



**W**ine consultants are those rare breed of people who can fly into a different country each week, pitch up at a winery, help the local people through a particular tricky bit of blending or tasting and fly out again.

They bring an international palate, vast amounts of experience and in some cases a name that can be banded about to give credibility to the wine.

Austrian Lenz Moser has done more than that. As consultant to the Changyu winery in China he has taken up residence in China for long stretches of time, he is trying to learn Mandarin and the winery where he consults now bears his name.

And what a winery! This is no standard concrete box with a designer reflecting pool in front. This is €70m worth of a Loire style chateau with turrets, gardens, a museum and an 800 barrel-cellar.

It would look perfectly at home in France, but instead it is 750 miles west of Beijing, in Ningxia which is fast becoming the 'hot-spot' of Chinese wine production.

Sheltered by the Helan mountains from cold winds and the bleak Gobi desert, this region supports grape growing particularly well. The vineyards are mainly located on the eastern foothills of the mountains at around 1100 metres above sea level.

The region receives around 3000 hours of sunshine a year, perfect for ripening, but the continental climate means that while day-time temperatures are warm, the nights are cool, allowing the grapes to retain their freshness and fruit.

But another vital factor for vine growing in Ningxia is that winter temperatures go down to minus 25C each year which can have a devastating effect on the vines. Prolonged cold can burst vines open, so they are pruned after harvest and before temperatures plummet, the soil is banked up on each side of the vines and they slumber through four months of harsh winter weather buried under the soil.

"I first went to China in 2008 to explore the wine regions and I fell in love with the country," said Lenz Moser when I met up with him at the London Wine Fair.



"Since then I have made 42 trips to China. I tasted the wines from Changyu and thought they could be improved, so I stayed for three months initially to find out more about grape quality in the region. Because it is so dry here, irrigation can be controlled to restrict the size of the berries. Smaller berries means there is a higher skin to juice ratio

## Smashing China

*Enormous amounts of money and Austrian expertise are creating a stunning winery nearer to Beijing than the Loire*



**THE EAST DRINKS RED:** Chateau Changyu Moser XV, is in Ningxia, China, not France; inset, Austrian wine consultant, Lenz Moser.

and so you get more flavour in the wine. We found some vines that are 18 years old and started working with them, as well as planting 60 hectares of vines around the chateau.

"Now we are making a Moser XV Cabernet Sauvignon, a rosé and a top wine called Chateau Changyu Moser XV."

"Did you expect the winery to bear your name?" I asked.

"Absolutely not, it is a great honour. The XV refers to the 15 generations of my family

who have been involved in grape growing and winemaking in Austria."

The name Moser is certainly well known, but tracing back 15 generations took a certain amount of research. "At first we could only find 14 generations, but after visiting libraries and various registers we discovered the name and vineyards of our 15th generation ancestor. This is fortunate because 14 is not a lucky number in Chinese."

Moser XV 2015 is an unoaked Cabernet Sauvignon from Ningxia (Tesco £8.50, selected stores, available online at £51 for a six-bottle case) and it is not just a curiosity, it is genuinely good. With soft, rounded cassis and red-berry fruit, it has good

depth of flavour, a pinch of spice and the kind of style that I would guess to be worth a lot more than its current price tag.

There are two more quality tiers, available at Berry Bros, at £19.95 and £59, which I haven't yet tasted, but they are clearly making statements about the quality of Chinese wine. Confusingly they all seem to have much the same name, incorporating Moser XV, Changyu and occasionally Chateau.

Changyu is the largest wine producer in China and it can challenge many others in the rest of the world. It produces 150m bottles of wine a year from nine properties scattered across this vast country. Each winery looks like a fairy-tale chateau with a state of the art winery behind the scenes.

I visited two of these properties several years ago – one was still a building site and I was amazed by the detail and the romance that was incorporated into the buildings. A hotel and restaurant was planned and there was talk of a golf course being built. Clearly investment in Chinese wine is on the grand scale.

With a population that is discovering wine on an exponential scale, why is Changyu bothering to export to the UK?

"We could sell all we produce but we need to benchmark our wines with those in the rest of the world," said Lenz. Wine consumption in China has moved rapidly through various stages. From an almost standing start 20 years ago, it has gone from the comical view of good wine diluted with Coke, through the over-the-top packaged 'gift' market wines and now, mainly through educated 25-year-old women it has hit the main track.

