

Outline of the 36th Honkaku Shochu Contest

National Research Institute of Brewing
June 28, 2013

1. Contest

The 36th 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 June 4 and 5, 2013. 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

190 entries (105% of the number of entries in June 2012) were exhibited from 81 manufacturers (101%) based in 25 prefectures (Table 1).

Overall, the number of entries increased by 9 compared to the previous contest (Table 2).

4. Trends among entries

(1) Production area (Table 1)

As for the production areas, entries from Kyushu and Okinawa, which are the main production areas for Honkaku *shochu*, numbered 144 and made up 76% of the total. In terms of the National Tax Agency Office, entries from Nagoya, Fukuoka, Kumamoto and Okinawa Regional Bureaus have increased, while the overall number of entries has declined.

(2) Raw materials (Table 2)

Compared to the previous year’s contest, the number of rice *shochu* entries decreased to 23 (96%), barley *shochu* entries decreased to 54 (95%), sweet potato *shochu* entries increased to 68 (117%), *awamori* entries increased to 20 (125%), buckwheat *shochu* entries decreased to 0, sake lees *shochu* entries increased to 14 (127%), and entries using other raw materials decreased to 11 (85%). 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*, continuing the previous year’s trend.

(3) Production line (Table 3)

Entries from the “special product line”, consisting mainly of long-term aged *shochu*, numbered 35 (135%).

5. Jury

The jury consisted of 23 members who were appointed by the president of NRIB, including *shochu* manufacturers recommended by the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association, 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. Quality trends

- 1) Single-distillation *shochu* made from rice and barley is typically crisp, clean, and light, while *awamori* and *shochu* made from sweet potato are known for their traditional flavor and aroma. These characteristics were reflected in this year's entries.
- 2) The flavor from the raw materials used tended to be highly expressed in the *awamori*, the sweet potato *shochu*, and the *shochu* using other raw materials. Furthermore, both aged *awamori* and aged barley *shochu* were took high scores in relation to aroma, flavor, and overall evaluation.
- 3) The flavor profile of both barrel-aged rice and barrel-aged barley *shochu* tended to reflect the characteristics of the barrel.

Table 1 Number of manufactures and entries per prefecture in the 36th 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	36th	35th	Detail							36th	35th	36th	35th	
				Rice	Barley	Sweet potato	Awamori	Buckwheat	Sake lees	Other					
Sapporo	Hokkaido	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0	1	0	-
Sendai	Aomori	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	13	14	93
	Iwate	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3			
	Miyagi	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2			
	Akita	2	1	3	-	1	-	-	2	-	6	5			
	Yamagata	1	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0			
Fukushima	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	4				
Kantoshinetsu	Ibaraki	1	1	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	5	5	7	10	70
	Tochigi	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Gunma	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Saitama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2			
	Niigata	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	2			
	Nagano	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1			
Tokyo	Chiba	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	3	4	75
	Tokyo	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1			
	Kanagawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Yamanashi	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1			
Kanazawa	Toyama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	-
	Ishikawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Fukui	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Nagoya	Gifu	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	4	2	200
	Shizuoka	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	1			
	Aichi	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	1			
	Mie	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Osaka	Shiga	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	2	7	29
	Kyoto	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1			
	Osaka	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Hyogo	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	4			
	Nara	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Wakayama	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2			
Hiroshima	Tottori	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	5	5	100
	Shimane	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Okayama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Hiroshima	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	3			
	Yamaguchi	2	0	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	0			
Takamatsu	Tokushima	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	11	13	85
	Kagawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Ehime	2	2	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	4	5			
	Kochi	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	7			
Fukuoka	Fukuoka	9	8	1	20	1	-	-	-	3	25	18	46	41	112
	Saga	3	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	4			
	Nagasaki	8	8	2	11	2	-	-	2	-	17	19			
Kumamoto	Kumamoto	4	4	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	7	6	78	68	115
	Oita	3	4	-	6	-	-	-	1	-	7	11			
	Miyazaki	4	3	1	3	11	-	-	-	-	15	7			
	Kagoshima	19	17	1	5	40	-	-	-	3	49	44			
Okinawa	Okinawa	8	7	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	20	17	20	17	118
Total		81	79	23	54	68	20	0	14	11	190	181	190	181	105

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

Contest	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
36th	23	▲ 1	54	▲ 3	68	▲ 10	20	▲ 4	0	▲ 2	14	▲ 3	11	▲ 2	190	▲ 9

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 36th Honkaku Shochu Contest

Raw material category			Special products	Total
		Number of entries	Number of entries	Number of entries
Rice		18	5	23
Barley		40	14	54
Sweet potato		67	1	68
Awamori		10	10	20
Sake lees		12	2	14
Other		8	3	11
Detail	Ume seed	1		1
	Kudzu vine	1		1
	Chestnut	2	2	4
	Brown sugar	3		3
	Sweet potato / Barley		1	1
	Sesame	1		1
Total		155	35	190

Note 1. "Special products" refers to long-term aging, cask aging and jar aging.