Tohoku Sake Awards 2026

November 10, 2026

Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology

Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau

1. Outline

(1) Purpose

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

(2) Review of 2026

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

This year, 145 sake breweries in the Tohoku region's six prefectures entered 115 samples from 103 breweries in the *ginjo-shu* category, and 152 samples from 125 breweries for the *junmai-shu* category.

It was difficult to dissolve rice this year due to the impact of last year's intense heat. However, master brewers and brewery workers skillfully applied their brewing techniques to address the situation effectively, with each brewery showcasing its unique character and delivering sake with outstanding flavor and aroma. The submitted sakes had matured and gained depth. The *ginjo-shu* category showcased sakes with gorgeous fruity aromas and a smooth, fresh taste. The *junmai-shu* category featured sakes with an even-keeled aroma and a well-balanced taste of refined acidity and richness.

Including this year, all sakes entered in the Sake Awards are of a very high quality, signifying that Tohoku's breweries are not content with the status quo and are continuing to step up to new heights. While the environment surrounding sake breweries in Tohoku faces various challenges, from natural disasters like the Great East Japan Earthquake and torrential rains to global warming and international geopolitical conditions, the current surge in the price of rice for sake brewing has been an unprecedented challenge for Tohoku's sake breweries. However, we are confident that breweries in the Tohoku region, with their outstanding technical expertise and commitment to quality, will overcome any difficulties that may arise.

We hope that people who enjoy sake from Tohoku and support the breweries will spread not only

throughout Japan but across the world.

2. Entry

(1) Qualification for entry

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

(2) Eligible *sakes*

Sake from the below-mentioned categories that were produced from the entrant's own production site located within the jurisdiction of the Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau during the brewing year of 2025.

(3) Categories

a *Ginjo-shu* category

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

b *Junmai-shu* category

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

(4) Number of entries permitted

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

3. Quality Examinations

(1) Schedule

- Preliminary examination: Tuesday, September 29 – Wednesday, September 30, 2026
- Final examination: Friday, October 2, 2026

(2) Process

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

(3) Evaluation policy

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

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

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

(4) Quality evaluation jurors

Jurors were selected from a pool of experts, including:

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

List of Jurors 2026

Name	Affiliations	Participating Examinations
SAITO TOMOAKI	AOMORI PREFECTURE SAKE BREWERS ASSOCIATION	GP, JP
OGURA AKIRA	AOMORI PREFECTURAL INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH CENTER, HIROSAKI INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE	GF, JF
SATO TAKUMI	HATOMASAMUNE CORPORATION	GP, JP
ADACHI KAORU	NISHIDASYUZOUTEN CO.	GF, JF
USUKHBAYAR NARANDULAM	IWATE INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE	GP, JP
HIRANO TAKAHIRO		GF, JF
IWAKIRI KEI	HAMACHIDORI CO., LTD.	GP, JP
OMOTO YUHKI	KIKUNOTSUKASA SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD.	GF, JF
HASHIMOTO KENYA	INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE, MIYAGI PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT	GP, JP
ITO KENJI	MIYAGI SAKE AND SHOCHU MAKERS ASSOCIATION	GF, JF
SATO YOSHIYUKI	HAGINOSHUZO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
HIRAI TAKAHIRO	HIRAKOUSHUZOU CO., LTD.	GF, JF
SATO TOMONORI	AKITA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND BREWING	GP, JP
OHNO TSUYOSHI		GF, JF
KODATE GEN	AKITA SHUZO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
SAITO KOTARO	SAIYA SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	GF, JF
KUDOH SHINPEI	YAMAGATA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	GP, JP
ISHIGAKI HIROYOSHI	YAMAGATA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SHONAI TESTING CENTER	GF, JF
JIN MASASHI	AZUMANOFUMOTO LIMITED COMPANY	GP, JP
WADA SHIGEKI	WADA SHUZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	GF, JF
SAITO TAKANORI	INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE FUKUSHIMA PREFECTUAL GOVERNMENT, AIZUWAKAMATSU TECHNICAL SUPPORT CENTRE	GP, JP
TAKAHASHI RYO		GF, JF
MATSUZAKI HIROYUKI	MATSUZAKISYUZO CO., LTD.	GP, JP
ARIGA YUJIRO	ARIGAJOZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	GF, JF

