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Japanese Sake Gains Global Attention at ASI Americas Best Sommelier Contest

JSS highlights sake's growing role in premium beverage market, attracting interest from top sommeliers and new international markets.

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The Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association (JSS) recently participated in the ASI Americas Best Sommelier Contest 2025 in Sonoma, California, from February 17 to 21. This event gathered national representatives, sommelier association presidents, top sommeliers, wine industry experts, and media. JSS's involvement highlighted Japanese sake's growing role in the global premium beverage market. The United States, a major export destination for Japanese sake, joined ASI in 2024, enhancing connections with leading sommeliers and promoting sake in non-Japanese dining venues.

The contest featured 14 national representatives competing in knowledge and technique. The winners were Joris Gutierres Garcia from Canada, Mark Guillaudeu from the United States, and Nicolas Reines from Colombia. All three had attended ASI sake masterclasses, showing their connection to Japanese sake. Nicolas Reines expressed a keen interest in sake and a desire to deepen his knowledge.

Hiromi Iuchi from JSS's Overseas Business Department emphasized the importance of participating in the ASI Sommelier Contest. She noted that the event, which rotates among three global regions annually, offers a platform to showcase sake. The sake tasting table was consistently busy, indicating high demand for sake experiences. Iuchi highlighted the growing interest among top sommeliers, who are eager to learn about sake, a beverage still not widely known.

During the event, JSS conducted a masterclass titled "Japanese Kokushu: Exploring the Artistry Behind Craft Sake and Honkaku Shochu," attracting around 80 industry professionals. Following the session, sommelier association presidents from Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil showed interest in hosting sake masterclasses in their countries. The Argentine Sommelier Association president organized a sake study session upon returning home. JSS also received a business inquiry from an Ecuadorian wine importer interested in sake, marking a potential new market, as Ecuador hasn't imported sake directly from Japan for over 30 years.

Looking ahead, future ASI competitions offer more opportunities to boost sake's international recognition. The 2025 ASI Asia-Pacific Best Sommelier Contest will be in Malaysia, followed by the 2026 ASI World’s Best Sommelier Contest in Portugal. JSS plans to continue strengthening sake's global presence by engaging in ASI events, aiming to elevate sake's status as a high-quality beverage comparable to wine and

spirits.