

Japan's 'space beer' sparkles among drinkers

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A Japanese brewer has come up with a beer that's truly out of this world -- one made with barley grown from a line of seeds that once orbited the Earth aboard the International Space Station.

Sapporo Breweries Ltd. said Monday orders had flooded in for the special edition of 250 six-packs of its new "Space Barley."

The company says the amber brew was made from the fourth generation of barley seeds that had spent five months in the Russian laboratory on the ISS.

"We have received orders from 2,000 people by Sunday. We believe this shows people's interest is high, considering the rather high price for six bottles," said company spokesman Yuki Hattori.

Some would call the price astronomical -- a six-pack retails at 10,000 yen (110 dollars), or almost 20 dollars per bottle.

Sapporo said it will keep taking orders for the [beer](#) until Christmas Eve, December 24, then select the lucky customers through a computer lottery, with proceeds to be donated to educational and research projects.

The beer is the fruit of joint research with Russia into growing edible plants in space to prepare for a future when humans can spend extended periods of time out of this world -- and when they might like a cold beer after a [space walk](#).

Sapporo teamed up with a biologist at Japan's Okayama University who has been part of the Russian space project to grow edible plants in space.

Barley can thrive in tough environments, such as at high and low temperatures, and is rich in fibre and nutrients, making it ideal for space agriculture.

Researchers found no differences between Earth-grown and space barley.

"Some people may expect the [space](#) beer to taste very different, but its selling point is that it's the same," Hattori said.

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