



People line up outside an ice cream shop opened by Kweichow Moutai in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province. — IC

Chinese *baijiu* brands tempting younger consumers with new flavors and formats

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As a traditional favorite, Chinese white liquor, or *baijiu*, is reaching out to young adults with many innovative flavors and formats, hoping to cultivate consumption among a generation that likes seeking out the new and unusual.

Baijiu-flavored snacks, such as ice cream, cake and chocolate, are being put on the table and becoming popular among young adults.

Known for its mellow taste and lingering fragrance, the traditional distilled spirit dates back to the Liao Dynasty (AD 907-1125), according to the latest archaeological finds at the Da'an distillery site in northeast China's Jilin Province.

The alcohol content of this throat-burning tippie is commonly from 38 to 53 percent. People drink pure *baijiu* without adding juice, ice or other extras — unlike other spirits like vodka and gin.

Baijiu's brand positioning and packaging generally give consumers a sense of occasion. At Chinese state banquets, *baijiu* was once used to entertain foreign leaders to show respect and sincerity. During business dinners and family get-togethers, people drink *baijiu* for a sense of festivity and friendship.

It was also the favorite of some ancient Chinese poets seeking inspiration or solace.

However, not everyone can appreciate this unique spirit.

Some consumers, especially Generation Z, flinch from it

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The combination of Moutai and chocolate can make the taste of the *baijiu* less strong, so that novice drinkers can appreciate it as well.

because of its strong taste, research firm Ipsos said in its 2021 *baijiu* consumption report after surveying people aged from 18 to 34.

And the high alcohol content is another obstacle. The boundary between liquor and beverages is becoming blurred, but several shots of *baijiu* may make drinkers, especially those who are not used to strong spirits, feel light-headed and go unconscious.

Research by CBNDATA in 2020 found “health” and “tipsy” are

the key terms about alcohol for younger drinkers. They enjoy the sense of fun that comes with moderate drinking, which lets them party longer.

Many famous *baijiu* brands, including Kweichow Moutai and Wuliangye Yibin, are too expensive for young consumers. For example, Moutai's official mobile app, iMaotai, shows that 100 milliliters of Moutai's classic Feitian 53 percent liquor costs 399 yuan (US\$60).

But it is not easy to buy it at

the original price because the quantity provided on the app is limited every day and demand exceeds supply. The price is hundreds of yuan higher on unofficial channels.

Online retailer JD.com said in a recent report that consumers aged between 21 and 35 who bought *baijiu* during the first quarter of this year on the platform only account for 23 percent of buyers.

But the report also said there is an increasing number of young adults being attracted to *baijiu*. CBNDATA says the younger generation has huge market potential.

To make an impact on young people, many famous *baijiu* brands have been cooperating with other enterprises to launch innovative trans-boundary products suitable for younger tastes in recent years.