

Outline of the 35th Honkaku Shochu Contest

National Research Institute of Brewing

June 22, 2012

1. Contest

The 35th Honkaku (meaning “the real thing”) Shochu Contest was held under the auspices of the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB) and the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association on May 31 and June 1, 2012. For this contest, a nationwide investigation of simple distilled Japanese spirits (*shochu*) was conducted with the aim of clarifying the current manufacturing technology and trends in liquor quality in order to contribute to the creation of a useful reference for manufacturers.

2. Exhibit

(1) Qualification for entry

Manufacturers who hold a license to produce simple distilled Japanese spirits (*shochu*) and are members of the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association

(2) Applicable standard for entry

Entries must be actual products sold on the market. There is no limit for the number of entries.

(3) Entry fee

The entry fee is 5,250 yen (including consumption tax) per item.

3. Overview of entries

181 entries (89% of the number of entries in June 2011) were exhibited from 80 manufacturers (93%) based in 29 prefectures (Table 1).

Overall, the number of entries decreased by 21 compared to the previous contest (Table 2).

4. Trends among entries

(1) Raw materials (Table 2)

Compared to the previous year’s contest, the number of rice *shochu* entries decreased to 24 (67%), barley *shochu* entries increased to 57 (116%), sweet potato *shochu* entries decreased to 58 (84%), *awamori* entries decreased to 16 (94%), buckwheat *shochu* entries decreased to 2 (40%), sake lees *shochu* entries decreased to 11 (79%), and entries using other raw materials increased to 13 (108%). Continuing the previous year’s trend, the highest number of entries by raw material was for sweet potato *shochu*. Furthermore, 50% of the sweet potato *shochu* entries used black *koji*, up 14% from the previous year.

(2) Production line (Table 3)

The 70 (92%) entries in the first sub-category, namely “vacuum distillation line”, highlighted the importance of a light quality and easily drinkable product. Additionally, the number of entries in the “atmospheric distillation line” category also decreased to 85 (88%).

Meanwhile, entries from the “special product line”, consisting mainly of long-term aged *shochu*, numbered 26 (86%).

(3) Production area (Table 1)

As for the production areas, entries from Kyushu and Okinawa, which are the main production areas

for Honkaku *shochu*, numbered 126 and made up 70% of the total. In terms of the National Tax Agency Office, entries from Sendai, Osaka and Takamatsu Regional Bureaus have increased, while the overall number of entries has declined.

5. Jury

The jury consisted of 26 members who were appointed by the president of NRIB, including *shochu* manufacturers recommended by the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association, relevant distribution and sales staff, academic experts, technical officers of the National Tax Agency, and staff of NRIB.

6. Evaluation of liquor quality

The quality evaluation was performed by sensory evaluation and chemical analysis. The sensory evaluation was conducted by measuring the profile, whereby 4 items (aroma, taste, material characteristics and the total evaluation) were assessed on a 5-point scale. In addition, the presence of 18 additional items concerning characteristics (merits) and 28 items concerning imperfections (demerits) was evaluated.

To evaluate the level of manufacturing technology, chemical constituents, which are potential indicators of adeptness of fermentation management, distillation operations and storage management were analyzed.

The results of the quality evaluation and the analytical values of the constituents were later made known to the exhibitors.

7. Trends in liquor quality

- 1) Most single-distillation *shochu* are crisp, clean and light, and this year's entries reflected this trend. The core *shochu* varieties, namely rice, barley and sweet potato, were all of good quality and most were clear and mild-flavored with no defects.
- 2) Characteristics of the raw materials tended to be highly expressed in the *awamori*, vacuum-distilled *shochu* using other raw materials, and *shochu* distilled at atmospheric pressure, including sweet potato *shochu*. Furthermore, aged *awamori* achieved good average scores for aroma, flavor and overall evaluation and were found to be clear, fragrant and richly flavored.
- 3) There were many specialized products, including aged liquors, of high quality with well-balanced flavors and aromas, and this trend was particularly evident in aged *awamori*. In addition, barrel-stored barley *shochu* reflected the characteristics of the barrel and tended to have well-balanced flavors.

Table 1 Number of manufactures and entries per prefecture in the 35th Honkaku Shochu Contest

Manufacturer location		Number of manufactures		Number of exhibits									Total number of exhibits per Taxation Bureau Office		Compared with previous contest (%)	
Taxation Bureau Office	Prefecture	35th	34th	Detail							35th	34th	35th	34th		
				Rice	Barley	Sweet potato	Awamori	Buckwheat	Sake lees	Other						
Sapporo	Hokkaido	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	-
Sendai	Aomori	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	14	10	140
	Iwate	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3			
	Miyagi	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1			
	Akita	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	5	4			
	Yamagata	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2			
	Fukushima	1	0	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	4	0				
Kantoshinetsu	Ibaraki	1	1	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	5	5	10	14	71	
	Tochigi	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
	Gunma	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1				
	Saitama	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1				
	Niigata	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2				3
	Nagano	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	4				
Tokyo	Chiba	1	0	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	0	4	4	100	
	Tokyo	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1				
	Kanagawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
	Yamanashi	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3				
Kanazawa	Toyama	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	1	-	
	Ishikawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
	Fukui	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
Nagoya	Gifu	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	2	10	20	
	Shizuoka	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5				
	Aichi	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2				
	Mie	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	3				
Osaka	Shiga	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	7	4	175	
	Kyoto	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1				
	Osaka	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
	Hyogo	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	2				
	Nara	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
	Wakayama	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	1				
Hiroshima	Tottori	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	5	7	71	
	Shimane	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2				
	Okayama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
	Hiroshima	1	2	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	3	3				
	Yamaguchi	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0				
Takamatsu	Tokushima	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	13	12	108	
	Kagawa	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2				
	Ehime	2	1	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	5	3				
	Kochi	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	7				6
Fukuoka	Fukuoka	8	7	1	11	3	-	1	-	2	18	25	41	44	93	
	Saga	3	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	4				
	Nagasaki	8	7	2	13	2	-	-	2	-	19	15				
Kumamoto	Kumamoto	4	5	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	6	8	68	78	87	
	Oita	4	3	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	11	9				
	Miyazaki	3	3	1	3	3	-	-	-	-	7	8				
	Kagoshima	17	20	1	5	36	-	-	-	2	44	53				
Okinawa	Okinawa	7	6	-	-	-	16	-	-	1	17	18	17	18	94	
Total		80	86	24	57	58	16	2	11	13	181	202	181	202	90	

