

Outline of the 49th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

National Research Institute of Brewing
Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association
June 19, 2026

1. Contest

Honkaku Shochu and *Awamori* are the Japanese spirits distilled in a pot still.

The judgement of 49th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest was held under the joint auspices of the National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB) and the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association (JSS) on June 2 and 3, 2026. For this contest, a nationwide research of pot distillation *Shochu*, particularly *Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*, were conducted with the aim of clarifying the current manufacturing technology and trends in liquor quality, as well as contributing to the improvement of pot distillation *Shochu* (*Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*) qualities.

2. Special rules for entry

(1) Qualification for entry

Manufacturers which hold a license to produce pot distillation *Shochu* (*Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*).

(2) Applicable standard for entry

Entries must be products of *Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori* to be sold on the market or during storage as commercially available. The number of entries per a manufacture is limited within 8 items.

(3) Entry fee

Members of the JSS: 5,800 yen per entry. Others: 8,700 yen per entry.

3. Overview of entries

A total of 158 entries (85% of entries compared with previous year) were exhibited from 66 manufacturers (100%) in 23 prefectures. The overall number of entries decreased by 27 compared with that in the previous year (Table 1).

4. Trends among entries

(1) Production area

As for the production area, the number of entries from Kyushu (Fukuoka and Kumamoto Regional Taxation Bureaus; Table 1) (117 entries) and Okinawa (11 entries), which are the main production areas for *Honkaku Shochu* and *Awamori*, are 128 that made up 81% of the total (Table 1).

(2) Varieties of raw materials

The following entries were received, rice *Shochu*: 21 (decreased by 6 compared with that in the previous year), barley *Shochu*: 55 (decreased by 12), sweet potato *Shochu*: 48 (decreased by 8), Awamori: 11 (decreased by 3), sake lees *Shochu*: 10 (no change compared with that in the previous year), buckwheat *Shochu*: 3 (decreased by 1), brown sugar *Shochu*: 2 (no change compared with that in the previous year), and other *Shochu*: 8 (increased by 3) (Table 2).

(3) Varieties of products techniques

Entries from normal products numbered 121 (86%). Entries from the special products, including long-term aged, cask-aged or earthenware jar-aged *Shochu*, numbered 37 (82%) (Table 3).

5. Judging panels and methods

The judging panel consisted of 15 members who were appointed by the president of NRIB from *Shochu* and *Awamori* manufacturers recommended by JSS, *Shochu* and *Awamori* specialists from prefectural research centers, technical officers of Regional Taxation Bureaus, and the president and staff of NRIB (Table 4).

The individual judgement process, which has been conducted from the 43rd Honkaku *Shochu* and *Awamori* Contest in 2020, were conducted for this judgement. In order to total the judging results, tablet computer devices were used in this judgement as substitutes for mark cards following the year before last.

The sensory evaluation was conducted by a profile method, whereby 5 characteristics (raw material characteristics, rich/light, sweetness, aftertaste, and the total evaluation) were assessed on a 5-point scale. In addition, the presence/absence of 17 positive and 24 negative characters was considered in a check-all-that-apply manner (Figure).

6. Quality trends

- (1) *Shochu* made from rice and barley was mainly fruity and mild tasted, that made from sweet potato was mainly floral, that made from sake lees was mainly highly fruity, and *Awamori* was mainly full-bodied.
- (2) As for normal products, fruity aromas, mild tastes and sweet tastes were highly expressed in vacuum-distilled rice *Shochu*. Fruity aromas were highly expressed in vacuum-distilled barley *Shochu*. Fruity aromas, roasting aromas and mild tastes were highly expressed in the blend of both distilled barley *Shochu*. Roasting aromas, characteristics of raw materials and rich tastes were highly expressed in atmospheric-distilled barley *Shochu*. Fruity aromas, floral aromas, characteristics of raw materials and clear tastes were highly expressed in vacuum-distilled sweet potato *Shochu* and the blend of both distilled sweet potato *Shochu*. Floral aromas, characteristics of raw materials and roasting aromas were highly expressed in atmospheric-distilled sweet potato *Shochu*. Roasting aromas, oily or mushroom-like aromas, rich tastes and sweet tastes were highly expressed in atmospheric-distilled *Awamori*. Fruity aromas, characteristics of raw materials, sweet tastes and clear tastes were highly expressed in vacuum-distilled sake lees *Shochu*.
- (3) As for long-term aged products, long-term aged rice *Shochu* had matured aromas, rich tastes and sweet tastes.
- (4) As for cask-aged products, the properties derived from cask and vanilla aromas were highly evaluated in cask-aged barley *Shochu*.
- (5) As for earthenware jar-aged products, characteristics of raw materials, matured aromas, aromas from earthenware, smooth tastes and rich tastes were highly expressed in earthenware jar-aged sweet potato *Shochu*.

