

CHAPTERS 1-24 (AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND FISH)

Submission by China

The following communication, dated 25 June 2002, has been received from the Permanent Mission of China.

Technical information on "Bai Jiu" (Chinese distilled spirits)
(Issue No. 104)

With respect to technical issue No. 104 (producing spirits, liqueurs by dilution) on page 83 of JOB(02)/53, China support Korea's proposal that a new split subheading be created under 2208.90, i.e. 2208.90(c), to specify traditional types of distilled spirits produced in Asia which is called "Bai Jiu" in China, "Soju" in Korea, "Shochu" in Japan. China propose the title of the split subheading ex 2208.90(c) be revised as "Bai Jiu, Soju and Shochu" to cover China's Bai Jiu. The origin criterion for this split subheading should be CTH.

Bai Jiu refers to the types of Chinese distilled spirits which use Qu and yeast as saccharifying and fermenting agent, cereals as raw materials, and undergo a series of production processes of cooking, steaming, saccharifying, fermenting, distilling, blending, aging(maturing) before becoming final products on the market. Bai Jiu are most popular alcoholic drinks in China and have been classified as other spirits under heading 2208.90 since China adopted the HS in 1992.

Because of the varieties of raw materials used and different processes adopted in the production of Bai Jiu from place to place in China, each type of Bai Jiu has its distinct aroma and flavor feature. Bai Jiu are categorized according to Qu used in fermentation, or the fermentation states, or the raw materials.

Saccharifying and fermenting agent, raw materials

Qu is a kind of saccharifying and fermenting agent for brewing in the production of Bai Jiu. Qu has a significant impact on the aroma and flavour of spirits. There are three types of Qu used in fermentation:

- Da Qu: made from wheat and/or barley mixed with pea. Da Qu is incubated normally in a solid state. Raw materials of Bai Jiu produced with Da Qu are mainly Chinese sorghum.
- Xiao Qu: made from rice and the fermentation is conducted in semi-solid state. Raw materials of Bai Jiu produced with Xiao Qu are rice grain.

- Fu Qu: a type of mold cultured in solid medium using bran as the raw material. *Aspergillus* sp. and yeasts are grown in pure culture respectively, and inoculated to cooked or steamed raw materials. The production process is characterized by short fermentation time and low production cost.

Fermentation states

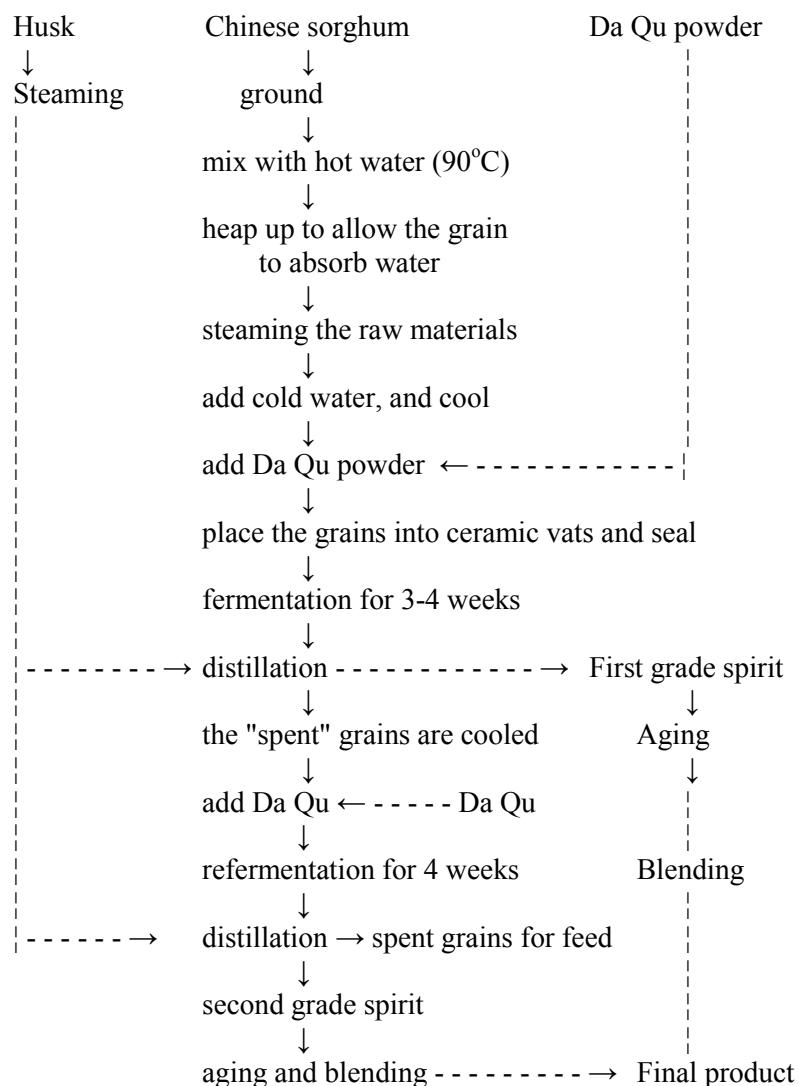
Bai Jiu can be divided into types according to the fermentation states:

- Produced by Solid-state Fermentation. The most widely used production process for Chinese distilled spirits is solid-state fermentation with the moisture content of fermenting grains covering about 60%. Most of high quality Bai Jiu are produced in this way. It takes longer fermentation time to obtain high quality spirits.
- Produced by Semi-solid State Fermentation. The spirits is just distilled from the semi-solid state fermented mash. Most spirits produced from rice grain in South China are produced in this process.
- Produced by Liquid State Fermentation. The production process is similar with the process for alcohol production, but is combined with some traditional techniques. The quality of the spirit produced in this procedure is lower than that produced in solid-state fermentation. Aromatic yeast is added to the fermentation mash to remedy this shortcoming.
- Spirits produced by solid- state fermented grain combined with liquid or semi-solid state fermented mash. In this way, usually the fermenting grains in solid state is placed on the perforated plate inside the steamer, and the liquid state fermented mash is placed in the cauldron above which the steamer is mounted. During distillation, the hot vapour resulting from the liquid-state mash pass through the upper layers of fermented grain and some aromatic components in it is distilled.

Production process

Take the production process of Fen Jiu for example. Fen Jiu is one of the most famous Bai Jiu in China. Its aroma and flavor characteristics are summerized as light aroma and flavor, a pure and refreshing smooth, sweet taste, and mellow with lingering aromatic aftertaste. The manufacture process of "Fen Jiu" is characterized by fermenting the grains in ceramic pots half mounted beneath the ground. After the fermenting grains is distilled, the distilled grain is refermented once more, then refermented grain is distilled. The collected spirits from the first distillation process and the second distillation process are aged separately and then blended. The spent grain after second distillation is used as feed. The husk which is used as fillings in distillation operation should be steamed to expel the unfavourable smell. The fermented grains mixed with only small amount of steamed husk is distilled separately, without any fresh grains being added (this is different from Maotai Jiu). The brewing technique of twice fermentation and twice distillation of the fermented grains aims at increasing the yield of ethanol.

The production process of "Fen Jiu" is summarized as follows:



Alcohol content

The alcohol content of distilled spirits abroad is relatively low, being about 40%. In China, however, the alcohol content of distilled spirits is usually higher than 50% but less than 65%, for the flavor and taste of the high alcohol spirits are finer than that of low alcohol content spirits due to low solubility of some esters existing in Chinese spirits. In recent years, lots of famous Chinese Bai Jiu are also produced in the form of low alcohol content and are getting popular in China now.

Bai Jiu with low alcohol content is manufactured with diluting technique. The alcohol content is lowered to about 40% (v/v), and some is about 20% (v/v). The following two kinds of diluting processes for production of low alcohol content Bai Jiu are currently used in China, both require deliberately controlled proportional blending, filtering and purifying, therefore producing low alcohol Bai Jiu by dilution technique should also be regarded as origin conferring:

- One is to chose the fine spirit as main ingredient and add water into it to adjust to appropriate concentration of alcohol, then the low alcohol spirits are blended with flavour-enhancing constitute. After being stored and filtered, the products can be consumed.

- Another one is to blend and add flavor- enhancing constitute firstly, then add water to low down the alcohol content of spirit. Because the alcohol content is low, it is difficult for some flavoring substances to be dissolved and some sediments (mainly consisted of esters) may appear after adding water to the spirit. The sediments have to be removed the water used has to be purified.
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