

LIFE&STYLE

WINE-DOWN
WEDNESDAYWine without the snobbery,
by **Libby Brodie**

SUNDAY marked Chinese New Year, an excellent reason to sample some of the country's incredible wines. Despite making wine for over 2,000 years, it is only relatively recently that wine-making has increased and started filtering into the UK's market.

"Wine is becoming popular because younger people are more influenced by Western tastes, and grape wine made in the Western style is a growing trend," says Janet Wang, author of *The Chinese Wine Renaissance*. "Now Chinese wines are also starting to be exported because Chinese producers want to showcase their wines to an international audience, especially since 2012 when [they] started to win top prizes in international competitions".

China's terroir is varied and unique, allowing a range of wines to be created, with red wine dominating production and consumption. The expanse of the Loess Plateau, with altitudes of over 1,200 metres above sea level near the Gobi Desert, is a "very exciting new frontier for the world of wine," says Wang.

Within this is the notable region of Ningxia, hailed as the Bordeaux of China and "the Eldorado of China's top reds," according to Lenz Moser, winemaker for Changyu Moser XV.

China is one of the largest wine producers in the world, says Moser, highlighting the industry's speed of growth and "hunger for premium wines".

"In a blind tasting in Zurich two years ago, our icon wine 'Purple Air Comes From The East' ranked fifth amongst such well-known stars as Château Pon-

CHINESE WINE IS
HOT RIGHT NOWTIPS FROM OUR WINE EXPERT ON APPROACHING
THIS BRAVE NEW FRONTIER OF THE WINE WORLD

net Canet and Seña, but nobody expects top wines from China," says Moser.

Effi Tsournava of The Royal Exchange's Oeno House says that Chinese New Year and #TryJanuary have meant more consumers have been keen to give wine from China a whirl.

Sipping their Silver Heights 'The Summit' 2017 (£71 Oeno House), I was impressed by its bold elegance and unfolding, enticing complexity, a key feature of premium Chinese wines.

"Our guests' eyes light up when we suggest a biodynamic Bordeaux blend from Ningxia, this element of surprise is certainly an alluring factor and we are delighted to see a growing number of wine-lovers keen to treat their tastebuds to new wines and explore new regions," says Tsournava. "As Chinese wine's quality, individuality and world-wide reputation are steadily growing, these are good early-investment opportunities."

As the Chinese usually drink wine in a banquet scenario, Chinese wines tend to be "food friendly and compliment a wide variety of food", says Wang. "The wines need to be versatile and accommodating to lots of different dishes. Chinese wines tend to be fruit forward, approachable when young, and well balanced since balance is a very important concept in China, and within its own food and wine culture".

If you want to try pairing for yourself then the Pan Pacific Hotel offers the largest, most extensive list of Chinese wine in London. I had the pleasure of trying it for myself this week as you can see from today's Dining Diary.

WINE RECOMMENDATIONS



PIQUANT, WEDNESDAYS DOMAINE £12.49
WEDNESDAYS.DOMAINE.COM

For those diligently sticking to Dry January, try this still Airen Blanco where the wine has been de-alcoholised to under 0.5% and is less than 45 calories a glass. It may not fool you into thinking there is booze, but it is a tasty alternative.



BOUVET LADUBAY TRÉSOR SAUMUR BRUT 2018 £19.99
MAJESTIC

This limited edition cuvée was created to celebrate The Who's 50th anniversary and Daltrey's career as a singer and actor, spanning more than 50 years. Creamy but fresh this is a crown-pleasing treat.



JOURNEY'S END THE GRIFFIN SYRAH 2016 £26
OCADO

Silky Syrah (the same grape as Shiraz) from sunny South Africa, this bursts open with crushed violet petals and bright cherries before melting into a rich, smooth red that lingers on the palate. A new mid-week staple for me. Delicious.



CHATEAU QUINTUS 2016 £110
MILLESIMA.COM

The fifth property owned by the Domaine Clarence Dillon group, along with Châteaux Haut-Brion and La Mission Haut-Brion. This classic, excellently made Saint-Émilion Grand Cru is balanced, graceful and precise.



CHATEAU DE MEURSAULT, MEURSAULT PREMIER CRU, LES CHARMES 2018 £84.67
JUSTERINI & BROOKS

We all need some dependability in our lives and Château de Meursault, the biggest organic Domaine in Burgundy, is delivering consistent, balanced, delicious wines. This whispers of sunshine and spring time. Charming indeed.

PAN PACIFIC'S STRAITS KITCHEN HAS GREAT CHINESE WINE

IF YOU are looking to explore Chinese wine then there is nowhere better than Straits Kitchen, in the central city-chic Pan Pacific Hotel. Sommelier Francois Bertrand is passionate about providing wines to fit their Asian menu, believing the variety and quality from China will surprise and delight.

What unfolded over the course of the afternoon only proved his point, starting with Chateau Sungod's Blanc de Blancs 2006, a traditional method sparkling wine from Hebei that was opulent, rich and nutty yet still retained a vibrant freshness. Bertrand took us on a journey, aided by Manager Viola Cerri.

We sipped Pretty Pony Riesling, a wine that was accurately described as

DINING
DIARY

"addictive", over summer rolls enlivened by the addition of fresh strawberries and chicken satay.

My guest asked for a pot to take home. A small glass of yellow wine tasted like the love child of sake and sherry and held its own against a cup of warm chicken broth before we dove into delicious mains of seafood rice noodles, a perfectly succulent baked

black cod and a duck salad whose simple presentation belied its captivating, rich flavours of the savoury meat dotted with sweet lychees.

We glugged Chateau Changyu Moser XV Cabernet Sauvignon, made by Lenz Moser, who I had just interviewed and who Bertrand described as an "excellent winemaker, just try and see for yourself".

The finale was an icewine, always a treat especially as only 4 countries can actually make it, needing as it does a harvest temperature of below 10 degrees. This was pure joy with the "Apple" dessert, an absolute must-order for anyone visiting Straits Kitchen - which I thoroughly urge everyone to do.



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