expression.

In June 1964, a 7.5-magnitude earthquake occurred in Niigata, and the damage reached as far as the southern parts of Akita. The damage was so severe that a cessation of business seemed unavoidable. However, the 25th-generation successor persevered through the difficult times. Deciding to overlook the popular method of brewing saké (in which alcohol is added after brewing), he began to earnestly pursue traditional saké brewing. The result was the resurgence of the Hiraizumi Brewery and the establishment of its reputation as a producer of high-quality saké. After the reorganization of the brewery into a joint-stock company in 1968, the company's successful strategy of traditional saké brewing gradually gained recognition in the market. By the arrival of the second saké boom in the 1990s, HIRAIZUMI had become one of the most popular, renowned breweries in the country.

The *Yamahai* method for brewing saké, which is utilized at Hiraizumi Brewery, has been handed down the generations. With the aim of thoroughly cultivating the yeast, only natural lactic acid bacilli found in the brewery are used. This skillful process requires one month to grow the yeast, while other methods in which manmade bacteria are used take only two weeks. Another crucial component is the water. Drawn from the aquifer of Mt.



Chôkai, the hard water used for HIRAIZUMI is rich in minerals. The brewery's dedication to this time-consuming process and quality ingredients ensures that the saké acquires a unique, acidic flavor harmonized with a mild taste. It

is delicious when served warm or cold due to its strong, lasting flavor.

HIRAIZUMI is said to be synonymous with the pure rice *Yamahai* method of brewing, in which no additional alcohol is added. A unique, full-bodied yet gentle aroma comes from the lactic acid. The instant it touches the tongue, the rich, acidic flavors spread throughout the mouth and create a “tightening” sensation. This is the prominent acidic characteristic of HIRAIZUMI. This delicious saké complements almost any meal, including cheese, fish, meat, and local cuisine. In addition, its light, simple taste harmonizes with and enhances a multitude of culinary flavors.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

Successful saké brewing occurs in close harmony with nature. Rice is directly affected by temperature and precipitation, thus resulting in a harder or softer texture. Other factors affecting the rice, such as microorganisms, must be monitored and managed. The distinct characteristic of HIRAIZUMI stems from its yeast starter, *Yamahai moto*, which is strong and stable even in changing environments. Much care is taken to prepare the water and maintain a strong fermentation process. We believe that to truly extract the full potential of the rice, we must also understand and utilize the yeast to its full potential.



HOKUSHIKA (北鹿)
by Hokushika Brewing Co., Ltd.

Tel: +81-(0)186-42-2101



Hokushika Brewing Co., Ltd. was established in 1944 through the merger of 21 brewers and 8 factories in Kita-Akita County and Kazuno County under the

industrial adjustment policy implemented by the central government. In 2014, the company marked its 70th anniversary. The company’s name, Hoku-Shika (北鹿), is based on the first Chinese character from Kita of Kita-Akita County (北秋田郡) and the second character from Ka of Kazuno County (鹿角郡). In its naming, the brewery hoped it would be as “energetic as the north’s (北) wild deers (鹿) jumping out of their dens.” Hokushika Brewing Co., Ltd. is located in Odate City, the center of a rice-producing area that spreads across the northern part of Akita Prefecture. The city is bordered by the Shirakami Mountains, a World Heritage Site that includes untouched natural beauty. To the east, the city is bordered by the Ou Mountains, where one can find not only spectacular beauty but also impressive seasonal changes at Lake Towada and the Hachimantai

Plateau. Odate City has a long history, serving as a transportation hub on the Ushû Road (leading to the Oshû Road) since the Middle Ages.

Traditional techniques have been passed down through a long line of passionate brewers, and such techniques are still used today. Odate grows high-quality rice due to its fine spring water. Hokushika's saké is brewed with the "Akita style *kimoto jikomi* method," which was created by refining the traditional method. Hokushika's special SETCHÛ-CHOZÔSHU saké is stored in a snow-filled pit for maturing. This concept originated from the



local practice of storing vegetables, such as Chinese cabbage and Japanese horseradishes, in snow, which was common before the introduction of refrigerators. By doing so, vegetables kept their freshness, and it was said that this process also improved their taste. Hokushika applied this method to saké brewing.



Through this method, which is made possible by the natural environment of Lake Towada and its plentiful snow, saké can be kept around 0°C, thus stabilizing its maturity.

After approximately three months, the saké achieves a mellow flavor while maintaining a fresh fragrance that is unique to the first saké of the year. The brewery has six tanks holding 50 *koku* each (50 *koku* is equivalent to 5,000 saké bottles of 1.8 liters) that store *Junmaishu* (pure rice saké) and *Daiginjô* (the most premium class of saké). With its distinct flavors, SETCHÛ-CHOZÔSHU continues to fascinate many customers.

The major saké brands produced by the brewery include:

Honjôzô HOKUSHIKA, which has a smooth, well-balanced, rich flavor

Daiginjô KITA-AKITA, which features a fruity, refreshing aroma

Daiginjô SETCHÛ-CHOZÔSHU and *Junmaishu* SETCHÛ-CHOZÔSHU are, as mentioned earlier, unprocessed sakés matured at 0°C in storage tanks buried beneath the snow. Both brands have superior, mellow bouquets and delicate tastes.



Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):



Saké brewing involves microorganisms such as yeast. As stated in our company's policy, "Wajô Ryôshu" (harmony brews good saké), our workers and their ability to work as a team are important for brewing high-quality saké. Developing saké-brewing skills is surely challenging, but it is also difficult to organize everyone so they can work toward the same goal while maintaining a friendly atmosphere.

This is why I truly appreciate our workers when we succeed in making good saké. I hope to continue brewing high-quality saké that delights both the customers and the workers.



IPPAKU-SUISEI (一白水成)

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The Watanabe family was originally from Mattô Town in Kaga Province (present-day Ishikawa Prefecture). The family fled the town when Oda Nobunaga attacked it to suppress its autonomy in the late 16th century. In 1688, approximately a century after their flight from Mattô, the family settled in Akita, and Hikobei



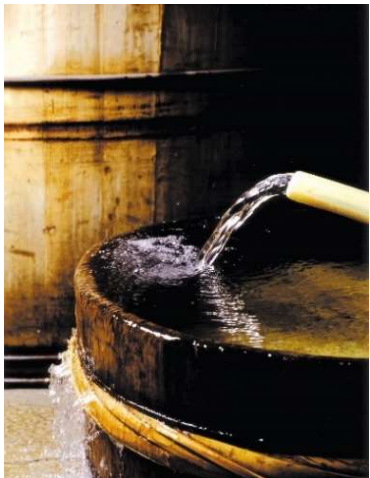
Watanabe started brewing saké in the village of Gojôme. At that time, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi reigned as the fifth shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate.

Overall, the brewery has a history lasting more than 300 years, which is rare even among the breweries in Akita.

Fukurokuju, from which the name of the brewery is taken, is the "God of Wealth and Longevity" and one of the seven deities of good luck. Fukurokuju (福祿寿) originates from three Chinese characters: Fuku (福), which means "blessing with many offsprings"; Roku (禄), which means "eternal prosperity of the family"; and Ju (寿), which means "long and healthy life."

The history of the brewery is extremely long, and its buildings give off an aura that attests to its many years of operation. Even though the facilities are periodically updated, the original construction continues to be used at the brewery. The two *kura* buildings, business office and the president's residence were registered as Japanese Cultural Property in 1996. Despite its simple structure, it has a stirringly powerful impact. Its construction is reputed to be the original design of the breweries in Akita, and it exudes the atmosphere of the Edo era. The floor plan of the office building is designed in the style of the early 20th century, which causes visitors to forget which era they are in after entering the building. The naturally filtered groundwater used in the brewing process is drawn from beneath the brewery. This is the same water that has been used since the founding of the brewery.

The saké brewery is located in Gojôme Town, which is 30 kilometers away from Akita City. The town is famous for its Akita Cedar, and it is surrounded by lush green mountains and rice



fields. The town has long been defined by its prosperous forestry business. At the center of the town, there is a morning market, which began in 1495 and has continued for more than 500 years. During the Edo era, the market was a well-known supply station for travelers looking to purchase es-

entials for their long journeys. Today, this market continues to bring in revenue from outside the prefecture and contributes to the



town's prosperity.

While Fukurokuju Brewery adheres to the historical and traditional method of brewing saké, customers' tastes are always

taken into consideration. In addition, the brewers are always striving to improve and test new methods of production. The fundamental point of brewing, which is always kept in mind, is to fully bring out the fine flavor of the rice and infuse it into the saké. The saké is made based on the following saying: "Watch out first for *kôji*, second for *moto (shubo)*, and third for *tsukuri (moromi)*." The processes within the brewery are carefully watched to ensure consistency and proper practices.

The saké brand name, IPPAKU-SUISEI, which is the staple saké of Fukurokuju, means the "best tasting saké consists of white rice and pure water." There are two standard products, which are known as the Blue and White Labels. The Blue Label is the higher-quality *junmai ginjô*, while the White Label is a *tokubetsu junmaishu*. The Blue Label saké is collected in bags and heated once before it is bottled so the flavor of the rice radiates from the saké. While the White Label can be purchased throughout the year, the Blue Label is only available during the winter season.

When tasting the White Label, the flavor of the rice as well as the pleasant, fruity taste invigorates the senses.

Words from the Representative:

Every day, we work hard to create highly satisfying saké. Most of the work in saké making should be done by hand, and this is exactly what we do here at the brewery. However, some operations can be better performed by machines. Thus, we combine these two approaches in our brewing process. The methodology used in our brewery is a product of our accumulated experience. The preservation process is also extremely important. The bottles used for our saké are disinfected and are made of quality glass, and the saké is stored below 5°C. We believe the manufacturing process is not complete until our customers truly enjoy our saké. Our hope is that our customers will be completely satisfied with our saké. The brewers at our company enjoy making saké, and they work hard every day. We hope to continue introducing people to our high-quality saké.



ITTEKI-SENRYÔ (一滴千両)

by Akitaken Hakko Kogyo Co., Ltd.

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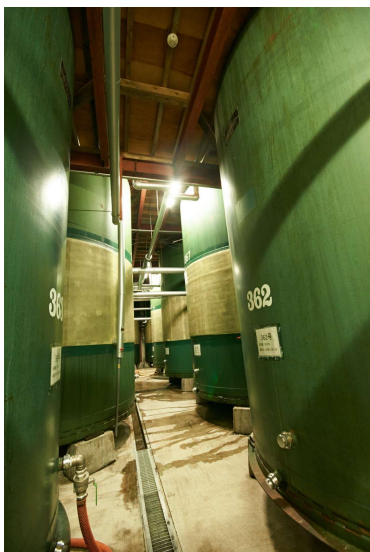


In 1945, Akitaken Hakkô Kôgyô Co., Ltd. was established in Yuzawa Town (present-day Yuzawa City) located in Ogachi



County in Akita. At that time, all the brewers in the prefecture were stockholders of the company. It began with the production and marketing of synthetic saké (saké-flavored liquor) and second-class *shôchû*. The founding of the saké section in 1975 provided an opportunity for the company to move to their current address.

