

Koshi No Murasaki Soy Sauce Brewery

The Koshi no Murasaki Soy Sauce Brewery was founded in the Settaya district in 1831. It once produced both miso and soy sauce, but now it focuses on traditional soy sauce production. The brewery's location along the former Mikuni Kaido trade route was ideal for shipping goods. A small Jizo statue that once served as a guidepost along the route sits beside the main Koshi no Murasaki building. The directions "Right for Edo, left for the mountain road" remain clearly visible on the base. Across from the Jizo is a small shrine dedicated to Inari, a deity associated with prosperity in business. The distinctive walls of the brewery have been blackened by exposure to the mold used to make koji in the soy sauce production process. The koji fills the air with a rich, distinctive aroma.

Koshi no Murasaki Soy Sauce

Though Japanese soy sauce is now a popular ingredient in cooking worldwide, many people do not know there are various regional differences

with regard to flavor and character. Koshi no Murasaki's eponymous soy sauce includes bonito dashi stock, in the style preferred in Niigata Prefecture, but the brewery also produces a variety of more conventional soy sauces as well. Koshi no Murasaki's drawstring gift bags are modeled on bags called *jinkichi*, which were traditionally used for carrying bottles of sake. The bag's design depicts the brewery mascot, Koshi no Jizo, a playful image of the bodhisattva Jizo statue that sits outside.

Main Building and White-Wall Storehouse

An inscribed talisman left behind by carpenters indicates that the Koshi no Murasaki main building was constructed in 1877. Thick support pillars incorporated into the design help the structure withstand the heavy snowfall of Nagaoka winters. These pillars also helped the structure survive the 2004 Chuetsu earthquake with minimal damage, though tiles were lost from the roof and soy sauce production was temporarily disrupted. The building contains a shop, office, meeting space, and the main soy sauce production area. A two-story earthen storehouse with a white plaster and clapboard exterior is connected to the main building on the southern side.

Beside it is a large brick chimney that displays the brewery's name in bold white characters. Both the main building and the storehouse are registered Tangible Cultural Properties.

The chimney is one of the brewery's most distinctive features. It originally released smoke from a coal-fired furnace used in miso and soy sauce production. The date it was added to the building is unknown, but it is thought to have been completed before 1933. After the chimney was damaged in the Chuetsu earthquake, it was rebuilt in a decorative capacity in honor of its many years as a distinctive part of Settaya's traditional townscape.