

NIQ Perspective



Asian Spirits are Surging, Thanks to Soju

Here’s what industry experts are saying:

As the Beverage Alcohol industry faces declines amid evolving consumption habits, Asian Spirits are emerging as a bright spot. At the forefront is Soju, a Korean Spirit that is rapidly growing. With its smooth flavor profile, low ABV, and cocktail-friendly nature, Soju is likely to continue gaining relevance as it outperforms traditional Spirits categories.



Camille Miura
Industry Insights
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Here’s what you should do if you are a brand

Identify opportunities to expand into the Soju market and innovate to align with Soju’s growing appeal. Look to the top couple of brands as best-in-class examples as they dominate the space. These brands offer approachable, easy to understand fruit flavors such as peach, strawberry, and grapefruit, making the category more accessible to mainstream consumers. Soju-based RTDs also present strong potential for expansion and innovation as consumer tastes evolve and emerging brands gain more relevance.

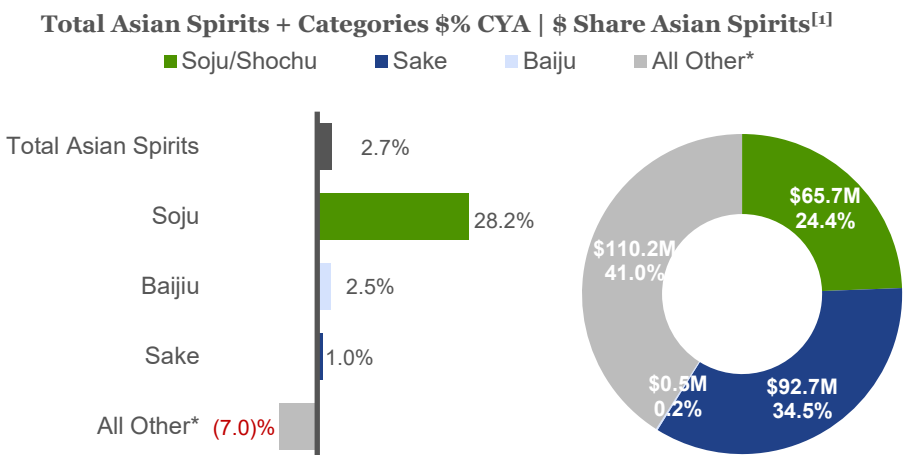
What is Soju?

Soju is a clear, low-ABV distilled spirit with origin in Korea, but not limited by geographical designation. While historically made in Korea from rice and other starches, Soju is now produced in multiple countries, including the United States, and is characterized more by its style and production method than by where it is made.

Implications for Beverage Alcohol Manufacturers

Soju Leads Growth Within Asian Spirits

Asian Spirits are growing despite widespread industry declines. Soju is driving this growth, up 28.2% vs year ago and is steadily gaining share as it emerges as a category leader.



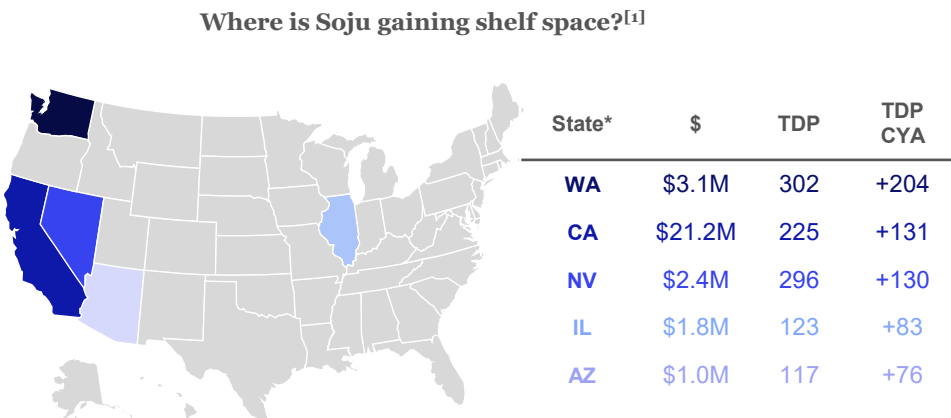
The Top Five Soju Brands Make Up 97% of Soju Sales

Top Soju brands like Soon Hari, Jinro, and Damso dominate as Soju gains traction within Asian Spirits. Soju is expanding into RTD offerings, as brands like Yoju and Jumo become more popular. Anticipate further Soju growth, especially within RTD^[1].



