

PRESS RELEASE

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IWC announces 2022 Sake Champions

On the 7th July in London, the International Wine Challenge (IWC) announced its three sake award winners, including the IWC 2022 Champion Sake, this year's overall winner.

The 16th IWC sake judging is the most extensive competition of its type in the world. Judging took place over four days in April at the Kia Oval in London. This year, despite remaining travel restrictions in some countries, the world's most respected 53 sake experts flew in from 14 countries to judge 1,732 sake entries, which is the largest IWC sake competition held since it started in 2007.

The results of three IWC Sake Awards, the IWC Champion Sake, the IWC Champion Great Value Sake, and the Sake Brewer of the year were as follows:

★ IWC Champion Sake 2022

known as 'The Oscar' of the sake industry went to

Sawahime Ginjo by Inoue Seikichi Co Ltd from Tochigi prefecture.

This is the second championship victory for Inoue Seikichi brewery since it won the title in 2010. *Sawahime Ginjo* was a strong winner in the hardest competition in IWC sake history beating off 1,731 contenders.

The IWC Trophies 2022 - The shortlisted finalists for the Champion sake were;

- **Futsu-shu Trophy winner**

Komachisakura by Watanabe Shuzoten Co Ltd. (Gifu prefecture)

- **Honjozo Trophy winner**

Atagonomatsu Betsushikomi Honjozo by Niizawa Sake Brewery Co Ltd (Miyagi prefecture)

- **Junmai Trophy winner**

Gunmaizumi Maikaze by Shimaoka Shuzo Co Ltd (Gunma prefecture)

- **Daiginjo Trophy winner**

Dewazakura Daiginjo by Dewazakura Sake Brewery Co Ltd (Yamagata prefecture)

- **Junmai Ginjo Trophy winner**

Isojiman Junmai Ginjo by Isojiman Premium Sake-Brewing Co Ltd (Shizuoka prefecture)

- **Junmai Daiginjo Trophy winner**

Hatsukame Junmai Daiginjo Kame by Hatsukame Sake Brewery Co Ltd (Shizuoka prefecture)

- **Koshu Trophy winner**

Masuizumi Barrel Aging Kijoshu by Masuda Sake Company Ltd (Toyama prefecture)

- **Sparkling Sake Trophy winner**

Yonetsuru Sparkling Rose by Yonetsuru Shuzo Co Ltd (Yamagata prefecture)

★ **The Champion Great Value Sake 2022** This year, the champion Great Value Sake Award was won by **Atagonomatsu Betsushikomi Honjozo by Niizawa Sake Brewery** from Miyagi Prefecture and it also won the Trophy in the Honjozo sake category.

★ **IWC Sake Brewer of the Year 2022**

The highly coveted IWC Sake Brewer of the Year award, which is the sake equivalent of the Winemaker of the Year award, went to: **Niizawa Sake Brewery Co. Ltd from Miyagi Prefecture.**

Niizawa Sake Brewery in Miyagi is known as the leading sake maker in the sake industry. The Niizawa Sake Brewery is hugely innovative in its approach and is challenging the industry norms with the appointment of the youngest female Toji (brewmaster) at the age of 22. This year Niizawa Sake Brewery was awarded Champion Great Value Sake, two Trophies, four Gold medals, five Silver, three Bronze, and three Commended Awards.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Key facts and statistics:

- The IWC 2022 had 1,732 entries, the highest number since it started in 2007.
- 462 breweries entered in total, of which 11 breweries are from outside Japan.
- Judging took place over 4 days with 53 sake judges of 14 different nationalities.

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 was held in Japan twice, 2016 in Hyogo and 2018 Yamagata, and is seeking for another opportunity to host in Japan.

Inoue Seikichi Brewery and Sawahime Ginjo – further information:

Inoue Seikichi Brewery has a reputation for only producing 'Jizake' (local sake) and has become known for using 100% Tochigi grown rice and local ingredients for all its products. Sawahime is the true essence of Tochigi and is produced using traditional local methods.

Sawahime Ginjo is made with 100% Tochigi products and resources; ie locally grown Hitogokochi rice, underground water from the Kido river, brewed by Tochigi yeast T-ND and using the locally designated brewing techniques specialised by *Shimotsuke toji*. Rice polishing ratio 50%, 16% ABV. Sawahime Ginjo is unexpectedly delicious for ginjo style to drink at warm a temperature like 40-50 degrees Celsius as well as chilled. Well-designed crystal blue bottle is eye catching, too.

Niizawa Sake Brewery – further information:

The Niizawa Sake Brewery is well known for its Atagonomatsu brand.

It is also known for its cutting-edge technique of polishing the rice down to an invisible size of 0.1% to produce premium sakes Reikyo and Zankyo which are sought after all over the world.