

Shochu



What is "Honkaku Shochu"

Shochu distilled using traditional pot stills and made from ingredients such as sweet potatoes, barley, rice, or brown sugar, with no additives other than water. Characterized by the deep appreciation of the ingredient's natural flavor, it is a type of Group-Otsu Shochu with a strictly defined production method.

Over 2,000 Brands of "Honkaku Shochu" Kagoshima – The Kingdom of Shochu and Its Unique Charm



Traditional Sake-Brewing Registered as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

“SHOCHU” from Kagoshima - stepping onto the global stage to be loved around the world

We interviewed Ms. Maiko Jikuya, the fourth-generation owner of Jikuya Distillery-operating for 115 years in Satsuma Town, Kagoshima Prefecture. She became the first female president of Kagoshima Prefecture Shochu Brewery Association Youth Club in 2024. We asked her about the appeal of Kagoshima Shochu and its future.

The Distinctive Features of Shochu from Kagoshima

Kagoshima is home to over 100 distilleries and more than 2,000 different brands. Each producer crafts shochu that reflects the unique characteristics of its local region. When you drink the shochu, you can almost see the faces of the producers and master distillers behind it. And above all, the biggest feature is the use of Kagoshima sweet potatoes. By using only high-quality sweet potatoes, Kagoshima produces richly flavored shochu that embodies the essence of the region.

In December 2024, “Traditional Sake-Brewing” was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

I'm truly delighted that the sake-brewing traditions handed down through generations was recognized in this way.

The present challenge is how we continue to pass them on to the future. I hope to use this recognition as an opportunity to promote Kagoshima's shochu overseas as well.

Professional Exchange in Paris, France

During my time as the president of the youth club, I had the opportunity to speak with bartenders in Paris about koji and shochu. They created various shochu-based cocktails and let me taste them, and I was truly impressed by their creativity and open-minded approach. Since shochu is a distilled spirit, it pairs very well with cocktails. Its potential is still expanding.

The Future of Kagoshima Shochu

Every year, new varieties of shochu are developed by the distilleries. While continuing to evolve, we also want to keep refining the traditional techniques. Our hope is to carry this forward for the next 200, even 300 years.



