



Yui Honen Odori (Yui Harvest Dance)
Setouchi-cho, Amami Oshima:
(Kagoshima Prefectural Intangible Folk Cultural Property)



Hirase Mankai Ittasse Harvest Festival
Totsugo-cho, Amami Oshima:
(Nationally Designated Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property)



Tete Muchitabori (Tete Harvest Festival)
(Tokunoshima-cho, Tokunoshima)



Hachigatsu odori (August Dance)
(Kikar-cho, Kikarjima)



Yoron Jugoya Odori (Yoron Full Moon Night Dance (Second Group))
Yoron-cho, Yoronjima:
(Nationally Designated Important Intangible Folk Property)



Kamihirakawa Daija Odori (Kamihirakawa Big Saikie Dance)
China-cho, Okinoerabujima:
(Kagoshima Prefectural Intangible Folk Cultural Property)

Planning and Editing

Oshima Branch Office of Kagoshima Prefectural Government /
Amami Branch of Kagoshima Sake and Shochu
Makers Association

<https://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/aq01/chiiki/oshima/index.html>

AMAMI KOKUTO SHOCHU

Amami Islands Original Spirits



❖ Distilled spirits made exclusively in Amami ❖

There is a type of distilled spirits made from brown sugar, which is made only in the Amami Islands. It is Amami kokuto (brown sugar) shochu.

It is a distilled beverage like brandy and whiskey, but has a clear color and zero sugar content. Each sip brings a gentle aroma of brown sugar, which is made from sugarcane, and a mellow

flavor of rice-malt. Shochu has been enjoyed by many as an authentic spirits (honkaku shochu), evoking the nature and passion of Amami to people who taste it. In recent years, the spirits have won a number of world-class contests and the reputation of shochu has been spreading worldwide.



sugarcane field

AMAMI KOKUTO SHOCHU



kokuto (brown sugar)

❖ Distilled Spirits of the World ❖

It is said that distillation to create spirits started in ancient Greece, when Aristotle experimented with distillation techniques. The same method had created brandy, whiskey and vodka in the West that traveled the Silk Road to the East.

In India it became arrack, baijiu in China, and raom in Thailand. When it reached Ryukyu, it produced awamori. And finally when the use of sugarcane was introduced to the Amami islands, it became what we now know as shochu.

❖ History of AMAMI KOKUTO SHOCHU ❖

It is not clear when the production of shochu started in Amami. The islands were placed under the control of the Satsuma feudal clan in 1609 after nearly a century under the tutelage of the Kingdom of Ryukyu. Given that the islanders were ordered to pay distilled spirits in tribute in 1623, it is believed that distillation techniques had already existed before that time.

Sagenta Nagoya, a Satsuma clansman who had been exiled to Amami Oshima, wrote Nantou Zatsuwu (Various Stories of the South Islands) (1850 - 1855), a collection of illustrations and writings of daily life in the islands. It depicted scenes of shochu production, with illustrations of chinquapin, millet and cycad among other nuts being used to make various types of distilled spirits. Nagoya described, "there are occasions when a transparent liquid from sugarcane is added to spirits which locals would call tomejiru shochu," which indicates that this might have been the origin of shochu.

However, at the time, the Satsuma clan had a monopoly on kokuto, and common people did not have access to it. The Satsuma clan also prohibited distillation during the sugar refining season.

In the Meiji period, a secret recipe for making awamori was brought into Amami from Okinawa, which led to a surge of home distilling. The distillation of alcohol at home was prohibited in 1899, but people continued the practice secretly. The Amami Islands were placed under the American administration after World War II and isolated as distribution routes to and from the mainland were restricted. Availability of rice for everyday consumption was also drastically reduced, and brewers substituted the rice normally used to make malt with barley and potatoes. However, since there were no buyers for such spirits, people began to use leftover brown sugar to produce spirits, which developed into the production method of Amami Shochu we know today.

When Amami was returned to Japan in December 1953, the government acknowledged how shochu had been produced by the local people up to that time. The Amami Islands became the only place in Japan where people were allowed to use kokuto to produce liquor with the stipulation that it be used in combination with rice malt under a very special exception to the Liquor Tax Law.



Introduction of Amami Archipelago and Home of Shochu

The Amami Archipelago is made up of Amami Oshima, Kakeromajima, Ukejima, Yorojima, Kikajima, Tokunoshima, Okinoerabujima and Yoronjima. These islands stretch across the Pacific from Amami Oshima, which is located approximately 380 km south-southwest of Kagoshima City, to Yoronjima, which exists 23 km from the northern tip of the main island of Okinawa. It has a subtropical oceanic climate, with a warm temperature of an average of 21°C throughout the year. Each of the beautiful islands with its distinct features is home to rare species of animals and plants. This uniqueness has made the island group as a candidate site for the World Natural Heritage. Island songs and dances and other parts of the fundamental culture of Japan are also vibrantly alive on the islands.



