

# In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 10

## Ai-no-Sawa Junmai Ginjo

Text/ Kaori Haishi (sake sommelier) Photography/ Susumu Nagao

### Aizawa Brewery

Address: Horigome-machi 3954-1, Sano-shi, Tochigi  
Telephone: 0283-22-0423

- Alcohol content: 15~16% ● Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage): 50%
- Nihonshu-do (Sake Meter Value + dry, -sweet): +2
- Rice: Yamada-nishiki ● Volume: 720ml
- Price: 1,665 yen (tax inclusive)



Shoko Aizawa's first junmai ginjo as a master brewer won the Tochigi Governor's Prize.

### Spirited Sake from a Female Master Brewer

Women won't be held back anymore.

Today terms such as "grass-eaters" and "ornamental plant" are being used more and more to describe a gentler and non-aggressive type of man, and men are increasingly going on the defensive. In contrast, women are firing up and breaking down traditional occupational stereotypes to become active in many fields. Female master brewers are a prime example. Women used to be banned from the sake world, an attitude that persisted even into the Showa era. Although they have become more common in the sake industry in recent years, it is still a male dominated business.

Shoko Aizawa of Aizawa Brewery is one of a handful of female master brewers. After graduating from junior college she

worked as a secretary for a professor and at a university hospital, but after her father suddenly passed away she joined the family brewery. When the master brewer there grew too old to carry on she also took on the job of master brewer.

This junmai ginjo Ai-no-Sawa sake is an embodiment of Aizawa's love for her work. It was the first sake she produced as a master brewer, and therefore holds strong memories for her, but it also won the Tochigi Prefecture Governor's Prize.

Learning this heightened my anticipation even more. When I poured the sake into the glass, a sweet-smelling mango fragrance wafted up.

It was not the delicate sake that you might expect from a woman brewer, but instead one with a robust rice umami as its core flavor. I took a sip and the umami seemed to slowly melt like ice.

For a while it was sweet-sour, then a light dryness made an appearance, leaving an aftertaste as it slowly trailed off. This sake has both elegance and a dignified beauty.

Such sake goes well with dishes containing fruit. Something like a seasonal salad of persimmons and shungiku (edible chrysanthemum) greens, or apple with a sesame dressing, would bring out its sweet-sourness. I can also recommend pouring a little ice-cold junmai ginjo Ai-no-Sawa over frozen grapes and popping them into the mouth whole, skin and all, for dessert. Although this sake would go with any kind of food, avoid strongly-flavored dishes so as not to detract from its elegance.

I feel as if the decent thing to do by Ai-no-Sawa is to drink it slowly over a leisurely conversation with someone, appreciating the sense of time going by.