Name	Affiliations	Participating Examinations
JOHN GAUNTNER	SAKE WORLD, Inc.	GF, JF
KUMADA CARLIN	YUTAKA SHOPPING KK	GF, JF
KANAUCHI MAKOTO	MIYAGI UNIVERSITY	GF, JF
FUJII TSUTOMU	FUKUSHIMA UNIVERSITY	GF, JF
AKAO TAKESHI	NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF BREWING	GF, JF
MATSUMOTO KEN	OFFICE OF ANALYSIS AND BREWING TECHNOLOGY, SENDAI REGIONAL TAXATION BUREAU	GP, JP, GF, JF
YAMADA KEITA		GP, JP, GF, JF
SEKI TAKAHIRO		GP, JP, GF, JF

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

4. Awards

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

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

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

5. Brewing Techniques Workshop

(1) Date

This event is scheduled to be held on Thursday, November 12, 2026.

(2) Location

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

(3) Participants

Participants will be limited to sake brewers and technical guidance organization staff in the Tohoku area and jurors of the Tohoku Sake Awards 2026 who register in advance.

6. Statistics

(1) Number of Entries

Prefecture	*Ginjo-shu*	*Junmai-shu*	Total
Aomori	10 (10)	11 (10)	21 (11)
Iwate	7 (7)	24 (16)	31 (17)
Miyagi	17 (14)	25 (20)	42 (24)
Akita	20 (18)	26 (22)	46 (24)
Yamagata	31 (26)	30 (26)	61 (34)
Fukushima	30 (28)	36 (31)	66 (35)
Total	115 (103)	152 (125)	267 (145)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

(Previous Year)

Prefecture	*Ginjo-shu*	*Junmai-shu*	Total
Aomori	12 (11)	12 (11)	24 (13)
Iwate	8 (8)	23 (16)	31 (16)
Miyagi	19 (16)	21 (17)	40 (22)
Akita	22 (20)	26 (22)	48 (25)
Yamagata	27 (24)	27 (24)	54 (30)
Fukushima	32 (30)	32 (32)	64 (36)
Total	120 (109)	141 (122)	261 (142)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

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

Prefecture	*Ginjo-shu*	*Junmai-shu*	Total
Aomori	6 (6)	4 (4)	10 (7)
Iwate	3 (3)	7 (6)	10 (8)
Miyagi	2 (2)	6 (6)	8 (7)
Akita	8 (8)	10 (9)	18 (14)
Yamagata	11 (10)	7 (7)	18 (12)
Fukushima	8 (8)	12 (12)	20 (15)
Total	38 (37)	46 (44)	84 (63)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

(Previous Year)

Prefecture	*Ginjo-shu*	*Junmai-shu*	Total
Aomori	5 (5)	7 (6)	12 (10)
Iwate	3 (3)	9 (8)	12 (8)
Miyagi	6 (5)	5 (4)	11 (8)
Akita	5 (5)	4 (4)	9 (8)
Yamagata	9 (9)	10 (10)	19 (15)
Fukushima	12 (12)	9 (9)	21 (15)
Total	40 (39)	44 (41)	84 (64)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of breweries

7. Entrants awarded Grand Honor Prize and Special Honor Prize

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

(1) *Ginjo-shu* Category

a. Grand Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Akita	HOKUSHIKA CO., LTD.	1410001006136	HOKUSHIKA

Tasting notes by two foreign jurors

・JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)

Subtle strawberry and banana essence in the aroma. Somewhat light but exquisitely constructed sake flavors that are layered in beautiful complexity. Exquisite.

・KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)

Big aromas of ripe pineapple and starfruit lead to a livery fresh fruit juice palate and a refreshing finish.

