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Domaine Takahiko's Pinot Noir Takes the World by Storm

Volcanic Terroir, Wild Yeast, and No Sulfur: Japan's Nana-Tsu-Mori Pinot Noir is the New Cult Wine

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Move over, Burgundy—there's a new contender on the block, and it's coming from an unexpected place: Japan. Domaine Takahiko, a boutique winery nestled in the volcanic soils of Hokkaido, is leading a quiet revolution in the world of Pinot Noir. This wine, once a well-kept secret, is now creating quite a stir among wine enthusiasts from Tokyo to New York.

Domaine Takahiko is located in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, which has been gaining a reputation for its unique wine-growing conditions. This vineyard is set on land that was once an old cherry orchard, benefiting from the volcanic soil and the relatively dry climate of the region. These factors make it easier to cultivate organic grapes with fewer issues related to mildew and other fungal diseases, setting a perfect stage for high-quality viticulture.

At the heart of Domaine Takahiko's fame is their flagship wine, the Nana-Tsu-Mori Pinot Noir. What sets this wine apart is its dedication to natural winemaking processes. Fermented with wild yeasts, unfiltered, and sans added sulfur, it embodies the essence of natural wine philosophy. The result is a Pinot Noir with earthy undertones and a symphony of flavors that include blueberries, mushrooms, and a distinctive hint of pine needles.


Nana-Tsu-Mori
2019
Pinot Noir
Domaine Takahiko Soga
1395 Yoichi-Nobori, Hokkaido-Japon

The appeal of Domaine Takahiko's wines has not gone unnoticed across the Pacific. In the U.S., the demand for Nana-Tsu-Mori has skyrocketed. When the main importer first started bringing it in back in 2022, they could only secure three cases. Fast forward to today, and while the quantities have increased slightly, they still remain limited, keeping the allure and exclusivity of the wine intact.

As is often the case with high-quality, limited-production wines, prices for Nana-Tsu-Mori have soared. According to Wine-Searcher, while the wholesale price hovers around $150, retail prices have ballooned to as much as $676 in some stores. This price hike is a testament to both the wine's outstanding quality and its rarity.

Hokkaido's wine scene, long active but somewhat under the radar, has received a significant boost from Domaine Takahiko's success. Historically, the region's vintners focused on cold-hardy hybrid varieties. However, inspired by Domaine Takahiko's achievements, there's a growing trend towards experimenting with European grapes like Pinot Noir.

Domaine Takahiko's rise has not only garnered the attention of wine lovers but also caught the eye of established names in the wine industry. Notably, Domaine de Montille from Burgundy has started cultivating Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in Hokkaido, signaling a strong vote of confidence in the region's potential.

Domaine Takahiko's triumph is more than just a win for a single winery; it's a win for Japan's wine industry as a whole. By producing a Pinot Noir that can stand toe-to-toe with some of the best in the world, they've highlighted the potential of Japanese wines and the burgeoning wine scene in Hokkaido.

In the end, the story of Domaine Takahiko and its remarkable Pinot Noir is a testament to the power of passion, tradition, and innovation. It's a reminder that great wine can come from unexpected places and that the world of wine is richer for it. So, next time you're looking to explore new horizons in your wine journey, consider reaching for a bottle from Japan—you might just find your next favorite sip.