



The centuries-old techniques for vinegar making in Qingxu county, Shanxi province, are included on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2006. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Vinegar brewers add flavor to business growth and tourism

Qingxu county's history of production, which stretches back millennia, listed by provincial government among characteristic industries

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The production of matured vinegar, a popular seasoning in China, is the pride of residents in the central Shanxi county of Qingxu. This is because of its long history, high quality and the fact that it boosts the local economy, generating revenue and jobs.

Many experts believe China's vinegar industry originated in Qingxu county, with a history of about 2,500 years. Qingxu is now a part of Taiyuan, Shanxi province's capital city.

Qingxu is renowned for its matured vinegar. The centuries-old techniques for vinegar making, which involve steaming, fermenting, smoking and maturing, were included on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2006.

In December 2020, Qingxu was recognized as "the capital of vinegar in China" by the China National Light Industry Council and the National Food Management Center of China Light Industry.

The county's most recent claim to fame was its inclusion in the first list of 10 provincial-level towns for characteristic industries by the Shanxi provincial government in September 2022.

Developing towns, counties and districts with characteristic industries is a new strategy in Shanxi, which aims to create new economic engines for local growth.

Li Fugui, mayor of Qingxu, said that the listing of the county as a provincial-level characteristic town is a historic opportunity for the local vinegar industry's development.

He noted that Qingxu should use this opportunity to improve the

market recognition of locally made matured vinegar products, extend the industry chain and expand operational scale.

When it comes to extending the industry chain, Li said Qingxu is giving equal priority to the development of upstream sectors like sorghum farming, upgrading the production sector and fostering vinegar-related emerging sectors in the downstream.

Sorghum is the major ingredient for vinegar production in Qingxu. To ensure a stable and high-quality supply, Qingxu plans to develop 100 sorghum-farming bases this year, each with an area of more than 30 hectares, according to Li.

In the downstream sectors, Qingxu will see the launch of 27 projects this year, with investment totaling 3.75 billion yuan (\$544.88 million), in such industries as bottling and packaging materials, trade, logistics and exhibition.

The vinegar-trading sector will be given a boost with the use of e-commerce and other digital tools, according to Li.

Meijin Vinegar Industry, one of the top three producers in Qingxu, is a pioneer in trade digitalization.

It now operates an e-commerce sales unit called "Rural Qingxu e-Town" and uses livestreaming shows to promote and sell products.

"Qingxu boasts a great number of vinegar producers. However, less than 10 of them have e-commerce operational units," said Wang Tao, head of the county's bureau of industry and information technology. "And now many more producers are planning for e-commerce operations, encouraged by the success of



Rural Qingxu e-Town," he said.

Vinegar-related tourism is another emerging sector in the industry chain. The industry is being boosted by visitors to Qingxu who expect to have more immersive and interactive experiences during their trips. They want to learn more about local industrial history and watch how vinegar is produced using time-honored techniques.

Among the many vinegar-producing enterprises throughout the county, Baoyuan Matured Vinegar Factory — a part of Shuita Vinegar, which is also among the local top three producers — is one of the oldest. Locals say the company is the perfect place for people who want to develop a deep understanding of the industry's history in Shanxi.

Baoyuan has been a top-quality vinegar producer since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and its products were supplied to the royal kitchens of the Ming and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

Nowadays, the old factory site is a museum that shows the history of vinegar production in Qingxu. It exhibits old vinegar-making equipment and documents that recorded the ancient production techniques. There are also workers using ancient techniques to make vinegar products, allowing visitors to taste and buy produce made on-site.

Parent company Shuita's executives said that the Baoyuan museum, now a major tourist destination in Qingxu, received 400,000 tourist visits in 2022, garnering a ticket revenue of 20 million yuan (\$2.9 million).

Based on the museum, Shuita is

planning to invest 816.6 million yuan in developing a large tourism project called the China Vinegar Expo Garden, to cash in on its centuries-old industry.

In the manufacturing sector, a number of companies are launching projects to expand capacity or upgrade operations.

Zilin Vinegar, one of the local top three producers, recently broke ground for a second-phase production facility.

"The facility, mainly a production plant with an annual capacity of producing 100,000 metric tons of vinegar, is expected to be operational at the end of this year," said Liang Weiwei, an executive in charge of the project's construction.

To host more investment projects across the entire industry chain, Qingxu is now accelerating the construction of a vinegar industrial park in the township of Mengfeng. More than 20 enterprises have settled in this park with a planned area of 17.7 square kilometers, according to local officials.

While extending and strengthening the industry chain, local authorities are encouraging businesses to enhance their innovation capabilities by cooperating with the country's renowned research institutions and universities.

Zilin Vinegar, for instance, launched China's first provincial-level laboratory for the vinegar industry in September 2022 in collaboration with Jiangnan University, Tianjin University of Science and Technology, Shanxi Agricultural University, Shanxi University and the Biology Institute of Shanxi.

In another development, the construction of a national-level vinegar testing center began in Qingxu in March. Its trial operation is expected to begin at the end of the year.

Fan Minfei contributed to this story.

Shanxi capitalizing on promotional opportunities at Hainan trade show

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The North China province of Shanxi viewed the recent China International Consumer Products Expo as an ideal platform to promote its products to the domestic and international markets.

The expo, held from April 10-15 in Haikou, the capital city of South China's Hainan province, attracted more than 320,000 visitors from home and abroad.

More than 3,300 consumer products from 65 countries and regions were displayed at the event.

