

HORIZON



TURBOJET

飛航天地

香港啟航

HONG KONG
SETS SAIL

泰國葡萄樂園

THAILAND'S
GRAPE ADVENTURE

DAVID LACHAPELLE
之宏圖景觀

DAVID LACHAPELLE:
A BIGGER PICTURE

倫敦帝苑豪宅

LUXE LIVING
IN LONDON

泰國佳釀

the thais that vined

泰國美食享譽全球，其深受國際鑑賞家青睞的葡萄酒也正準備走向世界

Thailand's food is internationally renowned, but now its distinctive wine industry is making a splash as vineyards win plaudits from connoisseurs

text billy clarke

一個周日黃昏，一群人圍著擺滿葡萄酒瓶的桌子，愉快地抽樣品嚐新收割的葡萄，如此情境通常會令人聯想到波爾多或托斯卡尼。其實100公里外便是人口稠密的曼谷，而葡萄酒業正在這裡悄悄冒起。

近年泰國的品酒文化愈來愈成熟，幾乎曼谷所有的時尚酒吧及酒店都有種類齊全的葡萄酒。官方數字顯示，目前泰國葡萄酒銷量每年可高達1千4百萬升。自2000年以來，每年增長約6.5%。

而許多本土葡萄酒廠獲得了國際認可及無數獎項。三位泰國葡萄酒專業人士於6月通過「註冊品酒師認證考試」。GranMonte葡萄酒廠最近亦在法國和英國的比賽中得到12枚獎牌。但一提起葡萄酒，很難令人馬上想到泰國。曼谷四季酒店的品酒師Siwat Thitipornwattanakul說：「泰國只有一些地方可以種植釀酒的葡萄。不過我相信泰國是東南亞最成功的葡萄酒產區。」

許多行內人士同意他的看法，有人甚至認為泰國擁有亞洲最好的葡萄酒廠。葡萄酒雜誌《Wine Today》的編輯Joe Sriwarin是通過了認證考試的其中一人。他解釋說：「泰國的生產商都是富豪，他們非常熱愛葡萄酒，加上金錢不是

IT'S LATE ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON and a gingery orange hue slowly turns to a bloody red in the sky above miles of lush, budding grape fields. Below, a group of fortunate individuals sits around a table covered in wine bottles, contentedly sampling a batch of grapes fresh from the latest harvest. This romantic scene would normally conjure up locations such as Bordeaux or Tuscany in the popular imagination, but just beyond the drinking table a fully grown elephant is assisting with the grape picking. Just over a hundred kilometres away, meanwhile, is the megalopolis of Bangkok, where rush-hour traffic percolates through busy streets, and an emerging wine scene sees the city's latest bars and lounges filling up for the evening.

Wine is a relatively newcomer to Bangkok's drinking scene, but local taste buds have matured more rapidly in recent years as the city, and country, develop. Wine drinking is now widespread in Thai society, and any hotel worth visiting in the capital offers an informed wine selection. Official figures indicate current Thai wine consumption could be as much as 14 million litres per annum, and has been increasingly steadily at around 6.5% every year since 2000.

Local producers have ushered in a silent revolution, with many wineries garnering respect worldwide and securing awards. In June three Thai wine professionals passed the Court of Master Sommeliers' internationally recognised Certified Exam, while one winery, GranMonte, recently scooped 12 medals at prestigious competitions in France and the UK. Yet wine producing is hardly the first thing one would associate with Thailand. Siwat Thitipornwattanakul, sommelier from the Four Seasons Bangkok, points out:







「泰國葡萄酒在亞洲 絕對獨一無二」

"No wine-producing
country in Asia is as
unique as Thailand"

問題，他們完全可以不計成本。在亞洲，泰國的情況獨一無二。」

另一個特殊因素是泰國的地理環境。少數葡萄酒廠在北部氣候涼爽的山區和山谷間種植葡萄。雖然泰國是熱帶國家，這些高海拔地區卻長年屬於亞熱帶氣候，非常適合種植葡萄。主要葡萄酒廠Khao Yai Winery的總裁及首席釀酒師Prayut Piangbunta比任何人更了解這個優勢，他說：「我們是唯一身在北半球，卻和南半球有相同採收期的地方。這裡的氣候有利於葡萄生長，白天晴朗溫暖，夜晚乾燥涼爽。」

泰國的緯度介於10至20度，有別於一般釀葡萄酒的標準30至50度。由於不符合傳統的釀葡萄酒環境，稱之為「新緯度葡萄酒」。雖然亞熱帶氣候更適合種植酸度高的葡萄，泰國葡萄酒廠還是成功種出多種類葡萄。葡萄酒行家Jirachai Sethisakko說：「泰國葡萄酒的質量相當於智利的中檔葡萄酒，或入門級的澳洲設拉子。」

業內人士都知道泰國擁有獨特的釀葡萄酒條件，有些地方甚至一年可收成兩次。「新緯度葡萄酒」的種植期是11月至3月，收成期則是1月至3月。然而除了地理位置及氣

"Thailand only has certain areas where grapes can be grown for winemaking, and it also has geographical limitations. [Yet] I am confident that Thailand is the most successful wine-producing region within South-East Asia."

His belief is shared by many industry professionals, and some have even said Thai wineries are the best in Asia. Joe Sriwarin, the editor of *Wine Today* magazine, was one of the three who passed the Certified Exam. He explains: "In Thailand, the producers are all millionaires who are passionate about wine, and when money is no object there is no stopping them. No other wine-producing country in Asia is as unique as Thailand."

