



A Partnership Brewed Over Decades

Doemens and Japan: A long-standing bond built on shared expertise, mutual respect, and a passion for brewing excellence.

The ties between Doemens and the Japanese brewing industry are intensively cultivated. Doemens has a strong presence in the Japanese market in order to continue to live up to its motto of 'German-Japanese beer and brewing culture'. We take a look at the long-standing ties between the two countries, talk to partners from Doemens and Japanese Breweries, and shed light on the history of the German-Japanese beer tradition, dating back to the 19th century.

Japan has a strong brewing culture. In the 1990s, the Japanese government provided extensive subsidies to support domestic beer production. Numerous local and regional breweries were established, and Dr Wolfgang Stempfl, then managing director of Doemens, was hired to provide on-site consulting and training. So the mid-

1990s marked the beginning of the most intensive phase of the relationship between Doemens and Japan. At that time, the first participants from Japanese breweries enrolled at the German-language brewing academy, and from the 2000s onwards at the Word Brewing Academy, the English-language master brewer training pro-

gramme in cooperation with the Siebel Institute.

The Finest Beer Selection beer award is also gaining increasing recognition in the Japanese brewing industry. The Japanese industry is dominated by the four major brewing groups, which together have a market share of around 95%. However, even these large corporations have a high demand for further training, as there is a lack of standardised training opportunities in Japan. There are constant changes for the nearly 1,000 breweries, such as in beer taxation.

For several years now, Doemens has had a strong partner in Japan in Sebastian Hohentanner, a native of Munich. As part of this cooperation, seminars are held in Japan and Japanese beer sommeliers are trained. We talk to Hohentanner about his involvement in Japan.

Brewing and Beverage Industry

International: Mr Hohentanner, you were born and raised in Munich. So, understandably, beer is an important cultural asset for you. The world of beer led you to Japan. An unusual story. Tell us about it.

Sebastian Hohentanner: That's right. During my student days, I enjoyed drinking wheat beer. However, when I was studying in Japan, it was difficult to find good wheat beer at the time. While searching for wheat beer, I met Johannes Braun, the German brewmaster, and Brian Dishman, the American brewmaster at the Otaru Brewery in Hokkaido. Not only did they brew excellent wheat beer, but thanks to the Otaru Beer Club, they also opened the door to the brewing industry in Japan for me. When the opportunity arose a few years later to import hops and malt from Germany to Japan, I seized it with both hands. Over the last 15 years in Japan, however, a lot has been added to hops and malt, including the collaboration with Doemens.

BBII: 2018 saw the premiere of Doemens' beer sommelier training programme in Japan. You speak fluent Japanese and are vice-president of BET Tech Co. Ltd. What does this company stand for?

Hohentanner: BET was founded in 2007 by my partner Markus Luczynski, a German master brewer with many years of experience in Japan. We have three pillars. The first is plant engineering and plant construction. Here, we sell our own plants, which are adapted to Japan, but we also work closely with Steinecker. In addition to the plants, the raw materials business with hops, malt and yeast is our second pillar. Here, we primarily work with suppliers from Germany, such as IREKS, HVG and HVG Spalt. However, we also source hops from other European and international growing regions. Consulting and training complete our range of services, enabling us to provide breweries in Japan with everything they need to produce high-

quality beers from a single source. The beer sommelier training course with Doemens, which we have been organising jointly in Japan since 2018, is an essential part of our training programme.

BBII: In 2024, together with Dr Michael Zepf, head of the Doemens Genussakademie, you were able to present 15 beer enthusiasts with the coveted beer sommelier certificates.

Hohentanner: Our last certificate award ceremony took place in Tokyo in March 2025. Interrupted by Corona, we have continuously held beer sommelier courses in Japan every year according to Doemens standards. We attach great importance to ensuring that the quality of training represented by Doemens can also be implemented in Japan without compromise. That is why we offer the original course with all Doemens materials entirely in Japanese. The examination is always conducted under the supervision of a representative from Doemens. Dr Michael Zepf has supported us from the very

beginning and has successfully conducted all examinations together with us. For Japanese beer sommeliers, the direct connection to Doemens is not only a mark of quality in their training, but also offers them access to the network of Doemens beer sommeliers worldwide. Since the first course, we have therefore also been participating in the World Beer Sommelier Championship with our Japanese beer sommeliers. This year, we were represented by two participants.

BBII: What comes to mind when you think of 'German-Japanese brewing and beer culture'?

Hohentanner: I think we are talking about two excellent representatives of beer and brewing culture. Both cultures share a dedication to perfecting the production of beer, both technologically and in terms of craftsmanship. Of course, we find excellent beers at the large breweries, as well as at the small craft breweries. The latter have continuously improved the quality of their beers, especially in the last ten



Sebastian Hohentanner connects the beer worlds of Germany and Japan. With his passion, he contributes significantly to the bond between the two countries.



As participant of the World Brewing Academy, Junya Maruebi appreciates opportunity to expand your professional network within the brewing industry and connect with fellow brewers from around the world.

years. The Japanese craft beer industry has drawn inspiration from beer trends from all over the world, such as Germany, Belgium and America. The result is a wide variety of beer styles of excellent quality. This has also been demonstrated over the last few years in the Finest Beer Selection organised by Doemens, in which Japanese breweries have been awarded prizes in various categories.

BBII: You know many Japanese men and women. Can you think of any 'humorous' stories worth telling? And how would you define Japanese humour?

Hohentanner: To be honest, I have to pass on that one. Even after more than 15 years in the country, Japanese humour is sometimes a closed book to me. Even my own jokes are often met with a brief 'ah, so that was German humour' rather than laughter. But that doesn't mean you can't have fun with Japanese people. On the contrary, even the more reserved Japanese quickly warm up over a beer. Whether together in a Japanese pub or a Bavarian beer garden, the atmosphere is always good. And especially among brewers, the language barrier is no longer a

problem after the third beer, when Prost and Kanpai alternate every minute.

BBII: Final question: What dominant character trait do Japanese and Germans have in common?

Hohentanner: Off the top of my head, I would say reliability and a commitment to always delivering the best quality in products and services. These values are particularly highly regarded in the brewing industry.

BBII: Thank you very much for this truly informative conversation.

Currently, Sapporo employees are once again undergoing training in Germany, including at Doemens. The Maruebi interview is representative not only of Sapporo, but also of competitors such as Kirin and Asahi.

Brewing and Beverage Industry International: What position do you currently hold at the Sapporo Breweries Ltd.?

Junya Maruebi: I work in product development at Sapporo Breweries Ltd., where I'm responsible for designing

beer recipes and developing new technologies that lead to innovative products.

BBII: What did you think of the Concise course? Did it provide you with useful information?

Maruebi: The Concise Course was a great opportunity to relearn the fundamental principles of brewing. It also gave me valuable insights into the differences in brewing philosophies between Japan, the U.S., and Germany. These perspectives helped me broaden my approach to product development and inspired new ways of thinking in my daily work.

BBII: How did this course help you advance your career after you completed it?

Maruebi: The course encouraged me to look beyond domestic standards and information, and to adopt a more global mindset. It helped me develop the habit of comparing and integrating international perspectives into my work. As a result, I became more interested in pursuing a career with a global scope in the brewing industry.

BBII: Would you recommend taking part in further training at the World Brewing Academy?

Maruebi: Absolutely. I would highly recommend the World Brewing Academy to brewing professionals who already have some experience and are looking to deepen their knowledge. It's also a great opportunity to expand your professional network within the brewing industry and connect with fellow brewers from around the world.

BBII: Dear Mr. Maruebi, thank you for the Interview.



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