



TOKYO  
WHISKY & SPIRITS  
COMPETITION

## Tokyo Whisky & Spirits Competition TWSC2021 Official Announcement

(Shochu Division)

# Evaluating Shochu from a Western Spirits Professional Perspective

The Tokyo Whisky & Spirits Competition (TWSC) is a competition designed to promote high quality whisky and spirits inside and outside of Japan, and drive the expansion of the alcohol industry. Organized by the TWSC Executive Committee, with planning and operation by the Japan Whisky Research Centre, the Shochu Division competition will be held from February to April 2021, in line with the schedule of the Western Spirits Division. This is the second time the competition features a Shochu Division, with the objectives of discovering new value in Japan's national spirit and increasing awareness of the category for promotion inside and outside of Japan. The hybrid judging process consists of a first round of remote judging by about 50 shochu professionals and 100 Western spirits professionals, and a second round with roughly 50 judges invited for an in-person judging session.

### About Tokyo Whisky & Spirits Competition

The Tokyo Whisky & Spirits Competition (TWSC), held for the first time in 2019, is a spirits (whisky, rum, gin, tequila, vodka, brandy, etc.) competition that was built upon the Japan Whisky Research Centre's body of knowledge about whisky, and its network of spirits experts. The Shochu Division was newly introduced in the 2020 competition, where about 70% of the judges are bartenders, liquor wholesalers, and manufacturers of Western spirits, and 30% of the judges are shochu professionals. Entries are judged via blind tasting, and are each awarded up to 100 points.



### Objectives

- Building domestic and international awareness and promotion of shochu, Japan's national spirit. Supporting overseas market expansion for shochu.
- Proactive announcements to domestic and international media to appeal to general consumers, including Western spirits enthusiasts. Drive additional consumption by approaching liquor stores, importers, restaurants, and bars directly.
- Provide high-quality evaluation (scoring) and information to competition entrants, helping them to better understand customer needs and increase product quality.

## Judging Outline

- Eligible Products Honkaku shochu, awamori
- Entry Period **September 23, 2020 to December 18, 2020**(firm deadline)
- Entry Cost 20,000 yen per item (+tax)
- Judging Dates **Late February to mid-April 2021**  
Judging Round 1 (Remote Judging): Late February to mid-March  
Judging Round 2 (Judging Session): Held in Tokyo over one day in early April  
\*Details TBA
- Awards Ceremony **End of May or early June 2021**  
Scheduled to be held in Tokyo  
\*Details TBA

**Additional details will be announced in due course on the TWSC Official Website**

## Judging Process

### Round 1 (Remote Judging)

All entries are divided up into mini bottles, then sorted by category. Up to eight entries make up one flight, which is subsequently sent to a judge. Product names are not disclosed to the judges as tastings are conducted blindly. Each item is scored by around ten judges. Using glassware specified based on the category of spirit, and in a specified order, entries are awarded up to 100 points based upon evaluation of 1) the aroma, 2) the flavor, and 3) overall (balance/finish). Upon collection of all judges' score sheets, adjustments such as using the second lowest score as the minimum are made, and an average score is calculated. Scores are totaled within each category, yielding items scoring Gold or higher, Silver, and Bronze. Results will be announced at a later date.

### Round 2 (Judging Session)

A panel of around fifty judges (planned) will be invited to a venue in Tokyo. Eight judges will be assigned to a table, where they will conduct a blind tasting of items that scored highly in Round 1. Scores will be tallied after all judges complete their tastings, and judges discuss amongst themselves at each table. Superior Gold and Gold awards are finalized on this day.

### Best of the Best

After Round 2, a special team of judges will be organized. A #1 "Best of the Best" will be decided from the pool of items that were selected as Superior Gold and Gold winners. Like Round 1, judging will be held remotely, and via blind tasting.

### Hybrid judging, a two-round process to further increase evaluation quality

The Shochu Division was newly added at TWSC held in 2020, which featured an entirely remote judging process of 258 items in the Shochu Division to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. This was an unavoidable decision at the time given the coronavirus situation. However, it highlighted that there are advantages to evaluating entries individually, and advantages to being able to exchange opinions with other judges at an in-person judging session. Thus, for Tokyo Whisky & Spirits Competition 2021's Shochu Division, a hybrid judging process will be used, consisting of Round 1 with around 150 judges evaluating entries individually, and Round 2 with around 50 judges evaluating entries in-person as a group. This combination will improve overall evaluation quality, enabling judges to better select entries worthy of attention.

## TWSC2020 Results

The second TWSC, held in 2020, had 258 entries in the Shochu Division. Details are below.

Category	Entries	Awards
Rice	25	21
Barley	54	46
Sweet Potato	115	96
Awamori	24	21
Kokuto	19	16
Other	21	18

### Encouraging consumption by discovering new potential of Shochu from a Western spirits professional perspective

- In an effort to support spirits makers and provide insights leading to product quality improvements and new product development, relevant comments made during remote judging and judges' discussions will be shared with the respective entrants.
- After the Awards Ceremony, the "Tokyo Whisky & Spirits Competition Official Guide Book" is published, covering all award-winning bottles. These are distributed to liquor stores and bars/restaurants, increasing consumer sales.
- The TWSC Official Homepage is periodically updated with interviews of judges, makers, and more. TWSC's SNS accounts and email newsletters are used to distribute additional information. Announcements are also made in English, enabling shochu makers to appeal to an international audience.
- Companies whose entries win awards will be provided with medal images and other promotional tools to enhance the profile of winning bottles.
- The Judging Session (Round 2) and Awards Ceremony are scheduled to be open to members of the general public and press.

#### About Japan Whisky Research Centre

The Japan Whisky Research Centre is a membership-based enthusiast organization headed by whisky critic Mamoru Tsuchiya. Since its inception in March 2001, the organization has collected and distributed information to encourage study of whisky and alcohol culture inside and outside of Japan. Alongside members of the industry, the organization plans and executes initiatives to nurture enthusiasts and drinkers alike. In addition to editing and publishing Japan's only whisky magazine, Whisky Galore, the organization plans and runs whisky events, develops knowledge and evaluation skills through the Whisky Connoisseur Qualification Certification Exam, and encourages learning to further enjoy whisky with the Whisky Kentei program.



TWSC Executive Committee Chair / Japan Whisky Research Centre Representative Director

#### Mamoru Tsuchiya Profile

Born in 1954 on Sado Island, Niigata Prefecture, Japan. Graduated Gakushuin University, BA in Literature. In 1987 he moved to the UK, where he became enamored with Scotch after encountering his first single malt while on assignment in Scotland. Upon return to Japan, he began his career as a whisky critic, being named one of the "World's Best Five Whisky Writers" by Highland Distillers in 1998. He was also the whisky historical investigator for NHK's serialized TV drama "Massan," which aired from September 2014 to March 2015. He has published several books such as The Complete Guide to Single Malt Whisky, The Complete Guide to Blended Whisky (Shogakukan), Taketsuru's Life and Whisky (Tokyo Shoseki), Whisky Perfect Bible (Natsumesha), and The Literacy of Whisky (Kadokawa). He is the editor of the bimonthly "Whisky Galore" magazine.

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