

Alcoholic Beverages

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Movement of Alcoholic Beverages During
the Winter Holidays

~Women grasp the key to the future of sparkling wine~

Sparkling wine is essential to the Japanese market during the winter holidays season. In Japan, the end and beginning of the year is when alcohol is most consumed. Over the last few years, sparkling wine has especially been actively consumed. The customs clearance figures of 2013 show that bottled wine under 2L was lower each month compared to the previous year, but the total year-on-year figure of sparkling wine constantly increased. Although the summer of 2013 was hit by a heat wave, beer did not grow very much. On the other hand, "the figures of sparkling wine did not seem to fall at all" (Brand Manager of Cava).

Sparkling wine, which has a reasonable price has completely rooted in the market and is no longer a temporary trend. It is available year around at supermarkets and convenience stores. Sparkling wine can also be enjoyed easily by the glass at restaurants. As the daily needs of sparkling wine, whose original demands were for celebrations, increases, there are stronger demands for products that are "one rank higher."



According to an online shopping store, "In 2013, the price range of the wines that consumers purchase are gradually moving up from Cava to Cremant, and Cremant to Champagne." Also, "for Champagne, more people are beginning to purchase Millesime and high class Cuvee." An alcohol specialty stores made the following comment: "Although we had a section mainly composed of products between 3000-4000 yen, but we want to add the 5000-6000 yen price range by the Christmas season of 2013."

In fact, starting with the top Champagne brand "Moët & Chandon," most of the main brands are making a double-digit growth. "Prestige Cuvee" is also doing well and there are many companies saying that this brand is "growing at a rate close to double-digit." This was not for Champagne, but there was a tasting event in November 2013 called "Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux" where the organizer commented, "high end products are moving actively in the Japanese market this year." Here is a comment by the Union's chairman: "You can expect quantity or numbers from China, but there are anxieties. We want to focus on the more matured Japanese market." As this comment shows, producers of other types of alcohol share similar ideas. The best Italian sparkling wine, "Franciacorta" recently opened an office in Japan, and is going to start working on activities to increase its name value and brand.



At a Champagne event, "Noel a la Mode," that Isetan holds every year, participants said, "the Japanese Champagne market is the most refined." In fact, Remy Cointreau sells all of Piper Heidsieck's standard class (brut) in the Japanese market and switch to their high end line "Essentiel". This also comes from the expectations to the Japanese market that "Japanese consumers will understand if the quality is high."

However, there are also concerns. There were brands that did not raise their price as part of their strategy in 2013. Now that euro is about to reach 140 yen, are we starting to count down to the price change? In addition, the tax increase in Japan starting from April is seen as an inevitable factor to affect the economy that has gradually made its recovery.

On the other hand, there are also voices saying, "The economy has a bright future in medium to long terms." This is because more women are entering the workforce. For working women, Champagne is one of the best rewards. Since women are sensitive to new information and have high disposable income, they get together for business or for leisure to enjoy "alcohol that is a little bit better." It may be said that the future of the sparkling wine category is up to women.