Located on the banks of the Omono River, the company is blessed with abundant, natural groundwater. This natural water is used as the base for the saké-brewing process. The water's hardness is at the top of its class among the saké breweries in Akita Prefecture, giving it a reputation of having rich mineral components.

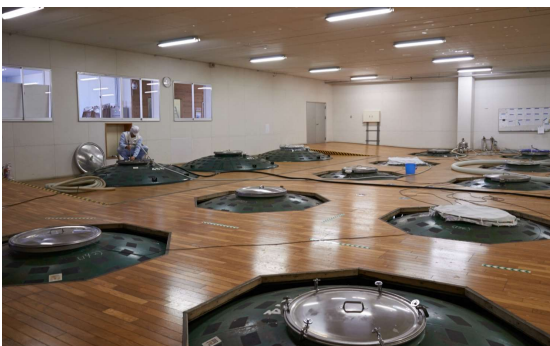


There are primarily two *kura* (brewing facilities): Showa *kura*, which produces premium-grade saké, and Heisei *kura*, which creates regular saké. In all, 17 members of the company are in charge of the production, including contract employees limited to winter terms. From November to March, Showa *kura* mainly brews *daiginjôshu* (fermented rice saké polished 50% at a low temperature). Beginning

in early February, it also produces saké using the *kimoto* method (one of the oldest saké-brewing methods using mashed yeast starters, which requires long-term intensive labor).

Heisei *kura* utilizes a three-season production process, in which it brews saké for 10 months from September through July. The two *kura* produce approximately 3,000 kiloliters of saké each year, with the capability of brewing up to 4,000 kiloliters.

The brand name, ITTEKI-SENRYÔ, means “every drop is worth a fortune.” Some of Akitaken



Hakkou Kogyo’s products include:

Junmai daiginjô ITTEKI-SENRYÔ, the brewery’s pride and joy, is a saké with rich fragrance

Tokubetsu junmaishu ONO-NO-KOMACHI, brewed using the *kimoto* method, has a crisp taste that is especially enhanced when served hot

Honjôzô nama-chozô-shu ITTEKI-SENRYÔ, a *honjôzôshu* preserved raw after squeezing, has a mild, pleasant taste as well as a light touch that makes it easily drinkable

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer)

Almost 10 years have passed since I became a member of the Sannai *Tôji* (saké-brewing leaders from the Sannai District) in 2003. At that time, the *Tôji* had been absent for approximately eight years, and no one was available as a saké-brewing master. Therefore, I had to learn through trial and error and by asking people from the Sannai District who came in during the winter season. After their retirement (due to old age), I passed a test and obtained a license to become a *Tôji*. Even then, on many occasions, I received guidance from senior members of other saké breweries. I did not meet with success every day. However, in



order to achieve a higher quality in taste, I will continue brewing under the motto of “challenging myself every day.” Although we have *daiginjôshu* produced from Yamadanishiki rice, which has become famous for being suitable for making saké, in the past few years, we have placed more emphasis on saké brewed with local rice. Harvested locally from Yuzawa, we have *daiginjôshu* and *tokubetsu-junmaishu* made with Akitasaké Komachi rice. If you have the opportunity, please try our products!



KARIHO (刈穂)
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The historic *kura*-style building of Kariho Brewery was built in 1850. At that time, Japan was beginning to open up as a country after centuries of national isolation.

The brewery was situated along the Omono River, a major river used for water transport in Akita. This location significantly helped product distribution. In 1913, Kyônosuke Itô, who had been brewing saké in a neighboring village, adopted the brewery and established a saké-brewing business with his colleagues. The history of the brewery was built on this foundation. The name KARIHO originates from a *waka* poem written by Emperor Tenchi (626-671) during the Asuka era:

*Akino-ta-no kariho-no-io-no toma-o-arami waga-koromode-wa
 tsuyu-ni nure-tsu-tsu*

“Out in the fields this autumn day, they’re busy reaping grain; I sought for shelter ‘neath this roof, but fear I sought in vain, — My sleeve is wet with rain.” (Translated by William N. Porter, 1909)



This poem shows affection for the lives of farmers plowing the fields and holds a deep meaning for saké brewers.

Kariho Brewery is located in the Senboku Plains, a major grain-producing area in Akita Prefecture. The climate there includes four distinct seasons that create appropriate conditions for saké brewing. For example, the summers and autumns are warm and humid (the ideal environment for cultivating saké rice), while the cold, snowy winters create the perfect atmosphere for brewing. The *kura* is situated along the banks of the Omono River, where the waters from the Ou Mountains flow. This river has blessed the area with an abundance of pure water, which has created a highly fertile agricultural region.

Kariho's saké is born from the techniques of the masterful *Tôji* (Head Brewer), the new instincts of the young brewer, and the delicate sensibility of the female brewer. The assimilation of these three elements creates saké with a new taste that is based on traditional methods. The water used at Kariho Brewery runs off the Ou Mountains and saturates the soil to become natural ground water. It is filtered through the gravel bed surrounding the *kura*, and it



is abundantly available as spring water throughout the year. This water is rich in natural minerals, and it has characteristics that help facilitate the fermentation process.

The signature characteristic of Kariho brewing is *junmaishu*, which is brewed over a 60-day period using the *Yamahai* method. Natural lactic acid bacteria are used in the early stage of the fermentation process, and the progress is then carefully monitored because it occurs over a long period and at low temperatures. This brewing process results in a saké with various flavor components and a refined, silky taste. *Yamahai*-brewed saké, with its delightful finish, pairs well with many dishes and brings out the flavor of food. The final step in the Kariho-brewing process is the traditional *sakabune shibori*. All the saké brewed at Kariho Brewery is pressed. Since this process takes a significant amount of time and effort, very few remaining breweries continue this tradition. The saké, pressed for two days, achieves a harmonized aging process while preserving its overall balance of flavor as well as the strong characteristic flavor of Kariho.



The major brands of Kariho Brewery include:

Junmai daiginjô KAEI (the prized saké of the brewery)

Junmai ginjô ROKUSHÛ

Yamahai junmai CHÔKARAKUCHI

Junmai daiginjô KAEI, made only with the highest-quality Yamadanishiki rice, is carefully brewed in the cold Akita style to produce a quiet, clear taste with a fragrant aroma.

Junmai ginjô ROKUSHÛ has an aroma that brings to mind juicy fruit and the characteristic dryness of Kariho Brewery's saké. At the same time, it is full-bodied, and the flavor spreads throughout the mouth like a "wave washing over the tongue."

Yamahai junmai CHÔKARAKUCHI ("extra dry") has a profound *umami* taste and a hard finish that saké lovers truly enjoy.

Words from the Representative:

Although we have relied heavily on traditional methods since the brewery's establishment, every year we take on new challenges. We believe tradition is built upon continuous innovation. It may take time for some to completely understand the complex flavors of some Kariho-brand sakés. Our goal is to create sakés with exquisite flavors and timeless qualities. I invite people from all over the world to enjoy our saké.



MANSAKUNO HANA (まんさくの花)
by **Hinomaru Brewing Co., Ltd.**

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Korean website at <http://hinomaru-sake.com/korean-top/>



Hinomaru Brewery was established in 1689. Hinomaru is the Japanese word for "rising sun," and the name is said to be derived from the Stake family's coat of arms, which included an

uchiwa (Japanese fan) with a rising sun in the middle. One of Hinomaru Brewery's first steps to becoming one of the most prominent saké breweries in the Tohoku Region occurred in 1909, when it was awarded first place at a saké-brand voting competition organized by the Tohoku Kôron Publishing Company. During the Taishô era (1912–1926), its annual production volume reached 5,000 *koku* (approx. 900 kiloliters). In 1913, it won a gold medal at the Japan-British Exhibition. In 1925, Hinomaru Brewery was reorganized into a stock company. However, due to the 1943 Industrial Reform Act, it was forced to relinquish its business. In January 1948, then-President



Mitsuo Satô regained the brewery's manufacturing rights by obtaining a grant that allowed the company to brew a basic production line worth 300 *koku*. The once-lost 300 years of brewing history was revived, and today, this small brewery produces 1,500 *koku* a year.

Masuda is the name of the town located in the southeast Yokote Basin. Surrounded by the beautiful natural scenery of mountains and rivers, this area is well known for a granary that produces high-quality rice suitable for saké brewing. Snow covers the land for most of the year, and in this cold environment, the company brews its products. The rich, cold, clear waters used for the saké come from the Ou Mountains in the Kurikoma Mountain Range,



which stands on the borders of Akita, Iwaté, and Miyagi Prefectures. This groundwater is one of the best in the prefecture, and it serves as the base for the brewing process. The saké

rice is harvested locally, and it is carefully grounded so 38% of the grain is left behind. While most breweries have outside sources that perform this part of the job, Hinomaru Brewery polishes its rice within the company.

At Hinomaru Brewery, *ginjôshu* and *daiginjô* are poured directly into the bottles and kept at low temperatures. By doing so, a rich, elegant taste is achieved. This unique method, which the company takes pride in, is carried out at the low-temperature storage

facility, which can preserve up to 120,000 bottles at a time. Another special facility they own is the *yukimuro*, a natural refrigerator in which the saké is preserved in a storage container buried in the snow. Most of the *ginjôshu* is kept in such storage. Other sakés, such as *junmaishu* (pure rice saké) and *futsûshu* (standard saké), are also kept in thermal tanks that maintain specific cold temperatures. From these steps, it is apparent that Hinomaru Brewery places a particular emphasis on low-temperature brewing. Heating the saké, which regular breweries tend to do twice, is only performed once. This technique is called *namazume* ("raw bottling"), and it is applied to many of the brewery's sakés. Every month, different types of *namazume* sakés are sold from the company as seasonal products. At many other breweries, such saké can only be available between the winter and spring. They are a seasonal luxury that are called *hiyaoroshi* in Japan. However, Hinomaru Brewery provides this *namazume* saké with the same quality as *hiyaoroshi* almost all year. Today, modern technology has allowed further improvements to brewing methods and facilities. Hinomaru Brewery took advantage of such advancements and decided to make *hiyaoroshi* available in every month of the year. This was the beginning of the company's focus on low-temperature preservation. From then on, the



company's ambition was to increase the number of low-temperature preservation facilities and ultimately brew all its products with this *namazume* method.

MANSAKUNO HANA ("Witch Hazel Flower") is the company's number-one brand. It was named after a 1981

NHK (Japan's national television broadcasting station) morning television series based in Yokote. The label is written in ink using calligraphy; today, such designs have become standard in the saké industry. However, when MANSAKUNO HANA was first released, it was quite an innovation.

The brewery uses the mild, soft water that emerges after a long period of melting in the mountains. The rice comes from the local contract farms, while milling is conducted at the brewery. Brewing is achieved using the Akita style of brewing saké under low temperatures over a long period of fermentation. The traditional *sô-shibori* technique is employed in which the saké is filtered using a wooden tank, which takes more time and effort compared to the usual process. Preservation and aging is performed one bottle at a time. Hinomaru Brewery prioritizes the improvement of quality over efficiency. The brewery has maintained the best parts of the traditional techniques, which can be tasted in its products.