Location map of the Amami Islands

❖ AMAMI KOKUTO SHOCHU Today ❖

Now there are 26 distilleries on five of the Amami Islands, producing around 170 different brands of shochu, including the 18 well-known brands. The reason for such a diversity lies in the different ways of production at each distillery, as well as the available natural resources of the islands.

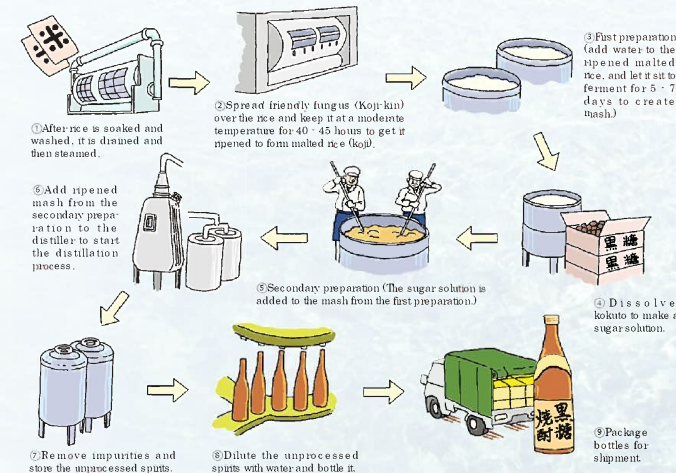
Water is one of the key ingredients. As Kikajima, Okinoerabujima and Yoronjima were formed by elevated coral reefs. The water there contains a lot of minerals such as calcium and magnesium, and is called hard water. On the other hand, Amami Oshima has many mountains and forests and is made up of old stratum. The water there contains less minerals and is

called soft water. Tokunoshima has both of these features, having hard and soft water supplies. Such diverse characteristics give a rise to different ways of making shochu from island to island.

There are two ways to distill shochu at the present time. One employs a traditional atmospheric distillation that capitalizes on the flavors of ingredients. Another method is a vacuum distillation which creates a milder aroma and flavor.

Furthermore, malted rice is used in the first fermentation and brown sugar is added and dissolved in the second fermentation to produce Amami kokuto shochu.

Making AMAMI KOKUTO SHOCHU



Differences between Amami Kokuto Shochu and Rum

Rum is made from molasses through a single fermentation. Under Japanese Liquor Tax Law, it is categorized as Western spirits. On the other hand, the production of Amami kokuto shochu involves two stages. In the first stage, malted rice is fermented, and then a block of dissolved kokuto is added before another fermentation in the second stage. This two-stage method distillation creates an aroma and a profound richness, which characterizes an authentic (single distillation) spirits. The liquor tax is also cheaper than that of rum.



① Straight

For those who want to fully experience the taste of Amami kokuto shochu, chill the bottle and a glass in the refrigerator before serving. Placing beverages with high alcohol content (40 or higher) in the freezer can also bring out a surprisingly deep taste.

② On the rocks

The savvy way chief brewers recommend to fully enjoy the sweet sugarcane aroma and depth of Amami kokuto shochu. Also, it has become very popular among women who seek authenticity. Best tasted when the ice starts to melt.



③ Kokuto shochu with hot water

The high road to enjoy the aroma and full flavor. Pouring 60°C water in a heat-resistant glass and then adding Amami kokuto shochu creates a convection current that helps the liquids to blend evenly. The ideal temperature at which to drink it is about 40°C, the point at which the savory flavors of the mix stabilize. At that temperature, it is also good for health and the mix emits a full aroma and presents rich taste. Enjoy a hot water to spirits ratio of 4:6 or 5:5, or whatever your preference.

Tasting its aroma and rich flavor

The authentic way to drink Amami Kokuto Shochu!

⑤ The "twice-up"

A 5:5 ratio known as the high road to drinking Japanese whiskey is also recommended for Amami kokuto shochu. It is perfect for unprocessed or barrel-brewed shochu with high alcohol content.

Let's AMAMI SHO Enjoy KOKUTO CHU!

How will you drink yours tonight? Let us show you numerous ways to enjoy Amami kokuto shochu.



④ Kokuto shochu with water

The most popular way to drink shochu. It gives a clean, light taste. Unlike the way you prepare it with hot water, pour shochu into a glass first and then add water. Adding ice cubes will give it even a crisper taste. Enjoy water to spirits ratios of 4:6 and 5:5, or as you wish. Preparing the mix the night before, rather than immediately before drinking, will make Amami kokuto shochu even more mellow.

