

Summary of Product Specification of Japanese GIs

I . Name of the Geographical Indication

利根沼田 (Tone Numata)

II . Product Category

Seishu (sake) – Article 3, Item 7 of Liquor Tax Act

III . Petitioner

GI Tone Numata Meeting

1306-2, Takahira, Shirasawa-machi, Numata City, Gunma Prefecture

IV . Date of Protection in Japan

22, January, 2021

V . Product Description

(a) Raw Material and Production Method (See Annex 1&2)

(1) Raw materials

- i) Only Yuki Hotaka, Gohyakumangoku, or Koshihikari harvested in the production area (See VI) is used for rice and rice koji.
- ii) Only water for use must be collected in the production area and one that has not gone through physical or chemical processes other than sediment and filtration.
- iii) Only Gunma KAZE yeast, Gunma G2 yeast or Yeast that was collected and cultured in the production area is used for fermentation.
- iv) Regarding the ingredients of “sake” provided in Article 3, item 7-b of the Liquor Tax Act, no ingredients other than “sake” must be used.
- v) In the case of using sake instead of water, only sake produced from ingredients in i, ii, and iii above must be used.

(2) Production method

- i) Sake shall produce in the production area in accordance with the production method of sake with the provision of Article 3, Item 7 of the Liquor Tax Act.
- ii) Liquors must be stored in the production area, if needed in the producing process.
- iii) In the case of bottling in containers to be shipped to customers, liquors must be bottled in the production area.

(b) Characteristic

Sake of Tone Numata has the quality of a sake that gives a moderate level of umami (the fifth taste alongside sweet, sour, bitter and salty) in generally clear flavor.

The sake tastes a bit bitter, which brings out refreshing sourness and body with umami, then mellow umami and sweetness, unique to the rice variety harvested in this region, spread on the palate. The flavor can be said to be fresh with a light alcoholic taste that neutralizes the alcoholic feeling despite its alcohol content.

The aftertaste is slightly bitter, which highlights its flavor, in addition to pure umami and sweetness. This sake goes well with food ingredients that bring out bitterness, umami and sourness.

The sake not only smells of fruits, such as grapefruit, white peach, yellow apple, banana, melon and litchi, which is generated by yeast, but also tastes like almond jelly, in addition to the fragrance of freshly pounded rice cakes that comes from rice. Furthermore, combining with the delicious aftertaste, the fragrance that evokes green grass and fresh verdure can be felt.

The color is generally like crystal and is clear with a touch of light gold.

The bitter aftertaste evokes spring vegetables. This sake goes well with the bitterness of mountain vegetables, such as butterbur shoots and aralia sprouts, and green crop, which are harvested in this region. Moreover, the amino acid from sake of Tone Numata brings out the flavor of meals in combination with the umami derived from the animal protein in meals that use livestock products (pork, beef and poultry) that are specialties of this region.

VI. Description of the Geographical Area

Numata City and Tone County (Katashina, Kawaba and Showa Villages ;Minakami Town) , Gunma Prefecture

VII. Link with the Geographical Area

(a) Natural factor

i) Water quality

The Tone Numata region, which is within the scope of its geographical origin, is in the north of Gunma Prefecture and is located in a region wedged between lines formed by the Mikuni Mountains centering on Mt. Hotaka and Mt. Tanigawadake in the north, and volcanos of Mt. Nikko-Shirane, Mt. Akagisan, Mt. Asama, etc. in the south.

The region is characterized by a river terrace that was formed by sand deposited in Lake Konumata, which existed about 150,000 years ago. Rainwater that falls in mountains, such as Mt. Hotaka and Mt. Tanigawadake, runs through sandy and muddy grave layers accumulated at the bottom of “Lake Konumata,” ending up bringing rich river water and underground water to this region. Water that goes through these sandy and muddy grave layers turns to soft water, becoming a factor that gives sake of Tone Numata clear flavor and color.

ii) Climate

This region belongs to the climate zone of the Sea of Japan (the Hokuriku and Sanin type). In winter, it often snows and rains with a monsoon and is very cold in this region.

