

Appendix 3

Hiroshima Regional Taxation Bureau Sake Awards 2025

Judging Report

The following is a report on the situation regarding entries and judging results for the Hiroshima Regional Taxation Bureau Sake Awards 2025.

The Sake Awards competition was held in three categories: “**Ginjo-shu**,” “**Jummai-shu**,” (classified according to the brewing method as specified in the Sake Brewing Quality Labeling Standard), and “**Kanzake**”(or warmed sake, evaluated at a higher temperature).

In 2025, a total of 198 entries were received from 73 breweries, with 69 in the **Ginjo-shu** category, 68 in the **Jummai-shu** category, and 61 in the **Kanzake** category.

Quality evaluations of the entries were performed by 27 judges with detailed knowledge of sake brewing and excellent sensory evaluation skills, including staff from the public testing and research institute in each prefecture in the Chugoku region,, National Research Institute of Brewing, and sake producers and retailers, as well as officers from the Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology, Hiroshima Taxation Bureau. Careful and strict evaluations took place over a total of three days—September 2 and 3 (Preliminary Round) and September 5 (Final Round).

As a common approach across all categories, entries were evaluated based on the principle of the selection of sake of excellent quality that reflects a high level of brewing technique and storage management.

In the **Ginjo-shu** category, the evaluation focused on the harmony of aroma and taste, with an emphasis on the aroma represented by the **Ginjo** aroma. Quality evaluation was conducted by classifying the entries according to whether or not alcohol was added.

In the **Jummai-shu** category, the evaluation focused on the harmony of aroma and taste with an emphasis on the taste that is distinctive of **Jummai-shu**. Quality evaluation was conducted by grouping entries with similar polishing ratios together.

In the “**Kanzake**” category, the evaluation focused on the harmony of aroma and taste when the sake was heated. Quality evaluation was conducted by grouping together entries having similar values obtained by dividing the extract content by the acidity.

After careful evaluation, a total of 77 entries—28 in the **Ginjo-shu** category, 27 in the **Jummai-shu** category, and 22 in the **Kanzake** category—were deemed worthy of the Excellence Prize.

In the **Ginjo-shu** category, although last summer's high temperatures reportedly made the rice harder and more difficult to dissolve, the brewers' ingenuity and adjustments produced sakes with fine aroma and taste. Many featured aromas reminiscent of apple and banana, while others carried notes of grape and other fruits. Overall, the sakes were smooth with well-balanced aromas and taste.

The **Jummai-shu** category featured both long aged sakes and those brewed with a Kimoto-style starter culture using a wide range of rice varieties. The entries were diverse, ranging from sakes with rich acidity and umami, those with a gorgeous aroma and smooth mouthfeel, others with a sharp, clean finish, and still others with a caramel-like sweet aroma and smooth, full-bodied taste from aging. All had distinctive and appealing tastes.

In the **Kanzake** category, as in the **Jummai-shu** category, the entries included long aged sakes, those brewed with a Kimoto-style starter culture, and several non-special-designation sakes. The entries covered a wide range, including sakes with pronounced acidity and sweetness, as well as those with a light, clean taste. In all entries, heating the sake brought the aroma forward, softened the mouthfeel, enhanced umami, and revealed the depth of taste unique to **Kanzake**.

In all categories, the producers' sophisticated brewing techniques, meticulous storage practices, and creative approaches yielded many exceptional quality sakes with well-balanced aroma and taste.

I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations and respect for the efforts of all the breweries that won the Excellence Prize among the many high quality sake entries.

Also, I hope that the breweries that missed out on the prize by a narrow margin this time will work to further improve their techniques based on the results of this competition and use the valuable experience gained from the competition in sake production from this year onwards.

The Sake Awards competition is held with the aim of promoting the advancement and development of sake brewing techniques, and improving the quality of sake produced in the Chugoku region, thereby contributing to the sound development of the sake industry.

We will continue to strive to achieve the objectives of the Awards, taking into consideration the opinions of breweries and others. We ask for your kind understanding and cooperation.

The sake brewing season will soon be in full swing. We hope that all breweries and related parties will continue to improve their production techniques, provide consumers with high quality and unique products, and that the reputation of traditional sake from the Chugoku region will continue to grow.

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