Tomato juice

Pour tomato juice into a glass containing kokuto shochu and ice cubes. Add Tabasco sauce and pepper as an option.



Coffee and Shochu

Blending coffee and Amami kokuto shochu. It adds a deep and fresh aroma of coffee that is very refreshing to taste.

Recommended either during or after eating. Coffee without sugar seems to be the best, but again add whatever you like.

ANYTHING GOES BY ADDING YOUR FAVORITE DRINK

Kokuto shochu with its fruity aroma and crispy taste makes a perfect companion to many beverages.

Ways to Enjoy Kokuto with Beauty and Health in Mind
New styles to enjoy kokuto shochu

Add paprika or cucumbers

Add slices of red and yellow paprika to your favorite kokuto shochu. It looks great and you can eat it too. If you prefer sweet flavors, char the paprika first until the surface turns brown-black, and then peel the blackened skin before adding it to your drink. Also you can try out shochu by adding slices of cucumber and ice cubes. Muddle them to release a fresh aroma before pouring shochu in.

Add shiso and chili pepper

Cut shiso in quarters, wash a fresh chili pepper and add the two to your favorite kokuto shochu. This surprising duo gives a refreshing twist to food.



Milk and Shochu

Mix cold milk, kokuto shochu and ice cubes in a glass. For a mellow taste, sugar can be added. Use soy milk to make it healthier.



Vinegar

Sour cocktails have become popular recently. Mix a favorite vinegar into shochu and then dilute with soda water.



With fruits of the season

Seasonal fruits can be added to Amami kokuto shochu to create unique cocktails.

<Ingredients: 60 ml spirits, 1/2 lime, 10 peppermint leaves, 1 tsp. sugar, crushed ice, soda>

- ① Place the mint, sugar and soda water in a glass and muddle these ingredients.
- ② Zest a lime and put half or a quarter of it in a glass and muddle again.
- ③ Add crushed ice.
- ④ Pour shochu and add more crushed ice.
- ⑤ Add some mint leaves on top.

Kokuto Shochu Mojito

Passion Fruit and Kokuto Shochu Mixed Drink

Cut a passion fruit into top and bottom halves and place them on a plate with the open side up. Pour shochu into each half and mix it with the fruit with a spoon. Enjoy the seeds and liquid together.

Passion Fruit and Kokuto Shochu Daquiri

Remove the seeds from a passion fruit with a spoon. Mix it with 10 ml of lemon juice and 1 - 2 ml of syrup, and then strain before adding to shochu and stir slightly.

Tips from bartenders

Katsuhisa Seisho / The fruity aroma of Amami kokuto shochu is great for cocktails. Enjoy the flavor.



Shiho Nishi / There are so many intuitive ways to enjoy Amami kokuto shochu



Enjoying Amami Shimauta music and food



Amami kokuto shochu, with zero sugar content and a fruity, sweet aroma and refreshing taste, can be paired with all kinds of foods and drunk at any point in a dining setting.

Pairing Shochu with Foods Will Go a Long Way



Liver paste



Fish carpaccio



Abura-zomen noodles



Pacific bonito sashimi



Aosa seaweed tempura



Stewed pork ribs

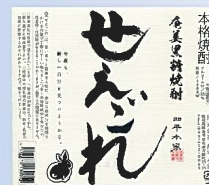
AMAMI KOKUTO SHOCHU

Amami Islands Original Spirits

Tenkai no Kura, Ltd.
(currently closed)

Representative brand: "Tenkai"

Photo: Glorious sunset on Amami Oshima (Ohama Seaside Park)



Seegore / Nishihira Honke, Co., Ltd.

21-25 Naze funata-cho, Amami City, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-52-0059
Founded: 1925
<http://www.kokuto-shochu.com/>

Distinctive masterpiece



Brand: "Seegore"
(25% ABV/1.8 £)
The liquor name Seegore means "drink" in Amami dialect.

Its notable feature is its rich and aromatic creamy taste, created through unfiltered preparations.



A panoramic view of the distillery facing a main street of Amami City street

Distillery

Shinzo Shimano, a writer/photographer, grew up near the distillery (his father was also a writer by the name of Toshio Shimao). In one of Shinzo's novels, he wrote, "Sehe," a product of Nishihira Distillery is the best distilled liquor in the world." This fictional distillery seems to have been based upon Nishihira Honke. The pride of the people toward the locally-produced spirits is visible even in such a piece of literary work.

Manufacturing features

Produced by a traditional three-step preparation process. In the first step, malted rice is fermented for about 40 hours in a pot. Then the half-malted rice, which has been fermented for 20 hours, is added on the second step. On the third step, dissolved brown sugar is added and kept for the next preparation. Finally, all ingredients are poured into enamel-coated iron cast tanks. The entire process is a labor-intensive and requires much effort. The long and slow progress of saccharification slowly progresses and brings out the flavor of the malted rice. Furthermore, this distillery employs a unique three-way variable valve distillatory apparatus which allows them to extract three different flavors of unprocessed spirits from the necks of three valves spouting from three different heights, adding depth to the taste of their shochu.



Distillery interior, coordinated in blue



Literary Monument of Toshio Shimao (Naze, Amami City)

Yayoi / Yayoi Shochu Zyo uzo usho, LPC.

15-3 Naze kohama-cho, Amami City, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-52-1205
Founded: 1922
<http://kokuto-shochu.co.jp/>

Commitment in making malted rice



Brand: "Yayoi"
(30% ABV/1.8 £)
Rich with a crisp finish.
[Shochu made with malted rice, pot preparations, and atmospheric distillation]

Distillery

The distillery is located in an area that used to be called Karahama; thus Yayoi's shochu was known as "Karahama-zee" by the local people. After the revisions in the liquor law in 1954, the company began to produce Amami kokuto shochu, but the brand name of "Yayoi" has continued to be used.



A panoramic view of the distillery

Manufacturing features

The principal philosophy of production is in making shochu that is ready to be enjoyed right after it is produced, without requiring it to be aged. This concept has broken the conventional idea of "unprocessed spirits having to be matured." Thai rice is used for preparing koji because of the reliable quality of Thai rice. White or yellow rice is also used, depending upon which brand to make. They believe that of all of the processes in making shochu, preparation of the malted rice in the first step is the most important process.



The entire view of Naze Harbor (Naze, Amami City)



Checking the color and aroma of banai preparations

Amami Sang o / Nishihira Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

11-21 Naze komata-cho, Amami City, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-52-0171
Founded: 1927
<https://www.kana-sango.com/index.html>

Traditional three-step preparation



Brand: "Amami Sango"
(30% ABV/1.8 £)
A sharp, flavorful shochu enjoyed by all ages.
[White malted rice, crock preparation, and atmospheric distillation]

Distillery

Established as Tomoe Beer, Ltd. in 1952 during the American administration of the Amami Islands. During the time when trade with the main islands was cut off, this distillery produced awamori, beers, ciders, yogurt drinks and other beverages that islanders sought after.



A panoramic view of the distillery



Pots in the first preparation and the enamel cast iron tanks for the second preparation

Manufacturing features

The traditional three-step preparation process has been employed since the chief brewer, the owner's grandmother, started the company. The first preparation involves adding malted rice in a pot. "Han-koji (half-koji)," which requires half the normal time to ferment, is added for the secondary preparation. In the third step, the previously prepared materials are combined with dissolved Amami kokuto in enamel cast iron tanks. After distillation, skipping the usual cooling and filtration processes, distillery staff spend hours carefully skimming fat from the tanks.



Kinsakubaru, a location site of a movie, "Godzilla" (Naze, Amami City)



Lento / Amami Oshima Kaiun Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

2924-2 Yuwan, Uken-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-67-2753
Founded: 1954
<http://www.lento.co.jp/>

Distillery of acoustic aging

Distillery

Started by a group of amateurs who studied the basics of brewing from experts and called on technical advisors from Kagoshima mainland. The group was thoroughly trained in production under chief brewer Kurose. Efforts to promote sales outside the island and to develop products designed for female fans since the company's inception have given rise to Lento, packaged in a blue bottle, which was unheard of at the time of release. Vacuum distillation and acoustic aging in which the spirits is matured to the sound of classical music give rise to a refreshing fragrance and mellow taste.



Company panorama at the foot of Mt. Yuwan



Brand: "Lento"
(25% ABV/1.8 ㊳)
Flesh aroma and light mouthfeel matured for 3 months with symphonic music. [White malted rice and vacuum distillation]

Manufacturing features

"Lento", the representative brand, is distilled to achieve a "delicate aroma and sweetness" from three key ingredients: the natural water of the Mt. Yuwan Range, a designated national park through which an ancient breath flows, and a blend of two types of yeast, one for flavor and one for aroma, to create the unprocessed spirits. That rice of reliable quality is used to make malted rice that is divided into white malted rice and black malted rice by brand. Classical music is always played in the warehouse lined with acoustic aging tanks mounted with transducers on the side that transmit musical vibrations to bind water molecules to the alcohol to create a round-bodied, smooth taste.



Calm Yakouchi Port (Yakeuchi, Uken Village)



Maturation tanks with transducers
Each month, different classical music is played in the distillery



Ryugu / Tomita Shuzojo, Ltd.

