

Summary of Product Specification of Japanese GIs

I. Name of the Geographical Indication

新潟 (Niigata)

II. Product Category

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

III. Petitioner

Niigata Sake Brewers Cooperative Association

292-2, Higashinakadori, 2 bancho, Chuo-ward, Niigata City, Niigata

IV. Date of Protection in Japan

7, February, 2022

V. Product Description

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

(1) Raw materials

- i) The only rice and rice koji that can be used must be rice produced in Japan.
- ii) The only water that can be used must be collected in Niigata Prefecture.
- iii) The only seishu ingredients that can be used must be the ones specified in Article 3-7 of the Liquor Tax Act (Act No.6 of 1953). However, among ingredients of seishu specified in Article 2 of Order for Enforcement of the Liquor Tax Act, nothing other than alcohol (limited to the case that alcohol is used when the weight of alcohol does not exceed 50% of the weight of rice (including koji)) can be used.

(2) Production method

- i) Seishu must be brewed in Niigata Prefecture in the seishu brewing method, specified in Article 3-7 of the Liquor Tax Act.
- ii) In the process of sake brewing, sake must be stored in Niigata Prefecture.
- iii) Bottling shall be completed with containers planned to be delivered to consumers, in Niigata Prefecture.

(b) Characteristic

In general, the seishu of Niigata has light and tasteful quality.

The aroma rising from a glass has gentleness as if it came from a morning mist and tastes like smooth and easily melting light snow in the mouth. Slight sweetness brought out from rice

mixes with other elegant umami, giving aftertaste and going away.

Such sake that has clean taste with less miscellaneous flavor is called light-bodied sake.

VI. Description of the Geographical Area

Niigata Prefecture

VII. Link with the Geographical Area

(a) Natural factor

Niigata Prefecture is located almost in the center of the Sea of Japan coast in Honshu, with Asahi Mountains, Iide Mountains, Echigo Mountains, on the east, and Mt. Myokosan and other mountains, on the west, having abundant water resources from many rivers flowing down to the Sea of Japan, including Shinano River and Agano River, which water quality is generally soft.

Moreover, in Niigata Prefecture, although it snows a lot, and hours of sunlight are short in winter, temperatures do not get extremely low even in a season of severe cold, and a temperature difference between day and night is small. The stable and moderate low temperature brought by snow creates the ideal environment for the action of microorganisms, such as koji mold and yeast, used for sake brewing.

The use of this abundant water as good brewing water and the climate with a small temperature difference between day and night have combined to produce the light-bodied sake of Niigata.

(b) Human factor

Niigata Prefecture where vast and fertile lands such as Echigo Plain and Takada Plain spread is one of the richest grain-yielding areas in Japan. In the Edo period, it was flourished as a port of call for Kitamae-bune (a cargo vessel), and rice produced here and its processed product seishu were transported to various places.

In the middle of the Edo period, farmers in Niigata went to work in other regions during the agricultural off-season and acquired sake brewing skills under the guidance of sake brewers in the western part of Japan, including Tanba and Tajima, and then, they devised sake brewing techniques suitable for climate, natural features, water quality and rice quality of various lands, which resulted in creating a group of Echigo sake brewers who would play a role of sake brewing at sake breweries throughout the nation, due to their skills and diligence.

In 1930, the Niigata Prefectural Institute of Brewing, the only prefectural research institution for seishu in Japan as an independent institution, was established, which theorized accumulated excellent sake brewing techniques of Echigo sake brewers, and the Niigata Seishu Study Group, a group of engineers from respective companies, tackled a variety of research tasks relating to the improvement of sake brewing technologies, and thereby developed a technology that enables production of high quality seishu from raw material rice of various qualities and conditions.

In order to respond to a problem of decreasing sake brewers that would hinder the succession of production technologies, the Niigata Sake Brewers Association formed the "Niigata Sake Brewing Technology Study Group" as a place for cross-company information exchange and study, in addition to the establishment of the nation's first "Niigata Sake School" to develop sake brewing technicians, and kept making efforts for the improvement of skills required on site as well as the awareness raising for ideas of sake brewing, such as traditional sake brewing techniques, transmission of culture, and preparation and attitude required for sake brewing.

Based on such technical support, they produced sake aiming at the quality of sake suited to the trend of westernization of Japanese lifestyle and food culture which had been changing in the modern period. As a result, a characteristic of the seishu rooted in Niigata is light-body, which has achieved name recognition nationally, and this characteristic has been maintained.

VIII. Control Body

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

Niigata Sake Brewers Cooperative Association

292-2, Higashinakadori, 2 bancho, Chuo-ward, Niigata City, Niigata

(Annex1)

Liquor Tax Act (excerpt)

(Definitions of other terms)

Article 3

In this Act, the meanings of the terms listed in the following items are as prescribed respectively in those items:

(1) ~ (6)

(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.

(8) ~ (27)

Order for the Enforcement 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 (sake)