Tasting notes by Japanese jurors

An overall, well-rounded maturity that is characteristic of autumn sake aged over the summer. Sweet, mellow aromas of honey and peaches, a rich full-bodied flavor, and a soft, lingering finish.

b. Special Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Miyagi	NAKAYU SAKE BREWERY, INC.	6370201002364	TENJOMUGEN

Tasting notes by two foreign jurors

・JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)

Red apple aromas open the show and crisp acidity lets more subtle and hidden fruity flavors become deliciously evident. A modern delicate sake that will satisfy anyone.

・KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)

Ripe passion fruit, pineapple and dragon fruit aromas invite you to a juicy palate with crisp acidity and white pepper finish.

Tasting notes by Japanese jurors

Gentle, fruity aromas like grapes and green apples. A light and refreshing flavor with a harmonious balance of sweetness, acidity, and bitterness.

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Akita	SUZUKI BREWING AND CO.	5410003002220	HIDEYOSHI

Tasting notes by two foreign jurors

・JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)

Gentle blossom aromas and a mellow sweetness define this engaging and very appealing sake. Slight herbal notes at the end provide structure to balance the light flavors.

・KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)

A nose of honeydew melon, fresh cream and white flowers leads to a silky honey palate and lingering finish.

Tasting notes by Japanese jurors

Fruity aromas of ripe apples and grapes. Pleasing umami from the exquisite balance of acidity and bitterness. A light, clear finish is impressive.

(2) *Junmai-shu* Category

a. Grand Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Fukushima	HIGASHINIHONSYUZO PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE	1380005003942	OKUNOMATSU

Tasting notes by two foreign jurors

・JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.)

Floral rose-driven but mellow aroma, but laced with melon rind. The flavors include pine notes and the weighty texture is supported by a clean minerality.

・KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK)

Aromas of green papaya, pineapple and lemon grass lead into a powder sugar palate with zesty acidity and juicy finish.

Tasting notes by Japanese jurors

Tender aromas reminiscent of pineapples, pears, apples, and white peaches. A nice balance of sweetness and acidity, and a smooth profile accented by mild astringency. A pleasant, lingering finish.

b. Special Honor Prize

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Iwate	AKABUSHUZOU CO., LTD.	5400001007445	AKABU
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
・JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.) *Ripe banana and a touch of grapefruit open to a very soft light presence on the palate. After that a gentle sweetness arrives balanced by a lively acidity.* ・KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK) *Nose of muscat grapes, lychee and unripe mango give way to a tropical palate with hints of banana and chestnuts.*			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
Fresh, invigorating aromas like apples and pears. A pleasant blend of elegant sweetness, clear acidity, and a touch of bitterness. A clean, crisp finish with lingering umami from the rice.			

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Miyagi	ICHINOKURA CORPORATION HONSHAKURA	4370201000031	ICHINOKURA SHOKO
Tasting notes by two foreign jurors			
・JOHN GAUNTNER (SAKE WORLD, Inc.) *The aromas are mostly banana but both green and ripe. The flavor is a combination of astringent and sweet, an extension of those aromas. Very approachable.* ・KUMADA CARLIN (YUTAKA SHOPPING KK) *Aromas of pineapple, pear and a hint of orange zest, a palate of tart apple and peach end in a zesty finish.*			
Tasting notes by Japanese jurors			
A vibrant yet fresh aroma of apples and melons with a faint nutty nuance. Moderate acidity and rich sweetness blend well together. A firm, lingering finish.			

8. List of Prizewinners

The "☆" symbols next the brewery names indicate Grand Honor Prize winners, and the "◎" symbols next the brewery names indicate Special Honor Prize winners.