"They have driven consumption to a massive 1.5 litres per head, which does not sound much compared against the UK's 21 litres and France's 43 litres, but when you consider that China's 1.5 litres is calculated across a population of 1.4bn people, that is a sizable amount of wine. Pretty soon they won't need to export to 'benchmark' their wines, they will be able to drink as much as they can produce. Buy some while you have the chance."

Sainsbury is also listing two Chinese wines from Changyu. Changyu Noble Dragon Riesling 2013 (£9) comes from Yantai and is light, fresh and simple while Changyu Noble Dragon Cabernet Gernischt 2013 (£10) has bags of lightly perfumed fruit. Even though these wines come from the same Changyu company, I think Moser XV from Tesco has a distinct edge on quality.



## wine club june offer

### SUMMER DRINKING – £82.99 FOR 12 BOTTLES

As soon as the sun shines it is time to invite friends round and enjoy a glass or two in the garden. This selection of wine provides all the flavours you need, from a sparkling aperitif to crisp whites, a rosé and big flavoursome reds.

This case would normally cost £99.88, but for Yorkshire Post readers the price is just £82.99, a saving of almost £17.

Delivery costs £9.95 for a single case, but if you order two cases to the same address it is free.

**How to order:** Order online at

www.houseoftownend.com/yorkshire-post-wine-club or ring our order line on 01482 638888, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Outside this time, leave a message

including your telephone number and we will ring you back.

This case contains two bottles each of: **Sparkling:** Jules Larose Blanc de Blancs Brut – a perfect summer aperitif.

**Whites:** Domaine de Pellehaut 2016, Côtes de Gascogne – fresh citrus fruit, team with salads and fish; Amori Pinot Grigio 2016 – ripe pears and orange zest flavours.

**Rosé:** Côtes de Provence Rosé 2016, Henri Gaillard – silky wild strawberry fruit.

**Reds:** Fitou Domaine Bertrand-Bergé 2013 – dark plummy fruit with spice; Blue Ridge Merlot 2015, Thracian Lowlands – warm, ripe, plummy fruit, perfect for a barbecue.



## off the shelf

**Koha Fantail Sauvignon Blanc 2016, Marlborough, New Zealand, 12.5%, Marks and Spencer, down from £10 to £8 until June 26:** A

bright, zesty, citrus and gooseberry packed wine, perfect as an aperitif to enjoy in sunshine or team this with salads and fish.



**Taste the Difference Greco di Tufo 2016, Italy, 12.5%, Sainsbury's, down from £9 to £8 until June 27:** Originally from

Greece, the Greco grape loves the hills behind Naples, and produces peach and apricot style wines, cut through with brisk freshness. Pair with serious fish.



**Réserve des Hospitaliers 2015 Cairanne, Côtes du Rhône Villages, 13.5%, Waitrose, down from £9.99 to £7.49 until July 11:** One of my

favourite, rich-tasting, spice-dusted dark forest fruits Rhône wines. Stock up, at this price it is a definite bargain.



**Gran Volante Tinto, Spain 2016, 14%, Majestic down from £9.99 to £7.99 until June 26:** Chunky

with dark fruits and smoky herbal notes. Made from Garnacha, Alicante and Tempranillo grapes this is a wine for evenings, served alongside ribs and sausages.



## on the grapevine

**Good read:** *The Complete Bordeaux* by Stephen Brook (Mitchell Beazley, £50) is the kind of book that looks good on any coffee table, but it is even better if you pick it up and read it. Now in its third edition, it has been revised and brought up to date by the author. This is a chunky book, but definitely not heavy going. It meanders through this fabulous wine region, starting on the left bank, detailing properties, ownership, vineyards, cépages and vintages. There is a little history of the estates and details of the way each has developed, with new vineyards and new winemakers. There are notes on the wines, and if you are planning to

buy some 2016 Bordeaux wines, you need this. If you are visiting, then this will provide background. The pictures are lovely and will tempt you to head to Bordeaux. Overall, thoroughly recommended.

**Matchmaking:** It was terrific to meet so many readers a couple of weeks ago in Millennium Square at the Yorkshire Food and Drink Festival. I matched several wines to dishes by Yorkshire chef Stephanie Moon. One combination that really hit the spot was Digby Leander Pink NV Brut (£30 Waitrose) English Sparkling Wine, not just good as an aperitif, but fabulous with her strawberry and hazelnut meringue.

## LIFE & STYLE

### Every Wednesday:

Food & drink: recipe ideas, food matters and kitchen gadgets.



**YORKSHIRE POST**

YORKSHIRE'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER