



John Gauntner is recognized as the world's leading non-Japanese sake expert. Originally hailing from Ohio, he worked in his original vocation as an electrical engineer in Japan before fate pulled him, although hardly kicking and screaming, into the sake world.

A longtime Japan resident, he both speaks and reads Japanese, and is well known among sake brewers and others within the sake industry as the window to making sake popular outside of Japan. He wrote the Nihonshu Column in the Japan Times (Japan's most widely read English language newspaper) for eight straight years. He then wrote a weekly column on sake in Japanese for the Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan's and the world's most widely distributed Japanese newspaper. He now writes a monthly piece for the Tokyo Metropolis magazine, and has published five books on sake. His last book entitled "Nihonjin mo Shirenai Nihonshu no Hanashi" (Things About Sake Even Japanese People Don't Know) was published in Japanese in 2003 by Shogakkan, and is available at bookstores everywhere in Japan.

Known as "The Sake Guy," John has been quoted and/or mentioned in sake related articles in countless publications including The New York Times, Newsweek, Forbes, Business Week, and Rolling Stone. He has spoken at Harvard, Yale, and Columbia Universities, Wharton School of Business, and countless other venues across the US and Japan.

He is the only non-Japanese member of the Ginjoshu Kenkyu Kikou (Ginjo Sake Research Group), and is the only non-Japanese to have participated as an official taster in a prefectural government tasting, as well as the only non-Japanese to provide regular sake-related consulting assistance in the form of lectures to the Government of Japan. He is the only non-Japanese to sit on the panel of the Award for the Promotion of Japanese Cuisine Overseas, an award assessed by the Ministry of Forestry and Fisheries in Japan. He is also the only non-Japanese to have won the "Kikizake Meijin" (Accomplished Sake Taster) award, presented by the Junsui Nihonshu Kyoukai (Pure Sake Association) for accuracy in sake tasting skills, an award he has won three times, in March 2001, March 2003, and March 2006. He serves as the chairman and chief non-Japanese tasting panel member of the International Sake Challenge held in Tokyo each year. Furthermore, he is the only non-Japanese to ever take (and subsequently pass) the "Kikizake Seminar" (Sake Assessment Seminar) administered by the Nihon Jouzo Kyoukai, or Brewing Society of Japan, the organization that, among other things, provides the majority of yeast strains to the brewing industry.



John also holds monthly seminars in Tokyo in English for the expat community, or those just passing through. Each summer and winter, he runs the Sake Professional Course, a week-long intensive sake study course, held in Japan in the winter and the US in the summer. Graduates of that course include the owners of all three of the sake-only retailers in the US, True Sake (San Francisco), Sake Nomi (Seattle) and Sayaka (New York City). Most of each winter he is traveling around Japan, visiting breweries regularly and constantly learning. Other efforts at educating and edifying about sake include a free monthly sake newsletter and various digital products and e-books .