7-8 Naze infune-cho, Amami City, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-52-0043
Founded: 1951
<http://kokuto-ryugu.co.jp/>

Since its foundation, insisting on pot preparation and black malted rice

Distillery

The smallest distillery in Amami. Since the beginning of the company, they have been using the same 32 pots and black malted rice to make shochu just the way it used to be prepared in the past. The secret of its crispy, mellow taste lies in this pot preparation. These 32 pots constitute the life of Tomita Shuzojo.



A panoramic view of the distillery at the foot of Mt. Rankan



Brand: "Ryugu"
(30% ABV/1.8 ㊳)
Rich, unique flavor with a crisp finish. [Made with black malted rice, full pot preparations, and atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

Black malted rice and domestically produced regular rice are used in the rice koji. Water used for preparation and for dilution is the fresh, soft water found in springs from virgin forests of Kinsakubaru, located deep in the mountains of Amami City. The flavor cradled in each pot varies, so human intervention and care is needed to adjust the taste. This pot preparation method adds a deep, rich body to shochu. Earthy scents from the pots are also a critical element in forming the flavor of spirits.



Yamagawa, the biggest downtown on the Amami Islands



The primary preparation begins with 32 pots



Amami Rokucho / Watari Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

25-35 Naze kohama-cho, Amami City, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-52-0631
Founded: Took over original company in 2015
<http://www.watari69.com/>

Cherishing the concept of learning from the past

Distillery

Amami has a tradition of dancing to the rhythms of Rokucho, accompanied by sounds of the shamisen and taiko drums. Their representative brand, "Amami Rokucho" is named in the hopes that Amami culture is passed on to future generations. "Amami Rokucho" is an Amami kokuto shochu meticulously crafted using the traditional pot preparation and atmospheric distillation method to create a flavor that brings out the abundance of nature and its long history on Amami Oshima. The crane and sea turtle motifs on the label symbolize good fortune, representing their hope that this shochu would be a must-have for all festivals and celebrations in Amami.



Distillery entrance



Brand: "Amami Rokucho"
(30% ABV/1.8 ㊳)
[Pot preparation, atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

Young distillers have inherited the traditions of using the traditional pot preparation and atmospheric distillation method. Yet their energy and new inspiration have succeeded in bringing about a new aroma and flavor to the slow-matured Amami kokuto shochu and created fusion by utilizing the knowledge of the past.



Tachigami, an island standing at the entrance to Naze Port (Naze, Amami City)



Inside the distillery



Jougo / Amami Oshima Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

1864-2 Ura, Tatsugoo-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-62-3120
Founded: 1957
<http://www.jougo.co.jp/>

Ancient island's shochu

Distillery

The distillery was purposely moved to source Jougo water, which is highly renowned in Amami. Water used for production is drawn from 120 meters under the ground. The Hamachidorikan, a direct sale outlet adjacent to the factory, has been a tourist attraction complete with a tasting corner, sales counter, restaurant and museum.



View of the production site with its symbolic giant shochu bottles



Brand: "Jougo"
(25% ABV/1.8 ㊳)
Mild taste crowned by the famed water used in preparing the mash. [White malted rice and vacuum distillation]

Manufacturing features

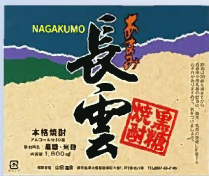
Kokuto made from sugarcane that grows in Amami Oshima is used in all products. Their products rely on high-quality water and carefully selected ingredients which go through a slow maturation. The company's shochu has been recognized in the spirits and liqueurs division of the Mondo Selection for consecutive years since 2008.



Heart Rock, a tourist site (Akaogi, Tatsugoo-cho)



Distillation process inside the distillery



Amami Nagakumo / Yamada Shuzo, Ltd.

1373-Ha Ogachi, Tatsugo-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL+81-997-62-2109
Founded: 1957
http://amamikke.com/5488/

Family-run small distillery

Distillery

The distillery is located at Ogachi, Tatsugo-cho, in the base of the Nagakumo mountains. The distillery uses the ground water from these mountains for the preparation process and when diluting unprocessed spirits. "Amami Nagakumo" is their representative brand which has been passed down from the first owner of the company and continued to be a local favorite. They employ atmospheric distillation for the primary preparations in earthenware pots.



The quiet appearance of the distillery



Brand: "Amami Nagakumo"
(30% ABV/1.8 0°)
Unique, mellow brown sugar flavor.
[White malted rice, pot preparation, and atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

Making good malted rice draws out rice flavor and is an important step in determining the taste of spirits and is vital in creating a full-bodied aroma and flavor. The company cleared the fields near the distillery in 2009 and is now cultivating sugarcane as well. Their sugarcane is fertilized with distillery by-products, and their end-product, kokuto, carries all the flavor and an aromatic punch.



