

DEWAZAKURA TAKES SAKE TO WORLD MARKETS

Tohoku produces many different types of sake. Miho Kawasaki introduces a sake brewer from Yamagata Prefecture that has a well-established reputation overseas, **Dewazakura Sake Brewery**.

Exports of sake have been soaring in recent years. In 2000 the annual volume of exports was approximately 7,400 kl, but in 2010 this reached an all-time high of approximately 13,000 kl. The largest export market is the United States (approximately 3,700 kl), followed by South Korea (approximately 2,500 kl).

Founded in 1892, Dewazakura Sake Brewery in Tendo, Yamagata Prefecture, is one sake brewer that is concentrating on exports. Its

markets include the United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, China, Brazil and India. Last year, it exported approximately 90 kl of sake to twenty countries.

However, just as the volume of exports had been steadily increasing, on March 11 the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred.

“Fortunately, none of our installations or employees sustained any direct damage,” says Masumi Nakano, president of Dewazakura Sake Brewery. “However, distribution holdups owing to gasoline shortages, together with the cancellation of festivals and other events, resulted in a drop in sake sales. Also, an unfavorable reputation caused by the nuclear power plant accident resulted in a significant fall in exports of sake to Europe and China.”

Today, however, six months after the earthquake, domestic sales are gradually picking up. Exports of sake to the United States are also expanding. As a result, the volume of exports this year is expected to show an increase of a few percent compared with last year.

Smiles for All

Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, Dewazakura Sake Brewery launched the Earthquake Reconstruction Project Smiles for All, donating a portion of its sales proceeds to earth-



Omachi was awarded the Junmai Daiginjo Trophy at the 2011 International Wine Challenge. Omachi is the name of one of several varieties of rice used to make sake.



Dewazakura Museum of Art opened in 1988, exhibiting traditional ceramics, crafts and calligraphy. The museum is housed in a traditional Japanese home built in the Meiji period (1868–1912) which used to belong to the father of Masumi Nakano, the president of Dewazakura Sake Brewery.

quake reconstruction.

As a part of its mecenat activities Dewazakura Sake Brewery owns and operates the Dewazakura Museum of Art in Tendo, which exhibits mainly South Korean ceramics and handicrafts. Yamagata Prefecture is taking in victims from Miyagi Prefecture and Iwate Prefecture, and the victims like to visit this art museum.

“When I heard victims say that seeing the artworks made them feel at peace, I was glad we had been able to render assistance in this way,” says Nakano. “Being in a neighboring prefecture to the disaster area, we intend to provide long-term assistance in the reconstruction of the area.”

In July, as they continued to provide earthquake reconstruction assistance, Nakano received some wonderful news: Dewazakura’s Omachi sake had been awarded the Junmai Daiginjo Trophy (for *junmai ginjo* and *junmai daiginjo* types of high-grade sake; 163 entries) in the Sake Category (over 460 entries) of the world’s largest wine contest, the International Wine Chal-

lenge held in the United Kingdom.

“Entries included sake from Miyagi Prefecture that was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake, so I honestly felt it would be good if that sake won an award,” says Nakano. “Now, as a sake brewer from Eastern Japan, I feel that I have to work hard to produce even better sake.”

From now on, Dewazakura Sake Brewery says it will be proactive in further expanding its market in the United States. Until now, the majority of its customers in the United States were Japanese restaurants, but recently there has

been an increase in other types of outlet. And even regular liquor stores in the United States are now preparing to sell sake brewed by Dewa-



Bottles of sake produced by Dewazakura Sake Brewery on the counter of a fusion cuisine restaurant in New York

zakura Sake Brewery.

“I want to make sake popular in ordinary households in the United States,” says Nakano. “I should very much like to see more people overseas enjoying sake to aid in the reconstruction of Tohoku too.” HU

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