

# NEW YORK

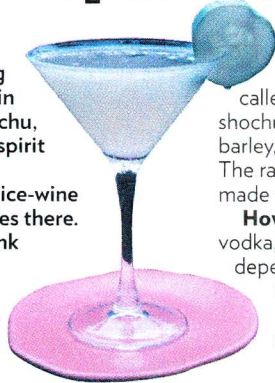
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## Intelligencer

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### **Big in Japan** Will shochu become the city's new sake?

In Tokyo, sake is being abandoned in favor of shochu, a vodkalike spirit that's been clobbering rice-wine and beer sales there. Now the drink is gaining momentum in New York.



#### **How's it made?**

Fermented with a mold called koji and then distilled, shochu can be made from barley, rice, wheat, or potato. The rage in Japan is imo, shochu made from sweet potato.

**How does it taste?** Like vodka, but nuttier or fruitier depending on the variety.

**How much is it?** Sake-size, 750-milliliter bottles run from \$50 to \$150.

#### **Variations:**

SushiSamba's "chu-tinis" feature muddled cucumbers; French-Asian spot Rêve serves shochu martinis with litchis; midtown's Totto mixes in pickled fruit. Just-opened EN Japanese Brasserie serves flights of shochu (\$16). "All the kids in Japan drink it. It's smoother than vodka," says EN co-owner Reika Yo. "Although I don't know personally—I don't drink alcohol." **BETH LANDMAN**