(1) *Ginjo-shu* Category

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Aomori	NISHIDASYUZOUTEN CO.	9420001001673	DENSYU
Aomori	MATSUMIDORI BREWERY CO., LTD.	1420001009063	ROKKON
Aomori	ROKKA SHUZO CO., LTD.	3420001009607	TORAI
Aomori	HACHINOHESYURUI CORPORATION GONOHEKOUJYOU	8420001006418	JYOKU
Aomori	NAKAMURA KAMEKICHI CO., LTD.	1420001009988	TAMADARE
Aomori	MOMOKAWA BREWING INC.	6420001012244	MOMOKAWA
Iwate	AKABUSHUZOU CO., LTD.	5400001007445	AKABU
Iwate	TAKAHASHI RYOUJI		HORINOI
Iwate	HAMACHIDORI CO., LTD.	4400001007322	HAMACHIDORI
Miyagi	ICHINOKURA CORPORATION HONSHAKURA	4370201000031	ICHINOKURA
Miyagi	NAKAYU SAKE BREWERY, INC. ◎	6370201002364	TENJOMUGEN
Akita	AKITA SHURUI SEIZOH CO., LTD. HONSHAGURA	8410001000388	TAKASHIMIZU
Akita	AKITA SHURUI SEIZOH CO., LTD. GOSHONOGURA	8410001000388	TAKASHIMIZU
Akita	KODAMA BREWING CO., LTD.	6410001003426	TAIHEIZAN
Akita	HOKUSHIKA CO., LTD. ☆	1410001006136	HOKUSHIKA
Akita	SAIYA SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	6410001004787	YUKINOBOSHA KACHOGESSEKI
Akita	TENJU SHUZO CO., LTD.	3410001005235	TENJU
Akita	AKITAMEIJYO	5410001005431	RANMAN

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
	COMPANY LIMITED		
Akita	SUZUKI BREWING AND CO. ◎	5410003002220	HIDEYOSHI
Yamagata	AZUMANOFUMOTO LIMITED COMPANY	4390002014534	AZUMANOFUMOTO
Yamagata	YONETSURUSYUZO CORPORATION	8390001010456	YONETSURU
Yamagata	KAMENOI SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001007975	KUDOKIJOZU
Yamagata	KOIKAWA SHUZO CO., LTD.	1390001006816	KOIKAWA
Yamagata	EIKO FUJI SAKE BREWING COMPANY	8390001007782	EIKO FUJI
Yamagata	SAKATA SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001006226	JOKIGEN
Yamagata	SUGIISAMI WARABIOKA BREWERY LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	7390003000456	SUGIISAMI
Yamagata	FUMOTOI CO., LTD.	6390001006753	FUMOTOI
Yamagata	MATUYAMA SYUZO CORPORATION	8390001007254	MATUMINE NO FUJI
Yamagata	CHIYOKOTOBUKITORAYA CO., LTD.	3390001012218	CHIYOKOTOBUKI
Fukushima	AKEBONOSYUZOU CO., LTD.	5380003001861	KIZUNAMAI HOUSUI
Fukushima	SUEHIRO SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD. HAKASEGURA	2380001017549	GENSAI
Fukushima	TATSUIZUMISHUZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	9380003001775	KYONOHANA
Fukushima	NAGURAYAMA SHUZO CORPORATION	6380001017685	NAGURAYAMA
Fukushima	HANAHARUSHUZOU CO., LTD.	3380001026763	HANAHARU
Fukushima	ARIGAJOZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	5380003000698	JINYA
Fukushima	MATSUZAKISYUZO CO., LTD.	8380001029290	HIROTOGAWA
Fukushima	HIGASHINIHONSYUZO	1380005003942	OKUNOMATSU

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
	PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE		

