

Outline of the Annual Japan Sake Awards 2020

May 22, 2020

National Research Institute of Brewing
Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association

The Annual Japan Sake Awards 2020 were held under the joint auspices of the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB) and the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association (JSS). This year marks the 108th Annual Japan Sake Awards, which were first held in 1911.

For this contest, a nationwide investigation of manufactured *sake* was conducted with the aim of clarifying the current manufacturing technology and trends in order to contribute to the improvement of *sake* quality and to enhance public awareness of *sake*. This is the only one national contest of *sake*, and we believe that these awards contribute to improvements in manufacturing technology and quality of *sake*.

1. Application process

(1) Applicant requirement

Manufacturers who hold a *sake* brewing license.

(2) Standard for entry

Sake applied to this contest must be undiluted *Ginjo-shu* brewed at the manufacturer's own licensed production sites during the brewing year 2019 (from July 2019 until the application deadline of the contest), as stipulated in the "labeling standard for the manufacturing process and quality of *sake*" of the National Tax Agency. Applied *sake* must have a degree of acidity* higher than 0.8 and contain no added aroma compounds.

(3) Number of entries

Limited to one entry per manufacturer.

(4) Entry fee (including consumption tax)

Members of JSS: 16,500 yen per item

Others: 24,750 yen per item

*Degree of acidity is volume (mL) of 0.1 N NaOH solution to neutralize 10 mL of *sake* to pH 7.2.

Acidity 1.0 is equal to 0.090 g of lactic acid /100 mL or 0.075 g of tartaric acid/100 mL.

2. Overview of the awards

(1) Number of entries, 850

(2) Schedule of blind tasting

Preliminary judging: 3 days, from April 22 to 24, 2020

Final judging was cancelled because a state of emergency was declared all over Japan.

(3) Judging panels

This year, to avoid the spread of COVID-19, the judging panels of preliminary judging was limited to the staff of NRIB.

(4) Methods of blind tasting

a) During the preliminary judging, a sensory profile of each *sake* was created by characterizing

“aroma” and “taste” and evaluating “total quality” (5-point scale). For the judging, entries were grouped based on the concentration of aroma compounds, which was analyzed in advance. The serving method of sake was changed to keep distance between panels.

b) Results of the sensory profile and overall evaluation will be sent to the applicants in the hope that the results might be used to improve *Ginjo-shu* manufacturing technology and storage management in the future.

(5) Results

Prize winners, 433 entries

Gold prize winners (those recognized as the very best among the prize winners) were not determined because the final judging was not held.

(6) Tasting event for *sake* manufacturers etc. and Public Tasting by JSS

Both events were cancelled for the sake of prevention of spread of COVID-19.

Unfortunately, the final judgement and tasting events were cancelled this year, but it was inevitable.

NRIB and JSS are thankful for all the sake manufacturers who submitted their sake even though we are in such difficult time, and we hope the results of the sensory profile and overall evaluation will be helpful for the manufacturers.

3. Comments on the quality of entries this year is coming soon.