Maiko Jikuya
Fourth-generation owner of Jikuya Shuzo



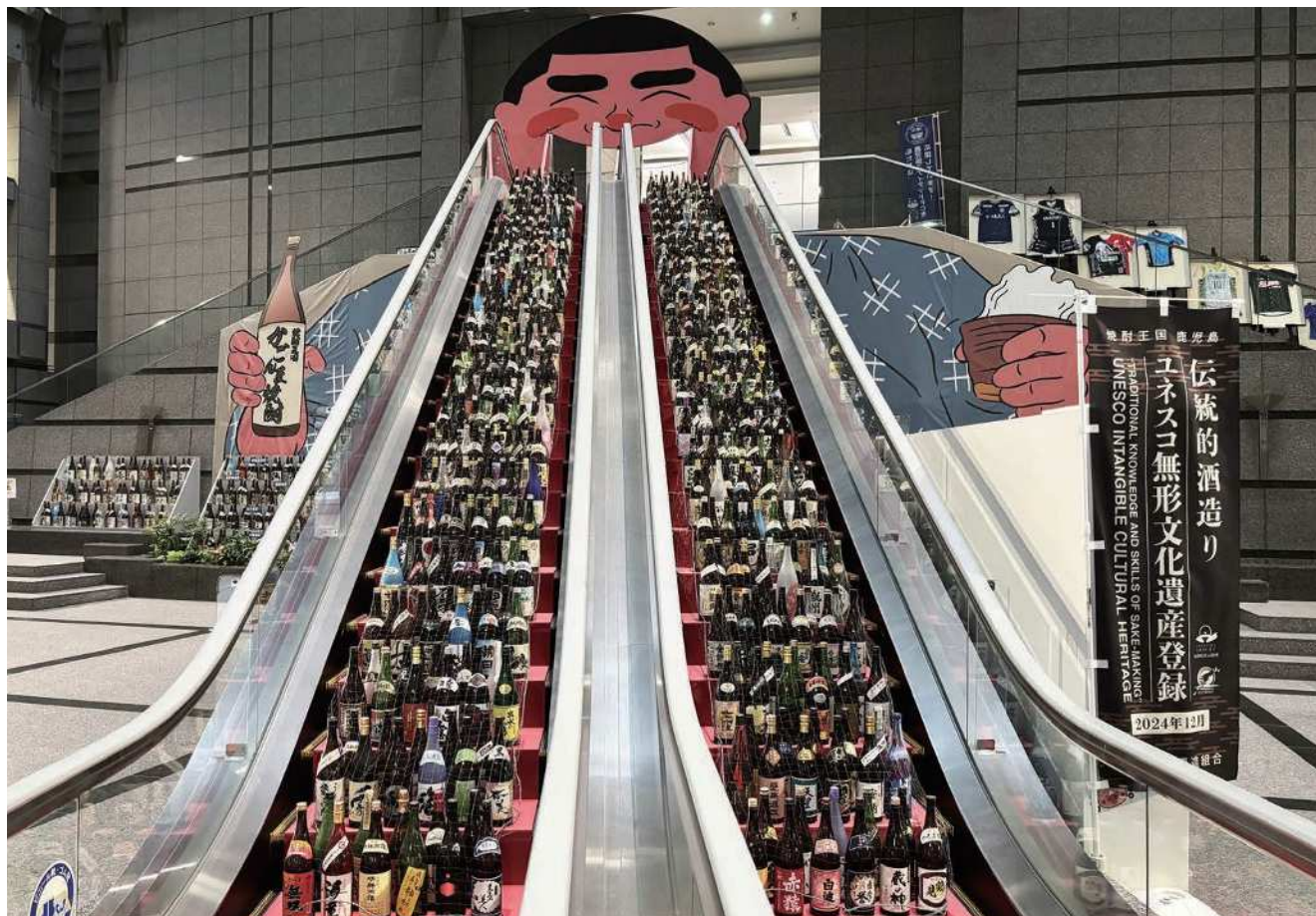
With 109, Kagoshima Prefecture is Japan's No. 1 in the number of distilleries, and one of the region's charms lies in the wide variety of shochu produced by each distillery.



Kagoshima Shochu Makers Association
TEL 099-222-1455



Amami branch, Kagoshima Shochu Makers Association
Amami Oshima Distilleries Association



Kagoshima Shochu Makers Association Members List (Total: 109)

