

## **Gaze into Wines of Beautiful Formosa Taiwan: Past, Present, and Potential**

Wei-Kang Feng

### **Abstract**

The thesis aims to explore the “new-new-world” wines of Taiwan. Taiwan is an emerging wine market with unique viticultural history and recent advancements. The objective is to provide comprehensive insights and suggestions for accelerating local winemaking success.

The study includes an analysis of the development of winemaking history, in-depth assessments of multiple aspects, field surveys, and interviews with leading Taiwanese winemakers. Assessments on Taiwan's climatic challenges, terroir, viticultural and vinification practices, and the impact of policy changes on the wine industry, are conducted. The research aims to understand the industry's evolution, current practices, and future prospects.

Initially controlled by the Monopoly Bureau in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the focus was on quantity over quality. In 2002, Taiwan's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) ended the monopoly, opened the market, and introduced global competition. Many vineyards were replanted, but ambitious producers continued, leading to significant industry development.

Taiwan's sub-tropical climate, with hot, humid conditions and significant rainfall, presents challenges for viticulture. Despite Taiwan's limited arable area, Central Taiwan is identified as a more ideal region for viticulture, where half of the registered wineries are located. The region is less affected by seasonal monsoons while the Central Mountain Range acts as a natural barrier to protect the region from excessive rainfall and typhoons. Localized viticultural practices, like the pergola system, are adopted to enhance air circulation and

mitigate disease risks while providing shades to avoid sunburn given hot sub-tropical sunlight. Besides, the mild winter allows for two harvests per year, producing unique summer and winter berries. However, producers start shifting the focus from quantity to quality, leading to the discussion of advanced and modern winemaking.

The primary grape varieties used in Taiwan are *Vitis Labrusca* and locally bred hybrid grapes, including Black Queen, Golden Muscat, Taichung No.1 to Taichung No.5, given their disease resistance and varietal characteristics. Since the end of the monopoly, vinification improvements have progressed significantly. Producers are experimenting with various approaches and exploring their potential.

Interviews with industry leaders highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Taiwan's wine industry and propose strategies for growth. Taiwan's wine industry has made significant progresses in adapting to local conditions and improving quality. The conclusion focuses on potential actions for local producers to achieve continuous improvement.

Keys to future success lie in three aspects: ongoing advancements in winemaking, strategic business practices, and industry transformation. Continued research on wine grapes, exploration on terroir potential, innovative winemaking approaches, and strategic marketing and branding are crucial for sustainable growth. Despite challenges, the potential for Taiwan's wine industry remains promising, driven by dedicated producers and supportive policies. The study concludes that focusing on quality over quantity and leveraging Taiwan's unique terroir can position the country as a notable player in the global wine market.

*Keywords:* Taiwanese wine, hybrid grape varieties, viticulture challenges, terroir and climate adaptation, wine industry development, WTO impact