

PRESS RELEASE

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IWC announces 2024 Sake Awards



International Wine Challenge Sake Brewer of the Year 2024, Niizawa Sake Brewery Co., Ltd

On the 9th July in London, the International Wine Challenge (IWC) announced its 3 biggest sake award winners including IWC 2024 Champion Sake, this year's overall winner.

The IWC sake judging is the most vigorous and influential competition of its type in the world and judging was successfully carried out over four days in May at St Mary Marylebone in London. For the 18th year of sake competition since it started in 2007, the world's most respected 65 sake experts assembled from 17 countries and judged staggering 1504 sake entries under a strict blind-tasting measure and multiple group examinations. This year, 31 sake brands were enrolled from 6 countries outside of Japan including Armenia, Brazil, China, England, Taiwan and US.

The IWC sake competition has now 10 categories: Futsu-shu, Honjozo, Ginjo, Daiginjo, Junmai, Junmai Ginjo, Junmai Daiginjo, Koshu, Aged sake (new) and Sparkling sake. This year the results of medals and trophies were announced online on the 6th June. And today, on the 9th July, the final results were announced at the IWC awards dinner, which are the IWC 2024 Champion Sake, the Great Value Champion Sake, and the Sake Brewer of the year. This annual dinner was attended by sake makers, judges, sake supporters and world press. The finalists flew from Japan to receive their awards and trophies. The IWC 2024 Sake Awards are as follows:

★ **IWC Champion Sake 2024**

Sponsored by Kyosei Bank for the second year running, the 2024 IWC Champion Sake which is regarded the most influential award known as 'The Oscar' of the sake industry went to **Miyakobijin Taiyou, Junmai Ginjo by Miyakobijin Shuzo from Hyogo prefecture.**

Miyakobijin Junmai ginjo Taiyou is the first championship victory for Hyogo prefecture since the competition started in 2007. Mr Ie Osamu, the master brewer of Miyako Bijin brewery received the Champion Sake Awards from Andrew Reed of IWC hosted by Ken Ohashi MW, the co-chairman of the IWC sake competition on the stage.

This Junmai Ginjo sake stood out for IWC judges noted as 'Aromas of musk melon, strawberries, hints of nuttiness, almond spice with an exquisitely integrated acidity on the palate, complete with aniseed and white asparagus notes.'

The champion sake brewery, Miyakobijin shuzo, is located on the south of the Awaji island in the Seto Inland Sea. The brewery strives to maintain the traditional sake making method despite the current brewing trend, and focuses on preserving Yamahai method where sake is left to ferment naturally without adding lactic acids. This IWC champion sake Junmai ginjo Miyakobijin Taiyou brews Yamadanishiki rice produced in the highest ranked sake-rice field in Yukawa area in Hyogo prefecture. To bring out the best of flavour from the rice, they reintroduced an old and rare filtering system called 'tenbin shibori'

★ **The IWC Champion Great Value Sake 2024**

This award, sponsored by the Sake Samurai Association (the Chairman Mr. Tsushima Kitahara) went to the best quality sake available at the most reasonable price. To qualify for a Great Value Award, entries must receive a Gold or Silver medal at the competition, have

a minimum production volume of 100,000 bottles and be available nationwide for less than 1,200 Yen (approximately £6) for 720 ml regular bottle size.

This year, the Champion Great Value Sake Award was won by **Fudoh Keikai Karakuchi by Nabedana Inc. from Chiba prefecture**. The brewery was the runner-up for the same award last year by their Junmai sake, Jinyu. On behalf of the brewery, Ake Nordgren, the co-chairman of IWC sake competition received the award from Mr Tsushima Kitahara, the chairman of Sake Samurai Association.

This sake presents an elegant nose, tones of Nashi-Asian pear, rice cake with a touch of herbal hints. Medium-dry on the palate with fresh layered fruits followed by great pure finish. Nabedana Inc was established in 1689.

★ **IWC Sake Brewer of the Year 2024**

Finally, the highly coveted IWC Sake Brewer of the Year award was announced. This award is equivalent of the Winemaker of the Year award and is awarded to the brewer with the highest consistency of results across their entries, went to: **Niizawa Sake Brewery Co. Ltd from Miyagi Prefecture** for the third consecutive year.

This year, Niizawa Sake Brewery has not only repeated its success as sake brewer but also has also won 2 category Trophies of Honjozo and Aged sake, 9 gold medals, 17 silver medals, 12 bronze medals and 13 commended medals.

Niizawa Sake Brewery in Miyagi is known with its hugely innovative and challenging approach to sake making such as the appointment of the youngest 22-year-old female Toji (brew master), Miss Nanami Watanabe. At the award dinner, Mr Iwao Niizawa, the owner of the brewery collected the award on the stage. The brewery was destroyed completely by the Tohoku Tsunami disaster in 2011 and Mr Iwao Niizawa and his team rebuilt a brewery from a scratch in a new area with their pioneering spirits.

★ **IWC Sake Prefecture of the Year 2024 (NEW)**

This new award is sponsored by Nomura Real Estate in Japan. The shortlisted prefectures were announced at the award dinner in the presence of Yutaka Hayasaka, managing director of the Nomura Real Estate UK. The award winner will be announced in November in Japan. The short list of the IWC Sake Prefecture of the Year 2024 is;

Nagano prefecture, Miyagi prefecture, Yamagata prefecture, Niigata prefecture, and Hyogo Prefecture.

Further info: To decide on the winner of this new award, IWC collates data from the results of the competition, analyses, and scores. Sake Prefectures with minimum 50 entries are awarded points for each sake of the current brewing season that have won an IWC Trophy, Gold, Silver and Bronze Medal or Commended Medal Award. Points are deducted for a sake submitted into the competition which did not receive an award. The results are then weighted based on the volume of entry from the Region, and finally given an average score per prefecture

About the IWC Sake Competition:

The IWC sake competition started in 2007 under the auspices of the Sake Samurai Association with 228 sakes entering that year. Now the IWC is widely regarded as one of the largest, most credible, and prestigious sake competitions in the world. IWC sake judging took place in London as a base but also held in Japan twice, 2016 in Hyogo and 2018 Yamagata.

The finalists for the IWC 2024 Champion sake; (Trophy winners of 10 sake category) were;

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|------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Futsu-shu Trophy | Rich Yamahai Kasumitsuru | KASUMITSURU CO., LTD. | Hyogo |
| Honjozo Trophy | Atagonomatsu Kennai Honjozo | Niizawa Sake Brewery Co., Ltd | Miyagi |
| Junmai Trophy | Enasan Junmai | Hazama Shuzo Co.,Ltd. | Gifu |
| Ginjo Trophy | Keiryu 150 Shunen Ginjo | Endo Brewery Inc. | Nagano |
| Daiginjo Trophy | Miyanoyuki Daiginjo | Miyazaki Honten Co Ltd | Mie |
| Junmai Ginjo Trophy | Miyakobijin Taiyou | Miyakobijin Shuzo Co Ltd | Hyogo |
| Junmai Daiginjo Trophy | Toko Junmai Daiginjo Fukurotsuri Juhachi | Kojima Sohonten Co.,Ltd. | Yamagata |
| Koshu Trophy | Hanahato Kijoshu Aged for 8 years | Enoki Shuzo Co., Ltd. | Hiroshima |
| Aged Sake Trophy | NIIZAWA KIZASHI 2019 2019/2020 | Niizawa Sake Brewery Co., Ltd | Miyagi |

Sparkling Sake Trophy

Dewazakura Awa Sake

Dewazakura Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.

Yamagata