The Shanxi delegation to the expo included 28 suppliers and 79 purchasing companies.

During the event, the delegation held a series of activities including exhibitions, on-site negotiations, investment promotions and match-making events.

The 28 suppliers from Shanxi exhibited their products in four categories — beverage, food, handicraft and smart manufacturing.

In the food section, for instance, Shanxi's time-honored food company Liuweizhai displayed its meat products.

"We are here to track the latest



Shanxi's exhibits attract visitors during the China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou. SUN RONGXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

market demands and new trends of consumption while also exploring new channels and opportunities for trade," said Jia Chongyang, a company executive. "The expo has offered us a chance to communicate with clients face to face, allowing us to seek more collaborations in the future."

The offerings of Lu'anfu Silk Group, another supplier from Shanxi, included silk-linen mats and blankets. The products are tai-

lored for the Hainan market as the materials used for the products can help relieve users from the heat in this tropical province.

Products from Shanxi's characteristic towns — places with industries with distinctive local features — were also on display at the event. They included ceramics from Huaiyuan, hand-polished lacquer ware and beef from Pingyao, glassware from Qixian, medical herbs from Pingshun and yellow wine from Daixian.

The delegation held an investment promotion meeting on April 14 to introduce the favorable investment policies, investment destinations and tourist attractions in various areas across Shanxi. Representatives of more than 80 enterprises from provinces and municipalities including Beijing, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Hainan and Fujian attended the meeting.

Yang Chunquan, head of the Shanxi Investment Promotion Bureau, delivered a speech at the meeting, saying that Shanxi is experiencing a historic economic transformation, which means ample opportunities for investors.

"We hope our friends here can visit Shanxi someday to identify investment opportunities and cooperative partners," he said.

The official said that he expected more collaborations between Shanxi and the expo host province of Hainan.

"We are complementary in many fields, especially the tourism industry," Yang said. "Hainan is warm in winter and Shanxi is cool in summer, which means we can be tourist destinations for each other during these particular seasons."

Shanxi officials also said their province wants to make use of Hainan's status as a free trade port to facilitate its export and import of consumer goods.

Yan Jie contributed to this story.

Officials on overseas tour to kick-start visits

By YUAN SHENGGAO

After restrictions on tourism were lifted following China's optimized measures for pandemic prevention and control in late 2022, Shanxi's tourism officials find their schedules are tighter than ever.

After intensive visits across the country in the earlier months of this year, they began overseas promotional trips this month.

The officials held a tourism promotional fair in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on April 14.

Wang Aiqin, head of the Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism, introduced Shanxi's major cultural and natural attractions to Malaysian guests. She said that Shanxi, with a history of more than 5,000 years, is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization.

"Shanxi is one of the provinces in China with the largest number of historical and cultural relics," Wang said. "And it is an exemplary province for the preservation of traditions, with many forms of ancient arts and crafts still alive today."

With such characteristics, Wang said Shanxi is a perfect place for tourists to study Chinese history and culture. She said Shanxi boasts a number of natural attractions, like those along the Yellow River and in the Taihang Mountains.

"And a unique feature of Shanxi's tourist resources is that they are a combination of natural wonders

and cultural connotations, like the Yellow River and the Great Wall," the official added.

Before the event in Malaysia, Shanxi held a tourism promotional event in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 10.

As Thailand is a country with many Buddhists, the event highlighted Shanxi's Buddhist culture.

Wen Xuebing, chief representative of the Thailand office of Shanxi Cordial International Tourism, hosted the event.

He introduced many Buddhist cultural destinations in Shanxi. For example, Wutai Mountain, which is one of the top four Buddhist holy mountains in China and Yungang Grottoes, one of the top three Buddhist cave arts hubs in the country.

The Shanxi officials' tours of Southeast Asia began with a tourism promotional meeting in Singapore on April 8. It was one week after China announced the resumption of overseas exchange visits by Chinese delegations of culture and tourism officials.

During the event, Shanxi's officials held talks with their Singaporean counterparts. A Singaporean tourism company agreed to send tourists to Shanxi on June 1. They are to be the first Singaporean tourist group to Shanxi after a halt of more than 1,000 days.

Zhao Lina contributed to this story.



A Shanxi official introduces the province's tourist attractions in Bangkok on April 10. ZHAO LINA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Wellness trips growing into a promising sector

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi is using its advantages such as pleasant climate, convenient transportation options, enjoyable food offerings and rich cultural and natural resources to boost the development of its wellness tourism industry.

Wellness tourism is an emerging sector in the wider picture of traveling. It features travels associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being. Wellness tourism trips include a variety of activities such as thermal springs, spas, exercise, recreation, relaxation and recuperation.

In Jinyuan, a district in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, for instance, there is a facility dedicated to wellness tours for seniors.

Taiyuan resident Liu Chengzhong, 70, enjoys spending several days a month in this facility, called Yuanyuan Senior's Resort.

The resort is next door to such attractions as the Tianlongshan National Forest Park and Jinci Park.

"I enjoy bathing in the sunlight in the gardens of the resort, walking in the neighboring forests with a high oxygen content and watching flowers in Jinci Park," Liu said.

"Jinyuan district is one of the best in Taiyuan in terms of vegetation coverage and it has rivers and lakes, as well as more than 200 sites of unmovable cultural heritage," said Liu Shufei, a district official. "It has many suitable conditions for developing the wellness industry."



A wellness resort in Taiyuan's Yingze district. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY