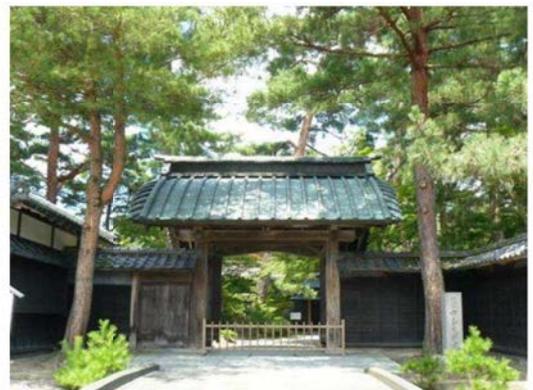


History of the Ichishima family and the brewery.

Aumont Sake Brewery has been producing wonderful sake since its founding nearly 230 years ago. Owing its quality to local rice, pure water and expert skill, our sake has a very good reputation both in Japan and other countries.

The Ichishima head family moved to the Shibata area in 1598 accompanied by the lord of the Shibata Clan, Sir Mizoguchi. The family had various businesses such as pharmaceuticals, finance and cargo shipping.

While being engaged in various businesses, the Ichishima family also undertook the cultivation of a huge area of swamp wasteland covering much of the land, and in the end, they owned nearly 12,000 acres, which made them one of the five biggest landowners in Japan at that time. Rumor had it they could access neighboring towns just by walking through their own land.



The house of Ichishima head family. Now open to public.

In 1790, Hidematsu Ichishima moved out from the head family.

While operating lumber and candle businesses, he started a sake brewery on the premises of Suwa shrine where Ichishima Brewery now exists.

The very first sake produced by Hidematsu was named “SUWA-MORI” after the Suwa Shrine.

It had a sweet and mild flavor.



Hidematsu Ichishima. The first head of Ichishima sake Brewery,



Old sake bottle labeled "SUWA- MORI".



Ichishima Sake Brewery in Meiji era (around 1900)

The 4th head, Chomatsu Ichishima designed the "AUMONT" label which resembles the royal crest in Europe. During his studies in Europe, he was impressed by the royal crest and came up with the idea for arranging a new label, as shown in the figure to the right:



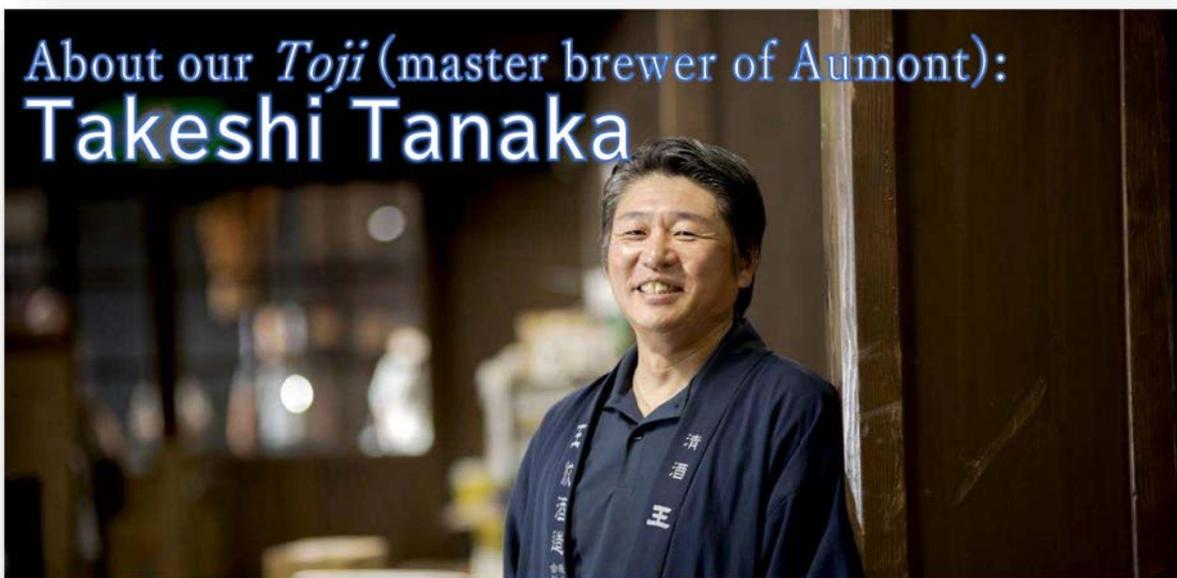
The label of AUMONT

The word "AUMONT" was created by combining two European words meaning water and mountains. He may have chosen this name as pure water from the mountains is essential for sake production.



