

## Hasegawa Sake Brewery



Hasegawa Sake Brewery is a small, family-run brewery that has operated in Settaya for over 180 years. The Hasegawa family were rice farmers who originally came to Nagaoka from Shinshu Province (present-day Nagano Prefecture), fleeing the fighting that plagued the country in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Historical documents date the brewery to an application submitted to the shogunate by Hasegawa Jukichi in 1842 to make *miki* (sake offered at shrine altars) with permission to sell the surplus commercially. Over successive generations, the family passed down their traditional brewing methods and established their business to become the Settaya icon it is today.

Notably, Hasegawa Sake Brewery is one of the very few breweries in Nagaoka that is run by a woman. Twice a year, the brewery hosts a *kurabiraki* (“open brewery”) event where customers can sample sake, tour the brewery, and peruse various products.



### *Characteristics of Hasegawa Sake*

Hasegawa Sake Brewery is dedicated to traditional hand-brewing, and the brewers closely oversee every aspect of the process. The company makes a wide range of products at various price points. Rather than relying on mechanization to extract the finished sake, Hasegawa Sake Brewery utilizes a technique called *shizuku shibori* (drip pressing), in which the mash is hung in cloth bags and the liquid is slowly extracted through gravity filtration, drop by drop. This creates a luxurious product with a strong aroma and mellow flavor.

In honor of their ancestral connection with Nagano, Hasegawa Sake Brewery combines sake rice from Nagano Prefecture with sake rice and other ingredients from Niigata Prefecture to create sake of various types, including *tanrei karakuchi*, which has the crisp, dry flavor preferred in Nagaoka. The brewery creates colorful seasonal labels for their sake bottles by collaborating with local illustrators.

### *Main Building (Omoya)*

The main building was originally built in 1886 and then further expanded with the



addition of a brewery in 1919. The main building is a registered Tangible Cultural Property. It sustained damage in the 2004 Chuetsu earthquake but was repaired over time.

On the shoji (sliding door panels) leading into the main building is a large *washi* paper cutout of the brewery's distinctive crest—a stylized rendering of the kanji character for “long” in the shape of a crane, a bird associated with longevity and happiness. The main building, which was originally used as a residence, now functions as an office. In addition to displaying the Hasegawa Sake Brewery product lineup, the interior contains Shinto household altars (*kamidana*) for enshrining tutelary deities and a large vintage safe. One of the household altars contains an *ofuda* talisman from Matsuno'o Taisha Shrine, which is dedicated to the deity of sake brewing.