As of April 2025

| Kagoshima Area (6 Members) | Ijuin Area (10 Members) | Osumi Area (8 Members) | Tanegashima Area (5 Members) |
|---------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Hombo Shuzo | Matsuzaki Shuzo | Iwagawa Jozo | Tanegashima Shuzo |
| Higashi Shuzo | Tasaki Shuzo | Marunishi Shuzo Futsuhara Distillery | Takasaki Shuzo |
| Sagara Shuzo | Shiraishi Shuzo | Osumi Shuzo | Yotsumoto Shuzo |
| Satsuma Muso | Hamada Shuzo Denzoingura | Shiratsuyu Company | Kouzuma Shuzo |
| Sanwa Shuzo | Yamatozakura Shuzo | Wakashio Shuzo | Mitake Shuzo |
| Mishima Shochu Muku no Kura | Wakamatsu Shuzo | Tensei Shuzo | Amami Area(24 Members) |
| Chiran Area (10 Members) | Komasa Jozo Hioki Distillery | Shinhira Shochu Distillery | Yayoi Shochu Brewery |
| Chiran Jozo | Nishi Shuzo | Okubo Shuzo | Nishihira Honke |
| Koura Shuzo | Nangoku Shuzo | Kajiki Area (13 Members) | Nishihira Shuzo |
| Ogome Shoten | Satsuma Kinzangura | Shirakane Shuzo | Amami Oshima Kaiun Shuzo |
| Bansei Shuzo | Ibusuki Area (6 Members) | Nikka Whisky Satsuma Tsukasa Distillery | Tomita Shuzojo |
| Fukiage Shochu | Nakamata Shuzo | Hinatayama Jozo | Amami Oshima Shuzo |
| Uto Shuzo | Oyama Jinhichi Shoten | Manzen Shuzo | Yamada Shuzo |
| Satsuma Shuzo | Ibusuki Shuzo | Nakamura Shuzojo | Machida Shuzo |
| Toji no Sato Kasasa | Yoshinaga Shuzo | AtStar | Asahi Distillery |
| Sakurai Shuzo | Tamura | Kokubu Shuzo | Kikaijima Shuzo |
| Sata Soji Shoten | Shiratsuyu Shuzo | Kirishima cho Distillery | Kamezawa Shuzojo |
| Sendai Area (10 Members) | Izumi Area(11 Members) | Sato Shuzo | Takaoka Jozo |
| Yamamoto Shuzo | Oishi Shuzo Distillery | Kirishima Kogen Beer | Amakawa Shuzo |
| Ogatama Shuzo | Kagoshima Shuzo Kurose Toji Denshogura | Oyama Shuzo | Nakamura Shuzo |
| Murao Shuzo | Kami Shuzo | Kai Shoten | Amami Shurui |
| Denen Shuzo | Miyauchi Shuzo | Okuchi Shuzo | Matsunaga Shuzojo |
| Shiota Shuzo | Miyano Tsuyu Shuzo | Kanoya Area (6 Members) | Amami Oshima Nishikawa Shuzo |
| Yoshinaga Shuzo | Nagayama Shuzo | Taikai Shuzo | Oki Shuzo |
| Uezono Shuzo | Sugimoto Shuzo | Kamikawa Shuzo | Saota Shuzo |
| Jikuya Shuzo | Nanshu Shuzo | Yachiyoden Shuzo | Kanzaki Sangyo |
| Komaki Jozo | Nagashima Kenjo | Moriizo Shuzo | Okinoerabu Shuzo |
| Kedoin Distillery | Unkai Shuzo Izumi Kura | Shiratama Jozo | Niirō Shuzo |
| | Izumi Shuzo | Kojika Shuzo | Harada Shuzo |
| | | | Arimura Shuzo |

There are two types of Kagoshima's Honkaku Shochu: “Satsuma Shochu” and “Amami Kokuto Shochu”

Born and raised in Kagoshima, the world-renowned “Satsuma Shochu”

Satsuma Shochu is an Honkaku Shochu distilled and bottled within Kagoshima Prefecture (excluding Amami City and the Oshima District) using sweet potatoes and water sourced from within the prefecture, and distilled using a pot still.

Single distillation: A traditional method in which the mash is distilled only once, allowing the natural flavors and aromas of the ingredients to be fully enjoyed.

Amami Kokuto Shochu - Exclusively produced in the Amami Islands and easy to approach even for first-time drinkers

This is an Honkaku Shochu brewed from pure brown sugar made from rice koji and sugarcane juice and distilled using a single distillation process. In December 1953, when the Amami Islands were returned to Japan, production was permitted specifically under the condition that it be made using rice koji and brown sugar, and only within the Amami Islands.



November 1
- Honkaku Shochu Day



May 9 & 10 -
Amami Kokuto Shochu Days



Shochu Flavor Wheel Representing the Aromas of Honkaku Shochu

Kagoshima - home to Japan's No.1 number of distilleries - has over 2,000 brands of Honkaku Shochu.

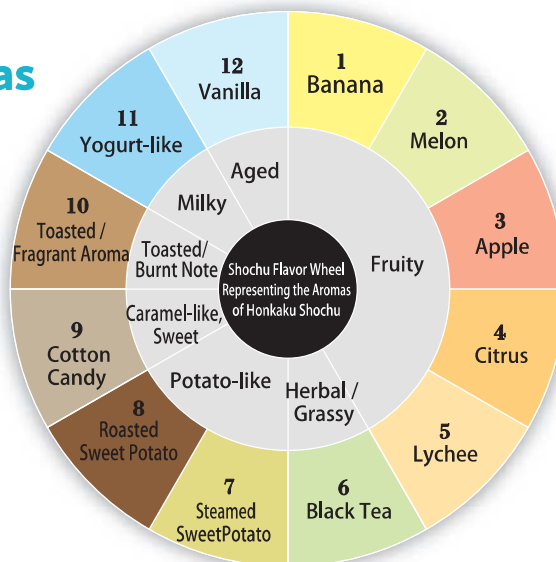
Each distillery produces its own unique expressions through distinctive methods and craftsmanship, offering a wide range of aromas and flavors to enjoy.



