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Spring drinking, A to Z

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Spring is a time of rebirth. Trees and vines blossom, fermentations of the brave and indigenous start up again after a winter's hibernation, Chateauneufs are tucked back in the cellar as Sauvignon Blanc shelves fill up.

Typically this is when we bombard you with thoughts of the fresh and the white, wine-wise. But the hoary spring-drinking theme needed a rebirth of its own; honestly, does the world need another laundry list of spring whites? Thought not.

Instead, I figured we all deserve a shot at relearning our ABCs - only this time in a slightly more pleasant way. Here, then, is our guide to spring drinking - from A to Z. May you never think of the alphabet the same way again.

Y is for **yamahai**, the rare form of sake that relies on yeasts to develop more slowly and more vinous, nuanced flavors to develop. This style can show more bite and character than many sakes, and that edge meshes with the slight astringency of so many spring foods.

Consider the round-edged **Yuki no Boshu Yamahai Junmai** (\$30/720 ml), whose name, "Cabin in the Snow," suggests a final Tahoe hurrah. For more edge, there's **Hiraizumi** (\$42/720 ml), a higher-acid effort from the Akita prefecture, which conveniently translates as "Splashing Spring Water." Another seasonal (but not yamahai) option? The saline, crisp **Harushika** ("Spring Deer.")