7. Chemical analysis

To evaluate the level of manufacturing techniques, the chemical compounds, which are potential indicators of fermentation management, distillation operations, and storage management, are currently being analyzed. The individual results of the sensory evaluation and the chemical analysis will be informed to all the manufacturers applied for entries. The overall results will be summarized and analyzed, and published in Report of the Research Institute of Brewing.

Judging room



The individual judgement process was conducted.



Serving: A plastic cup (140 mL volume) was filled with a sample (30 mL), and each cup was covered with a cap. The tray was then individually served to a judge. The tablet computer device was used in this judgement.

Table 1 Number of manufactures and entries per prefecture in the 49th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

Regional Taxation Bureau	Prefecture	Number of manufactures		Number of entries										Total number of entries per Taxation Bureau Office		Compared with previous year (%)	
		49th	48th	Varieties of single distilled <i>shochu</i>								49th	48th	49th	48th		
				Rice	Barley	Sweet potato	Awamori	Sake lees	Buckwheat	Brown sugar	Other						
Sapporo	Hokkaido	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	0	3	0	-
Sendai	Aomori	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	8	7	114
	Iwate	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2			
	Miyagi	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1			
	Akita	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2			
	Yamagata	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2			
	Fukushima	1	0	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	0			
Kanto-Shinetsu	Ibaraki	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	7	5	140
	Tochigi	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Gunma	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Saitama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Niigata	5	4	1	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	-	7	5			
	Nagano	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Tokyo	Chiba	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	4	5	80
	Tokyo	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1			
	Kanagawa	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1			
	Yamanashi	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3			
Kanazawa	Toyama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	-
	Ishikawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Fukui	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Nagoya	Gifu	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	1	2	50
	Shizuoka	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2			
	Aichi	1	0	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	0			
	Mie	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Osaka	Shiga	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	2	1	200
	Kyoto	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Osaka	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Hyogo	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1			
	Nara	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Wakayama	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
Hiroshima	Tottori	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	4	7	57
	Shimane	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Okayama	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4			
	Hiroshima	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Yamaguchi	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1			
Takamatsu	Tokushima	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	9	11
	Kagawa	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Ehime	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0			
	Kochi	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8			
Fukuoka	Fukuoka	7	6	4	16	-	-	1	1	-	4	26	26	43	44	98	
	Saga	1	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3				
	Nagasaki	7	6	-	10	3	-	-	-	-	-	13	15				
Kumamoto	Kumamoto	4	3	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	7	74	93	80	
	Oita	3	5	1	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	22				
	Miyazaki	4	5	-	6	14	-	-	1	-	-	21	25				
	Kagoshima	14	12	-	2	29	-	-	-	2	1	34	39				
Okinawa	Okinawa	6	7	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	11	12	11	12	92	
Total		66	66	21	55	48	11	10	3	2	8	158	185	158	185	85	

Table 2 Change in number of entries according to the varieties of single distilled *shochu*

(Number of entries)

