

Japanese beer company to give consumers a better buzz



There's an interesting bit of polarization occurring in Japan's alcoholic beverage market today.

As the country has grown more concerned with diet and health in recent years, one after the next, Japanese manufacturers have launched an array of low-calorie or "zero sugar" beers and canned cocktails.

All in all these have been very successful. The manufacturers have reinvigorated sputtering beer sales, and consumers—who have been watching their budgets—have gotten good quality drinks at lower prices than ever before. Makers even managed to keep the alcohol levels consistent with previous products, so consumers could keep their buzzes while cutting calories.

Then about six months ago, Kirin broke with previous practice

and launched a new kind of canned cocktail called [Hyoketsu Lemon Strong](#), a vodka-based drink containing 7% alcohol— almost 1.5 times more powerful than other products in the category. Surprise, surprise. The fuel-injected booze started flying off the shelves.

Now to follow up, Kirin is set to introduce a pumped up low malt beverage called **Strong Seven**, which as you might have guessed, also contains 7% alcohol.



I can imagine how this might play out in coming months, with Kirin, Suntory, Asahi, and Sapporo all trying to outdo each other. By next, we may see a market flooded with canned beers and cocktails that are more spirited than wine or sake!

At the same time, there may be a rush in the opposite direction. In the past year, Kirin also started selling drinks with lower levels of alcohol than usual—aimed at lightweights and younger drinkers. "Smooth" (above) has just 4%.