

# OVERSEAS NEWS

Cartoon Character Drives Devotees to Drink



## JAPANESE MANGA DRAWS ON THE WORLD OF WINE

There's an exciting new phenomenon in the wacky world of Japanese *manga* (comic books). It's wine. Shizuku Kanzaki could be called the Robert Parker of Asian oenophiles except he's a comic strip hero. Kanzaki is cast as an adventurer on a mission to find the world's 12 greatest wines. The *Kami no Shizuku* or Divine Drops are described to him by his father, a renowned wine critic, in his will.

As a rebellious youth Kanzaki ignored his father's passion for wine. After his death, Kanzaki's father initiates his son's conversion by bequeathing him his huge collection of wine. But a codicil in the will says that he can only receive his inheritance if he is able to discover the "12 Apostles". And he's in competition for the prized cellar with his adopted brother who has the advantage of being a sommelier.

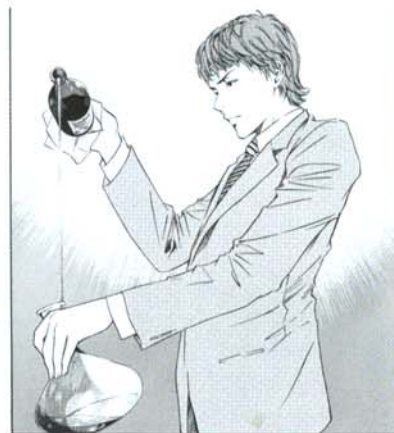
The story chronicles the tasting of the various wines Kanzaki encounters in every episode. He rhapsodizes over each wine with panegyrics such as: "It's like the voice of Queen's lead vocalist, sweet and husky, enveloped in thick guitar riffs and heavy drums."

The comic book's 500,000 readers have gone overboard for his graphic pilgrimage – and the wines. Stories abound in the Japanese media, such as a shipment of 20,000 bottles of Burgundy selling out as soon as it qualified for "divine" status and All Nippon Airways revamping their wine list according to Kanzaki's quest. There are stories, too, of Japanese women clamouring for wine education seminars.

In Taiwan, there have been reports of 50 cases of Chateau Mont Perat Bordeaux being snapped up within two days of the manga mentioning the 2001 vintage. Several bottle shops in Korea claim that wine now accounts for three quarters of their business. Customers at an Italian restaurant in Seoul, Addiction Plus, are increasingly asking for wines featured in the comic strip according to the owner Kim Chin-Ui.

So look out for the pictorial adventures of comic book hero Huonaki Hookasi in the next issue of *Gourmet Traveller WINE* and his hedonistic hunt throughout the Land of Oz for the "Dozen Drops to Die For".

ANTHONY MANIFOLD



**ASTRO BOY, LOOKOUT!**  
Cartoon character Shizuku Kanzaki on his quest for the "12 Apostles" of wine.

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