Table 2 Change in number of entries according to raw material category

Contest \ Raw material	Rice		Barley		Sweet potato		Awamori		Buckwheat		Sake lees		Other		Total	
	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest	Number of entries	Compared with previous contest
1st	40	-	16	-	77	-	24	-	5	-	24	-	20	-	206	-
6th	59	▲ 19	47	▲ 31	48	▲ 29	24	0	29	▲ 24	26	▲ 2	39	▲ 19	272	▲ 66
9th	69	▲ 10	100	▲ 53	26	▲ 22	24	0	31	▲ 2	60	▲ 34	85	▲ 46	395	▲ 123
10th	86	▲ 17	110	▲ 10	37	▲ 11	37	▲ 13	31	0	38	▲ 22	88	▲ 3	427	▲ 32
11th	96	▲ 10	105	▲ 5	48	▲ 11	23	▲ 14	26	▲ 5	25	▲ 13	61	▲ 27	384	▲ 43
16th	55	▲ 41	76	▲ 29	24	▲ 24	19	▲ 4	21	▲ 5	17	▲ 8	38	▲ 23	250	▲ 134
21st	63	▲ 8	70	▲ 6	22	▲ 2	17	▲ 2	19	▲ 2	27	▲ 10	27	▲ 11	245	▲ 5
26th	67	▲ 4	71	▲ 1	37	▲ 15	10	▲ 7	16	▲ 3	20	▲ 7	32	▲ 5	253	▲ 8
27th	73	▲ 6	76	▲ 5	45	▲ 8	17	▲ 7	22	▲ 6	22	▲ 2	25	▲ 7	280	▲ 27
28th	76	▲ 3	94	▲ 18	69	▲ 24	15	▲ 2	22	0	21	▲ 1	38	▲ 13	335	▲ 55
29th	63	▲ 13	84	▲ 10	79	▲ 10	30	▲ 15	19	▲ 3	25	▲ 4	37	▲ 1	337	▲ 2
30th	67	▲ 4	91	▲ 7	88	▲ 9	27	▲ 3	15	▲ 4	29	▲ 4	30	▲ 7	347	▲ 10
31st	57	▲ 10	90	▲ 1	103	▲ 15	28	▲ 1	21	▲ 6	22	▲ 7	33	▲ 3	354	▲ 7
32nd	51	▲ 6	83	▲ 7	98	▲ 5	28	0	17	▲ 4	20	▲ 2	28	▲ 5	325	▲ 29
33rd	44	▲ 7	77	▲ 6	82	▲ 16	32	▲ 4	14	▲ 3	21	▲ 1	18	▲ 10	288	▲ 37
34th	36	▲ 8	49	▲ 28	69	▲ 13	17	▲ 15	5	▲ 9	14	▲ 7	12	▲ 6	202	▲ 86
35th	24	▲ 12	57	▲ 8	58	▲ 11	16	▲ 1	2	▲ 3	11	▲ 3	13	▲ 1	181	▲ 21

Note 1. Brown sugar is included under "other".

Note 2. "Compared with previous contest" for 26th, 21st, 16th, 9th and 6th refers to comparisons to the 21st, 16th, 11th, 6th and 1st contest, respectively.

Note 3. Underlined numbers are the highest numbers of entries in the past.

Table 3 Status of exhibits in the 35th Honkaku Shochu Contest

Raw material category	Manufacturing category			Total	
	Vaccum distillation	Atmospheric distillation	Special products		
	Number of entries	Number of entries	Number of entries	Number of entries	
Rice	18	4	2	24	
Barley	35	14	8	57	
Sweet potato	1	54	3	58	
Awamori	2	8	6	16	
Buckwheat	2	0	0	2	
Sake lees	7	1	3	11	
Other	5	4	4	13	
Detail	Chestnut	2	1	3	6
	Sesame	1	0	0	1
	Brown sugar	0	1	1	2
	Ume seed	1	0	0	1
	Black soybean	0	1	0	1
	Yam	0	1	0	1
	Sweet potato / Barley	1	0	0	1
Total	70	85	26	181	

Note 1. "Vaccum distillation" and "atmospheric distillation" in manufacturing category include entries treated by ion exchange.

Note 2. "Special products" refers to long-term aging, cask aging and jar aging.