

bon appétit



It's a very good year, 1421 — the year the Ming Dynasty admiral Zheng He led the mighty Chinese fleet south on the first of many voyages of discovery. And now, the same year marks another milestone. It is on the label of China's first traceable wine. **Pauline D Loh** tells you more.



IN THE ADMIRAL'S SPIRIT

Wine made in China. It suffers the same credibility problems that other Chinese produce battles in and out of the country. If the wine is good, connoisseurs query if it has been secretly imported and then placed in a Chinese bottle. It seems nothing the Chinese vineyards do can convince them otherwise. Until, that is, a Hong Kong oenophile and a Chilean winemaker decided the answer is to let the world know where the grapes come from, where they are grown and who made the wine. The result is a pair of white and red that has quietly hit the market, stirring up both interest and curiosity.

The crisp fresh Chardonnay and the unusually cold climate influenced Cabernet Sauvignon are now in very good company — served at Beijing's top hotels like The Raffles, The Westin, Opposite House, Ritz Carlton and restaurants like the venerable Maison Bould.

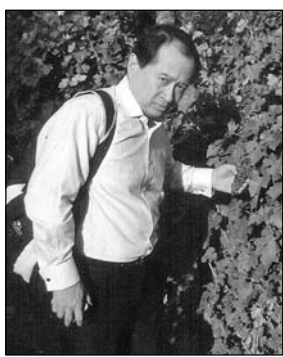
The other smart move Johnny Chan and Andronico Luksic made was to piggyback on a traceable products project by the Metro China supermarket group. In fact, Metro specially commissioned 1421 to produce a Chardonnay and a Cabernet Sauvignon to be exclusively sold under their Star Farms Traceability System.

Under this system, all products can be traced back to the farms or producers through a simple smart phone application. We were given a demonstration by Randy Lee Svendsen, 1421's spokesman and Ken Chan, key operations manager of Beijing Summit Wines.

The barcode on the bottle was scanned and information started popping up on Chan's phone, zooming right to the vineyard in Xinjiang where the grapes came from, and including a short biography of Australian Yarra Valley winemaker Sergio Carlei, the man who turns the juice into wine.

"The vineyards in Xinjiang are watered by the snowmelt from Tianshan, and the long cool growing season allows the grapes to mature slowly and develop the best flavors," says Svendsen, who is packing up his home in Las Vegas because he has decided he's going to spend the rest of his life in China.

He firmly believes that 1421 augurs well for the Chinese wine industry, and he is committed to promoting the wine through his regular columns in hotel trade publications and through his networks within the food and wine industry. It is through Svendsen's contact



1421's Johnny Chan at the Xinjiang vineyard. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

with the Grace Beijing Hotel that we got to know about the wines. It is also a pleasant surprise to stumble onto a wine producer who believes in traceable quality, and who collects grapes from vineyards that are converting to organic cultivation,

and willing to follow biodynamic principles in the winemaking, thanks to the Australian influence.

1421 uses grapes that come from vineyards sharing the same latitude as Bordeaux, and the vines were brought back from France by Johnny Chan and planted about 11 years ago.

The cold winters also mean there are few diseases, while the warm sunny days and cool crisp nights provide ideal growing conditions.

"What we are producing are wines based on what the terroir can offer, therefore, reflecting the true characteristics of the wines, refreshing and easy drinking to enhance the multi-layers of flavors in food today," Svendsen says. This is as good a mission statement as any, and we look forward to more vintages from 1421.

China Daily is organizing a Readers' Club Dinner featuring Beijing's

TASTING NOTES

ADMIRAL'S RESERVE

CHARDONNAY 2010

Clear pale straw in color, the wine has the scent of limes with a hint of white peach. The palate is refined and very fresh, and the citrus and lesser peachy notes balance the racy acidity that lingers on the tongue.

ADMIRAL'S RESERVE

CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2010

Brilliant red, the wine boasts red and black berry fruits with some black olive and cassis. There are underlying notes of vanilla, cedar and cigar box characters, which make it very interesting. Unlike the warmer climate cabernet sauvignons, this wine is lighter on the palate and will probably improve in the bottle as it ages.

Hotel's Yi House restaurant on Jan 16, 2012. We are pairing the food with the Admiral's Reserve wines, and look forward to converting more fans for the Admiral's collection.

For more details on how to join the China Daily Readers' Club dinner, please send an e-mail to paulined@chinadaily.com.cn.

EATout

TEMPLE OF GASTRONOMY

The Temple is now open, much to the delight of Beijing's worshippers of haute cuisine. Temple Restaurant Beijing or TRB as it wants to be known, is tucked away in the Dongcheng hutongs past the National Art Museum and promises to be an instant draw for the city's gourmets. Dishes "are thoroughly 21st-century but also firmly rooted in the grand traditions of the past". You won't need to consult an oracle to know it's going to be the flavor of the month.

— PAULINE D LOH
23 Songzhusi, Shatan Beijie, Dongcheng District, Beijing
010-8400 2232
E-mail: meet@temple-restaurant.com

STAY. SIMPLE. TABLE



The capital city's latest restaurant by a Michelin-starred chef is S.T.A.Y. or "Simple Table Alleno Yannick" at the Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing. S.T.A.Y. has been challenging existing benchmarks of both food and service after it opened in September this year. Alleno has already collected a total of five Michelin stars for his culinary expertise in Paris and Marrakech and he's obviously out to collect another in Beijing. The Wagyu beef, black cod and crab ravioli are all good, but you have to save room for the signature ribbon plate of sweet nothings. Be warned.

— PDL
Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing,
29 Zizhuyuan Road,
010-6841-2211 ext 26727
E-mail: stay.slb@shangri-la.com

GLUG GLUG ...

If you didn't brave the crowds at the German Holiday Charity Bazaar last weekend, you can still get a fine cup of mulled wine at the Kempinski hotel's Gluhweinstand at its Paulaner Brauhaus Terrace, 5-8 pm daily through to Dec 23.

— MIKE PETERS
50 Liangmaqiao Road, Chaoyang District,
Beijing 010-6465-3388

DESIGNER CUPPAS

Join fellow tea connoisseurs and amateurs on a day trip to Beijing's Maliandao Tea city on Dec 11. Start the late morning off with some light green teas, then a Fujian-style lunch, followed by an afternoon of more robust teas. Tea and gift-shopping at the end of the program. 10 am - 3 pm; 250 yuan (includes a large lunch with drinks).

— MP
The Hutong, 1 Jiu Dao Wan Zhong Xiang Hutong, Beijing
Reservations: info@thehutong.com
or call 15901046127

SESAME'S SNACKS

Cooking school Black Sesame's gourmet class this week focuses on two simple street snacks, Chinese flatbread and baozi. Dec 6, 11 am - 2pm; 300 yuan.

— MP
3 Heizhima Hutong in Nanluoguxiang, Dongcheng District
13691474408
RSVP: blacksamesekitchen@gmail.com
www.blacksamesekitchen.com

EATin

WHITE, RED, ORANGE

At the markets, the root vegetables are at their sweetest and fattest and the best in season are white radishes, cherry radishes, watermelon radishes and the green-skinned turnips. Orange pumpkins are also in season.

The white radishes beloved throughout the country have been sweetened by the cold snap and can be used grated into salads, or slowly braised in a warming stew with beef, or cooked into soup. Northerners often just cut the crisp white roots into chunks and eat them like pears, or dipped into the ubiquitous bean sauces.

Cherry radishes, the little bright red balls with snowy white flesh and tiny tails, are a local salad favorite. They are best eaten after a quick wash and trim and they add color and texture to any dish.

The watermelon radishes are my favorite vegetables this time of the year.

Their bright red magenta centers are hidden underneath a thick green skin but the centers are crisp and chewy. Pickled with a light sprinkling of sugar and vinegar, the watermelon radish lives up to its name and are great palate cleansers that refresh and add color to the heavy foods of winter. My husband keeps the scrubbed green skin, pickles them and crunches them up as snacks.

Pumpkins, advertising their beta-carotene content boldly and brightly, are also cheap and plentiful. Steam them in chunks, cut them up for a stir fry or make them into a creamy soup. You can't go wrong with pumpkins.

— PAULINE D LOH

For organic supplies, visit World Health Stores at Shunyi and Dongda-qiao which stock produce from De Run Wu Farm. The farm offers greens in season as well as organic eggs, rice and tofu. E-mail: jiyunliang@vip.163.com or call 139-1189-3712.

SHANGHAI

Award-winning beef noodles cross the Straits

By ERIC JOU
CHINA DAILY

Beef noodle soup, so simple yet so delicious, has been escaping my clutches for the last two years that I've been in Beijing. In Taiwan, I've had the pleasure of devouring bowl after bowl of the delicious beef soup, but there was nothing like it in Beijing.

Even back home in New York City, I was able to come across the simple mixture of braised beef in a tomato-based beef broth with noodles, bokchoi, and *suan cai* (pickled Chinese cabbage), but in Beijing the closest thing to it had been at the fast-food chains of Yonghe King and the Goody House, and both versions were only mediocre on their best days.

Chef Hung Jinlong, chef and founder of Chef Hung, an award-winning Taiwanese noodle beef soup chain, hopes to fill the void in Beijing.

At the opening in November, Hung said he is bringing his winning broths and noodles to the Chinese mainland completely unchanged, offering patrons a taste of what it

is to eat at one of his two establishments in Taipei.

Eager to try the noodle soup, I enlisted the help of two of my colleagues and we headed to Chef Hung's Beijing location, at Wangfujing.

The outlet is in a mall, and Chef Hung feels like a fast food joint. Much to my surprise there was also a bubble tea bar inside. I was glad to see that the homely nature of beef noodle soup wasn't lost in a place like Wangfujing.

On the very first page of the menu is a list of Chef Hung's championship bowls, the very recipes which won him consecutive titles at Taiwan's beef noodle soup competition.

We ordered the Champion Beef Shank with Noodle in Soup, a traditional red roasted noodle soup, a bowl of the Champion Beef Brisket in clear soup, a simple clear beef broth, and a bowl of Champion Braised Beef in Tomato Soup, a more authentic Taiwanese-style beef noodle soup.

There was one more bowl on the front page, the award-winning beef shank, tendon and tripe soup, but we were going for the tried-and-true



ERIC JOU / CHINA DAILY

Chef Hung's clear beef noodle soup is the universal favorite.

beef noodle soups. All the bowls on the front page were priced at 58 yuan (\$9), which is very expensive for a bowl of noodle soup in Taiwan where the average bowl of beef noodle soups is only NT\$ 150 (\$5).

We also ordered a Taiwan street food staple, *xianshuj* (Taiwan-style crisp-fried chicken chop).

The bowls arrived promptly and were very good portions. Each bowl was filled to the brim with beefy broth and the servings of beef were more than adequate.

My other two colleagues, who had never tried authentic Taiwanese beef noodle soup other than the instant noodle version, were immediately awestruck by the natural beefiness of the broth and the springy nature of the noodles.

We rated the tomato-based soup the best, and personally I found it to taste the most like what Taiwanese beef noodle soup should be.

The beef was also braised to meltingly tender, much like the pork found in Japanese pork bone ramen.

IF YOU GO

BEIJING APM MALL
5TH FLOOR
138 Wangfujing
Dongcheng district, Beijing
70 yuan per person.

Overall this was our favorite bowl, and my only problem was the lack of *suan cai* — but that was probably an oversight on the server's part.

We also liked the clear soup noodles, a dish which was elegant in its simplicity.

The red roasted beef noodle soup was least appreciated and was the only bowl we left unfinished.

Despite Chef Hung's claims that no monosodium glutamate (MSG) was used, I still felt a tingly aftertaste.

Overall, it was pleasant to see how Chef Hung has replicated the flavors from Taiwan in Beijing.

You can also get to taste other favorites like *luroufan* (Taiwanese braised pork rice). If you are in the neighborhood, drop in for a taste.

You may contact the writer at ericjouw@chinadaily.com.cn.