



FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009

Learning about shochu with the Tippling Bros.

March 31

Louis 649 hosts regular Tuesday Night Tastings with different spirits and brands. Paul Tanguay and Tad Carducci of the Tippling Bros. were hosting their mini lecture of sorts on the topic of shochu.

Paul started off by explaining that the kanji used for sake is the kanji for alcohol and can be also pronounced shu or chu.

"Sho" means to burn or to concentrate, so the word "shochu" means something like "burned alcohol," so it's talking about distillation.

In creating sugars necessary to ferment and create alcohol, whether the end product will be shochu or sake, koji is used.

For a shochu to be considered a Honkaku shochu, Paul explained that the list of ingredients that could be used was limited. Rice, barley or sweet potato could be used. In sweet potato it's harder to propagate koji, so the koji is mixed with rice to create a rice mash first, then mixed with the sweet potato. Dates also fell into this group of approved base ingredients, though dates aren't a native fruit.

Paul talked about how regional temperature and climate affected alcohol production in Japan. Paul pointed out that Kyushu is well known for shochu, with Kagoshima prefecture on the island of Kyushu is famous for shochu production. Temperature in particular affects rates of fermentation. In the more northern regions, the sake is crisper, but in warmer climates like in Kyushu, super fast fermentation makes sake almost undrinkable. So put the stuff in a still and distill, and what do you get? Shochu.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sonya Moore

Sonya is the online associate editor at Nation's Restaurant News. She is a New York-based fan of consumable liquids and encounters them in her life fairly frequently and will bravely taste whatever drink is put in front of her.

SUBSCRIBE

 Posts 

 Comments 

FROM MY TWITTER

Aw, I always loved pointing out the absurdity of the dueling Astor Place Starbucks...eseses:
<http://tinyurl.com/cnyp7f> (Eater, via Gawker) 1 day ago

[follow me on Twitter](#)

PREVIOUS POSTS

▼ 2009 (26)

▼ Apr 19 - Apr 26 (3)

[Bartender Lunch at Fatty Crab](#)

So, one of the questions of the evening was, why is shochu not vodka? Paul explained that it wasn't the distillation that set shochu apart, but the use of koji in the fermentation process. As someone mentioned, the koji acts similarly as flor in sherry. And there are koji of different types that can produce different affects in drinks.

Paul said that since 1972, sake sales have been going down in Japan because it's considered an old man's drink while shochu's gained considerably popularity. And not just in Japan. Paul pointed out that shochu is only second to vodka as one of the world's best-selling spirits.

Shochu can be aged and there's no real age limit to it, but Paul said that one producer told him that shochu can't be aged past three years. So where's all the aged shochu? It's a matter of whiskey producers having a tight grip on aging and coloring.

For the tasting we got to try a barley shochu, then a sweet potato shochu, and finally a detsu shochu.

As we tried the sweet potato, Simon Ford asked if something like sweet vermouh would go with it.

"No..." Tad said, but then after a beat he added, "...but that's not entirely true."

Tad said that it can work, but there isn't that much of a complexity or bitterness for the shochu to stand up against the vermouh, so it can be used more as a base.

Tad went on to say as he worked with barley and rice shochu he played around with it until finding that the classic vodka model drinks work. He also recommended pisco-based drinks because, "If you think about it, there are pisco-esque qualities."

Tad further explained that when working from existing recipes or combination, they have to be tailored for shochu because of the spirit's more delicate nature. For example, if a drink would ask for 1.5oz, up it to 2 oz.

I agreed with that statement and also found it interesting how you could really taste the base ingredient in the shochu. The sweet potato one really did taste like sweet potato.

Emails I get: Earth Day

Tales of the cocktail announces official cocktail:...

- ▶ Apr 5 - Apr 12 (4)
- ▶ Mar 29 - Apr 5 (2)
- ▶ Mar 22 - Mar 29 (2)
- ▶ Mar 8 - Mar 15 (2)
- ▶ Mar 1 - Mar 8 (4)
- ▶ Feb 15 - Feb 22 (1)
- ▶ Feb 8 - Feb 15 (1)
- ▶ Feb 1 - Feb 8 (1)
- ▶ Jan 25 - Feb 1 (1)
- ▶ Jan 18 - Jan 25 (1)
- ▶ Jan 11 - Jan 18 (2)
- ▶ Jan 4 - Jan 11 (2)
- ▶ 2008 (101)
- ▶ 2007 (11)

MORE NRN BLOGS

[Food Writer's Diary](#)
[Independent Thinking](#)
[Ambience Chaser](#)

OTHER LINKS OF INTEREST

[Restaurant Reality Check](#)
[Alcademics](#)
[Ardent Spirits](#)
[DrinkBoy: Adventures in Cocktails](#)
[Jeffrey Morgenthaler](#)
[Learn About Sake](#)
[Oh Gosh!](#)
[Tales of the Cocktail](#)
[The Cocktail Guru Blog](#)
[The Museum of the American Cocktail](#)

After we tasted the shochu, we got to drink a cocktail created by Tad called Blind Date in Manhattan. The drink is based on the Manhattan and uses date shochu.

[Jump to Nation's Restaurant News](#)
[Subscribe to NRN](#)

Blind Date in Manhattan

date shochu

Maraschino liqueur

sweet vermouth

honey

lemon peel

POSTED BY SONYA MOORE AT 2:47 PM

LABELS: [LOUIS 649](#), [PAUL TANGUAY](#), [SHOCHU](#), [SIMON FORD](#), [TAD CARDUCCI](#), [TIPLING BROS.](#)

o COMMENTS:

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

[Subscribe to: Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)