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Adelaide's First Dedicated Saké Bar Makes Its Debut In The East End

BY JAIMIE MARTIN ON FEBRUARY 22, 2017

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The humble rice grain will once again rise to the challenge by becoming the hero of Adelaide's first dedicated saké bar, **Saké Society**. With a pop-up bar and master sessions, which pair different saké styles with unexpected foods, this seems like the place to be in Adelaide if you're looking for some cultural adventure.

Owners Takeshi Lue and Matthew Stuckey compare the diversity in saké to be as vast as the different varieties of wine. A misunderstood drink outside of Japan, 'nihonshu' or 'saké' to English-speakers, is brewed to express different qualities of what is essentially just variations on rice, water and mould. Stuckey and Lue find this process endlessly fascinating and a substantial reason for their love of saké.

Made from fermented rice, this popular Japanese rice wine is not a hard spirit, as many believe.

"Why people think 'saké bombs' are a good idea mystifies me! If you've never tried nihonshu before, think of it like wine and drink it like you would a wine; smell it, swirl it, taste it... you'll be surprised how smooth it is." explained Stuckey.

Lue and Stuckey set out on their venture after greatly missing the Japanese hospitality and single-minded pursuit of excellence that Japanese bars possess. They believe Saké Society is their chance to bring some of that ethos and experience to Adelaide. Lue and Stuckey were determined to steer clear of just another Japanese-themed pub, as they aim to create a very specific experience at Saké Society. Creating a very small pop-up bar, that only seats 29 people, allowed them to do that without compromise.

"If all goes well over the next three weeks and the Adelaide audience responds well to our concept, there is every possibility that we will do something again," Stuckey says about the possibility of a permanent Saké Society space.

While both have experience in hospitality, Lue working in a sushi restaurant while he was studying, and Stuckey working as a hotel concierge while freelancing, neither have experience running a bar. Both men designed and fit out the bar, with help from their friends.

Stuckey says about the venue, "the space is designed to be 'paired back' and calming. It is minimalist but gentle. We want to create an environment where our guests can feel peaceful; and focus on food, drink and conversation."



qualities! The sessions are six-course meals, pairing selected nihonshu and Japanese-inspired small dishes. The six sakés chosen best represent the unlimited array of saké styles available in Japan with unexpected food pairings. The sessions will be run by **Andre Bishop**, who owns three saké bars in Melbourne, and is one of the most knowledgeable and passionate proponents of saké inside or out of Japan. Since opening his first bar in 2000, Bishop has done perhaps more than any other Australian to raise the profile (and consumption) of Japanese saké in Australia and has made it his mission to elevate Japan's most renowned drink to the status he says it deserves — something akin to that of wine.

All of which makes this a great spot to pop your saké cherry, so to speak. So, what do the masterminds behind this creation recommend? Stuckey recommends Bishop's nihonshu, which is only available from Bishop himself, as well as an extremely rare whisky from a small distillery in Saitama – *Ichiro's Malt*. Make a date to go down there before it closes, and experience a cultural sensation in the heart of the Adelaide CBD.

Saké Society launches Friday Feb 24th.

Reservations are required on Feb 24 at 6pm, Feb 25 at 6pm, and March 9 at 6pm. Walk-ins welcome Thursday to Saturday evenings.

16 Ebenezer Pl, Adelaide.

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