

Remarks by H. E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the IWC 2024 Award Winning Sake Tasting Event
on Wednesday 10 July 2024

Distinguished Guests,

I would not like to speak long because I understand my best role this evening is to keep my remarks shorter so that the guests of this evening can start sake tasting earlier and eventually enjoy more time for doing so.

I am truly delighted to welcome you all to the Embassy of Japan in the UK this evening, including those active at the forefront of sake production, distribution, serving and promotion. My wife and I would like to convey our deep gratitude for your participation in the International Wine Challenge 2024 Award Winning Sake Tasting Event.

To be honest with you, I am always thrilled to hold this event here at the Embassy because it is undoubtedly the most valuable opportunity in the UK for us to relish such a variety of delicious types of sake at the same time. It is indeed encouraging that as many as 1,504 sake brands entered this year's IWC Sake Awards from across Japan, and the best of them are now being provided for you, the guests of this occasion.

It is my great pleasure to celebrate the overwhelming achievements of the fourteen Japanese sake brewers, who have gone through the rigorous judgment process under the intensifying competition this year. I would like to offer my sincere compliments to all the winners for their perseverance in maintaining and refining their approach to producing excellent sake with their incomparable expertise, while facing a host of challenges both domestically and internationally.

As you know, the market for alcoholic beverages, particularly those of foreign origin, is generally very competitive here in the UK in the light of this country's traditional drinking culture. Nevertheless, I do sense a growing awareness of Japanese sake among British people. In this regard, may I extend my admiration to the IWC sake judges, the Sake Samurai Association and many others for their endeavours in the British sake sector over so many years, which have been boosting the popularity of Japanese sake in the UK.

I earnestly believe that sake, which fully represents Japanese tradition and culture with its long history and refined flavour, can play an important role in developing the partnership between Japan and the UK through our respective drinking cultures. I trust sake will strengthen its role as a bridge between the peoples of our countries and will facilitate extensive collaboration among ourselves.

Thank you very much.