

JETRO Sake Export Fair in Niigata

Niigata Prefecture is nationally famous for sake

- Niigata Prefecture is home to more than 90 sake breweries and boasts the largest number of sake breweries in Japan. Local breweries are honing their skills and technologies in competition with each other to produce unique and high-quality products. How sake tastes on your tongue and in your throat greatly differs by brand.
- Niigata Prefecture is also ranked as No. 1 in Japan for the shipment of *ginjo* sake (23% share in terms of shipment for 2014).

Climate

- The quality of sake depends on the quality of water used to produce it. In Niigata, spring water from mountains, which is soft water originated from snow and rainfall soaked into the ground, is used to produce sake that tastes soft and mild. Spring water also helps produce delicious rice to be used as ingredients for sake. The local climate also contributes to the production of high-quality sake, which needs to be brewed at low temperatures. The winter weather in Niigata is favorable for the brewing of sake, because snow helps clean air. Sake is made by using microorganisms such as *koji* mold and yeast, for which clean air is essential. Also the stability of temperature in winter helps brew sake in a stable and steady manner.
- Niigata Prefecture is widely known as the largest rice-producing area in Japan. Koshihikari produced in the prefecture is appreciated by consumers across Japan as the most delicious rice in the country. Gohyakumangoku, which began to be produced in the prefecture 50 years ago is a leading rice brand suitable for growing *koji* mold on steamed rice.

Commitment to higher quality

- (1) Niigata Prefecture is the only prefecture in Japan that has a research institute for sake brewing (Niigata Prefectural Sake Research Institute). It was established by the prefecture in 1930 to search for the brewing methods appropriate for local weather, climate and water quality, culture the rice optimal for sake brewing, and develop excellent human resources for sake brewing.
- (2) Moreover, Niigata Sake Brewers Association has a school to educate mid-level sake brewers (Niigata Sake School), which is the only school of its kind in the world. Only those recommended by sake breweries can enter the school. In order to graduate from the school, students study for about 100 hours a year over the course of three years, while also working for the breweries from which they are dispatched to the school. More than 400 people have graduated from the school since it was founded in 1984. Owners, experienced brewers and skilled workers of local sake breweries serve as teachers for the school, and students continue to exchange opinions with and receive training from their teachers even after graduation. This network of brewers is utilized also for the Niigata Sake Brewers Association to conduct its activities.

Commitment to improving people's awareness

- (1) Niigata Prefecture conducts a unique qualification test for “masters of sake” and some 7,000 people had taken the test by April 2015.
- (2) The prefecture also holds an event called “Niigata Sake-no-jin” as a fair comparable to Oktoberfest held in Germany. The one held in 2015 attracted more than about 120,000 people from Japan and abroad. The event has been held also in Hong Kong for the most recent three years.



“Niigata Sake-no-jin”

An Introduction to Niigata Prefecture

Niigata, the largest prefecture on the Sea of Japan coast, comprises the vast Niigata Plains, a major production center for rice. Niigata also has good airport, port and rail infrastructures, which makes it highly accessible from the Tokyo metropolitan area.

Abundant natural assets have made Niigata the top producer of rice in Japan, most notably of Koshihikari, which is not only the variety with the greatest crop yield but is also considered Japan's best brand of rice. Niigata also boasts the third largest number of hot springs in Japan.

Each season in Niigata presents a distinctive scenic beauty: cherry blossoms and tulips in spring, glorious sunsets from the beach in summer, colorful leaves in autumn, and spectacular snowscapes in winter. Niigata is also a treasure trove of culinary delights, offering an excellent cuisine made from a rich variety of local, seasonal produce.

Basic Information

Estimated population: 2,289,806 (as of April 1, 2016)

Area: 12,583 km²

Prefectural capital: Niigata City

Number of agricultural entities: 68,245 (source: Census of Agriculture and Forestry, 2010)

Brewery map in Niigata



The four elements of water, rice, climate, and traditional know-how handed down through generations of local master sake brewers combine to create the excellent quality of Niigata's sake. We hope you enjoy the crisp, dry taste—referred to as “Niigata tanrei”—of Niigata sake.



More Information

<http://enjoyniigata.com/english/index.html>