This uniqueness is, in part, due to the country's geography, which allows a few select wineries to operate in the mountains and valleys in the northern part of the country, where the weather is cooler. These high-altitude areas provide a predominantly subtropical climate ideal for the cultivation of grapes. Prayut Piangbunta, the director and chief winemaker from Khao Yai Winery — another leading producer — understands this better than anyone, explaining that: "Thailand is the only country in the northern hemisphere with the same harvesting period as the south, and this creates the perfect environment for grapes to grow, with dry, cool nights and warm, sunny days."

Being close to the equator, Thailand's latitudes fall between 10 and 20 degrees, in contrast to the typical winemaking standard of 30 to 50. This is the world of "New Latitude Wine", and hardly the norm for a wine-producing environment. Yet contrary to conventional viticultural



水上葡萄園， 還有大象採葡萄

In this world of floating
vineyards, elephants
assist in the picking



候外，泰國的獨特處還包括必須坐船收割的水上葡萄園，以及利用大象採葡萄。

這些葡萄酒的主要生產地是位於曼谷西南的湄南河三角洲和華欣山，還有泰國北部和東北部近清萊和考艾地區。考艾國家公園四周更有許多主要葡萄酒廠，泰國近半數的葡萄酒都是這裡出產的。這些葡萄酒廠也開放參觀，並提供住宿及餐飲等服務。位於東北部的Village Farm Winery有水療服務及一個建在懸崖邊的游泳池，Khao Yai Winery提供度假村住宿，Siam Winery則擁有一個很大的泰式木樓閣。

此區因而被喻為加州的納帕谷酒鄉。GranMonte的Nikki Visootha Lohitnavy說：「這裡好像70年代的納帕谷。納帕葡萄酒在1976年的巴黎品酒會（Judgement of Paris）打敗了法國葡萄酒。現在我們在世界各地也經常得獎。」雖然泰國葡萄酒仍有許多發展空間，但Siwat Thitipornwathanakul對前景依然樂觀。「我們還需要多學習。智利就很值得觀摩，因為那裡的情況和我們很相似。」

wisdom, Thailand wineries are perfectly capable of growing many types of grapes, even if the subtropical climate is more suited to grapes with high acidity. As Jirachai Sethisakko — the “Group Wine Guru” for Anantara — highlights: “The quality of Thai wines is comparable to mid-range Chilean wine, or an entry-level Australian Shiraz.”

Insiders know Thailand’s wineries are among the industry’s most distinctive, with some even reaping two harvests a year. In this world of New Latitude Wine, the production season runs from November, and harvesting takes place from January to late March. Labour is cheap, and grape picking often takes place at night so workers can avoid the heat of the day. However, the singularity of New Latitude Wine isn’t just confined to geography and climate. This is also a world where floating vineyards must be harvested by boat, and where elephants assist in the picking.

These wines are produced south-west of Bangkok in the Chao Phraya Delta and the Hua Hin Hills, and in north and north-eastern Thailand, near Chiang Rai. The hotspot is the area around Khao Yai National Park, where a cluster of leading producers collectively make nearly a half of all Thai wine. Many wineries also offer tours, lodging, restaurants and other peripheral attractions. Village Farm Winery boasts a spa and cliff-hanging swimming pool; Khao Yai Winery offers resort-style accommodation; Siam Winery’s large, Thai-inspired wooden pavilion was designed by an architect who cut his teeth at Norman Foster’s London practice.



兩國的確有很多相似處。智利的葡萄酒同樣受惠於氣候，也生產同類型的葡萄酒。智利過去也缺乏釀葡萄酒的知識，還面對嚴重稅務問題。直到80年代取消酒精關稅後才有了轉機。泰國現在的情況是徵稅過高和法律嚴峻，阻礙了葡萄酒業的發展。「泰國政府對酒類廣告管制非常嚴格，」Joe Sriwarin說道，「除了教育用途外，報紙根本不能刊登葡萄酒的圖片或文章。」

即使如此，泰國葡萄酒在海外的表現仍令人刮目相看。許多葡萄酒專家都視之為亞洲的最佳出品，前途無可限量。■



For this reason the area has been likened to Napa Valley in California, and the spirit of enthusiasm at these wineries echoes the buzz around Napa in its '70s heyday. "Back then Napa wines competed with French wines, and won at [1976 competition] the Judgment of Paris," recalls Nikki Visootha Lohitnavy of GranMonte. "Now we are [doing] the same all around the world." Thai wines might not be "winning" at a Charlie Sheen level just yet, but Siwat Thitipornwattanakul remains optimistic: "There are opportunities to grow. We need more education. Chile is a good example for us, since it is a region with similarities to Thailand."

Those similarities are numerous: Chile's is another incipient industry that benefits from an analogous climate and produces the same sort of wine. It also once lacked the education to create good wine, and was plagued by tax problems. Eventually alcohol tariffs were dropped in the '80s — a move that effectively saved Chile's industry. The reverse now holds true in Thailand, with excessively high taxes and draconian legislation hindering local winemaking. "The Thai government is very strict with alcohol advertising," says Joe Sriwarin. "Thai wine deserves better publicity from the local press, but it cannot publish pictures of bottles or write about wine except for educational purposes."

If the domestic scene has yet to come to its fullest fruition as a result of such complications, Thai wines are doing extremely well outside their country of origin. As many industry leaders attest, Thailand's wines are undoubtedly some of the best to come out of Asia, and the future looks bright for this embryonic economy. ■

葡萄酒產地 DRINKS LIST

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ALCIDINI VINEYARD

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