

Outline of the Annual Japan Sake Awards 2021

May 21, 2021

National Research Institute of Brewing
Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association

The Annual Japan Sake Awards 2021 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 109th 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 2020 (from July 2020 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: 15,400 yen per item

Others: 23,100 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, 821

(2) Schedule of blind tasting

Preliminary judging: 3 days, from April 20 to 22, 2021

Final judging: 2 days, May 11 and 12, 2021

(3) Judging panels

Experts on sensory evaluation of *sake* and appointed by the president of the NRIB from:

Sake manufacturers

Sake specialists from prefectural research centers

Technical officers of the National Tax Agency

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). In the final judging, an overall sensory evaluation was given (3-point scale). For both the preliminary and final judging, entries were grouped based on the concentration of aroma compounds and sorted in ascending order of glucose concentration, which was analyzed in advance.
- 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, 413 entries

Gold prize winners (those recognized as the very best among the prize winners), 207 entries

Testimonials are presented to the manufacturers jointly by the presidents of the NRIB and the JSS.

The list of gold prize winning *sake* is shown on a separate sheet.

(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 tasting events were cancelled this year, too, 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.