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Sake and Sushi On the Menu in Paris



© AFP | French saké samurai Sylvain Huet smelling saké at a tasting in Fushimi, Japan

Consumers in France are developing a taste for the East.

By [AFP](#) with Wine-Searcher staff | Posted Wednesday, 20-Mar-2013

Paris is poised to get its first saké tasting salon in a bid to demystify the Japanese rice wine that is still relatively unknown in the West.

Owners of Japanese restaurants Sakebar and Sola – which holds a Michelin star – will be hosting what they're calling the first saké salon in Europe in June, bringing in sake experts from [Japan](#) who will lead tastings for curious French consumers.

Sake producers, distributors and sommeliers will be on hand to help European palates understand the nuances, styles and complexities of the fermented rice wine in round-table discussions, workshops and conferences.

One of the discussion groups, for instance, will center around saké and French gastronomy, along with food pairings that are possible when an unexpected dinner companion turns up.

The arrival of a saké salon in Paris comes as little surprise, given the city's love affair with Japan's culinary heritage. Rivaling the number of bistros and cafés in the city is the popularity of sushi restaurants that have popped up in response to ever-growing demand. Rather than baguette sandwiches or quiche Lorraine at lunchtime, an increasing number of consumers now opt for rice-topped raw fish – a foreign and unpalatable concept for many French gourmards just two decades ago.

Since opening in 1998, Planet Sushi, for example, has built a mini-empire of 60 shops with plans to open 35 more. It has also expanded into Casablanca, Ibiza and Miami.

Similarly, Paris-based Sushi Shop is a ubiquitous sight in France, with international locations that now include Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Italy and the United States.

Sushi Shop has also been successful at recruiting star power, including French celebrity chefs such as Thierry Marx and Jean-Francois Piège, as well as American singer Lenny Kravitz, and, most recently, supermodel Kate Moss – both of whom were enlisted to design the packaging. Kravitz's sushi box carries the words "Raw, Like New York."

Sushi Shop in Paris carries a number of sakés to accompany its food, along with bottles of wine, including [Chateau Lagrange Les Fiefs de Lagrange](#), [Chateau Sergant Lalande de Pomerol](#), and [Domaine du Tariquet Côte Tariquet Chardonnay-Sauvignon Blanc](#).

Interest in saké is also growing in London, where a group called the Sake Sommelier Association hosts monthly saké tastings at Harrods' Tasting Room.

The Paris saké salon will be held from June 21 to 22.