



Baijiu Myths Dispelled

MYTH: Baijiu is just one form of Chinese spirit.

Baijiu – literally translating to “white spirit” from Mandarin – refers to about a dozen traditional Chinese spirits, and not just one type. As a category, its different styles can be as dissimilar to each other as rum or gin is to tequila. There are four principle styles of baijiu, broken down by “aromas” – strong aroma, light aroma, sauce aroma, and rice aroma. Other styles can get so specific that they refer to the spirits of a single distillery.

MYTH: All baijiu has a pungent, overbearing taste reminiscent of rotting fruit and sweaty socks.

In baijiu production, each Chinese distillery uses its own naturally-harvested yeast culture (*qu*) that is unique to its specific geographic location. This means that all baijiu tastes slightly different depending on where it is made, similarly to the French notion of *terroir* in winemaking. Because there are over 10,000 distilleries using different grains, *qu*, and production methods throughout China, baijiu takes on many different flavor profiles. A light aroma baijiu, for instance, can have a taste of dried apricot, pear, and pine, while sauce aroma can have a taste of fermented bean, mushroom, and caramelized fruit.

MYTH: Baijiu lives up to its nickname of “firewater” because of its very high alcohol content, more than most other spirit categories.

While a few brands do boast higher percentages, the vast majority of baijiu is bottled at around 50% ABV – not far off from your average whiskey. Ming River, specifically, has an ABV of 45%, which is the same as popular bourbons such as Maker’s Mark, Woodford Reserve, and Bulleit. Navy Strength Gin, Cask Strength Whisky, and Overproof Rum all run with much higher alcohol contents yet are never perceived to share baijiu’s “firewater” label.

MYTH: Baijiu’s aromas and flavors are too funky to be used efficiently in cocktails.

In cocktails, a strong aroma baijiu like Ming River can be called upon to perform like a rum agricole, Jamaican pot still rum, or a Batavia arrack, effortlessly finding a home in tiki drinks while also opening a new world for sours and aperitifs. Additionally, many classic recipes can be enhanced by incorporating Ming River baijiu in a split base or even just as a rinse.

For more information or cocktail recipes please visit www.mingriver.com and www.drinkbaijiu.com.