

## **Taketsuru Shuzo Sake Brewery**

Taketsuru Shuzo Sake Brewery is the birthplace of Taketsuru Masataka (1894–1979), regarded as the father of Japanese whisky. Masataka, also known as “Massan,” studied in Scotland in 1918 to learn the secrets of distilling whisky. Masataka returned to Japan in 1920 with his wife, Scotswoman Jessie Roberta Cowan (known as Rita), and went on to found the Nikka Whisky Distilling Company. Their story is told in *Massan*, a 2014 television drama on NHK, Japan’s national broadcaster.

Taketsuru Shuzo Sake Brewery began operations in 1651 in the salt-making business, before starting sake production in 1733, making it the oldest sake brewery in Takehara.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), salt from Takehara was shipped off in two directions: to Osaka before going on to Edo (present-day Tokyo), and to Akita and Hokkaido prefectures in northern Japan via the Sea of Japan. The ships returned with rice, which was used with the pure local spring water to produce sake.

The brewery is known for its traditional production process (*kimoto-zukuri*), which is the oldest surviving style of sake making. The process uses a yeast starter mash that is cultivated by naturally occurring lactic acid bacteria. Taketsuru uses only top-quality rice from local rice growers in Hiroshima Prefecture. The result is a sake designed to match the local fish caught in the Seto Inland Sea.

The owner wants to create a sake with umami flavor (one of the five basic taste categories: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami or savory). It is his desire to make a sake that will perfectly complement, and enhance the flavor of, traditional Japanese dishes such as sashimi.