Raw material	Rice		Barley		Sweet potato		Awamori		Sake lees		Buckwheat		Brown sugar		Other		Total	
	Awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	Compared with previous awards	
1st	38	-	16	-	78	-	24	-	24	-	5	-	4	-	15	-	204	-
6th	59	21	47	31	48	▲ 30	24	0	26	2	29	24	6	2	33	18	272	68
9th	69	10	100	53	26	▲ 22	24	0	<u>60</u>	34	<u>31</u>	2	7	1	<u>78</u>	45	395	123
10th	86	17	<u>110</u>	10	37	11	<u>37</u>	13	38	▲ 22	<u>31</u>	0	10	3	<u>78</u>	0	<u>427</u>	32
11th	<u>96</u>	10	105	▲ 5	48	11	23	▲ 14	25	▲ 13	26	▲ 5	8	▲ 2	53	▲ 25	384	▲ 43
16th	55	▲ 41	76	▲ 29	24	▲ 24	19	▲ 4	17	▲ 8	21	▲ 5	<u>11</u>	3	27	▲ 26	250	▲ 134
21st	63	8	70	▲ 6	22	▲ 2	17	▲ 2	27	10	19	▲ 2	4	▲ 7	23	▲ 4	245	▲ 5
26th	67	4	71	1	37	15	10	▲ 7	20	▲ 7	16	▲ 3	8	4	24	1	253	8
28th	76	9	94	23	69	32	15	5	21	1	22	6	<u>11</u>	3	27	3	335	82
31st	57	▲ 19	90	▲ 4	<u>103</u>	34	28	13	22	1	21	▲ 1	7	▲ 4	26	▲ 1	354	19
36th	23	▲ 34	54	▲ 36	68	▲ 35	20	▲ 8	14	▲ 8	0	▲ 21	3	▲ 4	8	▲ 18	190	▲ 164
37th	31	8	57	3	53	▲ 15	13	▲ 7	13	▲ 1	2	2	6	3	7	▲ 1	182	▲ 8
38th	21	▲ 10	50	▲ 7	66	13	16	3	6	▲ 7	2	0	2	▲ 4	4	▲ 3	167	▲ 15
39th	25	4	67	17	74	8	15	▲ 1	14	8	3	1	4	2	11	7	213	46
40th	32	7	67	0	88	14	22	7	13	▲ 1	3	0	4	0	7	▲ 4	236	23
41st	26	▲ 6	77	10	98	10	18	▲ 4	13	0	4	1	7	3	5	▲ 2	248	12
42nd	24	▲ 8	95	28	85	▲ 3	17	▲ 5	8	▲ 5	3	0	2	▲ 2	4	▲ 3	238	2
43rd	22	▲ 2	71	▲ 24	73	▲ 12	17	0	8	0	3	0	1	▲ 1	2	▲ 2	197	▲ 41
44th	24	2	71	0	68	▲ 5	13	▲ 4	11	3	2	▲ 1	2	1	2	0	193	▲ 4
45th	24	0	73	2	69	1	17	4	12	1	2	0	4	2	4	2	205	12
46th	35	11	66	▲ 7	82	13	23	6	11	▲ 1	4	2	4	0	3	▲ 1	228	23
47th	31	▲ 4	72	6	54	▲ 28	19	▲ 4	12	1	4	0	3	▲ 1	5	2	200	▲ 28
48th	27	▲ 4	67	▲ 5	56	2	14	▲ 5	10	▲ 2	4	0	2	▲ 1	5	0	185	▲ 15
49th	21	▲ 6	55	▲ 12	48	▲ 8	11	▲ 3	10	0	3	▲ 1	2	0	8	3	158	▲ 27

Note 1: "Compared with previous awards" for 36th, 31st, 28th, 26th, 21st, 16th, 9th and 6th refers to comparisons to the 31st, 28th, 26th, 21st, 16th, 11th, 6th and 1st Awards, respectively.

Note 2: Underlined numbers are the highest numbers of entries in the past.

Table 3 Details of products in the 49th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

(Number of entries)

Varieties of single distilled shochu	Normal products								Special products								Total	
	Vacuum distillation		Atmospheric distillation		Blend		Subtotal		Long-term aging		Cask aging		Earthenware jar aging		Subtotal			
	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th	49th	48th
Rice	15	18	1	3	-	-	16	21	3	2	2	4	-	-	5	6	21	27
Barley	27	28	4	7	8	10	39	45	2	2	12	19	2	1	16	22	55	67
Sweet potato	4	7	32	36	5	6	41	49	1	4	-	-	6	3	7	7	48	56
Awamori	-	-	7	10	2	1	9	11	1	2	-	-	1	1	2	3	11	14
Sake lees	6	3	-	2	-	-	6	5	2	2	2	3	-	-	4	5	10	10
Buckwheat	2	3	-	-	1	1	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4
Brown sugar	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	2	2	2
Other	4	4	2	1	-	-	6	5	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	8	5
Detail	Potato	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	3	-
	Ryokucha	1	1	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
	Matcha	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Kudzu vine	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Sesame	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Squash	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	58	63	47	59	16	18	121	140	11	13	17	27	9	5	37	45	158	185

Table 4 List of Judging panels for the 49th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest

	Name	Workplace and Position	
1	KONDO, Hiroo	Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association	Technical Advisor
2	TANAKA, Seiji	KENJOU CO., Ltd.	Section Chief, Manufacturing Department
3	KUBO, Taro	KUBO Shuzojo Co.,Ltd	Representative Director
4	NAGASAWA, Yoshikazu	SANWA SHURUI Co., Ltd.	Assistant to the General Manager, Production Division
5	IMAGAMA, Yoshihiro	Hombo Shuzo Co.,Ltd	Manager, Tsunuki Distillery Manager
6	SAWADA, Kazutaka	Industrial Technology Center of Saga	Researcher, Division of Food and Cosmetics
7	TANAKA, Ryoichi	Kumamoto Industrial Research Institute	Chief Researcher, Food Science and Technology
8	YAMAMOTO, Hideki	Miyazaki Prefectural Food Research and Development Center	Manager, Applied Microorganism Department
9	OSAFUNE, Yukio	Fukuoka Regional Taxation Bureau	Chief Technical Officer, Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology
10	KOHAMA, Hajime	Kumamoto Regional Taxation Bureau	Director, Office of Analysis and Brewing Technology
11	IEHARA, Maki	Okinawa Regional Taxation Office	Technical Officer, Indirect Tax Division
12	IWATA, Tomoko	National Research Institute of Brewing	Vice-President
13	HASHIGUCHI, Tomokazu	National Research Institute of Brewing	Director, Brewing Microbiology Division
14	OKUDA, Masaki	National Research Institute of Brewing	Director, Brewing Technology Division
15	ODA, Ken	National Research Institute of Brewing	Senior Researcher, Brewing Microbiology Division

