

Synthetic booze: Lab-made wine, sake may be coming to a bar near you—and whiskey is already there

San Francisco startup Endless West unveiled two products Thursday, Feb. 20, the likes of which have never been sold before: synthetic wine and synthetic sake. They involve no grapes, no rice, no winery or brewery — just water, ethanol and chemical compounds that give flavor, aroma, texture and more to alcoholic beverages, assembled in a Dogpatch laboratory.

Endless West, which changed its name from Ava Winery in 2018, already has a synthetic — or, their preferred term, molecular — whiskey out in the market called Glyph that launched in late 2018. The company says it's already being sold in 500 stores, restaurants and bars across six states, plus in Hong Kong, and local [San Francisco] bars including Drexler, Dirty Habit, Bergerac and Homestead are using it in cocktails. Now, with the arrival of wine and sake, Endless West takes a big step forward in its planned molecular revolution.

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The obvious pitch for Endless West's products involves sustainability. Because these lab-built beverages don't require large-scale agriculture or significant water use, they're friendlier to the planet than wine, whiskey or sake production. By the same token, their efficiency could theoretically make them much more affordable: They can be produced relatively cheaply and quickly.

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