

# Low-alcohol trend shakes up China drink makers



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The drinking culture in China is changing. It had long been common for people to enjoy parties at home fueled by high alcohol drinks. But recently, the younger generation is opting for weaker beverages, forcing the alcohol industry to innovate. NHK World's Nakamura Genta reports.

Young people in Beijing are kicking back with low-alcohol fruit cocktails.

There are all kinds of flavors. It's like drinking juice. People are more willing to have them.

The younger generation is under a lot of stress and they have many chances to drink. Low alcohol beverages that just give people a slight buzz are easier to enjoy.

The market for low-alcohol drinks is booming in China. A research firm says that last year it was worth about 19 billion dollars. The figure has roughly tripled in size over the past 5 years. There are a variety of reasons for the growing popularity, including such drinks being easier on the body and the budget.

This alcoholic beverage maker produces its own drinks and creates products for other companies. Zheng Bohan is one of its customers. He launched a firm in 2020 focused on low-alcohol drinks. To further appeal to the young crowd, he even developed a beverage with a twist: an original fruit liquor that comes with its own drinking game.

Other drinks are just alcohol. Ours come with fun and games.

It's a version of a party game that has recently become popular in China. Players can make other

participates do things like take a drink. It's meant to make it easier to have fun communicating while enjoying a beverage.

We hope to appeal to people who want to do more than just get drunk.

Amid the trend, China's leading high-alcohol beverage, Baijiu, is struggling. In 2022, a Chinese research firm surveyed people in their 20s and 30s about alcohol preferences. It found that only about 9% of respondents said they drink Baijiu at parties. The production value of the drink last year was about half its peak in 2016. So Baijiu makers are trying new ways to stay relevant.

A major Chinese Baijiu manufacturer collaborated with a well-known coffee chain to launch this: Baijiu latte. The drink was developed by the country's top Baijiu brand, Kweichow Moutai. Moutai is known as China's national alcoholic drink. It's a luxury item often used by Chinese leaders to entertain foreign dignitaries. Just a small amount is used to flavor the milk in the latte, keeping its alcohol content under 0.5%. The drink went on sale last September and sold more than 5 million cups on the first day.

It's very mellow. I like the combination of the aroma of Moutai combined with robust coffee.

The way young people enjoy a drink with friends is undergoing change and China's alcohol industry is pulling out all the stops to make sure it keeps a place on the table.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. Can you think of any other business opportunities for the changing alcohol market in China? Could any Japanese companies benefit from this trend?
2. Do you think traditional Japanese sake is also becoming less popular? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think young people in China prefer weaker alcoholic drinks? How about young people in Japan?
4. Have you seen any new alcohol market trends in Japan?
5. What type of alcohol do you prefer? Why?