In modern days, our main brand is "AUMONT". We try to preserve our tradition, but also, we produce sake which matches the current trends and tastes of customers, such as the "Yume" series of Junmai and the "Karen" series which we target mainly for those who are not familiar with sake, such as young people and women.





Skills are essential for producing good sake. Our Toji (master brewer) Takeshi Tanaka is one of only eight ※Zengiren SAKE Masters in Japan. He and all other brewers who are involved in sake production have a first-grade license for sake brewing. Our brewers devote themselves to making the best possible sake.

※**Zengiren SAKE Meister:** A skilled Toji who has passed the technical skill test conducted under the Human Resources Development Promotion Act. Currently, there are only eight SAKE Meisters in Japan. They have more than 20 years of work experience, excellent skills and a track record of activities, and are enthusiastic about training younger brewers and passing on their skills to the next generation. They are certified as a skilled craftsman.

Message from Takeshi Tanaka

“I have kept in mind the principle of producing sake with sweetness and softness.”

As my grandparents' home runs a sake shop and has business connections with Aumont brewery, I started working at the brewery in 1986 just after graduating from high school. In July 1986, I was dispatched to the Niigata Sake School and learned the basics of producing sake. Since then, I've been engaged in producing sake.

I became a Toji (current position) in 2003. I believe that the previous Toji, Mr. Soda, who worked as a Toji when I entered Aumont brewery, established the basics of our current sake. Since then, I have kept in mind the principle of producing sake with sweetness and softness. As our brewery gained attention for employing the first female sake brewer with a first-grade license, this may have in turn affected the flavor of our sake for the better.

“I realized the importance of making sake in a natural environment and sticking to the basics.”

In my third year as Toji, our sake was awarded a prize at the Annual Japan Sake Awards. In my fourth year, our sake was awarded a gold prize for five straight years in a row. I think this experience greatly influenced Aumont's sake. Also, I came to know more experienced and senior Toji masters from other breweries who gave me useful advice. Now, I have more opportunities to visit other breweries where I can acquire new knowledge. This brought me back to the starting point of sake production, in that the making of koji is the most important stage of the sake process.

There is an expression we use for the essential process of sake production: first, Koji (yeast), second, Moto (yeast starter), third, tsukuri (production). I realized the importance of making sake in a natural environment and sticking to the basics.



The first Japanese female sake brewer with a first-grade license:
Kazuko Shiiya

Workers looked so cool.

I was married to a farmer but one of my friends asked me to work in the kitchen at Aumont sake brewery. My role was to cook meals for workers who were involved with sake production from autumn to the following spring. There was a big pot in the kitchen and workers often came to get hot water. I sometimes observed them and they intrigued me as they focused so much on their work. So next autumn, I asked the company to let me join the sake production team and I was immediately accepted. There were 5 to 6 other female workers who involved in bottling and helping sake production at that time, and I started working with them. My job was mainly physical work but I didn't mind as I was a farmer. I was just happy that I could be involved with the sake production.

I admired Toji who studied for examinations

There was another turning point when I was working as an assistant sake producer. It was an examination that tests knowledge of sake production, which started in 1974. In the same year, the Toji and vice Toji took the test. Their attitude towards studying for the test encouraged me and the test itself looked interesting. The following year, I asked the Toji to let me take the test. He accepted and advised me to take the first grade. I studied at home after work and I could sometimes sleep for only 3 hours. Thanks to my efforts, I passed the test and was surprised that I was the only female who passed either first or second grade.

After I became a qualified brewer, I was involved more in sake production and was treated equally as male brewers. For example, I was involved in analyzing sake, pressing, making Shubo (the yeast starter), and making rice koji in Muro (special room). When I retired in 2003, I realized that I really enjoyed working with people. I met many people during my working days at Aumont Sake Brewery and they brightened up for 39 years.

