

Spirited Women and Sake Seminars

The [2007 Tales of the Cocktail](#) hosted many great seminars, two of which included **Spirited Women Past and Present** and **Sake to Me!**

Spirited Women Past and Present

By Debra C. Argen



Spirited Women Past and Present hosted by **Charlotte Voissey** and **LeNell Smothers** dressed in period costumes, provided attendees with a humorous and educational look at the evolution of women and alcohol, two words that were not always associated with one another.

At the turn of the century, ladies didn't drink alcohol, and gentlemen didn't drink in front of them. Ladies did not drink in bars and did not work in those establishments, as they were considered dangerous places for women. If a woman drank at all, there was a "feminine" way to drink, and one of the acceptable ways was to have the dessert Syllabub, which had alcohol as one of its ingredients.

By the 1800s some American women indulged in as much as three glasses of wine over the course of an evening, and by the late 1800s women were becoming "resourceful" in having alcohol in the form of cordials, stimulants, purely vegetal, and medicinal. Although drinking alcohol was not fashionable, taking drugs, including opium, was very fashionable at the time.

By the second half of the 19th century, steps were taken to integrate women into restaurants and drinking establishments. In 1868 New York women founded the very controversial Cirrhosis Club and became the "ladies who lunch" who actually went to restaurants and sat down to eat! By the 1890s women were slowly being admitted to the men's world of drinking and dining establishments, and Delmonico's in New York allowed ladies to have dinner at the restaurant.

Ladies, have we come a long way, baby!

Sake to Me!

By Edward F. Nesta

Sake to Me! with **Lorin Gaudin**, **Beau Timken**, **Lucy Brennan**, **Dina Cheney**, and **Dewey Weddington** opened eyes and minds, as Lorin opened the seminar with the statement "Sake does not have to be the warm yucky stuff." She proceeded to add that sake has many nuances and can be floral and heady.



Lorin, Beau, Lucy, Dina, and Dewey

Although sake has 2500 years of history, was started by monks and brewed in the temples, and at one time there were 30,000 brewers in Japan, there are more misunderstandings than understandings about this spirit that is fermented like beer and is drunk like wine. Beau Timken called sake "A libation with no education" in his book, **Sake a Modern Guide**.

One of the chief misunderstandings is that sake must be heated. It should be noted that heating sake masks its faults, and most inexpensive sakes are overheated to mask their faults. Sake should be drunk in white wine glasses to get the full nuances of this spirit.

All sake is made from brown rice, and the more they mill away the rice, the purer a product achieved, as the more it is polished, the easier it will be to convert to starch, which turns to sugar, and then to alcohol. The two key elements for making sake are rice and water; with the rice quality accounting for 20%, and water accounting for 80%.

There are many types of sake, the first category Class X uses rice, mold, and water, and varies according to the percentages of rice polished in correlation to each grain remaining and includes: Junmai; Junmai Ginjo; and Junmai Dai Ginjo; the second category, Class Y is made with rice, mold, water, and added brewer's alcohol: Honjozo; Ginjo; and Dai Ginjo. Other types of sake include: Nama, Nigori, Genshu, Taru, Kinpaku, Koshu, and Kijoshu.

After tasting different brands and types of sake at the seminar, I think I will now look differently at this very interesting and historic spirit.

Read other on the **Tales of the Cocktail** in the [Liquor Cabinet](#), [Restaurants](#), and [Chefs' Recipes](#) sections.

For information on the 2008 **Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans**, please visit: www.TalesoftheCocktail.com. For information on New Orleans, please visit: **New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.** at: www.NewOrleansCVB.com.

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