

SPECIAL WINTER BREW – SAPPORO FUYU MONOGATARI



🕒 20 JANUARY 2017 📍 LANCE GILES 📄 FOOD

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Every year, Sapporo Breweries releases their seasonal winter beer, called *Fuyu Monogatari* (冬物語), which is sometimes referred to as "Winter's Tale". These beers hit the shelves when it starts getting cold and stay there until things warm up, so keep your eyes peeled. But what even is this beer, why is produced, and how long has this been going on?

While the batch varies yearly, it is a typically a golden beer with a white head, full bodied and malty, with a bit of dryness. It isn't radically different from their standard Black Label (黒ラベル; *kuro raberu*). This is likely because beers in this style are most popular in Japan. What makes Winter's Tale stand apart is that it is specifically crafted with the demands of the Japanese winter in mind—it needs to pair well with winter cuisine, such as hot pot (鍋; *nabe*) dishes, winter fruits such as clementines or tangerines or mandarins (beer and fruit make a pleasant combination after a nice meal), and hot, hearty noodle soups, like *udon*. For the third year in a row, Sapporo is even providing recipes for dishes to eat with Winter's Tale. Part of their goal of making a nice winter beer is achieved by using a different kind of malt than usual: a Vienna malt. Another key to winter is just good ol' fashioned alcohol content. Sapporo Winter's Tale boasts 6% alcohol, a step up from their typical 5-5.5% brews. Nothing says winter like getting a little tipsy 'to stay warm'.



Beer and *nabe*—a delicious combination, and gourmet staple of Japanese winter.

But why have a winter beer in the first place? Do they have any other seasonal beers? Well, of course they do. Beginning in late October, they have Black Label Tohoku Hop—their standard beer with a bit of a twist, and only available in the Tohoku area. And that's in cans! If you want a bottle of Tohoku Hop, you'll have to be in Iwate or Aomori Prefectures. Sapporo also has their famous Sapporo Classic, typically only available within the borders of its native Hokkaido. Why do Sapporo Breweries do things like this? The simplest explanation just comes down to marketing. The rarity of Winter's Tale leaves me feeling obligated to pick one up whenever I'm out buying a beer. Seeing a Sapporo Classic on the shelves as a part of some campaign is downright exciting, and when the campaign inevitably ends, I find myself wanting to take another trip to Hokkaido. The folks over at Sapporo seem to have a good grasp on marketing.



Tohoku Hop

Sapporo has consistently put out Winter's Tale every year since 1988, and to keep this limited-edition seasonal treat interesting, they also change the can design every year. Compared to Sapporo's typical production, Winter's Tale is brewed much less and the flavor seems to change a bit every year. Of course, all that there is to really confirm this are year-old memories aided by the additional alcohol content of Winter's Tale. Get out and try one while you can.

Sapporo Winter's Tale can be found in convenience stores and some supermarkets, and possibly in some restaurants that serve Sapporo beers.

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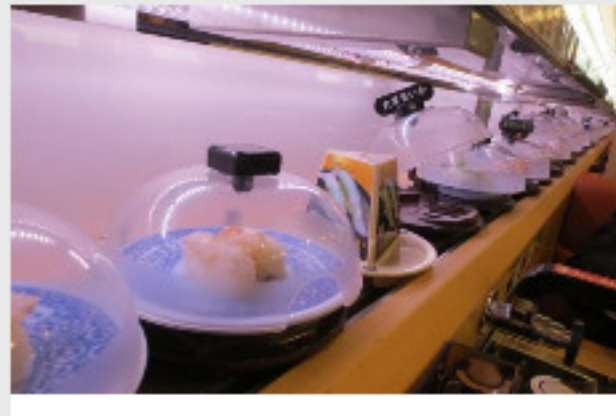
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