

Philippine Tropical Wines and Craft Beer, Liquor and Spirits

Tropical fruit wine-making in the Philippines started during the early 1980's. *Guyabano* (sour sop), pineapple, *kamias* (ginger lily), mango, *duhat* (Philippine black plum), and *bignay* (Philippine wild berry) are among the many tropical fruits commonly used in producing unique-tasting wines. Other fruits like *sampalok* (tamarind) and *granadilla* (passion fruit) are the more recent additions to the list of locally-produced fruit wines.¹



The country's *Libug* and *Malibug* berry-based red wines have received awards from international wine competitions. A local honey-based wine believed to have cold and cough therapeutic effects is now penetrating the mainstream wine market. There are also rice wines, oregano-based wines and other exciting healthy alcoholic beverages that are now elevating the alcoholic beverage sector in the Philippines, and hopefully penetrating the international market, as well, as the Philippines envisions to be Asia's best source of tropical fruit wines and spirits.²

Philippine Traditional Tropical Wines

Tuba (Coconut or Palm wine)

Among the most widely prevalent wines produced in the Philippines is the *Tuba*, which is produced from palm saps. The most common types of *Tuba* are made from coconut and nipa palm sap. *Tuba* can also be made from the kaong palm and fishtail palms.³ A notable variant of *Tuba* from the peoples of the Visayas and Mindanao is the *Bahalina*, which is distinctively reddish-brown in color due to the use of bark extracts from certain mangrove species.



¹ "No grapes allowed: Filipino wine-making with homegrown tropical fruits" by Christmas B. de Guzman. DA-BAR Research and Development Digest.

² "The Philippines' Tropical Wines and Spirits Pavilion presents unique alcoholic beverages in top food trade show", www.dti.gov.ph.

³ Wikipedia.

*Lambanog (Philippine Vodka)*⁴

Coconut wine or *Lambanog*, dubbed as the Philippine Vodka, is a natural and chemical-free alcoholic liquor obtained from the distillation of naturally fermented coconut sap. It is known for its high alcohol content and potency, containing at least 30% alcohol, and can be used as base liquor for other flavored spirits and cocktail concoctions. It is indigenous to the Philippines and an integral part of the Filipinos' festive heritage.



Photo: Jay Directo / Getty

Coconut *Lambanog* is classified into pure and flavored coconut *Lambanog*. Pure *Lambanog* is unmodified, clear, and colorless, commonly found in local stores. On the other hand, flavored *Lambanog* has added fresh fruits or Food and Drug Administration-approved food colors and flavors fitted for the more adventurous drinkers. *Lambanog* is widely produced from different regions in the Philippines but is predominantly from the Southern Tagalog Region.

A Philippine *Lambanog* brand, *Lakan*, won medals in all eight international wine and spirit competitions it joined over the last three years. *Lakan* won two golds in Europe's prestigious Monde Selections (in 2015 and 2017) and a double gold in a recently concluded China contest. *Lakan* also garnered three silvers and two bronzes in European and American competitions, proving global competitiveness.

Tapuy (Rice Wine)

Tapuy, also spelled *tapuey* or *tapey*, is a local drink that originated from Banaue and the Mountain Province in the Philippines, made from locally produced glutinous rice, cooked, fermented and then stored in earthen jars for two to three months. *Tapuy* leaves a sweet and tangy taste in the mouth.⁵

Basi (Sugarcane Wine)

Basi is a sugarcane-based wine infused with the samak tree bark. It is made by cooking sugarcane juice infused with samak berries and leaves and fermented in burnay (clay) jars. Aging *Basi* involves burying those burnay jars underground (usually under houses) where they stay sometimes for as long as five years. In the Batanes Islands, *Basi*, known as *Palek*, is flavored with an ebony bark, which turns the drink black. In Samar, another province in the Philippines, it is called *Intus*.⁶

⁴ "The Philippine Vodka "Lambanog": Facts & Misconceptions", Philippine Coconut Authority, www.pca.gov.ph.

⁵ "Tapuy - Filipino Rice Wine: How to Make" by EC Mendoza, www.hubpages.com.

