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Will Lyons

Wine review: the best bottles from China to try now



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China is now the fifth largest consumer of wine in the world. According to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, mainland China trails America, France, Italy and Germany, sitting ahead of the UK, Russia and Spain in its thirst for the commodity.

As we look towards a new decade and millions gather to celebrate Chinese new year on Saturday, one wouldn't bet against them overtaking Germany and Italy by 2030. Who knows — maybe even France? In terms of production, China has emerged as a serious player. The area of its land planted with vines is second only to Spain, ahead of France and Italy, but figures are skewed as they also include grapes grown for table-ready or dried grapes.

Around Bordeaux, the world's largest fine-wine region, there are a slew of Chinese-owned estates, including Château de Sours in the Entre Deux Mers, acquired by Jack Ma, billionaire founder of the retail giant Alibaba.

For all these stats, good-quality wine from China is still relatively scarce in the UK. Sainsbury's delisted its Chinese range in March last year, but there are still a few examples out there for the curious oenophile. Ocado is stocking Chateau Changyu, while a handful of independent merchants — such as Berry Bros & Rudd and Slurp — have entered the fray. Quality is mixed, but the next decade will be fascinating to watch.

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2018 Chateau Changyu Moser XV Cabernet Sauvignon

Ocado, £11.99

Ningxia

Here's an intriguing white cab sauv from China's oldest and largest estate, with advice from the Austrian winemaker Lenz Moser. It has a pale pink blush and crisp grapefruit flavour; zippy and refreshing on the palate, finishing dry.

2016 Treaty Port Vineyards The Lady of Fashion

Slurp, £12.50

Shandong

Produced by an Englishman, Chris Ruffle, in the Qiushan Valley, this equal blend of chardonnay and viognier is lightly oaked, dry and gently balanced. The fruit is fairly muted, but it would be a great pairing with scallops or sushi.

2018 Kanaan Winery Riesling

ND John, £23

Ningxia

From the Kanaan estate 600 miles west of Beijing, this is one of the best Chinese whites I've come across. It has bold notes of grapefruit, green apple and lime, with refreshing acidity. A hint of evolution in the bottle lends it an appealing dry finish.

2015 Changyu Golden Icewine Valley

Slurp, £25 (375ml)

Ningxia

Sweet wines are by far the most impressive style produced in China. This example is medium bronze in colour, with flavours of tangerine peel, honey and citrus, finishing with lovely acidity that dances across the tongue.

2013 Kanaan Pretty Pony

ND John, £25

Ningxia

Another impressive blend from Kanaan, based in the remote northern Helan Mountains, this is a combination of 90% cabernet sauvignon and 10% merlot. It has well-structured tannins and smooth indications of oak and blackcurrant, with a beguiling viscous texture.

2016 Chateau Changyu Moser XV Grand Vin

Hedonism, £88

Ningxia

Drawing once again on expertise from Moser, Changyu's Grand Vin is a subtly refined and credible version of the finest in Bordeaux. Dark and layered, it has striking aromas of blackcurrant, plum, vanilla and oak, and is rich in silky-smooth tannins.