

## **Why Awamori Is Made from Thai Rice**

Awamori's main ingredient is not sourced locally, something that is rarely seen in alcohol production. Although locally grown rice, millet, and sweet potatoes were used to make awamori in the past, by the early 1920s the price of local rice had risen and distillers sought an inexpensive overseas rice that would let them maintain the quality of their awamori. They settled on long-grain Indica rice imported from Thailand, which they found offered several important advantages. In broken form it provided more surface area for *kurokoji* mold to attach to. In addition, it was firmer and easier to work with than the sticky Japonica rice that was eaten and used for making sake in Japan. It also made it easier to control the temperature of the fermentation process, and it produced more alcohol than other varieties. Lastly, they noted that Thai rice added a rich fragrance to the finished awamori. While imported rice from Thailand is still the preferred ingredient, in recent years some distillers have begun to make awamori with specific, locally grown long-grain Indica rice.