vinetur

6 Emerging brands that are reshaping china's wine image globally

An exploration into china's rising wine producers

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In the picturesque landscapes of Yunnan, sitting at an elevation of 2500 meters, lies a tale as intriguing as the wine it produces. Jean-Guillaume Prats, former head of estates & wines for Moët Hennessy, found himself trapped by the snow for three days while exploring these vineyards. It is here, amidst breathtaking beauty, that European

missionaries of the 19th Century first sowed the seeds of viticulture. Today, this region gifts the world with Ao Yun, a wine some critics hail as China's finest.

Over the past ten years, Chinese wines have gathered acclaim, amassing thousands of awards and intriguing wine enthusiasts globally. Yet, sourcing these wines, riddled with stories of passion and perseverance, remains challenging, even within China. A combination of limited production, regulatory constraints, hefty price tags, and at times, a mere lack of motivation to reach global markets, poses hurdles for curious connoisseurs.

However, a few Chinese brands have indeed managed to permeate global markets.

Ao Yun: Flying Above the Clouds

Ao Yun, which translates to "flying above the clouds", hails from the Shangri-la region, where Yunnan converges with Sichuan and Tibet. Critics such as Robert Parker, Wilfrid Wong, and James Suckling have lauded its complexity. It offers a symphony of intense red and black fruits, punctuated by hints of licorice, chocolate, graphite, and forest undertones, all rounded off with refined tannins. Due to Moët Hennessy's extensive reach, Ao Yun is one of the more accessible Chinese wines, available in various countries, albeit with a starting price of $238 a bottle.

Grace Vineyard: China's Consistent Gem

In Shanxi province, Grace Vineyard has spent two decades perfecting its craft. Known for its versatility, it's ventured into newer terrains like sparkling wines and is one of the rare producers of Aglianico in China. Their flagship wines have made their presence felt internationally, with notable mentions including the Marselan which earned a platinum best in show award at the Decanter Asia Wine Awards.

Silver Heights: Ningxia's Pride

Ningxia, often recognized as China's premier wine region, owes some of its reputation to Silver Heights. A family venture, this winery has consistently upped its game, especially since using fruit from its vineyards from 2015 onwards.

Helan Qing Xue: The Decanter Winner

Gaining international recognition in 2011 with its Cabernet blend Jia Bei Lan, Helan Qing Xue has steadily broadened its repertoire. Winemaker Zhang Jing is optimistic about the brand's European outreach in the coming months.

Kanaan: Reds and Whites

Kanaan stands out in a red-wine centric nation by also producing commendable whites, notably a German-inspired Riesling and a semi-sweet blend. Its reds, however, particularly the Pretty Pony Cabernet blend, are crowd favorites.

Changyu Moser XV: Fusion at its Best

A collaboration between China's eminent producer, Changyu, and the Austrian Moser family, this project leverages resources and expertise from both sides. Their white Cabernet, touted as a Chinese first, is bound to spark debates among aficionados.

China's journey in the world of wines may be nascent, but its potential is undeniable. For those keen to explore, a simple online search for "China" could reveal some of the nation's vinous treasures.