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White wine demand rises in China as red wine production declines and market trends shift

Domestic producers and international exporters target growing white wine segment amid changing consumer preferences and limited grape supply

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A recent report unveiled at ProWine Hong Kong in May 2025 has identified a significant opportunity for white wine in the Chinese market, despite overall modest growth prospects for wine sales in the country. The research, conducted by Geisenheim University in Germany, surveyed both local trade professionals and international

producers between November 2024 and February 2025. The findings indicate that dry white wines are expected to lead market trends through 2027, surpassing red wines in anticipated popularity among both producers and the trade.

The results were presented digitally by Professor Dr. Simone Loose, head of the Institute of Wine and Beverage Business Research at Hochschule Geisenheim University. During the presentation, prominent figures from China's wine industry, including Xing Wei MW—the country's youngest Master of Wine—were invited to comment on the data. Wei highlighted a dramatic decline in domestic red wine production over the past decade, noting that output has dropped from over 10 million hectoliters ten years ago to just 1.2 million hectoliters today.

In contrast, white wine production remains limited but is experiencing growing demand. Wei explained that domestic producers in regions such as Ningxia are now able to command higher prices for white grape varieties than for traditional reds like Marselan, which has historically been one of the most valuable grapes in the area. To meet rising demand for white wines, some wineries have begun producing white wines from red grape varieties. For example, Château Changyu-Moser XV in Ningxia introduced a white Cabernet Sauvignon in 2017 and followed up with a barrel-aged version in 2020 under the guidance of consultant winemaker Lenz Moser.

Wei noted that techniques such as using activated carbon to produce blanc de noirs—white wines made from red grapes—are becoming more common due to a shortage of white grapes. He also pointed out that wineries like Célébre, located in Yunnan province's Himalayan foothills, are investing heavily in planting white grape varieties based on expectations of future demand. Célébre showcased a barrel-fermented Chardonnay at ProWine Hong Kong, which is currently available in the UK market at a premium price point.

The ProWine business report also forecasts strong performance for imported white wines from Germany and New Zealand, reflecting the anticipated growth in this segment. Sparkling wines are also seen as having potential for increased sales, although they currently represent a small share of the market.

Despite these positive signals for white and sparkling wines, Wei cautioned that red wine continues to dominate consumer preferences in China. Drawing on his own research into Chinese wine buying patterns, he emphasized that style remains the most important factor influencing purchases—more so than price, country of origin or grape variety. According to Wei, “For the Chinese consumer, wine is still red,” with white wines seen as more attractive than sparkling options but still trailing far behind reds.

Wei also stressed the importance of localized storytelling when marketing wine to Chinese consumers. He advised that effective engagement goes beyond superficial cultural references and requires a deeper understanding of local values and preferences.

The report’s findings suggest that while China’s overall wine market may be growing slowly, there is clear momentum building behind white wines. Both domestic producers and international exporters are watching this trend closely as they plan their strategies for the coming years.