Residence of Saigo Takamori, leader during the Meiji Restoration, during his exile (Tatsugo, Tatsugo-cho)



Adding malt by hand to steamed rice



Sato no Akebono / Machida Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

3321 Ogachi, Tatsugo-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL+81-997-62-5011
Founded: 1991
http://www.satoake.jp/

A drop of the Amami forest

Distillery

Undaunted in its pursuit to make high-quality shochu, Machida Shuzo opened its distillery with the latest large-scale facilities at its current location and is HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) certified. Free tastings and sales of exclusive items are available at the Sato no Akebono (Satoake) Reception Hall adjacent to the distillery facility.



The entrance to the distillery, filled with seasonal flowers



Brand: "Sato no Akebono"
(25% ABV/1.8 2°) A dash of the sweet aroma of brown sugar in a full-bodied flavor. Matured 3 years.
[White malted rice and vacuum distillation]

Manufacturing features

At the time of its founding, the distillery was the first to introduce vacuum distillation to the Amami kokuto shochu industry, which created a stir as it managed to raise the alcohol content to 25%. Domestically produced rice is used to prepare the malted rice. The representative "Sato no Akebono" brand is aged at least for 3 years.



The Amami Nature Forest Observatory where rare species of animals may be spotted (En, Tatsugo-cho)



Steaming rice in an industrial-use rice steamer



Asahi / Asahi Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

41-1 Wan, Kikai-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL+81-997-65-1531
Founded: 1916
http://www.kokuto-asahi.co.jp/

Shochu distillery on an island of sunrise

Distillery

The oldest distillery in the Amami Islands, Kikaijima is located at the most eastern point of the Amami Islands, where the rising sun comes up early. Aptly named "Asahi", or rising sun, to represent Kikaijima, the spirits were first produced as awamori but the name has been on since the company was founded.



Black tanks give the distillery a classic, modern air



Brand: "Asahi" (30% ABV/1.8 0°)
Complex richness in a traditional flavor with a sharpness aftertaste. [White malted rice and atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

"Asahi" products' ingredients are: hard water that springs from the Kikaijima island formed by coral reefs, malted rice, and brown sugar produced in Amami and in Okinawa. These ingredients give the spirits some complex richness and aftertaste with a sharp finish.

Asahi Shuzo is working on producing their spirits locally, as they stand as the island's distillery, that has been raised by the surrounding nature and island's people. Having their own farm and sugar refinery, they grow organic sugar cane and process brown sugar, and they continue to challenge on keeping their spirits made in Kikaijima. "Hi Izuru Shima no Soe" is a brand that embodies the spirit of the distillery, by only using brown sugar produced at the distillery.



Hyakunodai Observatory where you can view the entire island (Kadan, Kikai-cho)



Slowly dissolving the brown sugar without boiling it is key



Kikaijima / Kikaijima Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

2966-12 Agaren, Kikai-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL+81-997-65-0251
Founded: 1916
http://www.kurochu.jp/

Gleeful shochu made on a radiant island

Distillery

The staff strives to distill a spirits that can only be made here, on Kikaijima, "the radiant island that makes radiant spirits." Kikaijima Shuzo nicknamed its Amami kokuto shochu "kurochu" and calls it that in all promotions.



Distillery conveniently located near the ocean for shipping



Brand: "Kikaijima" (25% ABV/1.8 0°) Old-school sweet scent and fresh throat feel. [White malted rice and atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

The "Kikaijima" brand relies on the latest techniques in the atmospheric distillation that has always been used. Time is given to the spirits to make best use of natural island resources. Longstanding fans were thrilled when Kikaijima Shuzo shochu was awarded the Gold Prize in its first-ever entry to the Monde Selection, an international institute of culinary evaluation, and again the following year. Kurochu flavor relies most heavily on the water and maturation tanks. Hard water is drawn from a mountain spring 30 meters underground for the preparations. It's full of minerals and nutrients that accelerate fermentation of malted rice and yeast. Hard water that is treated to be soft is used to dilute the spirits. All products contain unprocessed spirits matured for 1 year or longer.



One road in sugarcane field (Nagamine, Kikai-cho)



Temperature control is so critical that it is checked every 30 minutes to 1 hour



Amami / Amami Shurui, Co., Ltd.

1194 Kametsu, Tokunoshima-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.81+997-82-0254
Founded: 1965
http://www.amamishurui.co.jp/

Sparkling flavor blended from 5 distilleries



Brand: "Amami"
(39% ABV/1.8 2)
Blend of flavors from 5 distilleries.
Unique aroma and depth with clean flavor. [White malted rice and atmospheric distillation]

Distillery

Amami Shurui is the first joint bottling company in the Amami Islands that transports equal amounts from five distilleries to make into products for sale. Every distillery uses nearly a 1:1.8 ratio of rice and brown sugar in the same atmospheric distillation process, so that the unprocessed spirits brought by tanker truck from the distilleries is cooled, filtered and blended to create a shochu flavored like no other.



