

James The Sommelier - Wines From Lesser Known Regions China

'Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours.'

China

The last country I want to mention is certainly not least. China has now been hailed as the new leader in the world economy and far beyond any others with regards to imagination in innovation. With plans to build the first mega-city, potentially housing 260 million people and interlinking 9 different cities, it seems as if previous forward thinking films like "The 5th Element" and "Star Wars" were a little tame when conjuring up futuristic images based in a time thousands of years after they were made. China wants to complete this in six years! 'Sooner rather than later!' says the steely-eyed, spectacled Chinese businessman.

As the Chinese adopt more Western ideas it is not hard to imagine that wine would be one thing they would want to invest in. Let's not forget, money is, more often than not, power. Pump this new beverage phenomenon with cash; inject it as if from an icing syringe. Blast the bugger. Coat it in thick, green, papery enamel. Time will only tell but the desired result will probably be wine, which has reached a respectable standard, for quadruple the cost. And who cares about cost when you and your 6th of the world's minions are running the money.

It is not hard to wrap yourself around the mindset. Skewed, warped, kaleidoscopically unreasonable it is the mindset none-the-less and it seems to be working. As regions, such as Shandong, begin to make a name for themselves as the 'wine regions' of China, state-of-the-art wineries are materializing; shiny, new, chrome coated steel fermenting vats, warehouses the size of an English county with smooth oak barrels lining the walls; a wooden version of the Terracotta army, motionless but with resolute purpose. Forgive the habit of pairing a vintage Margaux with a cool can of coke, these people have the money to know what they're doing, damn it! That, and the fact French professionals of the wine making business are paid insane amounts of money to make sure the quality is nothing less than in their home country, it may not be long until China enjoys the same wine recognition as America. Sooner rather than later, or so they say.

Let's take Chateau Junding, the Disneyland of wine making. As well as a workable winery, Chateau Junding boasts a 92 room, five star hotel and an international standard golf course to boot. Enjoy and relax you tourists, you businessmen; wine hungry and exhausted, take pleasure in the fact that this opulence forces quality, beaten out with hammer and sickle.

Their Chardonnay (RM 458) has fruit and acidity in equal measure, and the Cabernet/Merlot and Cabernet Syrah blends boast length and a good deal of complexity. Winemaker Shao Xuedong says the Cabernet fruit comes from one of Great Wall's older plots, allowing them to produce a better wine than they could from the young vines sprouting on their impressive property.

China is close on the heels of Old world and New world wine alike. Be careful, it says, and up the tempo. If they are not, they might soon find themselves unable to offer China anything that they can't confidentially produce themselves.



Tips: If you plan to enjoy one bottle of wine with several different regional dishes, don't get too adventurous. Try a white, fruity wine such as a Chardonnay

For more information about wine join our wine classes at That Little Wine Bar, 54 Chow Thye Road,
George Town, Penang

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