Words from the Representative:

Our saké is extremely popular locally; it is rarely found outside Akita. While it is a very “manly” saké, one can still taste a gentleness that is unique to our brewery. We have a variety of storage facilities with different temperatures. Every month, we check if the *namazume* saké or our “raw” products are ready for shipping, and if they are, we sell them as seasonal products. The majority of our saké is unfiltered, and it has not been watered down. Therefore, our cus-



tomers can taste the raw, original taste of the saké. Of course, every product we sell each month is made using different types of saké rice and fermentation processes. It would be our honor and pleasure if you would take the opportunity to enjoy our saké, including our regular line-up, such as MANSAKUNO HANA, HINOMARU, and MAHITO, and our seasonal specials.

Scene of the Stories

Hot Spring “Nyuto Onsen”



“Tsurunoyu Onsen” in snow



NOSHIRO (能代)
by Kikusui Brewing Limited
Partnership

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Kikusui Brewery was established in 1875 in Noshiro City, which used to be a well-known center for lumber distribution. Because the brewery suffered from several devastating fires, the exact year of its establishment is uncertain. However, it is possible that it dates back to the Kôka period (1844–1848) during the Edo era. From generation to generation, the heads of Kikusui Brewery have inherited the first name Kisaburo, and the current head of the brewery is Kisaburo the Sixth.

In the early years, Kikusui Brewery’s saké did not have any name, and it was simply known as “Kisaburo’s saké.” However, when the brewery participated in saké competitive fairs held



during the Meiji era, a brand name was introduced, combining the first two Chinese characters for the childhood name of the brewery’s head, Kikuji (喜久治), and Sui

(水) (“water”). This was also the origin of its early saké brand KIKUSUI (喜久水).

The brewers work on Kikusui's saké with a well-known adage in mind: *Ichi kôji, ni moto, san tsukuri* ("Kôji is of first importance, *shubo* is of second importance, and *moromi* is of third importance."). This means making good *kôji* (rice mold) is the most important element in brewing good saké. *Shubo* is made using carefully prepared *kôji*, and the brewers at Kikusui Brewery make *moromi* by scrupulously following the traditional three-step fermentation process (*Sandan-Shikomi*) in which *kôji*, rice, and water are added to *shubo*.

Kikusui Brewery stores bottled saké in a 100-meter-long, brick train tunnel built in 1900, which was the 33rd year of the reign of Emperor Meiji. The tunnel used to be called the "Tsurugata Tunnel"; today, it is a national cultural property. The new Tsurugata Tunnel runs along the old one, and it is part of the Japan Railway's Ou Line connecting Fukushima City to Aomori City via Akita City. The former Tsurugata Tunnel stores up to 60,000 bottles of saké and matures saké at 12°C throughout the year.



Kikusui Brewery is known for its unique "Kamutachi Internship," a saké-brewing internship system. The name Kamutachi is an ancient word for saké brewing. During the period of fermentation from early December to the end of March, applicants live together and work with the head brewer to make saké.

Those who complete the training receive the title "Kamutachi Expert" and the opportunity to obtain confidential information about the brewery. Any able-bodied individual is eligible to apply for this program. The list of past Kamutachi interns shows that this program has included those from a wide array of occupations, such as brewers, professionals at saké-related businesses, office workers, students, journalists, housewives, civil servants, and university administrators. Many participants come from the Kanto and Kansai regions of Japan, which shows that many Japanese people still have a strong interest in saké brewing.

One of Kikusui Brewery's main saké brands is *junmai ginjôshu* KISABURO-NO-SAKÉ ("Kisaburo's saké"), which retains the name given by the local people of Noshiro Port Town before the brewery established the brand name KIKUSUI. KISABURO-NO-SAKÉ is brewed using "Hanafubuki" ("shower of blossoms") rice grown in Noshiro City and polishing it up to 55%. The atmosphere of the old days is revived with KISABURO-NO-SAKÉ.



Kikusui Brewery's other brands include *daiginjô* NOSHIRO HIRAFU and *junmai daiginjô* SHUKONDEI NOSHIRO. They are both brewed by polishing "Yamadanishiki" rice up to 40%, and they are popular entries in the NOSHIRO Series. SHUKONDEI NOSHIRO is made by using only the clear, well-balanced liquid that comes through the pressuring machine after the first run. This second-run saké is matured in the tunnel storage facility. It features a dry, fruity, refreshing flavor layered with a delicious aroma.

Tokubetsu junmai KIICHIRO-NO-SAKÉ is the work of Kiichiro or Kisaburo the Seventh, who will lead the brewery into the next generation. For this brand, the rice is polished up to 58%, and the saké is only brewed from natural ingredients such as rice, *kôji*, and water. KIICHIRO-NO-SAKÉ has a crisp flavor and a subtle, delicate fragrance that always excites the senses. According to the current head, "Its flavor gets better and better as Kiichiro's brewing skills improve."



OKUSHIMIZU (奥清水)

by Takahashi Syuzo-ten Co., Ltd.

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Takahashi Brewery is located in Rokugô in Misato Town, which is known for its clean water and natural springs. The name Rokugô probably originates from an Ainu expression, "Rukokottsui," meaning "location of clean water." The water source is groundwater cultivated at

an alluvial fan located on the east side of town. Cold (12–15°C) filtered water emerges from the surface in more than 60 locations throughout the town year-round. Unlike other cities, in which the government supplies public water, the public uses this clean water for everything from drinking to washing vegetables and clothes. The "Takaramon Kiyomizu" water spring is one of 60 national famous waters selected by the Ministry of Environment, and this water is also used in Takahashi Brewery. The Takaramon Kiyomizu is a highly reputable water spring even among those in Rokugô-cho, located in the district which was named after the spring itself. The spring was discovered during the Azuchimomoyama period. While the Lord of Rokugô Castle, Hyôgo-no-Kami Nikaido, was fighting against Tôtômi-no-Kami

Onodera, a natural spring was discovered under a temple gate. The name “Takara” means “treasure,” “Mon” means “gate,” and “Kiyomizu” means “spring water.” Thus, “Takaramon Kiyomizu” means “spring water as a treasure under the (temple) gate.”

Takahashi Brewery was established in 1919 in Senhata Village, and it moved to Rokugô Town in 1955. When the brewery moved to Rokugô, the ex-mayor of Rokugô Town, Mr. Hatakeyama, offered his residence. On the path to the brewery, a small pond is neatly paved with round stones, which is pleasing to visitors. This beautiful pond may remind visitors that this brewery is very proud of the quality of its water.



The brewery’s most important product is *Daiginjô* OKUSHIMIZU (奥清水). The brand name is a combination of the first Chinese character of the *Ou* (奥羽) Mountains and the word for spring water, *Shimizu* (清水), thus highlighting that the



high-quality water comes from the Ou Mountains. In the brewing process, “Yamadanishiki” rice is polished to keep only 40% of the core rice grains, after which it is transformed into a wonderful *daiginjô* through long, low-temperature fermentation. The Sannai *Tôji* of the brewery has perfected this technique.

In addition to “Yamadanishiki” rice from Hyôgo Prefecture, “Misatonishiki” rice from local farmers, “Akita Saké Komachi” and “Menkoina” rice from Akita Prefecture, and “Gimpû” and “Suisei” organic rice from Hokkaido Prefecture are used. *Junmaishu*, using organic rice, has also received high praise in the market. Approximately 80% of the brewery’s production is shipped outside Akita, while 20% is consumed in the prefecture.



Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):



Currently, we are seeking ways to create a new taste by harvesting, selecting, and cultivating yeasts on our own. We recently succeeded in separating saké yeast from local white lavenders at Misato Town, and with the help of the Akita Research Institute of Food and Brewing, we commercialized a new saké, MISATOSEKKA, ("Snow Flower of Misato") in 2014.

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RAKU-IZUMI (楽泉)
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Nishimura Brewing and Co. is located on the coast of the Sea of Japan in the northwestern part of Akita Prefecture. It is surrounded by the rich forests of the Dewa Mountains and the Shirakami Mountains, the latter of which is a World Heritage Site. The city was founded at the mouth of the Yoneshiro River, and it prospered as a transportation



center for Akita Cedar. In its long history, the brewery survived many fires that devastated the city. In May 1983, a strong earthquake destroyed the brewery's building, after which it was successfully rebuilt. The city has beautiful black pine trees lining the shore; these trees were planted during the Edo era to deflect the sand blown in by the strong west winds. This pine forest has been designated a national protected recreation forest, and it is known as one of the most beautiful pine forests in Japan. Noshiro is also where the Ando clan built the Hiyama Castle in the 15th century. Although the castle itself was demolished in the

17th century, a medieval atmosphere still remains.

Nishimura Brewery began as a branch store for the network of merchants in Ômi Province (present-day Shiga Prefecture) called *gôshûdana* (*gôshû* means “Ômi Province” and *dana* means “branch office”). Many *gôshûdana* were active throughout Japan, but only a few existed in Akita. Sowemon Nishimura, the first master of the brewery, was originally a fabric wholesale dealer selling textiles and yarn. During the Hôreki period (1651–1745), he began brewing saké in this area, which lacked a brewing industry despite its abundance of good rice and water. Because Noshiro was a port city used by the *Kitamae Bune* (trading ships on the coast of the Sea of Japan), the sakés produced by breweries in Noshiro were tasted by visitors from remote towns and constantly refined by the affluence of the brewery’s busy location.

Using pure, hard water, which flows abundantly from the underground water of the neighboring Yoneshiro River, Nishimura



Brewery creates saké with a fresh, dry flavor and a light taste. The brewers perform traditional hand brewing based on the idea of “quality first” and the following motto: “Satisfy consumers’ needs with good faith, creativity, and effort.”

The brewery also takes pride in brewing the local saké of Noshiro. The brewery uses non-sealed tanks

(except for part of the *ginjô* production) that allow carbonic acid gas to flow out, which enables the head brewer to adjust conditions based on the slightest changes.

In addition to its major product, RAKU-IZUMI, Nishimura Brewery produces *Junmai daiginjô* JÛROKUDAI, *Junmai ginjô* SHIRAKAMI-NO-KAZE, and *Tokubetsu junmaishu* KAZE-NO-MATSUBARA. All the saké is hand brewed, and the use of the Akita-style brewing method allows its advantages and characteristics.

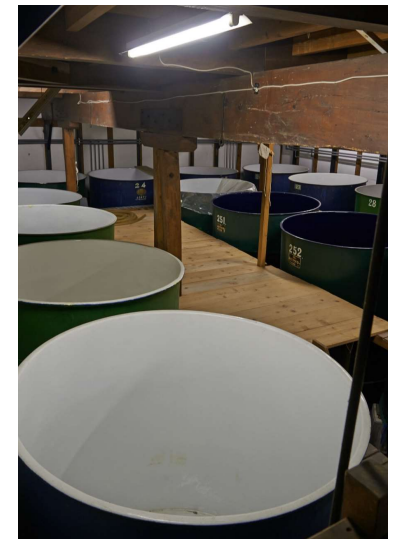
Sowemon Nishimura, the 12th generation, created RAKU-IZUMI saké for a national competitive fair in the Meiji era. Sowemon also considered some other names, such as “Kitamasamune,” but he chose the name RAKU-IZUMI (“a fountain of enjoyment”) because he believed saké pleases people’s hearts.