Panorama of Amami Shurui, Co., Ltd. factory



Carefully testing and blending the features of unprocessed spirits



Tanker truck hauling unprocessed spirits from distilleries



Bullfighting, part of Tokunooshima culture

Manufacturing features

The "Amami" brand is a blend of unprocessed spirits made by atmospheric distillation at 5 distilleries to create a unique aroma, rich flavor and smoothness on the palate. Using white malted rice and atmospheric distillation, a chief brewer relies on his experience and techniques to carefully analyze the ever-varying delicate state of unprocessed spirits to determine how best to blend a brand's flavor. The result is a depth of taste born by blending different unprocessed spirits that only a joint bottler could produce.



Distillery panorama

Nakamura Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

43-12 Hetono, Amagi-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL.81+997-85-2016 / Founded: 1947 / Brand: "Fukazakari"



Distillery panorama

Matsunaga Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

1283-1 Asan, Isen-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL.81+997-86-2070 / Founded: 1952 / Brand: "Matsushika"



Distillery panorama

Takaka Zozou, Co., Ltd.

982-1 Kametsu, Tokunoshima-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL.81+997-83-0014 / Founded: 1949 / Brand: "Mandai"



Distillery panorama

Amakawa Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

789 Kodaka, Tokunoshima-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL.81+997-84-1221 / Founded: 1947 / Brand: "Amakawa"



Distillery panorama

Kamezawa Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

849-1 Kametsu, Tokunoshima-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL.81+997-83-0028 / Founded: 1921 / Brand: "Mauchi"



Shimano Napoleon / Nishikawa Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

474-565 Shirai, Tokunoshima-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-82-1650
Founded: 1950
http://syuzouonline.shop-pro.jp/

Passionate shochu / Glass of happiness



Brand: "Shimano Napoleon"
(25% ABV/1.8 2)
Crisp flavor, easy to drink. [White malted rice, pot preparations, and vacuum distillation]

Distillery

Mid-range hard water drawn from 190 meters below the distillery is used in preparations and for dilution. Hard bedrock containing coral layers formed about 100 million years ago during the Mesozoic era have an exceptional balance of minerals in transparent water formed over several tens of thousands of years that give shochu its crisp flavor.



Distillery on a massive lot



Matured in unglazed ceramic pot fired at 1200 degrees

Manufacturing features

Dissolved brown sugar is added to the pot of first mash in a second and final third stage, and then the mash is prepared in a stainless steel tank. The fermenting mash is monitored by a temperature-control system that automatically controls cooling when the temperature rises due to fermentation or other reasons. However, manual assistance with a paddle or by other means is essential to check the condition of the mash.



Bronze statue of legendary Asashio Taou, yokozena sumo champion (Ito kawa, Tokunooshima-cho)



Tenka Ichi / Niir Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

2360 Tamina, China-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
TEL.+81-997-93-5232 (Distillery)
Founded: 1920
http://www.shimacma-sendenbu.com/okinorabu/7097

Drunk on the aroma of brown sugar



Brand: "Tenka Ichi"
(30% ABV, 1.8 2)
Deep, crisp flavor with intoxicating freshness. [White malted rice and atmospheric distillation]

Distillery

The distillery produced and sold awamori when it was founded, but after the plant was burned down in the air raids and suffered damage in a 1977 typhoon on Okinoerabu, a new plant was built that is still used today. The distillery uses the shitsugi method of storing and maturing Okinawan awamori, and produces the 5-year "Suirendo" and the 12-year "Kotobuki" brands of well-cultured spirits.



Distillery near the water source at Tamina Village



Milk coolers to cool tanks

Manufacturing features

A higher ratio of brown sugar than malted rice is used in the preparation, and preparations 1 through 3 are all done in the same tank. Bulk milk coolers for dairy farming are used to cool the tanks with water from the Kuragou water source. The well-known "Tenka Ichi" brand is matured for 1 year and then diluted with water passed through a water softener. "Tenka Musou" is made partially by a new method in which brown sugar is added at room temperature to capture the sweet aroma of brown sugar in the mash.



