

Ota Sake Brewery

Founded in 1892, Ota brewery started brewing a single sake—called Shirasagi—but now they make many different types of sake. Ota uses three kinds of rice in their sake: Yamada Nishiki, Kami no Ho, and Ukon Nishiki. Yamada Nishiki is a very popular sake rice that is used throughout Japan, while Kami no Ho and Ukon Nishiki are less popular and grown only in Mie Prefecture.

Twenty years ago, when Iga began promoting its ninja history, Ota brewery introduced their Hanzō line. Named for Hattori Hanzō (1542–1596), a sixteenth-century samurai who reportedly led the Iga ninja, Hanzō sake has become Ota’s most popular brand, and in 2016 Ota brewery had the honor of providing their “Hanzō Junmai Daiginjō Migaki 40” sake to attendees at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit. While Ota brewery still uses ninja designs in their logos, they are working to expand beyond their reputation as the makers of the “Ninja Sake.”

Ota brewery’s new *tōji* (master brewer) is the son of the owners, and he launched the Ando (“&”) variety of sake, known for its softer, sweeter taste. The brewery is passionate about opening up the sake market to women, who have been notoriously underrepresented in the sake world. Sake has long been viewed as a men’s drink, but Ota brewery believes that it should be enjoyed by all.