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**Sommelier** (sə-mel-'yā) n. pl. **sommeliers**-'yā(z) [Fr. MF, court official charged with receiving and storing wine, and later overseeing place settings and desserts] (1829): a manager in a restaurant who has charge of wines and their service: a wine steward

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### Paul Tanguay, SushiSamba

By Jim Clarke

Paul Tanguay's grandmother not only inspired him to pursue a culinary career, she pushed him through the door, putting him to work in her restaurant in Quebec. Once he had learned his way around the kitchen he worked his way through various positions at a number of Canada's leading restaurants. This would be enough for some, but Paul decided to conquer the front of the house as well. As a restaurant manager he eventually oversaw a group of three restaurants around Montreal.

In 1997 a lead on a management opening at L'Express in New York City drew Paul south across the border. It panned out, and when he found there was a hole in beverage operations, he stepped in and found a special niche for himself.

**SushiSamba**  
New York:  
Park Ave. S. and 7th Ave.  
Chicago, Miami  
[www.sushisamba.com](http://www.sushisamba.com)

SushiSamba's Concept Developer Shimon Bokovza must have recognized Paul's eagerness to be challenged, because in 1999 he put Paul in charge of developing a wine and sake list that would complement the menu's mix of Japanese, Brazilian, and Peruvian cuisine. Multi-cultural restaurants often reveal an identity crisis in their beverage program, and Paul also had a big learning curve ahead of him as he added sake, cachaça, and pisco to his growing understanding of wine. The beverage program he eventually came up with offers a huge selection of wines, sakes, and inventive, cross-cultural cocktails.

Paul's responsibilities have expanded with the restaurant group, which now has four locations in New York, Miami, and Chicago. He aims to expose his guests to new tastes in wine and sake – and shochu, a Japanese spirit – and emphasizes education, both of his staff and his guests, as a way to make people feel at ease. He's even shared his sake knowledge with students of his alma mater, the American Sommelier Association. Looking ahead, he's got some new ground to cover as well: not only does SushiSamba's next restaurant have a Greek-Turkish theme – which means a whole new set of regional drinks – but he and his wife Francine have just had their first child, a baby girl named Kaley.

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