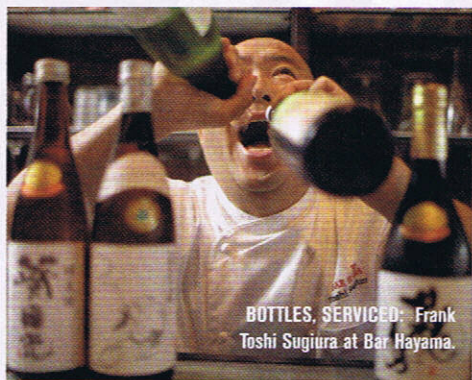


## SAKE BOMBER

This month, Japan rings in Setsubun—the arrival of spring on the lunar calendar—with large-scale festivals and celebratory rounds of sake. For Frank Toshi Sugiura, the first certified master sake sommelier in the U.S., the holiday might just be his St. Patty's Day. After all, as the owner of the Westside's Bar Hayama, he stocks 60 iterations of the rice-based hootch.



**BOTTLES SERVICED:** Frank Toshi Sugiura at Bar Hayama.

*Ever encounter skeptics who scoff at the mere idea of a 'sake sommelier'? Not now. It's changing—people are learning. They're beginning to take it more seriously? They're requesting good sakes the same way they request an Opus One. Certain sake snobs frown on the hot stuff. Do you? About one-third of the sakes on my menu can be served hot, but not too hot: 110 to 120 degrees is best. Some restaurants don't know, and they'll go up to 160 degrees. That's too hot. You can't taste anything. Any advice for newbies when it comes to food pairings? If you're eating from the sushi bar, you want something clean and crisp. If you're going to eat from the kitchen—tempura or meat—go for rich and savory. What's your favorite bottle at the moment? Daishichi Junmai Kimoto Classic. It's made in Northern Japan. It's so clean, you still taste rice. —Lizbeth Scordo*