

Some fairly interesting Japanese wine is made from Koshu, a pinkskinned, predominantly *vinifera* grape, believed to have come to Japan from Europe many centuries ago, via the Silk Road. Koshu usually produces a clean, dry, light-bodied wine with a delicate citrus character that pairs very well with sushi and sashimi. Good Koshu producers include Grace, Château Mercian, Katsunuma Winery (good sparkling Koshu), Marufuji Rubaiyat and Asagiri Wine Company. Also worth trying are red and white wines from Suntory in Yamanashi, Yamazaki Winery in Hokkaido, and some of the upper level Château Mercian wines – their Private Reserve Chardonnay is surprisingly good.

LEBANON Lebanese wine has always been centralized in the Bekaa Valley, but new vineyard areas have been planted, particularly in Batroun and Mount Lebanon in the west and Jezzine in the south. Lebanon's speciality is spicy red wine blends, but whites are improving. Chateau Musar and Kefraya's Comte de M are still the most sought-after wines, but investment is paying off in Ixsir and Château Marsyas (with the same owners as Domaine de Bargylus in Syria) and other wineries such as Massaya, Clos St. Thomas, Dom. des Tourelles and Château Ka are also improving in quality. A number of new small wineries making characterful wines include Ch. Belle-Vue, Karam and Dom. de Baal.

LUXEMBOURG With one of the world's highest levels of wine consumption per capita, very little wine is exported. Co-operatives dominate here and quality is about what you would expect. Plantings of Elbling and Rivaner (Müller-

Thurgau) are in decline, and are being replaced with quality varieties such as Riesling, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer. *Crémant* (sparkling) wines continue to increase in quality and popularity.

MALTA The first impression of Malta is of an arid rocky island squeezed full of people and with barely enough soil to grow basic food crops. And it *never* seems to rain. Well, it does rain, and its limestone rock is able to absorb and hold a significant amount of water in reserve. Even so, water is scarce, but the vine doesn't need much – often the morning and evening dews from the sea breezes is enough to keep it going. Most wines used to be made from imported Italian grapes, and they weren't bad. But, especially on the small island of Gozo, vineyards are being developed and attractive wines are now available from 100% Maltese grapes. They're good, but you can taste the sun.

MEXICO In the far north-west of Mexico, in Baja California, some good reds are made by L A CETTO as well as by smaller companies such as Monte Xanic and Casa de Piedra. In the rest of the country, only high-altitude areas such as the Parras Valley and Zacatecas have the potential for quality wines. Casa Madero, in the Parras Valley, has some success with Cabernet Sauvignon. Other promising grape varieties include Nebbiolo, Petite Sirah, Tempranillo, Zinfandel and Barbera, with Viognier and Chardonnay also planted.

MOLDOVA Standards of winemaking and equipment leave much to be desired, but fruit quality is good, and international players, including PENFOLDS and winemakers Jacques Lurton, Hugh Ryman and Alain Thiénot, have worked