Junmai daiginjô JÛROKUDAI was created by the current master after carefully selecting water and rice. This new brand is a masterpiece.

Junmai ginjô SHIRAKAMI-NO-KAZE is a fine product that is made from “Akita Sakékomachi” rice and water from the Shirakami Mountains. This saké has a mild, elegant fragrance.

Tokubetsu junmaishu KAZE-NO-MATSUBARA takes its name from the well-known pine forest on the coast of the Sea of Japan.

Throughout the long history of this rich land, saké has been



brewed with respect for the tradition and the earnest desire for the essence of fine taste.

Words from the Representative:

Our goal is to satisfy consumers' needs with good faith, creativity, and effort. We do whatever we need to do to make high-quality saké. Our ability to focus on all details of the brewing process is an advantage of this small brewery.



RANMAN (爛漫)

by Akita Meijyo Co., Ltd.

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Email: Ranman@ranman.co.jp



Akita Meijyo Co., Ltd. was established in 1922 to brew RANMAN with the goal of “bringing Akita’s saké brewed with good rice and

abundant water to the national market.” While most breweries in those days were traditionally small family-run enterprises, 88 investors in Akita Prefecture (including brewers, politicians, and financiers) established Akita Meijyo Co., Ltd. as a modern corporation.

If the brewery was to establish a national reputation, it was necessary to equip it with the capacity to produce a substantial volume of high-quality saké. For this reason, the company constructed a modern factory with a brewing capability of 10,000 *koku* of saké (10,000 *koku* = approx. 1,800 kiloliters). To choose the name of the new saké brand, a national public competition (with a prize) was held, which was also part of a nationwide marketing strategy. Subsequently, the sales of RANMAN expanded to Sendai, Tokyo, and the rest of Japan, until production was halted due to the Pacific War in December 1941.

After the war ended in 1945, Akita Meijyo Co., Ltd. restarted in

1949, and it successfully conquered the market due to its quality and marketing strategy. On the one hand, saké stores highly valued that RANMAN had the quality of a first-class saké (called *tokutei-meishu*, “special-designation saké,” since the enactment of the National Tax Agency Notification in 1989) even though it was classified as a second-class saké (called *futsûshu*, “ordinary saké”). Thus, the brand became available inexpensively. On the other hand, its active marketing strategy of using Sayuri Yoshinaga, a very popular actress, had a tremendous impact on consumers. However, after a sales peak in the 1970s, changes in consumers’ tastes resulted in the rising consumption of other alcoholic beverages and the gradual fall of saké. Currently, RANMAN’s sales are only one-fifth the volume and one-third the sales of those in the 1970s. Due to changes in the lifestyles of the Japanese people, 1.8-liter bottles were replaced by smaller bottles or paper packs. The brewery is aware of the need for a change in its strategy, and it is making efforts to enhance the sale of special-designation sakés, such as *daiginjôshu*, *ginjôshu*, and *junmaishu*. However, 80% of its products are still designated as *futsûshu* (“ordinary saké”).



The brewery is located in Yuzawa, which is situated in the Yokote Basin in the southern part of Akita Prefecture. It has the Ou Mountains to the east and splendid rice paddies to the west, with magnificent Mt. Chôkai in the distance.

Sannai Tôji (highly skilled brewers from the Sannai District in Yokote City), who used to work for the brewery only in the



winter, are now full-time employees of the company and are fully devoted to the art of brewing. In addition, Yuzawa has the nearby tourist attractions the Koyasukyô Hot Springs and the Aki-no-Miya Hot Springs, and it is becoming increasingly known for its production of *Inaniwa Udon* (wheat-flour noodles from the Inaniwa District in Yuzawa City).

For its production of saké, 99% of the rice used comes from

Yuzawa and Ogachi with identifiable producers. The remainder is Yamadanishiki rice used to produce *daiginjôshu*. The principal brewing method adopted at the brewery is Akita’s low-temperature, long-period fermentation, which is practiced with the natural blessings of the region. The major objective is to ensure the stable provision of RANMAN to consumers with constant quality.

The representative brands of the brewery include:

Futsushu BISHU PACK in 1.8-liter paper packs

Junmaishu MANAGU TAKO, which is easy on the throat

Daiginjô BOTAN, which has been sold at the brewery since 1978

Junmai daiginjô KARAJISHI, which has been sold also since 1978

Junmai daiginjô KAORI RANMAN, which offers a fruity fragrance, is an affordable luxury

Further emphasis will be placed on the production of *junmai daiginjô* and *junmai ginjô*, which offer rich fragrances and luxury at accessible prices.

Words from the Representative:

RANMAN is a carefully brewed saké that has the blessings of the region's natural surroundings. The brewery has a modern system for tracking rice producers and for the brewing process. Our extra safety measures and concerns for the environment are additional responsibilities we are willing to take so our customers can enjoy our products for as long as possible. RANMAN should be a saké that brings people joy. I myself feel a sense of happiness when drinking it every evening.



RYÔZEKI (両関)
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The foundation of Ryozeke Shuzo Co., Ltd. can be traced back to 1874 in southern Yuzawa City in Akita Prefecture. The “ryô” in Ryôzeki means “both,” while “zeke” is short for Ôzeke, which formally stands for the champion of all sumo wrestlers. Ôzeke is also used to describe something with the highest

rank in its field, similar to “the king of...” In the saké industry, “Masamune” is a common name given to brands, coming from the name of one of the best katana swords made in eastern Japan. In addition, another famous katana from the western region is called “Munechika.” A man who loved saké and swords proposed that, if “Masamune” is the Ôzeke of the east and “Munechika” is the Ôzeke of the west, “Ryôzeki” would be a perfect name for the “king of saké” that rules over both eastern and western Japan.

Ryozeke Shuzo started with one main building and four *kura* (brewing houses). They were the first tangible cultural properties to be registered in Akita under the national Law for the



Protection of Cultural Properties. For many years, the brewery's saké has been awarded prizes at the national new-brewed saké fairs organized by the National Institute of Brewing. In addition, its products have received high praise at prestigious international liquor competitions around the world.

Even within Akita, the land of snow, Yuzawa City is famous for its heavy snowfall. The hot summers and freezing winters provide an environment suitable for producing high-quality natural spring water. This groundwater is the base of Ryozeke Shuzo's brewing process. Yuzawa is also a great location for saké production because it is one of the main areas for harvesting rice suitable for brewing. "Bizan Nishiki" is one of Akita's proud lines of saké rice, and roughly 80% of it is produced in Yuzawa City.



By taking full advantage of these great sources of water and rice, Ryozeke Shuzo challenges itself every day to create delicious saké. Ryozeke Shuzo was the first brewery in Akita to be awarded the grand prize by the National

Institute of Brewing (cf. "A History of Akita's Saké" in this booklet).

The low temperature long term brewing technique is a part of Akita's traditions. However, Ryozeke Shuzo developed its own unique brewing skills. Using the region's well-known cold weather, it holds down the highest temperature of the *moromi* (unfiltered saké in the middle of the fermentation process) as much as possible and ferments the saké slowly. By adopting this method, the brewery can achieve a smooth taste. Instead of maintaining its exclusivity, Ryozeke Shuzo publicly opened this

technique to other breweries in order to contribute to the advancement of saké production in the Tohoku Region. Furthermore, another policy the company has firmly maintained since its establishment is training its own *Tôji* (Head Brewer). All the brewery's *Tôji* have been trained within the company.



Ryozeke Shuzo has two main mottos: (1) "To produce in harmony with the people, one must brew what brings harmony to the people," and (2) "Quality first." These two mottos have never been broken, and to date, the brewery

cherishes the spirit of tradition.

Junmai daiginjô SETSU-GETSU-KA is Ryozeke Shuzo's most prominent saké. It is made purely from ferment, water, and rice that has been ground by 50%. The smooth taste and soft aroma make it a suitable drink for any season. This brand is the brewery's masterpiece, and it has won the highest award at the International Wine and Spirits Competition, the oldest and most widely respected alcoholic-beverage competition in the world.

Another product that has gained much popularity in recent years is the *junmaishu* RYÔZEKI. It received the grand prize at the 2014 Fine Saké Awards in Japan. With one sip, a refreshing, delicious taste together with a fruity aroma spreads throughout the drinker's mouth.

Yamahai tokubetsu junamishu RYÔZEKI is made using a special method called *yamahai-jikomi*, which requires much more time and intensive labor than other brewing techniques. The balanced, rich flavor of this crisp, dry saké allows those who try it to expe-

rience the depth of the brewery's taste. It was awarded first place at the Autumn National Liquor Competition.

Words from the Representative:

When creating our large variety of sakés, the *Tôji* keeps one notion in particular in mind: the development of human resources. A team must always include members who can effectively communicate with one another. This fundamental aspect comes before any other policies. It is taken for granted that we protect and cherish our traditions. However, having the flexibility to follow the flow of time and provide what the public desires is also important. We also aim to take extra note of customers' needs and continue developing saké that brings a fresh, new taste to our brewery. For example, if a drinker has stopped drinking saké due to a negative feeling, we want to produce a drink that he or she will want to try. Ryozeiki Shuzo is willing to accept these challenges. In addition, our dream is to realize the following three aspects when brewing our saké: (1) the succession and creation of our culture; (2) the development of the local region; and (3) providing harmony and joy to the people.



SHIRATAKI (白瀑)

by Yamamoto General Partnership Co.

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info-shirataki@shirakami.or.jp



Yamamoto General Partnership Co. is located in Happo Town, which was formed by the merger of Hachimori Town and Minehama Town in 2006. It is situated in the northwestern part of Akita Prefecture, and it has a breathtaking panoramic view of the Sea of Japan, where sandfish (*hatahata*, a gourmet specialty from Akita) flock every winter. The city is bordered to the north by the Shirakami Mountains, a World Heritage Site where natural beech tree forests are preserved. A travel writer during the Edo era, Masumi Sugae, visited the forests and described them

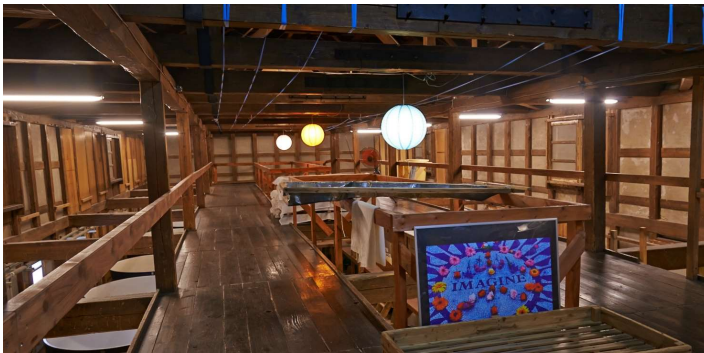
as "an earthly paradise."



In 1901, Yomonosuke Yamamoto, who owned vast estates in the area, established the brewery. The production increased annually (except for a temporary drop during the war) and continued to grow

until 1973. The height of production was reached when coal-mining activities thrived at the Yubari Mine in Hokkaido.

During this time, nearly half of the entire production of Yamamoto Brewery was consumed by the miners at Yubari. However, in the 1960s, there was a decline in saké consumption at the Yubari Mine due to a switch from using coal to petroleum in Japan. In 1965, Yamamoto Brewery turned its attention to making products of higher values and commercialized one of first *daiginjô* in the national market. *Daiginjô* BACCHUS (named after the goddess of alcohol in Greek mythology) was highly valued by many high-end restaurants in Tokyo and Kobe. Due to the new policy, Yamamoto Brewery gradually re-established its production after the decline in consumption at the Yubari Mine.



In the 1990s, Yamamoto Brewery witnessed a series of sad events; its successors and representatives passed away one after another. The brewery's activities were dramatically affected, and sales figures dropped sharply. The current head, Tomofumi Yamamoto, came to the brewing business rather unexpectedly. However, in order to keep the brewery running, he released a series of eye-catching products as soon as he arrived in 2002, making full use of the marketing skills he previously learned in music business. In 2007, he abolished the traditional post of *Tôji* (Head Brewer) and became the production manager himself, after which he released *junmai ginjô* YAMAMOTO. Approximately

seven years after he assumed his new role, the brewery's entire production tripled. Since 2010, the brewery has not used artificial alcohol additions, and it is referred to as a brewery that performs "entirely pure rice brewing (*zenryô junmai jikomi*)."

In its early days, the brewery used water out of its own wells. However, due to its proximity to the coast, the water contained too much minerals, and it was unsuitable for saké brewing. As a result, the brewery conducted a large-scale construction project in 1932 and built a 2.5-kilometer-long underground aqueduct to obtain natural spring water from Mt. Yakushi. The new water source provided extremely soft water, which dramatically improved the quality of the saké. Even brewers from other breweries brought trucks with empty tanks asking for some of the water. Furthermore, the brewery has exercised strict quality control by introducing equipment, such as large refrigerators (to store saké at low temperatures) and pasteurizers (that can pasteurize saké after the bottling process), to maintain the freshness of the saké throughout the year.



Yamamoto Brewery's main brands include several brands of *junmai ginjō* in the YAMAMOTO Series and *junmai daiginjō* SHIRATAKI.

Junmai ginjō YAMAMOTO PURE BLACK features a fruity, sour citrus flavor with golden letters shining on its pure black label. As it spreads throughout the mouth, the saké's rich taste starts to expand, followed by a smooth, refreshing finish.

Junmai daiginjō SHIRATAKI has a fresh aroma of apples. Its juicy fragrance fills the mouth as if the drinker were biting into a fresh apple. SHIRATAKI is a well-balanced saké with a brilliant aroma, an elegant flavor, and a subtle yet refreshing scent with a spicy finish. The name SHIRATAKI ("White Waterfall") comes from a 17-meter waterfall located behind the Shirataki Shrine in Happo City.

Words from the Representative:

Thanks to our business partners who continue to support us, our production has tripled in the seven years since I started producing saké at the brewery. This has been the upper limit of our brewing capacity. We will continue our efforts to improve quality and offer saké that will delight fans both inside and outside Japan.



SUIRAKUTEN (酔楽天)

by Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd.

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Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd. has two major origins: Takaku Brewery and Kunibanzai Brewery.

Takaku Brewery was founded in

1920. Its founder, Kurozaemon Takahashi, was a strong-willed, hard-working man who ran a wholesale rice business and a pawn business named "Kagiichi," and he eventually started brewing *miso* and soy sauce. At the age of 60, he ventured into the saké-brewing business with no prior experience in saké brewing. His saké brand, HÔSHÔ (宝生), took its name from the jewel of the same name, which was the treasure of the Inari Shrine that enshrined the God of Commerce.

Kunibanzai Brewery was established in 1908. Its founder, Shin-suke Kawaguchi, served as the fishermen's boss for the main family business, and he accumulated wealth by improving the company's business performance. Kawaguchi established a family branch by creating the new house name of "Maruchô-san." On October 15, 1908, after producing 200 koku (equal to 20,000

bottles) of saké, he was qualified to brew by the Tax Office Superintendent of Akita, Mr. Kikuchi. Kawaguchi's house name and saké brand name was initially BANZAI, which is a Japanese cheer that can be translated as "Long life!" or "Hurrah!" However, after the brewery was founded in 1908, it added the kanji character "Kuni (國)," which represents Japan. It was then renamed KUNIBANZAI (國万歳) to celebrate the country's victory in the Russo-Japanese War.

After uniting these two breweries, Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd. was established in 1969 at Araya, Akita City.

Araya is the birthplace of Akita's saké, and it takes pride in its tradition as a major saké production area. The town, located on the coast of the Sea of Japan, is blessed with an abundant amount of fine spring water. It also has suitable land for saké brewing due to the harbor situated near the estuary of the Omono River, which allows saké rice to be imported from the upper regions. The highly skilled brewers called "Hamada *Tôji*" (brewing experts) from the neighboring Hamada Village also contribute to the perfect environment of Araya. Furthermore, Araya was historically a castle town of the feudal lord Satake and a commercial area at which trading and exchanging goods occurred. The town brewed saké called ARASHIYAMA, which was patronized by the feudal clan. Currently, Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd. stands next to where the ARASHIYAMA factory was once located. Araya had 12 saké brewing manufacturers operating during the middle of the Meiji



era. In this land of tradition and history, the company continues to focus on how its saké should be made, following a strict (almost stubborn) handmade policy to advance its skills and enhance its business performance.

Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd. polishes every grain of carefully selected saké rice until they shine like "pearl orbs." The company brews saké using fresh, medium-hard, natural water, and it continues to pass down the confidential brewing methods of Yuzo Nagasawa (the experienced *Tôji* [Head Brewer]) to the current Mitsugu Kato (the current *Tôji*). The brewery strives to improve the quality of its saké even further. The unique yeasts, the aged brewery, and the grace of the saké are created from the brewers' hearts. In addition to the old-fashioned method of using Japanese pots, steamers, and wooden chests to make *kôji* as well as of making *moromi* slowly at a low temperature, the brewery utilizes Araya's climate to create and nurture its saké. The brewery's main brand is *daiginjô* SUIRAKUTEN (酔楽天, "drunken Hakurakuten"), the name of which is derived from the Chinese poet Hakurakuten (白樂天), who was known as a "great drinker."

Daiginjô SUIRAKUTEN is stored and matured at a low temperature by combining the best of the brewery's technology. Due to its splendid quality, the saké is admired as "the Napoleon of saké." It features a fruity aroma and a mellow flavor that makes it a perfect accompaniment to dishes such as clams steamed in saké, "Tomburi" (Akita's local food



appreciated as “land caviar”), and seafood, particularly squids and scallops. Saké fans view SUIRAKUTEN as a wonderful saké they can keep enjoying through the second or even third rounds of parties.

The brewery’s other popular brand is *Junmaishu* KOSHIKI JUNZUKURI (“old-fashioned pure brewing”). It is brewed by steaming Akita-grown “Gin-no-Sei” (“fairy of poems”) rice with the traditional method of using Japanese cauldrons and wooden chests, using a traditional *kôji* box to create *kôji*, and fermenting the batch for a long period at a low temperature. The saké’s light, smooth taste makes one forget about the time. The refreshing lightness highlights its elegant acidity, and you will find yourself constantly emptying the cup.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

Our motto is “Wajo” (“brewing in harmony”). We brew saké while checking the steamers and touching the tanks with great care, as if they are our children. When we brew saké, we make a wish that it will turn out to be excellent. My passion for saké spreads to the people around me. The word “Wajo” is commonly used among those engaged in brewing saké. When all the people who brew, sell, and drink a saké hope it will be good, a certain harmony is created among them, which helps produce high-quality saké.



TABITO (田从)

by Maizuru Brewing Co., Ltd.

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Maizuru Brewery, established in 1918, is located in the Hiraka Town of Yokote City, which lies on the edge of the Minase River’s alluvial fan in the center of the Yokote Basin. The brewery is known for its saké brand—TABITO (田从). Its name consists of the ancient Chinese character “从” meaning “a people’s gathering,” and the first Chinese character “田”, meaning “rice paddy.” TABITO was named by a representative who wanted to symbolize the connection between those who cultivate the rice, those who



brew the saké, those who sell the saké, and those who enjoy the saké.

The owners, the Kudô family, are descendants of

Suketsune Kudô, whose origin can be traced back to the Fujiwara family, the most powerful family from the 10th to the 11th century. Suketsune Kudô is a well-known figure in Japanese history due to his assassination by the Soga brothers in 1193. The Soga brothers’ story later became one of the three most popular stories of vendetta, which was also dramatized in *kabuki* and

other forms of Japanese theater. The Kudo family later became the head priests of the Shinshû Ôtani sect's old temple, Tôryûsan Tsûkakuji, in Masuda Town.



The brewery was spared from the national policy of industrial mergers during the Pacific War. Afterwards, the brewery attempted to expand its business outside the prefecture, and it launched the saké brand AKITAZURU ("Cranes of Akita"). In addition, the brewery began brewing and selling nationally designated types of saké, especially after it garnered several gold prizes at national new-brewed saké fairs.

Hanako Kudô, the daughter of the current representative, is in charge of production management, and she is the only female *Tôji* (Head Brewer) in Akita Prefecture. She is the eldest of two sisters born in the temple in Masuda Town. As stated earlier, the original family business was as head priests of the temple, but her grandfather was asked by his relatives to take over the brewery, so he served as the president of the brewery and as the head priest of the temple. When he passed away, Hanako's aunt was asked to take over the temple, while Hanako's mother was asked to lead the brewery. Eventually, inspired by the responsibility to preserve saké culture and the history of the brewery, Hanako became involved. After a series of trials and errors, she decided in 2001 to brew *junmaishu* (pure rice saké) exclusively. This decision was met with great opposition. The brewers, including the head and the workers, resigned from their jobs stating, "Do it alone." She is currently brewing saké on her own, but



she remains positive. According to Hanako, "I would like to continue brewing without losing my own beliefs."

She brews truly delicious *junmaishu* using the rich water resources and rice of the region and exploiting their full potential. One characteristic of her saké is that the final products are sold after being matured for more than three years.

The main brands of the brewery include:

Yamahai-shikomi junmaishu TABITO

Junmai ginjô GEKKA-NO-MAI

Gennoyakumai-shikomi junmaishu TABITO

Yamahai-shikomi junmaishu TABITO is a light yellow saké with a strong, deep deliciousness and a dignified flavor. Together with a clear taste of rice, sourness and fragrance amplify the complex yet well-organized characteristics of this saké. Although this saké becomes much deeper in taste when it is warmed, it is still brilliant after it cools down. The overall taste always pleases and relaxes people's hearts and bodies, and it allows individuals to

feel moderately good without being tired from drunkenness.

Junmai ginjô GEKKA-NO-MAI has both deliciousness and freshness, and it has a comfortable, moderate dry flavor with a fascinatingly elegant fragrance.



Gennoyakumai-shikomi junmaishu TABITO, is "made from rice

grown with less agricultural chemicals (*Gennoyakumai-shikomi*)", and it has a strong taste of rice. It is especially delicious when warmed up.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

In Japan, where saké is produced and consumed extensively, saké brewed with additional alcohol has become the mainstream. However, Japan is proud of *junmaishu*, that is, saké only brewed with natural rice, malted rice, water, and artisan techniques that have been passed down for centuries. My job is to maintain the culture and techniques of my ancestors and pass them on to the next generation. Do you want to experience the true potential of a well-matured *junmaishu*? Open a bottle, leave it for a while (so that it gets exposed to the air), and warm it up. If *junmaishu* in a bottle is like a flower bud, this is how you make it bloom. You will be surprised by its great taste, which lasts even after it cools down. I hope you get the opportunity to taste this delicious, secretly matured *junmaishu*!



TAIHEIZAN (太平山)
by Kodama Brewing Co., Ltd.

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http://www.kodamajozo.co.jp/about_us/about_t_us.html

Email: info@kodamajozo.co.jp



This brewery, internationally known for its award-winning, pure-rice, super-premium saké TAIHEIZAN- TENKÔ (太平山 天巧), is located north of Akita City in Katagami City. The founder and owner, the Kodama family, has been conducting its brewing business at the same site since 1879. Good rice, clean mountain water, and the ideal climate give TAIHEIZAN saké its unique quality. Recognized at international competitions, such as the prestigious London International Wine Challenge (IWC), TAIHEIZAN is available and enjoyed by consumers in 10 countries around the world.



The Kodama family first began its business in 1879 as a soy sauce and *miso* manufacturer for local consumers. Soy sauce and *miso* are traditionally basic, essential seasonings in Japanese cuisine. At that time, there was a

great potential for business to develop in Akita. Tomokichi, the eldest son of the founder of Kodama Brewery, was sent to the traditional soy sauce producing areas, Choshi and Noda, to learn brewing techniques.

As its soy sauce and *miso* business



developed, the Kodama family started making saké in 1913. The brand name TAIHEIZAN comes from the symbolic mountain of Akita City, Mt. Taihei (“Grand Mountain”), which has long been worshipped by the people of Akita. Soon after its debut, TAIHEIZAN became popular with local consumers.

Always searching for improvements and higher quality, the Kodama Brewery introduced Japan’s first chilled saké, TAIHEIZAN-REIRÔ (太平山 玲瓏), in 1933. REIRÔ became a big hit in Tokyo, and after taking first place at the 14th Annual National Sake Competition in 1934, TAIHEIZAN achieved national recognition and popularity.



The unique characteristic of TAIHEIZAN saké is its deep *umami* taste with a sharp finish. One of the secrets behind this brand is the creation of *moto* (yeast starter) before the main fermentation occurs. Kodama Brewery developed an original technique, known as the “Akita Kimoto Method,” which is an Akita version of the traditional pole-rammed *kimoto* method of creating *moto*.

The traditional *kimoto* method is very labor intensive and time consuming, and during the Meiji period (1868–1912), many breweries switched from the traditional yeast-starter creation method to a faster, simpler version of *kimoto*, called *sokujiimoto*. However, Kodama Brewery believed in the qualities of saké made by the traditional *kimoto* method and passed down its original Akita Kimoto Method to the next generations in the brewery.

The combination of tradition as well as the adoption of new technology and refined brewing techniques create the unique qualities of TAIHEIZAN saké. The brewery’s recent awards include appraisals from Japan’s Annual National Sake Competitions; Gold and Grand Gold Medals from Brussels’ Monde Selection International Competition (2000–2015, consecutively); the first-place Gold Trophy in 2009 and the Ginjô/Daiginjô Trophy in 2014 at London’s IWC; gold medals in Hawaii’s Joy of Sake annual competitions (2001–2013 consecutively); and the Gold Ginjo Award at the Toronto International Sake Challenge in 2014.



Words from the Representative:

Proud of our tradition and craftsmanship, we are always striving for higher quality in our products to provide the best to our customers. The highlights of our wide range of saké products are represented by handcrafted *junmai daiginjô* and *junmai ginjô*, made from local quality Akita Saké Komachi rice, and the popular *junmai* brewed using our Akita Kimoto Method. Seasonal saké products are also available in limited numbers. I hope you will enjoy them and appreciate every beautiful season of Akita.



TAKASHIMIZU (高清水)
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Akita Shurui Seizoh Co., Ltd. was established in 1944 when 12 breweries in and around Akita City were amalgamated. The main facilities of Akita Shurui Seizoh are located in Kawashiri, Akita City. The brewery uses the pure, high-quality spring water available at Kawashiri. Its source is said to belong to the same subsoil water vein used by Lord Satake for tea ceremonies during the Edo era.



At Kawashiri, the company has two *kura* buildings called Senshû *kura* and Sennin *kura*

as well as storage, bottling, and product warehouses. The entire production process, from preparation to shipment, is carried out in-house. The Senshû *kura* was established in 1978, and is a well-designed, modern six-story building, making it beneficial for the traditional saké brewing process. The brewing process begins on the top floor, and each subsequent step in the process is carried out on the floor below, creating an efficient progression. In 2005, one of existing buildings in the company's main prem-

ises at Kawashiri was renovated and turned into a *Saké Dôjô Sennin kura* (Saké Brewing Training Center), where traditional brewing techniques are practiced. The brewers fervently practice traditional saké brewing in order to create and perfect a tradition for the generations to come.

In 1990, a rice milling plant was built in the town of Goshono, and in 1998, the *Goshono kura* was established,



thus continuing the heritage of handcrafted saké. While the brewery uses these traditional techniques, it also uses advanced temperature control equipment, and only a limited number of the best young workers are employed at this *kura*. Here, they adapt to the needs of saké lovers by maintaining a relatively small-scale production process, guaranteeing the quality of each batch of saké.

At the Annual National Saké Awards in 2015, both the main *kura* and the *Goshono kura* received gold prizes. In addition, TAKASHIMIZU received gold prizes for 16 consecutive years.



The brewery's main products include:

TAKASHIMIZU JÔSEN, which is made with an abundance of *kôji*, giving it an elegant taste, a rich scent, and a smooth finish.

TAKASHIMIZU JUNMAI DAIGINJÔ, which is made in the Akita style using Akita Saké-Komachi rice milled down to 45% of the original grain size. It has a graceful aroma and lovely flavor that gently stimulates the senses.

Words from the Representative:

During the saké-brewing process, *kôji* plays an exceptionally important role. The amount of *kôji* used greatly influences the quality of the saké. If a large amount of *kôji* is used, a deep flavor is achieved. Despite the importance of *kôji*, many breweries are reluctant to increase the amount used due to the cost, time, and labor involved. While high-quality saké is made of more than 15% *kôji*, there is no standard for the amount used in normal

saké. All Takashimizu saké is made of more than 23% *kôji*. By taking the extra time and effort and using an ample amount of *kôji*, we attempt to satisfy saké lovers. We do not take any shortcuts in the brewing process, and we earnestly aim to create the highest-quality saké.



TENJU (天寿)

by Tenju Shuzo Co., Ltd.

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More than 140 years ago, the second-generation head of the family, Eikichi Ôi, established the saké brewery in 1874 at the foot of Mt. Chôkai. Each subsequent head has inherited the name Eikichi. The brewery has continued doing business in this area, skillfully using the natural climate and pure water. The saké rice has been

studied and developed for many generations. Moreover, the traditional techniques used by the brewers and the history of the saké have been preserved since its establishment. Presently, the seventh-generation head (and president) is continuing this long-honored tradition.

The name of the saké brand TENJU means “life for 100 years,” which was rare in the old days. While it embodies the will to live a full and happy life of 100 years, the characters in the name are more than 2000 years old. They were taken from the Kongo Sutra carved into a cliff located on Mt. Taishan in Shandong Province, China. The desire for those drinking TENJU saké to live a full life is embodied in the characters, which were thus chosen

for the name.

The Tenju brewery is located in a small town called Yashima within Yurihonjô City. It is located at the final stop of the Chôkai Sanroku



line, which is 40 minutes from the Ugohonjô station. Akita is well known for its high-quality rice, and Yashima Town produces some of the finest rice in Akita.

The foundation of Yashima Town dates back to the Heian period (794–1185 C.E.) where it was established by practitioners of Shugendô. Historically, two families, the Ôi and Nei, were the largest, most powerful families in the area. In 1640, there was an internal conflict within the Ikoma family, which ruled Takamatsu Domain in Sanuki Province (present-day Kagawa Prefecture) and produced an annual revenue of 170,000 *koku* (volume of rice). The Ikoma family escaped abolition, but it was relegated to Yashima to produce an annual revenue of only 10,000 *koku*. Due to this history, there is a taste of Kagawa in local festivals and events.



The Tenju brewery is surrounded by Mt. Chôkai and the Dewa Mountains, where it snows a significant amount. This location is well suited for the Akita-style, low-temperature, long-term fermentation process. The extremely soft water used in the fermentation process comes from the subsoil water

beneath Mt. Chôkai. The rice used has been cultivated by contracted farmers. For generations, the mellow, distinguished taste has captivated the taste buds of people in Akita. The unique flavor of TENJU is achieved thanks to the region's natural environment, water, and rice. The mission of the Tenju brewery is to produce the best saké possible at Yashima.

Yôsuke Ichinoseki is currently the youngest *Tôji* (Head Brewer) in Akita. He graduated from the Tokyo Agricultural College where he majored in saké brewing. After graduation, he started working with the president and improved the brewing process by finding ways to make each step consistent. He is also challenging the traditional method of using yeast made from rice, and he is investigating the use of artificial yeast made from flowers.

Rice for Tenju brewery is supplied by 15 farmers who belong to the Tenju Sake Rice Study Group. The group was established in 1983 under the leadership of the sixth-generation head of the brewery. The group holds study meetings and cultivates "Akita Saké Komachi" rice and "Miyamanishiki" saké rice on 22 hectares. All the rice used for TENJU is locally produced by the Tenju Sake Rice Study Group, except for a small portion of "Yamadanishiki rice" from Hyogo Prefecture.



When discussing the quality of TENJU, one person should never be overlooked. Masatsune Hanaoka developed the low-temperature, long-term fermentation method that

became the Akita standard. The quality of TENJU had significantly improved under the guidance of Mr. Hanaoka. He guided saké brewers for 10 years until he passed away in February 1953. However, his knowledge has been passed on, and it continues to guide the brewers on a daily basis. The brewery's signboard includes calligraphy created by Mr. Hanaoka himself, which continues to remind the brewers of his great teaching.

In the 2014 International Saké Challenge (ISC), the brewery's staple saké, *daiginjô* TENJU, received a trophy, and the other types of TENJU received gold, silver, and bronze awards in various categories. Furthermore, in the Slow Food Japan Kanzake Contest, the *honjôzô* TENJU was awarded the gold prize. Whether the competition is international or within Japan, TENJU is profoundly admired.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

We hope our customers live long, healthy lives. Due to our passion for using high-quality rice, water, and techniques, we are constantly striving to improve and produce the best saké in Akita.



YACHIYO (八千代)
by Yachiyo Shuzo and Co.

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The precise details are unknown because resources describing



those days have been lost, but it is said that Kenzô Gotô ran a pawnshop on Ichiba Street in Rokugô Town before moving to Hondochô around 1915 to establish Yachiyo Brewery. That year was celebrated with Emperor Taisho's enthronement. With hopes for the nation's prosperity and the brewery's success, its name, which is also its saké brand name, was derived from the lyrics of the national anthem:

tional anthem:

Kimigayo-wa chiyo-ni yachiyo-ni

“A thousand years or 8000 years of life be thine.”

The government policy during the war forced Yachiyo Brewery to suspend its saké production, after which it began making wine. However, it resumed saké brewing in 1948.

For many years, the bottles produced by Yachiyo Brewery were only sold locally. Sôichirô Gotô, the second-generation head of

the brewery, started developing sales outside Akita Prefecture. A friend of Sôichirô who was working for a newspaper told him there was a popular sushi restaurant group named “Yachiyo Sushi” in Tokyo. He suggested that saké bottles of “Yachiyo” should be served there. After the proposal was rejected by the Sushi restaurant group, Soichiro tested many different brands of sakés with the name of “Yachiyo” throughout Japan and convinced sushi chefs that YACHIYO of Akita was best suited for the sushi they served.



The actual sales of bottles of YACHIYO at Yachiyo Sushi only started in 1982 after the death of Soichiro. However, the sales increased to almost 36,000 liters at its peak, and it continues to be popular to this day.

Rokugô is famous for the Rokugô Water Springs. Each spring has a name, such as “Niteko Shimizu” (“Niteko” is an Ainu word meaning “forest water,” while “Shimizu” is a Japanese word for “water spring”), which is well known for once being



served to Emperor Meiji while he visited Akita. Another well-known spring is “Odaidokoro Shimizu” (“water spring for cooking”), which was used for cooking when the Lord of Satake visited the area to hunt with eagles (falconry). Because of those water springs, Yachiyo Brewery has no difficulty finding good water for brewing. Excellent techniques, superb local water, and excellent local rice were passed down from Tsurumatsu Nakano, who served the brewery as *Tôji* (Head Brewer) for more than 30 years, to Kazuo Saitô, the incumbent *Tôji*.

The brewery’s main products include:

YACHIYO JÔSEN CHÔKARAKUCHI

Ginjôshu TÔJI TSURUMATSU

Junmaishu YACHIYO

YACHIYO JÔSEN CHÔKARAKUCHI (“Special Selection—Extra Dry”) has a saké meter value of 15 plus, i.e., it is one of the driest sakés in Japan. It was at the request of Yachiyo Sushi that Yachiyo Brewery created this new type of saké. In general, dry saké tends to have too much alcohol, and the easiest solution is to add water. However, Kazuo Saito, the Head Brewer, invented this *honjôzôshu*, which is extra dry without having added water and a diluted taste.



Ginjôshu TÔJI TSURUMATSU is brewed in honor of Tsurumatsu Nakano, and it prioritizes taste over fragrance. Its light, dry taste matches any dish.

Junmaishu YACHIYO has a saké meter value of 4 plus,

which allows one to taste the combination of its characteristics. It is brewed by avoiding the use of young *kôji* and limiting the addition of water during the fermentation process.

Words from the *Tôji* (Head Brewer):

There is no manual for producing saké. I sometimes think that if we did not worry about quality, it would be easy to make saké. However, I cannot avoid difficulties every year because I have a strong desire to brew saké as I believe it should be brewed. I brew saké using the best of my skills and concentration. However, I have never seen saké brewed exactly as I had expected. Brewing is beyond human skills and wisdom. This is also the joy of this work. My hope is to brew saké with a taste that can be shared by young and old generations.



YAMABUKI (山吹)

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French website at <http://kinmon-kosyu.jp/franch/index.html>

Spanish website at <http://kinmon-kosyu.jp/spanish/index.html>

Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery Co., Ltd. was established in 1973 through the joint investment of a brewing company and distributors in Akita. However, the original roots of this company date back to 1936, when Akita Fuji Brewery started its business. The AKITA-FUJI brand has been brewed continuously every day since then. The name comes from Mt. Chôkai, which stands at the border between Akita and Yamagata Prefectures. The people of Akita affectionately call Mt. Chôkai "Akita Fuji" ("Fuji" is taken from the famous Mt. Fuji because the two mountains resemble one another). Akita Fuji resides deep in the hearts and souls of many people who live in or come from this prefecture. It has watered the well-known rice fields of Akita and has been the object of worship since ancient times. The Meiji era began in Japan in the late 19th century, and Hokkaido became the center



of cultivation for pioneers seeking to start a new life. Many people from Akita also left their hometowns and crossed the rough waves of





the Tsugaru Strait between the Japanese mainland and Hokkaido. The 1950s were recovery years for Japan after World War II, and the 1960s saw high economic growth. During these two important periods, many inhabitants of Akita migrated to Hokkaido to work in the coal mines. Living in an unfamiliar land, the brand name AKITA-FUJI brought many people a piece of home. Therefore, AKITA-FUJI was extremely popular among migrant

workers in Hokkaido. Today, based on past traditions, the company has a mission to broaden the idea and deepen the connection between the world of food and saké. It aims to do so by matching the brewery's aged saké with food from Hokkaido.

Jukusei-koshu (long-term aged saké) is Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery's key commodity. Across the globe, there are as many different alcoholic drinks as there are stars in the sky. However, the current president believes that *umami* makes Japanese saké distinctive from all other drinks. The story began almost 30 years ago, when he discovered a *koshu* that, with one sip, "shook his world." It led him to question his most fundamental views, which he believed were common sense. The scent and color were unimaginable compared to those of regular refined saké. However, he



thought it was most definitely delicious. From there, the president began his research and revealed its hidden past. *Jukusei-koshu* was considered the finest saké, but its long history came to an end due to the liquor tax law enacted by the Meiji government during the late 19th century. Eventually, a project was initiated in Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery to revive this forgotten line of *jukusei-koshu*.

One difficulty the brewery faced was dealing with the negative impact of *hiochi*. For saké that has been matured for a long period, a *hiochi* occurs, with the *hiochi* lactobacteria growing rapidly in saké. This transforms the crystal-clear liquid into a dull white color and gives it a strong acidic taste, thus completely changing its aroma. The method used to avoid this phenomenon was inspired by the way in which champagne is made. Originally, the company tried to adopt the *junmai* brewing method and to produce unprocessed saké with a lower alcohol percentage. Instead, the brewers decided to add a small quantity of alcohol, which successfully controlled the bacteria. This is similar to the way in which liquor is added to champagne in the final processing stage. Finally, Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery reached its ideal *jukusei-koshu*, which had something close to perfect maturity. Over the years, the added alcohol ages and gives the saké a pleasant taste. Moreover, the company revised its tank-storing



techniques by implementing a new method that takes better advantage of Akita's climate. Through such improvements, the brewery has been continuously refining its maturing knowledge. After decades of

trials and errors, in 2007, the day finally arrived when a saké beyond any saké ever produced was born. The company named it YAMABUKI, and it has a beautiful golden color that shines like amber.

The Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery is represented by the *jukusei-koshu* YAMABUKI series. In 2009, the name YAMABUKI first appeared in the annual International Wine Challenge, one of the largest wine competitions in the world. The 1999 YAMABUKI received the top award in the saké department with its first entry. Since then, for seven straight years, entries from the YAMABUKI series have brought back trophies. The brewery has kept challenging the status quo and ideas that people accept as common sense. What is the essence of *umami*? The brewery continues to examine the essence of saké in attempts to find in-depth answers into the world of saké brewing. This philosophical approach to saké has brought the brewery its current success. Today, Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery brews high-quality saké that can compete at the international level. It is the brewery's pride and joy to be able to produce such world-class saké.



YUKI-NO-BIJIN (ゆきの美人)

BY AKITA JOZO CO., LTD.

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Ever since its establishment in 1919, Akita Jozo Co., Ltd. has stood on the right bank of the Asahi-kawa River, a tributary of the Omono River, which flows through Akita City. Therefore, the original brand was named HANA ASAHI-KAWA ("Hana" means "flower"). However, during World War II, the Industrial Reform Act of 1942 suspended saké brewing, and it was not until 1947 that the com-

pany restarted its production. The newly revived saké was re-named ASAHI-KAWA, and around the same time, the brewery gave birth to a new brand, KANTO.

The Tohoku Region is famous for its three major festivals, one of which is the Kanto Festival. During this annual festival, celebrated in Akita City around the beginning of August, the main street is filled with 5- to 12-meter tall bamboo poles with 24 to 46 lanterns hanging from them; these poles are carried by performers. The brewery is located near the Kanto Main Street, and the saké brand is named after this festival. During the festival, many paper lanterns on the bamboo poles are lit to represent

komedawara (cylindrical, straw rice bags), and the way in which they wave in the night sky resembles ears of rice. It is said that the origin of this festival was a ceremony practiced by the people to pray for a good harvest. Akita, the “nation of rice,” is symbolized by Kanto where males compete to demonstrate their exquisite skills.



The company has been unique from the beginning because it was established as a joint stock cooperation at a time when family businesses were common. Many of the founding partners were unfamiliar with the saké-brewing industry, including the first president of the company. When the business faced difficulties, the president of Aramasa Brewery and the legendary leader of Akita's brewing industry, Masatsune

Hanaoka, intervened to introduce Kôichi Kobayashi, who worked at Ishida Brewery in Ôdate City. Kobayashi was an excellent brewer who used to serve as the *Tôji* (Head Brewer) at Aramasa Brewery. With his techniques, he re-established the brewery and became president after the war. Kôichi Kobayashi laid the foundation for the brewery as it stands today.

Akita was once famous for its high-quality saké production, which only used rice. However, after World War II, Akita's saké breweries produced mostly second-class saké, to which alcohol and sugar were added. In an attempt to break away from this practice, Akita Jozo Co., Ltd. decided to change its fundamental policies in 2000. A new brewery was built to once again pursue the original notion of saké brewing, i.e., “fermentation of rice and *kôji*.” From the moment when the construction was com-

pleted, all the saké was prepared using small-capacity tanks dedicated to *daiginjô* (labor-intensive saké brewed with 50% processed rice, with usually a small quantity of distilled alcohol added). The new facilities allowed the company to brew and preserve saké under a low temperature throughout the year (a method that usually gives the saké a milder taste). The use of all additives, such as distilled alcohol, sugar, and acidulants, has been abolished. Instead, the company currently brews only *junmaishu* (saké made purely out of rice). *Junmaishu* is made using the traditional saké-brewing methods cultivated in Akita. Akita Jozo Company also emphasize the fact that its products are brewed by hand. The rice is manually washed 10kg at a time using bamboo draining baskets. In addition, *kôji* is made 2kg at a time using a traditional tool called a *kôji-buta*. The water is drawn from a natural spring located an hour away by car.