On the Kagoshima Prefecture Brewers Association website, you can explore shochu brands by their fragrance and taste profiles.

※Based on data from the Council for the Future of Honkaku Shochu

※Supervised by the Kagoshima Prefecture Brewers Association



PICK UP!

POINT

Shochu contains zero sugar and zero purine!

“I avoid alcohol because it makes me gain weight.” Shochu is perfect for people who think that way. As a distilled spirit, shochu undergoes a process in which the sugars from its ingredients remain in *moromi*, resulting in zero sugar and zero purine content. It's also lower in calories than other alcoholic beverages, making it less likely to cause weight gain compared to beer or sake.



Beer

Approximately
16 grams of sugar
(per 500 ml can)



Sake

Approximately
8 grams of sugar
(per 180 ml flask)



Shochu

0 grams of sugar
— no matter how much
you drink!

Can Shochu Help Prevent Blood Clots!?

Drinking Honkaku Shochu is said to stimulate the secretion of enzymes that help dissolve blood clots, thereby reducing the risk of thrombosis. Its effect is believed to be about 1.5 times stronger than that of wine. Blood clots can lead to serious conditions such as heart attacks and strokes. However, this is assuming you drink in moderation, so make sure to use shochu responsibly.



The Best Ways to Enjoy Shochu

01 Sparkling Aroma and Smooth Finish — Shochu with Soda

【What You'll Need】

Shochu, soda water, ice, a glass chilled in the freezer, a muddler, a glass chilled in the refrigerator

- ① Pour shochu into the glass until it is one-quarter full. (Using shochu over 30% ABV enhances the aroma)
- ② Pour the soda water into the space between the ice and the glass, avoiding direct contact with the ice.
- ③ Insert the muddler to the bottom of the glass and, lifting the ice slightly, stir slowly from the bottom twice so as not to let the carbonation escape.

※ Make sure the glass you use is well chilled in the refrigerator. You may also enjoy this drink without ice.



02 Crisp or Mild — On the Rocks & With Water

【What You'll Need】

Shochu, mineral water (for serving with water), ice, glass, muddler

- ① Fill a glass generously with ice and stir lightly with a muddler to chill the entire glass.
- ② Pour shochu into the glass until it is half full.
- ③ For cutting with water, top up with mineral water to about 9/10 full. (Soft water is recommended)
- ④ Using the muddler, stir lightly more or less 2 times.

※ Enjoy how the flavor changes gradually as the ice melts.



03 Gently Rising Sweet Aroma — Shochu with Warm Water

【What You'll Need】

Shochu, warm water, a small glass, and a thermometer if available

- ① Heat up the water (50°C in winter, 42°C in summer)
- ② Pour the warm water into the glass first, then add the shochu
- ③ Adjust the strength to your taste, for example shochu 6 : hot water 4 or 5 : 5.

※ The ideal temperature for enjoying the sweetness and aroma of shochu is about 42°C—roughly body temperature.

※ When you pour shochu over the hot water, the temperature difference creates natural convection, so it tastes great even without stirring.

※ If you pour the hot water first, it tastes sweeter; if you pour the shochu first, it has a drier flavor.



04 Smooth and Light — Pre-mixed Shochu with Water

【What You'll Need】

Shochu, water, storage container

- ① Pour shochu and water into a clean container in your preferred ratio.
- ② Shake the container to mix, then let it rest in a dark place for about one night to one week.
- ③ Chill in the refrigerator or warm before drinking.



