

# CRAFT BEER TASTE TEST



**BAIRD (SHIZUOKA): RISING SUN PALE ALE**  
Hailing from Izu, Baird Brewing is one of Japan's most successful craft breweries. Their flagship creation starts off with a powerful, hoppy aroma with hints of citrus. The taste is surprisingly refreshing and light, making this one eminently drinkable: a basic, no-frills quality ale that goes perfectly with comfort food. Banzai!  
**Where to drink it** At the company's own Taproom in Nakameguro, Harajuku and Yokohama. The Nakameguro branch (2F, 2-1-3 Kamimeguro, Meguro. 03 5768 3025. [tinyurl.com/TOTtaproom](http://tinyurl.com/TOTtaproom)) serves great izakaya-style food, too.

**T.Y. HARBOR (TOKYO): WHEAT ALE**  
This orthodox witbier's notable yeastiness kicks in at the end of the sip and makes for a nice combo with the slight, appealing banana flavour. While clearly an above-average creation, the Wheat Ale unfortunately lacks the wow factor to propel it into the 'excellent' category. Should work really nicely on hot days by the sea, though.  
**Where to drink it** More than a brewpub, T.Y. Harbor's American-style Tennozu restaurant (2-1-3 Higashi-Shinagawa, Shinagawa. 03 5479 4555. [tinyurl.com/TOTtyharbor](http://tinyurl.com/TOTtyharbor)) is one of the few places in Tokyo where you can sit outside on the waterfront.

**FUJIZAKURA HEIGHTS (YAMANASHI): RAUCH**  
The mouthwatering smell of smoked ham is the first thing you'll feel when being confronted

with Fujizakura's Rauch, a faithful recreation of Bamberg-style rauchbier. A true rarity in Asia, this moderately smoky brew may shock first-timers but should appeal especially to barbecue-loving carnivores.  
**Where to drink it** You can find bottles even at upscale supermarkets, but we recommend heading out to their excellent brewery restaurant Sylvans (6663-1 Funatsu Azakenmarubi, Fujikawaguchiko, Minamitsuru, Yamanashi. 0555 83 2236), located near the base of Mt Fuji.

**ILLI'S TOP PICK**  
**HITACHINO NEST (IBARAKI): WHITE ALE**  
In terms of international name recognition, the Kiuchi Brewery's Hitachino Nest beers are way ahead of the curve in Japan. The White Ale is their most decorated creation, featuring a smooth mouthfeel, a unique citrus-and-coriander hop flavour and a pleasant aftertaste that leaves you craving more. One of the best performers, even in a field as strong as this, with the freaky owl label supplying the cherry on top.  
**Where to drink it** Hitachino Nest bottles are readily available in Tokyo, but serious fans should take the Joban line up to Mito Station and visit Kiuchi Brewery's True Brew pub (4F Mito Station Excel Minami Bldg, 1-7-31 Miyamachi, Mito, Ibaraki. 029 306 7575. [truebrew.cc](http://truebrew.cc)).

**TAMA NO MEGUMI (TOKYO): BOTTLE CONDITIONED ALE**  
A vaguely pale ale-like brew with an aroma that might remind you of wild berries, the Ishikawa brewery's most curious concoction surprises with a sparkly kick and goes down effortlessly. The nice carbonation and peculiar, bitter finish are this beer's best bits. No masterpiece, but definitely deserves to be sampled.  
**Where to drink it** Ride the Chuo line to Tachikawa, transfer to the Ome line and get off at Haijima, walk for 15 minutes or so and you'll be at the brewery (1 Kumagawa, Fussa, Tokyo. [www.tamajiman.com/english](http://www.tamajiman.com/english)). Pair your beer with a pizza or some sausages at the Fussa no Birugoya restaurant (042 553 0171).



**Ili Saarinen** bar hops to find the tastiest ale in Tokyo

Although watery mainstream lagers still dominate the world of Japanese beer, serious brew enthusiasts will no doubt be familiar with the craft movement that's been growing here at a rapid pace. Nowadays, the island nation's beers regularly claim top honours at international contests like the World Beer Cup, its breweries are making a name for themselves abroad and, most importantly, more and more people are choosing Session IPAs over Super Dry. Inevitably, this means we're now spoiled for choice. So, to narrow down the pickings, we chose five representative brews from eastern Japan and put them to the test.



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coffee, drinks and art.



Welcome

Nakano Broadway 2F 5-52-15 Nakano Nakano-ku Tokyo  
<http://bar-zingaro.jp/>



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