Figure
Tablet Judging Screen for the 48th Honkaku Shochu and Awamori Contest
(Image)

審査酒番号
001

[評価項目]

総合評価	1:とても良い 2:良い 3:どちらでもない 4:悪い 5:難点あり ※ ○1-----○2-----○3-----○4-----○5	. 選択解除
原料特性	1:強い 2:やや強い 3:どちらでもない 4:やや弱い 5:弱い ※ ○1-----○2-----○3-----○4-----○5	. 選択解除
味の濃淡	1:濃い 2:やや濃い 3:どちらでもない 4:やや薄い 5:薄い ※ ○1-----○2-----○3-----○4-----○5	. 選択解除
甘味	1:強く感じる 2:やや強い 3:感じる 4:やや感じる 5:感じない ※ ○1-----○2-----○3-----○4-----○5	. 選択解除
後味	1:すっきり 2:ややすっきり 3:どちらでもない 4:ややもたつく 5:もたつく ※ ○1-----○2-----○3-----○4-----○5	. 選択解除

[香り]	[特性]	[指摘項目]
果実様 <input type="checkbox"/>	果実様 <input type="checkbox"/>	エステル臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
花様 <input type="checkbox"/>	花様 <input type="checkbox"/>	
甘い香り <input type="checkbox"/>	バニラ香 <input type="checkbox"/>	
	カラメル様 <input type="checkbox"/>	
香ばしい・煙様 <input type="checkbox"/>	香ばしい <input type="checkbox"/>	こげ臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
		燻製・薬品様 <input type="checkbox"/>
硫化物様 <input type="checkbox"/>		硫化物様 <input type="checkbox"/>
酸臭・乳製品様 <input type="checkbox"/>	乳製品様 <input type="checkbox"/>	シアセチル <input type="checkbox"/>
		酸臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
草様・溶媒様 <input type="checkbox"/>		アルデヒド <input type="checkbox"/>
		インク様 <input type="checkbox"/>
油様・キノコ様 <input type="checkbox"/>	油香 <input type="checkbox"/>	油臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
	キノコ様 <input type="checkbox"/>	カビ臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
原料 <input type="checkbox"/>	原料特性 <input type="checkbox"/>	原料不良 <input type="checkbox"/>
蒸留 <input type="checkbox"/>		未たれ臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
貯蔵 <input type="checkbox"/>	熟成香 <input type="checkbox"/>	ガス臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
容器 <input type="checkbox"/>	樽香・かめ香 <input type="checkbox"/>	樽臭・かめ臭 <input type="checkbox"/>
移り香 <input type="checkbox"/>		ゴム臭・樹脂臭 <input type="checkbox"/>

[味]	[特性]	[指摘項目]
濃さ <input type="checkbox"/>	濃醇 <input type="checkbox"/>	過多 <input type="checkbox"/>
淡さ <input type="checkbox"/>	淡麗 <input type="checkbox"/>	うすい <input type="checkbox"/>
甘辛 <input type="checkbox"/>	甘い <input type="checkbox"/>	からい <input type="checkbox"/>
きれいさ <input type="checkbox"/>	きれいな <input type="checkbox"/>	くどい <input type="checkbox"/>
刺激感 <input type="checkbox"/>	なめらか <input type="checkbox"/>	あらい <input type="checkbox"/>
		酸味 <input type="checkbox"/>
		苦味 <input type="checkbox"/>
		渋味 <input type="checkbox"/>

[調和]	[特性]	[指摘項目]
	調和 <input type="checkbox"/>	不調和 <input type="checkbox"/>

[短評・助言]

入力文字数:0/100

審査酒番号

001

← 5-point scale evaluation

Overall evaluation

Raw material characteristics

Body

Sweet taste

Aftertaste

← Optional checks(arity)

Fruity

Floral

Sweet

Roast, Smoky

Sulfury

Volatile acids, Milk product,

Herbal, Solvent

Oily, Mushroom

Raw material characteristic

Distillation-derived

Cask-aged,

earthenwarejar-aged

Lingering scent

← Optional checks (taste)

Full body

Light body

Sweetness

Clean

Smooth

← Optional checks (balance)

Total balance

← Comment/Advice