

## Saffron Liqueur Brewery

The thick texture, floral fragrance, and sweet taste of saffron liqueur once made it a popular beverage across Japan, particularly during the 1930s, when its popularity even spread abroad to Hawaii. These days, the drink is found primarily in the Nagaoka area. It offers a sweet, easy-to-drink alternative to liquor or beer.

Construction of the Saffron Liqueur Brewery began during the Meiji era (1868–1912) and continued into the Taisho era (1912–1926). Yoshizawa Nitaro, the brewery's founder, was known for his colorful taste in decor and design. The brewery's storehouse is a striking example of the plastering arts developed in the Edo period (1603–1867). The eaves are decorated with ornate dragon designs, and the shutters for the windows feature intricate plaster reliefs called *kote-e* ("trowel pictures"). Such personalized artwork on building exteriors is rare in Japan, likely because it was expensive to create.

The garden incorporates reddish-brown volcanic rocks brought to the site from Mt. Asama in neighboring Nagano Prefecture. Many of the internal beams, frames, and doorways in the storehouse and main brewery building are made of high-grade wood, of the kind usually reserved for expensive cabinetry.

The second floor of the "Kote-e Warehouse" is a small museum dedicated to the history of saffron liqueur. The exhibits include magazines and various artworks such as posters, as well as related household items from saffron liqueur's heyday in the 1930s. The museum also offers more information on the Yoshizawa family and how they have managed the facility over the years.