

## Interview: Paul Tanguay



Paul Tanguay

Mr. Paul Tanguay is well known as a real sake authority and a go-to guy for sake education in the US. I first met him when he was Corporate Beverage Director for SushiSamba, and developing a special interest in Sake.

Among his many sake achievements, Paul was the winner of the 2006 Eastern U.S. Sake Sommelier Competition and ranked among the top ten at the 2006 World Sake Sommelier Competition, and for years he has been a part of the judging panel for the U.S. National Sake Appraisal. Paul is currently Founding Partner of [Tippling Bros.](#), a NYC based Beverage consulting company and is also [Vine Connection's](#) National Sake Educator.

I recently had the opportunity to catch up with Paul and luckily for me, he agreed to answer some questions I had about his take on all things sake. Here's the Urban Sake Interview!

**Q: How on earth did you get into sake in the first place?**

**Paul Tanguay:** Well, being a sommelier/overall beverage geek, it was just a natural progression to learn about another alcoholic beverage. Also, earlier on I realized that not many wine people were interested in learning about sake. I kind of saw sake as an opportunity to have a niche that other sommelier's did not have. Looking back, it was a smart move.

**Q: I won't ask you to pick favorites, but what are some sakes you really enjoy and when/under what circumstances do you enjoy them?**

**Paul Tanguay:** My favorite category by far is Ginjo sake, typically with a 50% semai buai. Depending on the sake, this category can work as a simple aperitif or has enough 'meat' to hold up to food.

**Q: What advice would you give to folks who want to learn more about sake but are not sure where to start?**

**Paul Tanguay:** Well, for starters Urban Sake.com is a great place to start learning. Because of the

language barrier, the obvious sources like Gauntner, Sake World, Phillip Harper are great sources. But the one number one advice, try as many different sakes ads you can, from producers, categories and types.

**Q: Any favorite food-sake pairings you can share with us?**

**Paul Tanguay:** Sake and Pizza. I'll leave it at that. I think this could be a whole separate article

**Q: The world of sake in the US feels to me to be evolving quickly! Where do you see the sake import industry in five or ten years? Can imported Japanese sake go mainstream?**

**Paul Tanguay:** Though sake has seen unbelievable growth during the past two decades, my feeling is that it has begun to slow down, especially in the large markets like NYC, San Fran, Miami, Chicago. An example of that is five-six years ago, i use to get at least 1 to 4 calls a month from various media sources that were interested in sake. Though, with that said, there are many pockets in this country where people have such an interest in learning more about sake. This week, I had 30 people attend a sake seminar in New Orleans. Still a ton of interest. Personally, I feel there might be too many sake importers to support demand, which might not be good for the industry- too much sake sitting around might lead to some bad sake laying around, potentially turning some new drinkers off the beverage. In terms of going mainstream, unfortunately, I just don't see that happening any time soon. First, because of the overall price of premium, ginjo sake. Second, the language barrier- look at German wines. And third- right now- the American palate is seeking drier beverages, in wine, beer and spirits. For many, sake appears too sweet to them. They also seek higher acidity than what sake might offer.

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Thanks Paul! That Sake and Pizza comment has me intrigued! I will get some field research in as soon as I can.

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