

19 Feb 2018 - 3:56pm

## Female winemakers are raising the bar in 'The Napa Valley of China'



Wang got her nickname from her so-called 'crazy' idea to start a winery with no professional experience. (Wang Fang)

Leading the generation is pioneering winemaker 'Crazy Fang', whose top Chinese reds have just landed in Australia, just in time for Lunar New Year.

**By**

Audrey Bourget

Her real name is Wang Fang, but in the wine world, she's known as "Crazy Fang" for her innovative winemaking.

After [receiving awards and the praise of international critics](#), two of her wines are now available in Australia, just in time for Chinese New Year.

**Where did it all begin?**

Wang comes from the Chinese province of Ningxia, which she describes beautifully as “a place with oasis and deserts, sandy slopes and mountains”.

Her dad worked in agriculture his whole life, before turning to viticulture in his 50s.

“Although my dad was a pioneer of crafting fine wine in our region, I never pictured myself being a winery owner before I went to Germany,” she tells SBS Food.

There, she was able to taste different wines from all around the world and develop her own preferences.

In 2009, she helped her dad present his winery at an international wine exhibition, even if she wasn’t 100 per cent convinced.

"There were even people looking at a world map to see where Ningxia was located and insisting on coming for a visit because they were surprised by the wine."

“Could China produce great fine wines? Nobody had achieved that yet,” she says.

But her doubts were rapidly squashed: “Our booth was overwhelmed by the crowd! There were even people looking at a world map to see where Ningxia was located and insisting on coming for a visit because they were surprised by the wine.”

These days, China’s region is sometimes referred to as “[The Napa Valley of China](#)” for its rapidly growing wine industry.

Several of its leading winemakers are women: there is Wang Fang, but also [Emma Gao at Silver Heights](#), Zhang Jing at Helan Qing Xue and Gloria Xia at Chandon.

[In an interview with China Daily](#), Austrian winemaker Lenz Moser attributes their rise both to their talent and to market forces: "Seventy per cent of wine purchases are made by women, whether in supermarkets or online. So having women at the front end of the process just makes sense."



Two top Chinese wines from a winemaker nicknamed Crazy Fang have arrived in Australia.

### Why Wang was named 'Crazy Fang'

The international wine exhibition she attended with her father had such an impact on her that the following year she returned to China to start her own winery without any experience.

“Looking back, I can see that the persistence for crafting fine wines was already running in my veins,” she says.

In 2011, she opened Kanaan Winery in Ningxia. Her father taught her a lot about viticulture, but she says she had her own idea about what type of wines and cellar operation she wanted.

The nickname “Crazy Fang” was floating around for a bit before it was [made popular by UK wine critic Jancis Robinson in 2014](#). It refers to Wang’s so-called ‘crazy’ idea to start a winery with no professional experience, but also to the pioneering nature of the Wang family.



### Kanaan Winery and its horses

It's not Wang's Riesling, but two of her reds that have hit Australia first, [Kanaan Pretty Pony 2013](#) and [Kanaan Black Beauty 2012](#). They reflect Wang's personal taste: "fruity, fully-bodied lively wines with refined tannins".

Pretty Pony is the awarded flagship wine of the Kanaan Winery, made from a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (90 per cent) and Merlot (10 per cent). It's full-bodied with black fruit, coffee, cinnamon and chocolate aromas and flavours, with fine-grained persistent tannins and mineral length.

Black Beauty is also a Cabernet Sauvignon (70 per cent) and Merlot (30 per cent) blend. It's highly aromatic and elegantly structured with pure cassis, red cherry, blueberry fruits, spicy nuances and fine-grained yet supple tannins.

The horse theme is a nod to the Helan Mountains in Ningxia.

"The mountains move like horses running at the edge of the sky. I love and admire these beautiful creatures because they are powerful and elegant – qualities I aspire to capture in the wines I create."

"When you drive along them, the mountains move like horses running at the edge of the sky. I love and admire these beautiful creatures because they are powerful and elegant – qualities I aspire to capture in the wines I create," says Wang.

She says she's excited to be launching her wines in Australia, especially because many people celebrate Chinese New Year around the country.

"The dining and drinking is a very important part of the Chinese New Year tradition. I expect that Chinese Australians will be interested to try the best wines from their homeland during this special time," she says.

Pretty Pony and Black Beauty are available exclusively in selected Dan Murphy's.