The Potential of Shochu Cocktails

Distilled spirits like gin, vodka, and rum are used as cocktail bases. Therefore, Honkaku Shochu, which is also a distilled spirit, has great potential as a cocktail base, too.

In recent years, the global alcoholic beverage market has seen a growing trend toward lower-alcohol drinks. Shochu, with its rich and distinctive flavor, offers depth even at lower alcohol levels. As a result, “shochu cocktails”—based on shochu—are gaining attention from top bartenders worldwide.





Processed Foods from Kagoshima



Barley Miso

Kagoshima's barley miso is known as "Satsuma miso," characterized by its light color and mellow sweetness. To bring out the natural sweetness of the barley, it is aged for a relatively short period, resulting in many varieties with a fresh, clean aroma and visible koji grains. This Satsuma miso is an essential, classic ingredient in the local dish Satsuma-jiru. (miso soup with chicken and vegetables)



Katsuobushi (Bonito Flakes)

Katsuobushi is a traditional food made by simmering, smoking, and drying bonito fish. Facing the Kuroshio Current, Kagoshima yields large catches of high-quality bonito and is widely known as a production area for premium katsuobushi.



Kokuto (Brown Sugar)

This processed food is made by slowly boiling down the juice of squeezed sugarcane. In addition to sugars, it is rich in calcium, iron, and potassium. It also contains minerals such as phosphorus and magnesium, as well as vitamins. *

Located at the southernmost tip of Japan's mainland, Kagoshima has long engaged in trade with China, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Through this influence, crops such as sugarcane, sweet potatoes, and peanuts, were introduced, giving rise to a food culture centered on dishes and processed foods that makes use of these ingredients

Kagoshima Prefecture is also one of Japan's most remarkable "island prefectures," with many inhabited remote islands. Within its diverse natural environments, ranging from temperate to subtropical, each island has fostered its own distinctive culture. These processed foods are symbols of the region's culinary heritage, nurtured by Kagoshima's climate, natural features, and historical background. They continue to be passed down today and remain beloved in people's everyday lives.



Soy Sauce

Kagoshima soy sauce is predominantly "sweet soy sauce," known for its mellow flavor and distinctive, rich sweetness. It contains a high proportion of sweeteners such as sugar, mirin (sweet cooking sake) making it particularly sweet even by Japanese standards.

Despite its unique sweetness, it has depth and umami, and dishes prepared with this soy sauce are so flavorful that you can't stop eating.



Buta Miso (Pork with Miso)

The main ingredients are pork, miso, and sugar. Characteristics vary by region, but on the Kagoshima mainland it refers to a mixture made by sautéing ground pork with finely chopped vegetables such as shiitake mushrooms, burdock root, and ginger, then adding sugar and miso and cooking it down while stirring until it forms a thick, blended paste.*



Satsumaage (Deep-fired Fish Cake)

A dish made by mixing tofu, egg, and other ingredients into minced fish paste, shaping it, and deep-frying it in oil. Its distinctive feature is a slightly sweet seasoning with sugar. In Kagoshima, it is often called "Tsukeage".*



Akumochi Sake(Sweet Cooking Sake)

This is a local sake made mainly from rice and produced traditionally in Kagoshima. Thanks to its unique production method, it has a rich sweetness similar to mirin.(sweet cooking sake)*



Jar-brewed Black Vinegar

A culinary vinegar made by placing rice koji, steamed rice, and water in ceramic jars and leaving them outdoors to ferment naturally. The mash is prepared twice a year, in spring and autumn, and the vinegar is completed after more than a year of fermentation and aging.*



Nari Miso(Miso with Sago Palm Seeds)

A type of miso made on Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima, prepared by crushing and mixing in the seeds of the sago palm called "nari".

The sago palm grows from the Osumi Peninsula in Kagoshima down to the Yaeyama Islands in Okinawa, and is sometimes referred to as a "living fossil" plant.*

*Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries,
"Nippon Dentoshoku Zukan" (Encyclopedia of Traditional Japanese Foods)



[Contact]Kagoshima Products Association

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Kagoshima Products Online "Kagoiro"



Yamagawa Zuke(Dried Daikon Radish Pickle)

Yamagawa Zuke is a traditional pickle and a specialty product of Yamagawa in Ibusuki City, located at the southern tip of Kagoshima Prefecture. It is made by pickling dried daikon radish in earthenware jars and allowing it to mature.

Its flavor is pleasantly fragrant with a hint of roastiness, and the taste becomes richer the more you chew it.*



Miki(Lactic Acid Fermented Beverage)

Miki is a lactic acid-fermented beverage that has long been made on Amami Oshima. It is prepared using rice flour, raw sweet potatoes, and sugar. It is also drunk in Okinawa Prefecture, where barley is used instead of sweet potatoes.*



Sugarcane Vinegar

Sugarcane vinegar is naturally fermented from the pressed juice of sugarcane in the Amami Islands. It is produced exclusively in this region, it is a rare fermented sugarcane product even across Japan.

Unlike ordinary vinegar, which is made by adding microbial cultures to promote fermentation, sugarcane vinegar develops naturally through wild yeasts and acetic acid bacteria present in the air.*



Kagoshima's Local Sweets

Made with ingredients nurtured by Kagoshima's rich natural environment and deeply rooted in the local community, these traditional confections have long been loved by the people of Kagoshima. They are perfect to enjoy with Japanese tea or as a souvenir.

Karukan

A refined confection made by mixing grated Japanese yam, non-glutinous rice flour, and sugar, then gently steaming it until light and fluffy.



Iko Mochi

A sweet and soft traditional confection from the early Edo period, made from glutinous rice flour that has been roasted beforehand.



Kore Mochi

This chewy, dark brown rice cake is made by kneading glutinous rice flour together with sweet azuki bean paste and then steaming the mixture.



Shirokuma

A shaved-ice dessert topped with condensed milk, fruit, sweet azuki beans, and more. The cherries and raisins resemble the face of a polar bear, which is why it is called "Shirokuma" ("polar bear").



Bontan Zuke

A candied confection made by simmering the peel of bontan, a citrus fruit specialty of Kagoshima, and coating it with sugar.



Azuki Kan

A steamed bean jelly sweet made from azuki beans, wheat flour, kudzu plant starch, and sugar. It has a different texture compared with bean jelly that is set with agar.



Akumaki

Glutinous rice, soaked overnight in lye (an alkaline liquid made from wood ash), is wrapped in moso bamboo sheaths and then slowly simmered in plenty of the same lye solution.



Getanha

A sweet made by soaking a dough of wheat flour, brown sugar, and eggs in a rich brown-sugar syrup. Its name is said to come from its shape, which resembles the "teeth" of wooden clogs (geta).



Kajiki Manju(Steamed Bun)

A sake-steamed bun. One story says it originated from the sake-steamed bun served when Lord Yoshihiro Shimazu moved his residence to Kajiki.



Fukuregashi

A steamed bread-like cake flavored with brown sugar. Because it is made with baking soda, it puffs up softly as it steams.



Karaimo Netabo

In the Kagoshima dialect, karaimo means sweet potato. This mochi dish is made by mixing freshly pounded rice cakes with steamed sweet potatoes.



Jambo Mochi

Soft rice cakes are skewered with two bamboo sticks in the image of the pair of short swords once worn by samurai, then grilled and topped with a thick, sweet sauce.



Ijuin Manju(Steamed Bun)

Small steamed buns about 3cm in diameter, marked with the Shimazu clan crest—a cross inside a circle—and filled with white bean paste.



Bontan Ame(Tangerine Rice Candy)

Soft, pale orange candies wrapped in oblate starch paper, with a sweet-tart, refreshing citrus aroma.



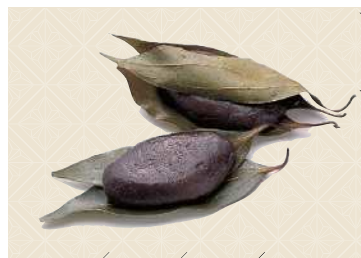
Sweet Potato Karinto

Sweet potato sticks that are deep-fried, coated with sugar or brown sugar, and then dried until crisp.