Expect Soju to Continue Gaining Shelf Space in Western States

Soju is gaining shelf presence across the country, but especially in Western states. Washington and California lead in TDP growth as Soju expands. Look out for accelerated expansion across the country as Soju gains even more relevancy in the United States.





Here’s what industry experts are saying:

As East meets West across the Beverage Alcohol landscape, rising interest in Asian Spirits and Beer is fueling Soju’s emergence among U.S. consumers. Its diverse flavors and experiential appeal are resonating with younger, multicultural drinkers, posing Soju as a key player in the next wave of global BevAl trends.



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The takeaways

- Asian culture is fueling discovery with K-beauty, K-pop, TikTok, and matcha, leading growing consumer openness to Asian products
- Soju is gaining retail momentum with off premise households more than doubling year over year, signaling awareness and trial
- Younger, multicultural consumers are driving relevance, with Soju over indexing with Asian, Black/African American, Gen Z, and Millennial consumers
- With only 4.7% of On Premise consumers selecting Soju, bars and restaurants remain a major growth opportunity
- Flavor and format can unlock growth. Soju’s approachable taste, RTD potential, and cultural relevance make it a strong innovation platform

Your next move

Look beyond traditional category boundaries and explore global cultural trends that are capturing younger consumers’ attention, especially those tied to international discovery, flavor exploration, and social experiences. Brands that connect authentically to these emerging influences can create more relevant products, occasions, and stories that recruit consumers into the category.

Global Popular Culture Took a Shift East in 2025

Prevailing trends in popular global culture in the last year have routinely originated from East Asia, taking a step away from US-centric culture [2]

TikTok:

The social media platform originating in China continues to amplify Asian pop culture globally, making it easy to discover viral music, trends and beauty routines from across the region.

K-Beauty:

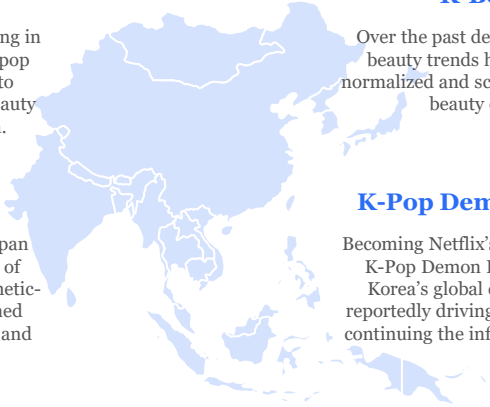
Over the past decades, many global beauty trends have been refined, normalized and scaled through Korea’s beauty ecosystem

Matcha:

Although originating in China, Japan has led the modern globalisation of matcha. Viral café culture and aesthetic-led content in 2025 drove sustained demand among young consumers and resulted in global shortages.

K-Pop Demon Hunters:

Becoming Netflix’s most-watched film, K-Pop Demon Hunters expanded Korea’s global cultural footprint, reportedly driving tourism boosts and continuing the influence of Korean IP.



Momentum Building in Off Premise Purchasing

Despite reaching just 0.6% of legal drinking age households, Soju is gaining traction, with its buyer base more than doubling year over year. This rapid growth in purchasing signals emerging interest beyond core audiences. With low household penetration and increasing trial, the Off Premise represents a significant whitespace opportunity to drive awareness through expanded distribution and convert new buyers.

Off Premise Purchasing Metrics [3]



834K
Buying Households **+165%**



\$14
Spent per Buyer



24%
2+ Time Buyers



The Next-Gen On Premise Drinker

While just 4.7% of On Premise drinkers choose Soju at bars and restaurants, those who do skew younger and multicultural. This small but mighty segment delivers outsized impact by driving trial and discovery. The On Premise remains a key entry point to engage diverse, younger audiences, offering a high-energy environment to build relevance and loyalty.

Drink categories at bar, restaurant or similar (other categories) [4]

4.7%

Of On Premise Consumers have selected **SOJU**

On Premise Consumer Demographics [4]



285
Asian



126
Black/AfAm



226
Gen Z (21+)



179
Millennial



We value your feedback.

Please share your thoughts [here](#)!

Craving for more?

Reach out to your NIQ touchpoint to explore customizable solutions for your brand.

[2] NIQ, K-Beauty Goes Global Report, 2026; [3] NIQ, Expanded Omnishopper Panel on Demand BevAl Integrated Database; Total US; All Generations Legal Drinking Age 21+; L52 weeks ending 03/21/2026; [4] NIQ, On Premise User Survey (OPUS); United States (Fall 2025) – Sample Size: 15004; Q. Drink categories at bar, restaurant or similar (other categories)