



Bubbles for the Summertime - And we ain't talking wine!

by Collin Williams



As we have been discussing some unique and different suggestions for your summertime imbibing, it is my hope that you have enjoyed these selections and tried them on your friends and love ones.

Since we are on a roll with the outside –the-box ideas, let me throw another at you this week. Sparkling Sake! I know what you're thinking "What the heck is he talking about?" Bear with me, I think you're in for a surprise.

If you have read any of my articles where we discussed Sake, you will recall the discrepancies in the general public's misconceptions about sake and the incredible variety of flavors and styles that are available. Sparkling Sake certainly has to rank amongst the "latest and greatest" categories in the Sake world. These products allow a person to experience something different, refreshing, and full of flavor. This idea fits into the idea of getting the consumer to think about the beverage in other manners than have become the norm. Was this so different than the invention of Champagne?

Sparkling Sake is very new to the world market of sake and is still relatively small in distribution compared to the other styles available. However, what this sake lacks in range of availability it makes up for in growing excitement amongst the sake lovers and neo-wine circles. Different retailers and wine bars are beginning to offer a few selections of Sparkling Sake due to popular demand and a growing trend of consumer consciousness and intrigue. This fervor is allowing brewers in Japan to begin experimenting with new techniques and focusing on the flavors and appeal that these beverages offer. However, since this type of sake is so new to the scene an understanding of the basics by consumers and brewers alike must be mastered.

Sparkling sake starts out simple enough in the same fashion as regular Ginjo sake – rice kernels are polished to a desired degree of size before being cooked, inoculated with koji, and placed into a starter mash (moto) and later the Moromi (main mash). Usually, a brewer would allow the mixture to reach alcohol levels of 16 - 20% ABV. However, in the sparkling sake method the fermentation is arrested with the mash is only about 5 -10% ABV.

Why halt the fermentation process? Similar to methods used in Champagne production, the brewers need enough sugar to be present inside the bottle so that the yeast can proceed with the fermentation under a containment seal – i.e. forming trapped CO2 or Bubbles! If the mash is allowed to ferment completely there won't be enough sugar left for the yeast to convert to alcohol and gas inside the bottle.

By allowing higher levels of sugar to be present inside the liquid, this also means that these types of beverages will be sweeter than the average sake. Also, due to the necessary addition of sugar and yeast to the liquid while inside the bottle, sparkling sake (or Supakuringu) will retain some of the existing yeast as brewers do not usually filter this style of sake before release to the public. Remarkably, the end result is something that is bubbly, sweet, and still retaining substance. A good way to visualize this taste experience is to think of "cream soda"

Incidentally, similar to Champagne, Sparkling Sake is not always made in the "traditional method". Some higher volume producers choose to add carbonation to the liquid before bottling. The end result is much the same as that in the traditional method, but these types can suffer from a lack of complexity without the yeast component.

The practical application for these beverages is enormous. Of course, due to our subject matter, I would recommend this beverage (served in a white wine glass) during any of your summertime – outdoor activities as Sparkling Sake is perfect to refresh you in the heat and quench your palate. But, don't stop there! This is a great beverage to use when you are requiring that fresh aperitif to liven up a party or go with your starter courses. And, just like Champagne, Sparkling Sake can be used in many of your toasting and celebratory occasions. Interestingly – some Formula One Professional Race Car Drivers will toast their winnings with a big bottle of Supakuringu! Go Figure!

Poochi Poochi Sparkling Nigori Sake 320ml; 7.5% ABV

\$13.43 cash

Clear color and develops a firm mousse on the service that's visually very appealing. Light tropical notes on the nose similar to under ripe honeydew melon and lime, slightly sweet undertone reminds me of eating sorbet or cotton candy. Gets better with each sip almost developing a lime soda – like character. Very nice and refreshing!

Chikurin Hou Hou Shu Pink Sparkling Sake NV

300ml; 6.1% ABV

\$15.46 cash

This one has almost a beer – like visual appeal (think: India Pale Ale), the nose is toasty while the palate delivers loads of sweet fruit character of cherry chocolate, strawberry preserves and whip cream. The first thing that comes to mind for me is Cherry Ice Box Pie!



Ozeki Hana Awaka Sparkling Sake NV 250ml; 7% ABV - \$5.98 cash

Kizakura Stars Pure Sparkling Sake 330ml; 6.5% ABV - \$6.83 cash

Ozeki Sawa Sawa Sparkling Sake 300ml; 9% ABV - \$8.57 cash



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