Cape Tamina, one of the top 10 sightseeing locations in Amami (Tamina, China-cho)



Ine no Tsuyu / Okinoerabu Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

1999-1 Hana Toi, Tamashio aza, Wadamari-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
 TEL+81-997-92-0185
 Founded: 1969
<http://www.inehotsuyu.com/>

Round, full flavor made from 4 distilleries

Distillery

Six distilleries came together in 1969 to create Okinoerabu Shuzo. Now, the representative brand "Ine no Tsuyu" comes from 4 distilleries: Uchihigura, Saota Shuzo, Oki Shuzo and Kanzaki Sangyu.



Unprocessed spirits from 4 distilleries are bottled individually or in a blend



Okinoerabu Shuzo factory surrounded by subtropical plants



Brand: "Ine no Tsuyu" (30% ABV/1.8 fl. oz.)
 Mellow aroma and round taste with a satisfying mouthfeel. [White malted rice and atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

The well-known "Ine no Tsuyu" brand from Okinoerabu Shuzo has the sweetness and richness of an atmospheric distillation with the roundness of 1-year maturation. The "Erabu" blend of atmospherically distilled unprocessed spirits from Saota Shuzo, Oki Shuzo and Kanzaki Sangyu has a full aroma and deep flavor gained from the blend of spirits from 3 distilleries. In "Erabu", the barrel-stored "Shirayuri" adds depth to a sweet aroma and richness from the barrel to evoke an elegant taste reminiscent of the famed white lilies of the island.



Brand: "Erabu" (30% ABV, 1.8 fl. oz.) / Blend of distilled unprocessed spirits from the blend of spirits from 3 distilleries: Saota, Oki and Kanzaki



The famed Erabu Lily of Okinoerabujima

Uchihigaura

536 Wadamari, Wadamari-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL+81-997-92-1146 / Uchihigaura manufactures about 80% of Okinoerabu Shuzo. Founded in 1930 as an awamori manufacturer



Distillery panorama

Saota Shuzo, Ltd.

1318 Kunigami, Wadamari-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL/FAX +81-997-92-2124 / Founded: 1951 / Brand: "Tsuizumi"



Distillery panorama

Oki Shuzo, Ltd.

598 Tetchina, Wadamari-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL/FAX +81-997-92-0222 / Founded: 1917 / Brand: "Asahizakura"



Distillery panorama

Kanzaki Sangyu, Ltd.

434 Kamishiro, China-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture / TEL +81-997-93-3702 / Founded: 1950 / Brand: "Koufuku"



Shouryu / Harada Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

379-2 China, China-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
 TEL+81-997-93-2128
 Founded: 1947
<http://www.hamdasuzo.com>

A drop of mellow heating

Distillery

Established by splitting from a brewery making awamori. The most well-known brand is matured 5 years. Unprocessed spirits matured 5 years are blended with another unprocessed spirits stored in oak barrels and matured another 5 years to create an aromatic, rich kokuto shochu.



Checking bottles one by one to ensure no impurities are present



China Pot is visible from the distillery



Brand: "Shouryu" (30% ABV/1.8 fl. oz.)
 5-year well-cured spirits. Round flavor and richness. [White malted rice and atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

In addition to the "Shouryu" brand, the distillery is doing more long-term maturation, producing brands matured for periods as short as 3 years and as long as 10 years before shipping. This creates the mellow aroma and roundness you can only find in the rich flavor of atmospheric distillation of unprocessed spirits given ample storage and maturation.



Stalactites at the Shouryuudou Cave tourist attraction



Shima Yuusen / Arimura Shuzo, Co., Ltd.

226-1 Chabana, Yoron-cho, Oshima-gun, Kagoshima Prefecture
 TEL+81-997-97-2302
 Founded: 1947
<http://www.shimacamsendenbu.com/yoron/4916>

Gift from Yoronjima

Distillery

Arimura Shuzo is the sole Amanai kokuto shochu distillery on Yoronjima. Hard water springing up from the rising coral reef is used in the first and second preparations. The water gives it a sharpness and refreshing aftertaste. There is a fun drinking ritual on Yoronjima called "Yoron Kempou" in which the brand "Shima Yuusen" is used. The low 20% ABV content is diluted for the custom of usually drinking shochu straight in Yoronjima.



The first and second preparations are made in these pots



Yoronjima's only distillery is opened to tourists



Brand: "Shima Yuusen" (20% ABV/1.8 fl. oz.)
 A sharpness with refreshing aftertaste. [White malted rice, 100% pot-fermented, atmospheric distillation]

Manufacturing features

White malted rice and Thai rice are primarily used in both the first and second preparations. The atmospheric distillation is done the old-fashioned way in pots. In the final preparation, black malted rice is used. Yoronjima tap water (hard ground water) is used in preparations, and super soft water for dilution. Since it's often drunk straight, the most popular brand of island shochu is set at the lowest ABV of 20%.



Beautiful Yungahama Beach that rises only at low tide (Furusato, Yoron-cho)