⁶ "List of Philippine Wines", www.glossaryoffilipinofood.blogspot.com.

Philippine Craft Beer⁷

The Philippine craft beer industry has already grown significantly over the past few years. Production has thrived, as well as consumption and consumer awareness. According to the Craft Beer Association of the Philippines (CBAP), most of the industry growth happened in 2015, when around 15 breweries opened that year. Since 2015, the CBAP has signed up 60 craft beer breweries all over the Philippines.



Photo source: Engkanto Brewery.



Photo: Brewfest MNL's FB Page

Most of the craft beer breweries in the country are located in Metro Manila. About 43 % of its 60 current members have their factories in Makati, Manila, Parañaque, Quezon City, Las Piñas, Taguig, and Pasig.

The rest of Luzon has a generous share of the craft beer industry. Ten breweries are located in Southern Luzon, while another ten are in the Northern to Central regions. There are 12 craft beer breweries in the Visayas and two in Mindanao.

The craft beers are not necessarily available only in the area where they are produced but are supplied to other parts of the country, making their brews available to a wider market. Indeed, craft beer has increasingly become more popular among Filipinos and is gearing towards joining the international market.



Photo: Philippine Craft Beer Community's FB page.

⁷ "The Craft Beers in the Philippines and Where to Find Them" by Pauline Macaraeg, 26 February 2019. www.esquiremag.ph.

Philippine Craft Liquor and Spirits⁸

Amadeo Coffee Liqueur

Amadeo is an all-natural coffee liqueur that's made with four of the Philippines' main viable coffee varieties: Arabica, Liberica (Barako), Excelsa, and Robusta. Named after the coffee capital of the country, Amadeo municipality in Cavite, it offers a unique, one-of-a-kind blend with a full-bodied taste and an aroma to match.



Photo source: www.manila-wine.com

Archipelago ARC Botanical Gin

Archipelago comes from the Full Circle Craft Distillers Co., touted as the Philippines' first authentic craft distillery. Its Botanical Gin uses 28 exotic botanicals, which include *pomelos* from Davao, pine buds from Benguet, *dalandan* oranges from Quezon Province, and more.



Archipelago ARC Lava Rock Vodka

Aside from gin, Full Circle also offers its own vodka. What makes it different is that it is filtered from lava rocks from the Taal and Mayon volcanoes. The special filtration process leaves a subtle minerality to the spirit that's smooth, crisp, and clean at the same time.



Photo source: Full Circle Craft Distillers' IG

Barik Supremo Lambanog

Barik Lambanog takes sap from the nipa palm's fruit to make authentic Philippine moonshine. It is perfect for purists looking to experience the pre-colonial Filipino drink. Barik also offers lambanog with a ginger sour flavor.



Photo source: Barik's IG

Crows Gin

Crows Craft Brewing & Distilling Co., founded in 2013 by Jose Mari Cuervo with a focus on beer, introduced Crows Gin with flavors from 23 botanicals. Now, billed as the country's first small-batch craft gin, Crows Gin uses several Filipino botanicals including pandan, coconut milk, calamansi, lemongrass, orange, and more.



Photo source: Grapevine Manila

⁸ "The 16 Best Filipino Craft Liquor and Spirits to Drink Right Now" by Paolo Chua, 10 September 2019. www.esquiremag.ph.

Crows Single Malt Craft Whiskey

In 2019, Crows introduced its barrel-aged craft whisky made with a single malt variant. The craft whisky has notes of caramel, bananas, sourdough bread, and some citrus. Currently, it's the first single malt to be produced out of the Philippines, which is a feat in itself.



Photo source: www.crowscraft.com

Don Papa Rum 7 Years Old

Don Papa Rum is a premium aged, single-island rum that is made at the foothills of Mt. Kanlaon. The rum got its start after founder and Rémy Cointreau executive Stephen Carroll heard stories of Bacolod having the finest sugar canes in the world. Don Papa Rum is made with a molasses base, which is then aged a minimum of seven years. Carroll also founded the Bleeding Heart Rum Company to distill it locally. Today, the brand has become one of the most renowned Filipino-made craft spirits in the world.



