The Annual Japan Sake Awards 2020 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 108th 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 2019 (from July 2019 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: 16,500 yen per item
Others: 24,750 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, 850
(2) Schedule of blind tasting
Preliminary judging: 3 days, from April 22 to 24, 2020
Final judging was cancelled because a state of emergency was declared all over Japan.
(3) Judging panels
This year, to avoid the spread of COVID-19, the judging panels of preliminary judging was limited to the 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). For the judging, entries were grouped based on the concentration of aroma compounds, which was analyzed in advance. The serving method of sake was changed to keep distance between panels.

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, 433 entries

Gold prize winners (those recognized as the very best among the prize winners) were not determined because the final judging was not held.

(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 final judgement and tasting events were cancelled this year, 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.