VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

The Joy of Sake
by Justin Tedaldi

Returning to New York in June for its 15th annual celebration, The Joy of Sake hosts the world’s largest sake tasting outside Japan with a record of 513 competition-level sakes and 19 top restaurants serving the best in traditional and contemporary Asian cuisine.

While statistics show that sake is losing ground to beer in Japan, it continues to make inroads in the U.S., especially among drink-savvy New Yorkers.

"The best showcase of this in the U.S. is The Joy of Sake," said Joy of Sake board member Chris Johnson, an experienced sommelier and restaurant owner whose time in Japan began in the early ’90s, as a participant of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. Also known as the Sake Ninja, Johnson adds, "As a JET alum, having the opportunity to work with the national beverage of Japan is an honor and truly important."

A beverage that can be paired with foods as diverse as sushi, chocolate and even pizza, sake lovers will also be able to sample exclusive appetizers at the event from some of New York’s most distinguished eateries, including Morimoto, Sakagura and Momofuku Ssam Bar, enhancing the appreciation of the drink that finds grids add to a meal.

A brewer’s technique and consumer help determine a great sake, and over 200 sakes not available in the U.S. are featured in this year’s iteration, including more than 100 gold award winners from the 2019 National Sake Appraisal.

"It’s safe to say," said Joy of Sake founder Chris Peifer, "that New York has never seen a sake event like this one.

Experience The Joy of Sake on Friday, June 21 at Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 West 18th Street. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.joyofsake.com. Justin Tedaldi has written about Japanese and Korean entertainment since 2005. For more of his stories, visit http://jtny.org/magazine/"

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BOOKS

The legendary Five Horses scroll painting, long believed to be lost, has been made into an art book. The painting by Li Gonglin (1849-1910), an exemplary painter of China’s Northern Song dynasty. Reproduced for the first time in color, and at full scale, the masterpiece has now been published in an A3 size hardcover art book with detailed commentary by the editor, Professor Ikariya Masashi of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Asia, the University of Tokyo.

Earlier this year, the Five Horses was included in an exhibition entitled "Unveiled Calligraphy: Yan Zhenqing and His Legacy", held at the Tokyo National Museum. The event had an impressive turnout, with many people visiting from both within Japan and overseas, including China. The Five Horses drew much acclaim as a special hallmark of the exhibition.

The scroll painting, rendered in beautiful colors and flowing lines of ink, uses the highly valued Chengxiang paper from the Northern Song dynasty. It was hailed as a masterpiece ever since it was made: successively prized and treasured through a long line of dynasties.

The Five Horses had been brought over to Japan during the chaotic times around the end of the Qing dynasty. Some time after its first unveiling to the public in 1928, the painting disappeared, and its whereabouts had remained unknown for about 80 years.

The art book’s productive team comprises distinguished professionals in the fields of photography, design, printing and bookbinding. The publication includes a full translation of the text in Chinese and a summary in English. Also provided are close-up images of the masterpiece with compelling visual impact.

The book is priced at $28.00 yen. (Written by Yoko Takeda, Haiku Press / Translated by Shoko Ichihashi Fujita)