

DRINKS

Summer Sipping: Try saké cocktails for light, refreshing drinks

Veronica Meewes

This time of year means sunset happy hours, picnic perfect weather, and the beginning of grilling season. Looking for a new cocktail that's perfect for all three? Try switching to saké as your base alcohol of choice.

While often known as "rice wine," the base used to create saké is actually closer to beer as starch from the rice is converted to alcohol through fermentation using yeast and a mold.

Undiluted (genshu) saké usually contains 16 to 20 percent ABV and, if diluted, saké can range from 10 to 15 percent -- as much as a strong bottle of vodka. The clean, refreshing taste of a filtered saké is the perfect base for a citrus or herb-infused cocktail, while the smooth milkiness of unfiltered saké (nigori) is equally ideal mixed with flavors like chocolate and coconut.

then paired with these variations of saké take a very mild and versatile

Sarma Melngailis, co-owner of their menu. (In fact, they actually began to serve **organic junmai ginjo**

"Saké mixes beautifully with fresh cilantro, you really can't overwhelm the other flavors on its own or in cocktails, it pairs well with our raw food."

Chris Johnson, director of operations and saké sommelier at Cherry Restaurant in New York's Dream Downtown hotel, keeps the bar stocked with over 80 types of saké. He also loves using it paired with other spirits to replace vermouth.

to call the bar you can

As saké becomes more popular in the Valley of Oregon, it's also making its way to near 300 bars and restaurants. Local ingredients are also driving the rising popularity of saké as a natural progression.

SakéOne, which is brewed in the Willamette Valley of Oregon (typically known for pinot noir), is getting more and more requests for kegs. They now distribute to nearly three dozen restaurants and bars across the country...

"As we Americans more closely scrutinize what we eat and drink, saké is a great choice for those seeking a gluten-free, sulfite-free, tannin-free, additive-free, low acidity, cool and fun beverage choice," he told TODAY.com.

So kick off the summer season by serving up some refreshing sake cocktails that are sure to please your guests.



Salma Melngailis

Sake cocktails are a great alternative to hard liquor

Sarma Melngailis, co-owner of New York's raw food mecca Pure Food & Wine, uses saké in several of the drinks on their menu. (In fact, they go through so much of it that they actually began to serve **SakéOne Momokawa organic junmai ginjo saké on draft** to eliminate the excess of glass bottles leftover at the end of each shift.)

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