The rice used for the saké is also special. The brewery uses rice that is particularly suitable for brewing; it is primarily ordered from Akita, but some comes from Hyogo and Okayama Prefectures. The Akita style of low-temperature, long-period fermentation, established by Masatsune Hanaoka, has been revived. It requires a low temperature and extensive time for preparation. After the primary brewing below 6°C, *moromi* is slowly fermented at around 10°C, and the entire fermentation process takes more than 30 days. After the filtering process, the saké is preserved in 1.8-liter bottles at low temperatures. By doing so, the saké can be shipped in its fresh



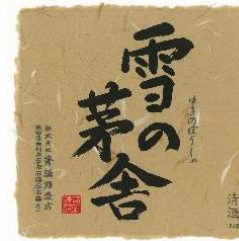
condition.

With one sip, a light, yet pleasant taste spreads in harmony with a delicately clear tart flavor. Akita Jozo Company aims to brew such saké so the consumers can enjoy its deliciousness from the first taste. *Junmai ginjô* YUKI-NO-BIJIN (“Snow Beauty”), in particular, has a sweet but refreshing tart touch with little *zatsumi* (a slight flavor that inevitably appears in the saké-brewing process and disturbs the balance of the entire taste). This all-around saké suits many types of Japanese dishes, such as *oden* (Japanese stew with various meat and vegetables made with a thin soy sauce-base soup, usually served during winter), *nabé* (Japanese hot pot, also served mainly in winter), and other seasonal dishes.



Words from the Representative:

Our motto is “Saké is the best companion for Japanese dishes.” We believe Japanese cuisine, especially its seafood dishes, is best suited for saké, and no other alcoholic beverages can compete. How can we make saké that can further promote the deliciousness of Japanese dishes? This question most likely holds the key to our future saké development. Our company will continue to brew saké with a touch of clear sweetness and tartness.



YUKI-NO-BÔSHA (雪の茅舎)

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Yatarô Saitô established this brewery in 1902. The residence, store, warehouse, and 11 buildings (all registered national cultural properties) stand as they did more than 100 years ago. The structure of the store is built in a traditional manner, but it also has large, decorated eaves and a second floor with a unique design influenced by Western architecture. Located on the back side of the premises are three large warehouses made of clay. Together with the front gate and book storage building, which also has historical importance, they illustrate how the local industry developed at the turn of the 20th century.



During the Edo era, the Ishiwaki area of Yurihonjô City was the distribution hub of the Kameda Domain. Rice and lumber from Akita were distributed to Osaka from the Ishiwaki port. In order for the goods to reach the port, the Koyoshi River was used.

Even today, the area includes many shops that sell specialty goods from Yurihonjō City, and a hint of the long history can still

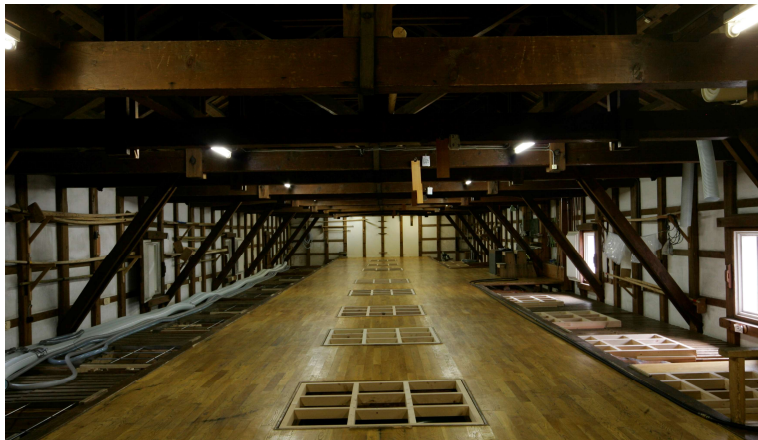


be felt in the atmosphere of the town.

In years when there is a significant amount of snow, there is an abundant harvest because that abundance of snow means an abundance of snowmelt the following

year. The Saiya Company cultivates and takes great pride in their own saké rice, “Akita Saké Komachi.” The excellent quality of the rice allows the company to create superior saké. According to the Head Brewer, if there is less protein and more water in the rice, better-quality saké will be produced.

All the steps in the production process, from cleaning the rice to shipping the saké, are performed in-house. The yeast used is



also homegrown, and it has been researched and developed for more than 25 years. This homemade yeast gives the saké a unique flavor, fragrant aroma, and consistent quality. So different yeasts are not mixed, the utmost care is given to providing sanitary control of the unrefined saké. Furthermore, the thick, natural cedar walls of the fermentation room help control the humidity, thus creating an ideal environment. In this environment, the Sannai *Tōji* (brewing expert from Sannai Town) of the brewery implements a natural brewing method in which he does not mix, add water, or filter. The original yeast invented at the brewery does not require stirring and the yeast is left to naturally ferment. Normally the bagged saké is pressed and filtered along with added water. However, Saiya Brewery uses a process in which these practices are not necessary, and the mellow aroma and flavor of the saké are allowed to remain in their natural states.



The pride of the Saiya Brewery is *junmai daiginjō* CHÔSETSU (“Listening to Snow”), which aims to be the best of all the *junmai daiginjō*. The Yamadanishiki rice that is used is milled until only 35% of the core remains. The aroma brings to mind the scent of ripe fruits, and the light, full-bodied taste makes it easy to enjoy. The soul and confidence of the Saiya Brewery can be found in each bottle of this saké. *Daiginjō* KACHÔ-GESSEKI (“Flowers in the Morning and the Moon in the Evening”) is also an extraordinary

daiginjō. It also uses the Yamadanishiki rice milled to 35%, and it undergoes low-temperature, long-term brewing. The harmony of the taste and flavor elevates the senses and allows a state of bliss to be reached with each sip.

The staple series saké of the Saiya

Brewery is YUKI-NO-BÔSHA (“Thatched House in Snow”). The name of this saké was chosen after a suggestion by a writer from Tokyo to use this expression to describe Akita in winter, with its characteristic landscape of farmhouses enveloped in white, glistening snow.

Words from the Representative:

In order for our customers to be completely satisfied, we are always striving to create high-quality saké that they cannot help but drink more after the first sip. When you want delicious saké that leaves a lasting impression, our saké never disappoints.



Post-scriptum

(Translated from *Bishu Ôkoku Akita*, with minor revisions)

In the fall of 2013, Mr. Mitsuaki Homma, a researcher at the Center for East Asia Studies (now the Institute for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration), proposed publishing an English guidebook to Akita's saké. At the time, he was on secondment from Akita Bank, but he is currently working for the bank as well as serving as an affiliated researcher at the IASRC. He stated, “Let's make a gorgeous English guidebook of all of Akita's saké breweries in the image of a winery guidebook.” After some reflection, we decided to start with a Japanese version because without good contents in Japanese, we cannot expect to have a good book in English. In the early spring of 2014, Mr. Homma and I visited Mr. Shinichiro Kodama, Chair of the Akita Saké Brewers Association, and proposed the guidebooks (in Japanese and English) to present the history and culture of Akita's breweries to readers inside and outside Japan. An additional purpose was to contribute to the enhancement of Akita's brand image both domestically and overseas. To our utmost pleasure, the proposal was accepted, and an editorial committee for *Bishu Ôkoku Akita* (“Kingdom of Transcendent Saké”) was established. Now, the Japanese version is out of press.

Through the stories provided by the breweries and through my visits there, I was deeply impressed by the richness and diversity of Akita's brewing culture. Some of the breweries date back to the Middle Ages, even to the 15th century, whereas some were set up after the war. Each brewery utilizes the benefits of Akita's rice and water and its rich nature, to which they add human wisdom and new brewing techniques. In addition, each brewery

continues to make progress by passing down their saké brewing techniques from generation to generation.

I would like to express gratitude from the bottom of my heart to the following people who kindly helped make this happen: the 35 breweries who kindly offered texts and photos of their stories; Mr. Shinichiro Kodama, the Chair of the Akita Saké Brewers Association, who gave us unstinted cooperation and encouragement; the members of the *Bishu Ôkoku Akita* Editorial Committee; the members of the Food Sales Promotion Division of Akita Prefecture, who provided necessary data; photographer Ms. Nozomi Takahasi, who took excellent photos of the breweries; our colleagues at Akita International University; and Mr. Hajime Abe, alias “Ambaikô,” the Director of Mumyôsha Press Co., Ltd., for whom I cannot find the right words to fully describe our gratitude for teaching us how to create this book.

If wine is a bottled poem, saké is a bottled *haiku*. It is at the heart of national and regional cultures. With this book as my guide, I can re-explore the culture and history of this beloved country known as the “Kingdom of Transcendent Saké.”

Yutaka Takemura
Institute for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration
Akita International University



Saké Brands and Breweries in Akita

AKITA-HOMARE ⑬	Akita Homare Shuzo Co., Ltd.
AMANOTO ⑩	Asamai Shuzo Co., Ltd.
ARAMASA ⑨	Aramasa Brewing Co., Ltd.
AZAKURA ⑳	Azakura Brewing Co., Ltd.
CHITOSE-ZAKARI ①	Kazuno Meishu Brewing Co., Ltd.
CHIYOMIDORI ⑳	Okuda Brewing Co., Ltd.
DAINAGAWA ⑩	Bizen Shuzo Honten
DEWA-NO-FUJI ⑰	Sato Brewing Co., Ltd.
DEWATSURU ⑱	Dewatsuru Brewing Co., Ltd.
FUKUKOMACHI ㉓	Kimura Brewery Co., Ltd.
FUYUKI ㉑	Fukunotomo Shuzo Co., Ltd.
GENRIN ⑪	Naba Shouten Co., Ltd.
HARUKASUMI ㉒	Kuribayashi Brewing and Co.
HIDEYOSHI ㉔	Suzuki Brewing and Co.
HIRAIZUMI ⑰	Hiraizumi Hompo Co., Ltd.
HOKUSHIKA ②	Hokushika Brewing Co., Ltd.
IPPAKU-SUISEI ⑥	Fukurokuju Brewing Co., Ltd.
ITTEKI-SENRYO ㉒	Akitaken Hakko Kogyo Co., Ltd.
KARIHO ⑳	Kariho Brewing Co., Ltd.
MANSAKUNO HANA ㉔	Hinomaru Brewing Co., Ltd.
Noshiro ③	Kikusui Brewing Limited Partnership
Okushimizu ㉒	Takahashi Syuzo-ten Co., Ltd.
Raku-Izumi ④	Nishimura Brewing & Co.
Ranman ㉔	Akita Meijyo Co., Ltd.
Ryozeki ㉓	Ryozeki Shuzo Co., Ltd.
Shirataki ⑤	Yamamoto General Partnership Co.
Suirakuten ⑧	Akita Shuzo Co., Ltd.
Tabito ㉑	Maizuru Brewing Co., Ltd.
Taiheizan ⑦	Kodama Brewing Co., Ltd.
Takashimizu ⑫	Akita Shurui Seizoh Co., Ltd.
Tenju ⑰	Tenju Shuzo Co., Ltd.
Yachiyo ㉔	Yachiyo Shuzo and Co.
Yamabuki ⑱	Kinmon Akita Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.
Yuki-no-Bijin ⑩	Akita Jozo Co., Ltd.
Yuki-no-Bosha ⑭	Saiya Brewing Co., Ltd.



Saké Labels of 35 Breweries in Akita

The representative saké labels of the 35 breweries from North to South are placed from left to right and from top to bottom.