This region has a larger amount of precipitation and also enjoys longer hours of sunlight during rice-growing months than other regions in Gunma Prefecture. Also, the temperature difference is wide in a day. Whereas the daytime highest temperature sometimes exceeds 30°C in August, the daytime lowest temperature goes below 20°C in the same month. Due to these factors, it is said that starch that is generated by daytime photosynthesis is stored effectively in the night-time, whereby this region can harvest rich and well ripened rice that is suitable to sake making.

Additionally, temperatures in rice paddies can be kept constant by using rich river water and ground water, which is said to be effective for preventing damage from high temperatures on scorching days. Thus, it can be expected that rice of high quality can be reaped stably.

Furthermore, harsh coldness in winter is also highly appropriate as an environment for sake brewing.

(b) Human factor

It is said that sake making was commenced on a full scale in the Tone Numata region in the Edo era. The record shows that there were 26 sake makers in 1809, suggesting that regional brewers made close interactions around this time, such as forming “brewer groups” to make arrangements to comply with regulations on brewing, sales and other basic matters, which have been handed down to today.

In the old days, sake was made under the leadership of groups of chief brewers, named *Echigo Toji*. Their brewing technique remained within a group and was rarely shared with other ones. Nowadays, however, all breweries have shifted to a system in which there are owners of breweries doubling as chief brewers, and employed chief brewers. Under this system, regular exchange of information, etc. and research have been made among chief brewers in the region as part of close interactions among breweries, which is a tradition since the establishment of brewer groups. It can be said that the characteristics of sake in Tone Numata have been made more distinctive by this activity.

Breweries there have made efforts to maintain and improve the quality of sake, unique to this region, especially through development of yeast that originates in this region, research and accumulation of expertise in rice making and sake brewing, suitable to the yeast.

Additionally, all breweries in this region are active in making efforts to preserve the environment in the belief that preservation of natural environment in this region is crucial to maintaining the quality of sake.

Moreover, breweries are also engaged in revitalizing the region by leveraging sake making

as its pivot, which has materialized as activities of the “Liaison Council for Tone Numata Sakagura Tourism,” which wineries and beer breweries too belong to.

VIII. Control Body

In order to use “Tone Numata,” the liquor that uses “Tone Numata” is required to be confirmed by the following control body pursuant to guidelines for work implementation, prepared by the organization.

GI Tone Numata Meeting

1306-2, Takahira, Shirasawa-machhi, Numata City, Gunma Prefecture

(Annex1)

Liquor Tax Act(excerpt)

(Definitions of other terms)

Article 3

(7) “Seishu” means the following liquors of less than 22 percent alcohol content:

- a. Liquors made by fermenting rice, rice koji and water as the raw materials and filtering the resultant fermented substance;
- b. Liquors made by fermenting rice, rice koji, water, seishu lees and any other substance provided for by Cabinet Order as the raw materials and filtering the resultant fermented substance (limited to the case where the total weight of the substance provided for by such Cabinet Order does not exceed fifty hundredths of the weight of rice (including rice for koji preparation)); and
- c. Liquors made by adding seishu lees to seishu and filtering the resultant substance.

Enforcement Ordinance of Liquor Tax Act(excerpt)

(Raw materials of sake)

Article 2.

The substances provided for by Cabinet Order as the raw materials of sake as stated in Article 3, Item 7, b. of the shall be alcohol (including liquors conforming to the provisions of Article 3, Item 9 (excluding the provisions for alcohol content) (excluding the liquors to which any substance other than water is added) whose alcohol content is 36 percent or more but no more than 45 percent; the same shall apply hereinafter), shochu (continuous distilled shochu or single distilled shochu, excluding shochu to which any substance other than water is added; the same shall apply hereinafter), grape sugar or any other saccharide provided for by an ordinance of the Ministry of Finance, organic acid, amino-acid salt or sake.

(Annex2) flowchart of making Seishu