Photo source: Don Papa Rum's IG

Intramuros Liqueur de Cacao

Intramuros Liqueur de Cacao was made with the Philippines' history with cacao in mind. In the 1800s, it was popularized by the Spanish as a hot chocolate drink. From there, Intramuros took inspiration from the *tablea tsokolate* to create a rich spirit that uses 100-percent roasted cacao.



Photo source: www.manila-wine.com

Julius James Small Batch Single Source 100% Corn Whisky

Made purely out of corn sourced from Isabela, Julius James is aged in square oak barrels for a minimum of three and a half years. The corn gives it a unique flavor profile while the Philippines' climate adds something more special to it.



Photo source: www.manila-wine.com

Kanto Salted Caramel Vodka

Kanto was created by Destileria Barako to "pay homage to the Filipino's unique *tagayan* drinking culture", a tradition where drinkers share a common glass, passed around in a round-robin sequence. It has the taste of smooth vodka combined with the sweet tang of salted caramel. Awarded a double gold award at the SIP (Spirit International Prestige) Awards in California, it currently holds the highest award for a Filipino-produced vodka.



Photo source: Kanto's IG

Lakan Extra Premium Lambanog

Lakan creates award-winning, extra premium *lambanog* (coconut liquor). Lakan's process is completely artisanal which takes approximately 10 coconut trees to make one bottle. As such, it is only produced in limited quantities, which really helps in making sure everything is of exquisite quality.



Manille Liqueur De Calamansi

Manille is probably one of the more known craft spirits today. The zesty drink comes in a vodka base, but what really makes it special is the fact that it has no added flavoring. Here, the *calamansi* (Philippine lime) is the main star. It's a perfect pairing to sweet and savory dishes or just as an added kick to a cocktail. Manille is also available in *dalandan* (a variety of citrus fruit native to the Philippines) flavor.



Photo credit: Destileria Limtuaco & Co.

Paradise Mango Rum

The Philippines is known for its mangoes, so it only makes sense to have a liqueur based on it. Using premium aged rum and mangoes, this liqueur is a tropical island in a bottle. As the world's first mango rum liqueur, Paradise Mango Rum has received several awards in Japan, London, and Belgium, to name a few.



Photo source: www.manila-wine.com

San Juan Lambanog

Produced in Batangas, San Juan Lambanog starts with the tedious collection of coconut sap. It is fermented onsite, distilled and stored in oak barrels to add complexity. Lambanog is a traditional Filipino distilled palm liquor made from coconut or nipa palm sap.



Photo by Paul Del Rosario.

Sirena Blue Pea Gin

Made with 14 botanicals, Sirena Blue Pea Gin is a small-batch distilled gin with citrus and floral bursts of *sampaguita*, pink pomelo, and blue pea flower. Because of its blue color, the gin turns pink when mixed with citrus.



Photo source: Sirena Gin & Tonic

Sirena Vodka

Sirena Vodka is a small-batch distilled vodka that comes from Destileria Barako. It's distilled two times and charcoal filtered six times to become one of the purest vodkas in the Philippines. Destileria Barako also has a salted caramel version of the vodka.



Photo: www.destileriabarako.com

Tapuey from Adams

Tapuey is a traditional rice wine liquor from the highlands in Northern Luzon. It is normally served during rituals and special occasions after it has fermented for two months in clay jars. This particular brand, Tapuey, is from Adams, Ilocos Norte.



Photo source: Proudly Promdi

VuQo Premium Vodka⁹

VuQo is clear with a satiny, medium-dry body and has the aromas of citrus, coconut, and vanilla with light flavors of tropical fruit. Its pepper-accented finish is smoothly warming. After a thorough proprietary fermentation and continuous distillation process, VuQo is filtered six times through coconut-shell activated carbon, resulting in an exceptionally clear and smooth vodka. Available in the Philippines and the United States, VuQo was introduced to the US market at the CBS Studios in Hollywood in 2009.



⁹ "Our Story", www.vuqo.com.