Kesen Dango

Azuki bean dumplings wrapped in the leaves of the kesen tree, a type of cinnamon.



Shinko Dango

Fragrant skewered dumplings brushed with soy sauce and grilled. Their name is said to come from Shinkoin Temple in Hioki City.



Sweet Potato Candy

A thick syrupy sweet made by slowly boiling sweet potatoes with malt. No sugar is added, letting you enjoy the natural sweetness of sweet potatoes.



Hoshiimo

Thin slices of steamed sweet potato that are dried. They offer the sweet potato's natural, gentle sweetness and a pleasantly tender texture, and are also enjoyed as a traditional preserved food.



Kakaran Dango

Dumplings made with mugwort or azuki beans, wrapped in leaves of the smilax china plant. The aroma of the leaves whets the appetite.



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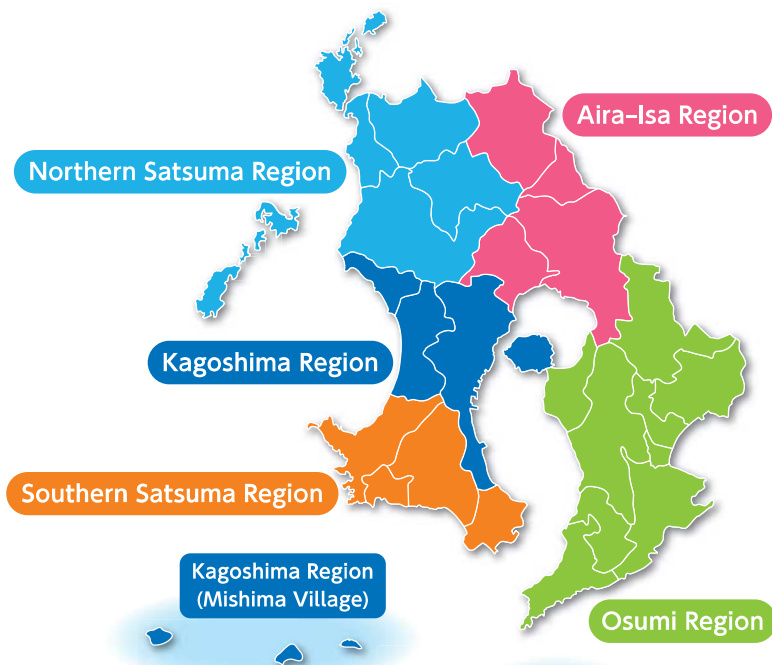
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Kagoshima Products Online "Kagoiro"

Geographical Features of Kagoshima Prefecture

Located at the southern tip of Kyushu, Kagoshima Prefecture stretches about 600 km from north to south. It consists of the mainland formed by the Satsuma and Osumi peninsulas, together with many islands such as the Koshikishima, Tanegashima, Yakushima, the Tokara Islands, and the Amami Islands. Its diverse geographical environments not only produce an abundance of rich ingredients, but have also given rise to many local dishes.



Kagoshima Region

Kagoshima City, Hioki City, Ichikikushikino City, Mishima Village, Toshima Village

Northern Satsuma Region

Akune City, Izumi City, Satsumasendai City, Satsuma Town, Nagashima Town

Southern Satsuma Region

Makurazaki City, Ibusuki City, Minamisatsuma City, Minami Kyushu City

Aira-Isa Region

Kirishima City, Isa City, Aira City, Yusui Town

Osumi Region

Kanoya City, Tarumizu City, Soo City, Shibushi City, Osaki Town, Higashikushira Town, Kinko Town, Minami Osumi Town, Kimotsuki Town

Kumage Region

Nishinoomote City, Nakatane Town, Minamitane Town, Yakushima Town

Amami Islands Region

Amami City, Tatsugo Town, Setouchi Town, Yamato Village, Uken Village, Kikai Town, Tokunoshima Town, Amagi Town, Isen Town, Wadamari Town, China-cho Town, Yoron Town

