

Sake, the drink that makes women beautiful

Have you ever tried sake? Japanese people's favourite drink allegedly makes women's skin more beautiful. And who would know better than Sachiko Koyama Japanese sake-sommelier. Read our interesting interview with her.

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It is a lot tastier than you would think and it is not as strong as a Hungarian palinka— and those are only two of the doyens of surprises that sake has given us. It really seems that this traditional Japanese drink will hold an important place in our liquor cabinet and in front of our vanity mirrors after having gotten introduction from **Sachiko Koyama** professional sake - sommelier.

If they ask you about the relationship between sake and women, what is the first thing that comes into your mind?

That sake fits women. It makes them more beautiful. It contains a lot of amino acid— which sets it apart from wines—, and these amino acids are incorporated into the hair and skin, making it fresh and soft. That is why many beauty products are made from Japanese sake and women often put sake in their bath water as well. If we went to a traditional Japanese sake distillery now, we would see many older women working there, who have very beautiful, youthful and soft hands. This is because the sake must be hand-blended thus retains their skin's beauty.

Is it an old tradition in Japan that women use sake in beauty care?

It is partly tradition, but here is also new knowledge regarding sake that the beauty industry has just started utilizing lately. Putting it into bath water is a very old tradition of thousand years, but you can also get very popular cosmetic products in Japan which have just started including sake as an ingredient.

In Hungary sake is thought of as the drink of Japanese man, which a women at least as consumers have little business with, Is this a mistaken idea?

It is true that the consumption of sake and its rituals in old Japan are related to men in principle. The relationship between women and sake was merely the act of serving it to men. Modern Japanese women however already consume all sorts of alcoholic beverages, including sake, so this is not a manly privilege anymore.

What do you think about these traditions changing in connection with sake?

I come from a traditional family but I have no problem with these traditions changing. Before women used to pour the drink into a man's cup, now it can happen the opposite way, I take this as the growing of tradition, not the opposing of it. This is not a bad thing at all.



Sachiko Komaya sake sommelier

Do others also perceive this as enrichment of tradition? For instance that yourself as a woman coming from a traditional Japanese family have become a sake sommelier in Japan, has everyone accepted and supported that?

I used to work in a bar, where out of 6 sommeliers I was the only woman, our guests were all men. There were people who were happy with the peculiarity of having a woman sommelier offering them sake, and there were those who disapproved. When I moved to London this was not peculiar anymore, and it was not a disadvantage either, which I am very happy about, because I like to promote this traditional Japanese drink to both men and women.

Why is that so important for you?

Sake is an inseparable part of our culture – it has been produced for 2500 years in Japan – and it is thus very apt to be able to transmit my country's traditions through it. Sake is more

than just alcohol, it is a sacral drink, which played an important role in different religious purification rituals, too. When saying farewell to the deceased, they used to pour sake on the ground, on a wedding the bride and groom used to drink sake from a shared cup – this what I did on my wedding too. Its key role in Japanese culture could probably derive from the fact that it is a very pure drink. It is made from only three components, clean water, and rice and koji - which is mixture of rice and a special yeast -, therefore, it is a very organic drink which contains no added substances.



Over the past two decades Hungarian wine culture, has increased very much, and now most housewife know what foods to pair with what kind of wine. About sake, however, we know very little. What are the basic skills that are important to keep in mind if you want to surprise guests in your home with Sake?

Unlike wine, sake is not usually paired with food. Most often it is drank on its own. At the same time, because the acids it contains it does highlight well different taste of foods- it is just like a good Japanese wife, who through support makes the life of her husband better, nicer, more conformable, points out the hidden beauties of life to him. Still, if I had to choose a food, I would pair it with foods with tomato and cheese- of course warm meals. Sake is also good to cook with – even a few drops kill the odor typical to fish.

Are there special traditions to the serving and tasting of sake, of which a good housewife should be aware of?

The strong-smelling sake should be consumed from wine glass as this is the best way to enjoy the beverage's flavors. It should be taste similar to wines, a small amount of sake

should be stirred in the glass while repeatedly raising it close to our noses, smell and taste a little. Milder sakes should be tasted from small china cups and warm. Serving also includes the tradition that it should be the women pouring the sake, holding the bottle with both hands, the sake cup should also be held with both hands while raising it to drink.