JCN indicates Japan Corporate Number

(2) *Junmai-shu* Category

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Aomori	NISHIDASYUZOUTEN CO.	9420001001673	DENSYU
Aomori	MIURASHUZO CO., LTD.	4420001010349	HOUHAI
Aomori	ROKKA SHUZO CO., LTD.	3420001009607	TORAI
Aomori	MOMOKAWA BREWING INC.	6420001012244	MOMOKAWA
Iwate	AKABUSHUZOU CO., LTD. ◎	5400001007445	AKABU
Iwate	ASABIRAKI CO., LTD.	8400001000067	ASABIRAKI
Iwate	KIKUNOTSUKASA SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD.	3400001000476	KIKUNOTSUKASA
Iwate	WASHINOO CO., LTD.	8400001004101	WASHINOO
Iwate	SUISENSHUZO CORPORATION	7402701000297	SUISEN
Iwate	IWATEMEIJYO CO., LTD.	4400601000560	IWATEHOMARE
Miyagi	UCHIGASAKI BREWING CO.	3370003001278	HOYO
Miyagi	ICHINOKURA CORPORATION HONSHAKURA ◎	4370201000031	ICHINOKURA SHOKO
Miyagi	YAMAWA SYUZO CO., LTD.	2370201002401	YAMAWA
Miyagi	ICHINOKURA CORPORATION KINRYUKURA	4370201000031	ICHINOKURA KINRYUKURA
Miyagi	KANENOI SHUZOU CORPORATION	9370201003145	WATAYA
Miyagi	HAGINOSHUZO CO., LTD.	7370201003139	HAGINOTSURU
Akita	AKITA SHUZO CO., LTD.	2410001001020	SUIRAKUTEN
Akita	AKITA SHURUI SEIZOH CO., LTD. GOSHONOGURA	8410001000388	TAKASHIMIZU
Akita	AKITA JOZO CO., LTD.	6410001000373	YUKINOBIJIN
Akita	DAINAGAWA SAKE BREWERIES	1410001011251	DAINAGAWA
Akita	HINOMARUJOZO CO., LTD.	6410001009167	MANSAKUNOHANA
Akita	SAIYA SHUZOTEN CO., LTD.	6410001004787	YUKINOBOSHA CHOSETSU
Akita	AKITAKENHAKKOKOGYO CORPORATION	6410001005430	ITTEKISENRYO

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Akita	AKITAMEIJYO COMPANY LIMITED	5410001005431	RANMAN
Akita	DEWATSURUSYUZO CO., LTD.	6410001008202	DEWATSURU
Yamagata	YONETSURUSYUZO CORPORATION	8390001010456	YONETSURU
Yamagata	KAMENOI SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001007975	KUDOKIJOZU
Yamagata	EIKO FUJI SAKE BREWING COMPANY	8390001007782	EIKO FUJI
Yamagata	SAKATA SHUZO CO., LTD.	5390001006226	JOKIGEN
Yamagata	SUGIISAMI WARABIOKA BREWERY LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	7390003000456	SUGIISAMI
Yamagata	KOYASHUZO CORPORATION	9390001008714	HANAUYO
Yamagata	TAKAGI SHUZO CORPORATION	4390001009320	JUYONDAI
Fukushima	OTOKOYAMASHUZOUTEN, L.P.	6380003001761	AIZUOTOKOYAMA KAI
Fukushima	SUEHIRO SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD. HAKASEGURA	2380001017549	HAKASEGURA
Fukushima	TSURUNOE SYUZO CO., LTD.	7380001017619	AIZU CHUJO
Fukushima	NAGURAYAMA SHUZO CORPORATION	6380001017685	NAGURAYAMA
Fukushima	HANAHARUSHUZOU CO., LTD.	3380001026763	HANAHARU
Fukushima	ARIGAJOZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	5380003000698	KISSUI HIDARIUMA
Fukushima	SENKOMA SYUZO CORPORATION	4380001010279	SENKOMA
Fukushima	TOYOKUNI SHUZO LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	3380003000799	IBUKI
Fukushima	HOMARE SAKE BREWERY CO., LTD.	3380001018703	AIZU HOMARE
Fukushima	HIGASHINIHONSYUZO PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE ☆	1380005003942	OKUNOMATSU

Prefecture	Brewery	JCN	Brand
Fukushima	HIMONOYA SYUZOTEN CO., LTD.	1380001009456	SENKONARI
Fukushima	KOKKEN SHUZO CORPORATION	5380001019146	KOKKEN

JCN indicates Japan Corporate Number