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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**iichiko, Japan’s #1 Barley Shochu, Unveils “iichiko Saiten,”
the First-Ever Mixology-Friendly Shochu Optimized for Cocktails**

*Higher Proof Shochu Distills the Natural Splendor of Kyushu Island and
Captures Bartender Imaginations in the U.S. Craft Cocktail Scene*

KYUSHU ISLAND, Japan, January 14, 2019—iichiko, Japan’s leading barley shochu brand, today unveils iichiko Saiten, a pioneering, higher-proof shochu that is optimized for mixology and targets bartenders at the vanguard of the U.S. craft cocktail scene. Produced on Kyushu, Japan’s southernmost main island and the cradle of shochu, iichiko Saiten (pronounced SIGH-ten, meaning “colorful sky”) is the first-ever shochu developed with insights from top U.S. bartenders with exceptional palates and deep cocktail knowledge. A unique clear spirit, iichiko Saiten is rich in flavor and *umami* character, resulting in genuinely innovative cocktails.

The pot-distilled spirit will be available at leading mixology-driven bars and restaurants, as well as notable independent spirits retailers (SRP \$29.99/43% ABV/750ml). iichiko Saiten is launching in N.Y., Calif., N.J., Massa., Fla., Ga., Ill., Texas, Colo., Nev. and Wash. in early 2019. It is produced by Sanwa Shurui, Co., Ltd., one of Japan’s most esteemed producers of shochu, sake and wine. Davos Brands imports iichiko Saiten into the U.S. and is aligned nationally with Southern Glazer’s Wine and Spirits, the spirit’s U.S. distributor.

A Shochu Designed for Mixology

Shochu, a clear spirit distilled from barley, sweet potatoes, rice or buckwheat, is traditionally bottled at 25% ABV, since it is designed to complement Japanese cuisine, not overpower it. However, its lower proof has made it challenging for mixologists. In contrast, iichiko Saiten is 43% ABV and comparable in proof and cocktail versatility to Western spirits.

“We have created iichiko Saiten as a new kind of shochu specifically for mixology,” says Mr. Masahiko Shimoda, President, Sanwa Shurui, Co., Ltd. “Our goal is to make shochu a clear spirit that is celebrated around the world, on par with the best gins, vodkas, tequilas, rums, piscos and mezcal. Saiten brings a toasty and flavorful barley character that is truly unique and stands out in any cocktail. Moreover, we craft Saiten in keeping with iichiko’s highest quality standards for which we are renowned.”

“At 43% ABV, iichiko Saiten is a game-changer,” says Andrew Chrisomalis, CEO and Co-Founder, Davos Brands. “Japan has produced shochu for more than five hundred years, but from a mixological standpoint, this is Day 1, a remarkable watershed event. The cocktail possibilities for iichiko Saiten are limitless and we look forward to unlocking the creativity of the U.S. craft bartending community to harness its vast potential.”

Tasting Notes on a New Kind of Shochu Optimized for Cocktail Applications

On the nose, iichiko Saiten is redolent with aromas of honeydew melon, white grape, pickled watermelon rind and kabosu citrus. There are also hints of soy, white pepper and rich barley. On the palate, iichiko Saiten has a strong start and a long finish. It exudes rich *umami* notes of jasmine tea, white peach, minerals and earth with some citrus and a saline finish that beckons another sip.

The symphony of flavors creates exciting applications for iichiko Saiten’s use in cocktails, both stirred and shaken. These include the Manhattan, El Presidente, Blood & Sand and the Scofflaw, along with citrus-forward drinks.

A Shochu That Distills Kyushu’s Pristine Environment and Water

iichiko is headquartered in Kyushu, Japan’s southernmost of four main islands. A mountainous landscape with clean, fresh air, iichiko’s prefecture, Oita, is famous for its geothermal springs (*onsen*), dense cedar forests and pristine nature. iichiko’s spring water is exceptionally soft and pure. It is filtered through more than 10 layers of volcanic rock extending approximately 1,000 feet below ground, which contributes to iichiko Saiten’s smoothness.

The Art and Science of *Koji*, an Essential Aspect of Japanese Brewing

Koji is an essential aspect of Japan’s art of brewing. Leveraging their deep expertise in crafting sake, iichiko’s brewmasters have perfected the art and science of *Koji*, a sweet and fragrant mold that is generally inoculated into rice. *Koji*’s diastatic enzymes transform the grain’s starch into sugar, thereby setting the stage for fermentation, and give rise to robust flavors. iichiko’s unique strain of *Koji* is cultivated under laboratory-grade, clean room conditions. The *Koji* also creates citric acid, a natural preservative.

Innovative Barley Koji, Instead of Rice Koji

While rice *Koji* is typically used to make shochu, as well as sake, iichiko has broken new ground by cultivating barley *Koji*. This innovation truly sets the company's shochus apart from other producers.

Two-Row Barley Polished for Purity

iichiko Saiten is made with hand-selected, two-row barley. As an ingredient, "shochu" grade barley is carefully selected from "malt" grade barley. "Shochu" grade barley has a character that maintains the integrity of its shape when polished. About 30 percent of the total weight of the barley's kernel is removed through polishing, ensuring a clean and pure flavor.

Pioneering "All Koji" Fermentation for Enhanced Flavors

Shochu production requires water, *Koji*, steamed barley and yeast, however, typically *Koji* only accounts for about a third of the mash. iichiko is one of a few producers to embrace the *Zen Koji* (all *Koji*) fermentation technique. In *Zen Koji* fermentation, barley *Koji* is used instead of steamed barley as a source of nutrition in the fermentation mash. Moreover, a proprietary yeast is introduced, whereby the aroma and flavor derived from the barley are enhanced, making for a richer, more robust and aromatic shochu.

Two Fermentations and a Single Distillation

Shochu fermentation consists of two steps, the first to encourage yeast production and the second to create alcohol, shochu aroma, and flavor. The *Zen Koji* technique is utilized in the second step. The process is painstakingly slow, yet potent, and results in a mash of approximately 18% ABV, around double the level common in whisky making. Because of the higher alcohol content, iichiko Saiten is distilled only once (single distillation style). The single distillation preserves various aromas and flavors derived from the barley in raw shochu. Therefore, iichiko is categorized as *honkaku* (genuine) shochu, and never contains artificial additives or sweeteners. Moreover, the single distillation better preserves the flavors created during fermentation, as opposed to multiple distillations that strip them out.

Low Pressure and Atmospheric Distillation

In producing iichiko Saiten, iichiko employs two methods of stainless steel pot still distillation: *Gen-atsu* (low pressure distillation) and *Jo-atsu* (atmospheric distillation). *Gen-atsu* enables a lower boiling point, thereby concentrating only light and delicate aromas and flavors. *Jo-atsu* is at a higher temperature and captures various robust flavors of the mash. A careful and harmonious blending of both distillates is employed for iichiko Saiten.

ABOUT iichiko

iichiko is Japan's leading producer of barley shochu, Japan's revered spirit. A global icon, it is the 23rd largest spirits brand in the world. Headquartered in Oita Prefecture on Japan's Kyushu Island, iichiko sets the gold standard for shochu. Using proprietary *Koji*, yeast, pristine spring water, two-row pearled barley, as well as low pressure and atmospheric distillation techniques, the company has produced a range of blended shochus, including iichiko Saiten, the first mixology-friendly shochu. Produced by Sanwa Shurui Co., Ltd., iichiko is sold throughout Japan and in 30 countries worldwide. In the U.S., iichiko is imported by Davos Brands, whose premium portfolio includes Aviation Gin, Sombra Mezcal, Astral Tequila and TYKU Sake. It is distributed nationally by Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits. For more information, please visit www.iichiko.com and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/iichikoUSA/, Twitter at @iichiko_Shochu and Instagram at @iichiko_usa.

ABOUT SANWA SHURUI, CO., LTD.

Sanwa Shurui Co., Ltd. was founded in 1958 by three sake brewing families, with a fourth joining the following year. The company's name means "three" and "harmony," alluding to its mission to maintain harmony with nature and its employees at all times. While utilizing different ingredients and processes to produce iichiko Shochu, Wakabotan Sake and Ajimu Wine, the underlying concept is always the same: "Quality comes first." Sanwa Shurui is headquartered in Oita Prefecture on Japan's Kyushu Island.

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