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The complex, yet vital task of defining aroma profiles in Chinese wines

Ascertaining predominant aroma profiles in wines is complicated as it involves numerous factors. However, greater understanding of these profiles is a major step towards characterising hallmark regional styles and creating points of difference in a highly competitive market place. Changqing Duan highlighted the emerging differences in wines from across China.

As a professor, national senior winemaker and director of the centre for viticulture and oenology at the China Agricultural University, Changqing Duan knows all too well how challenging it can be to define particular wine profiles and link them to one region. "A wine region is a complicated entity – it is a very large area with no standardised references". There can be myriad wine styles within a single region, depending on terroir, climate, sunlight, temperature, water, varietal and vineyard management, the humanities and history, he pointed out. Individual choices made by winemakers add to the complexities. Despite this, greater knowledge of the way different cultivars perform in the various sub-regions of Ningxia and a more mature wine industry have provided

indicators as to the differing profiles displayed by the same grape variety in different vineyards. "We have already seen that Cabernet-Sauvignon expresses itself differently from West to East", explained Duan, who drew an imaginary line from the North-East to the South-West of the country with differing profiles on either side. "It is full-bodied in the West and medium-bodied in the East". The varietal also displays differing hues: "In the West it is purple-red when young, whereas it is a less intense ruby-red in the East. And in the West, it displays more abundant and characteristic aromas of red and black berries, fruit jam, cut hay, stone fruit, green pepper and mint". The tannins too, are finer in the East.