



The opening ceremony of the China (Guizhou) International Alcoholic Beverage Expo on Sept 9.

PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

# Alcohol expo bigger than ever

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China's finest liquors and beers were joined by some of the best alcoholic beverages the world has to offer at the second China (Guizhou) International Alcoholic Beverage Expo, which kicked off yesterday in Guiyang, capital of southwest China's Guizhou province.

A total of 20,000 exhibitors and traders are expected to attend over the course of the five-day event, which runs from Sept 9 to 13.

At a press conference on Sept 8, organizers announced that a total of more than 1,300 exhibitors have applied to participate, including more than 660 from overseas and nearly 700 from China. There are three times as many foreign exhibitors as last year. And some 6,100 merchants will also attend.

This year's event by far eclipses the one last year, when more than 800 Chinese and foreign companies attended the expo along with nearly 10,000 business people.

Guizhou citizens can go to banks to get free tickets to the expo, which is being held at the Guiyang International Conference and Exhibi-

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ZHAO KEZHI  
PARTY CHIEF AND GOVERNOR OF  
GUIZHOU



tion Center.

Two hundred contracts, with a combined value of 168.5 billion yuan (\$26.56 billion), were signed at the opening ceremony. Moreover, a total of more than 1,900 investment projects totaling 247.6 billion yuan will be promoted during the expo. Both figures exceeded last year's numbers.

Zhao Kezhi, Party chief and governor of Guizhou, says the local government is working to make the expo a grand international gathering for the industry. He said Guizhou will improve the expo

year by year to develop it as a window to the outside world as well as a platform to attract business and investment.

Exhibitors and traders include business people from 43 countries and regions, including France, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the Hong Kong special administrative region.

Zhao said organizing the expo helps to raise the reputation and influence of Guizhou. It also stimulates faster and better economic development.

Shen Yiqin, vice-governor of the province, said at a press conference on Sept 8 that the theme of this year's expo is to "display great brews from around the world and promote exchange and cooperation."

Shen said local governments will work with renowned Chinese and foreign liquor and wine companies to build the expo into an internationally famous event.

Guizhou is known for producing China's famed Moutai *baijiu*, a type of clear Chinese liquor. But the expo also showcases other renowned liquors from around the country as well as wine, beer, whiskey and other alcoholic beverages from all over the world.

Famous brands of *baijiu* from other parts of the country — Wuliangye, Fenjiu, Xifengjiu, Dongjiu and Yanghe — will be exhibited in No 1 hall along with Guizhou's Moutai.

The exhibition area for this year's event has grown to 80,000 square meters, 50 percent more than last year. All countries and regions that rank among the top 10 in terms of alcoholic beverage trade with China are participating, organizers said.

The entire industrial chain is represented at the expo, includ-

ing raw materials and finished products as well as packaging and related products.

Some Guizhou liquor companies promoted their products by employing people dressed in the traditional clothing of their respective ethnic groups. Guizhou has 48 ethnic groups, and many famous liquors were developed by these indigenous cultures.

A special section has been set aside for foreign wines, including some from France, Australia and New Zealand. Some brands represented at the expo are chateaus Lafite, Latour, Mouton and Margaux.

Renhuai, home to Moutai and an array of other brands of so-called sauce fragrance *baijiu*, held a press conference on Sept 8 to introduce its development and investment cooperation plan. Renhuai produces 80 percent of the province's sauce fragrance *baijiu* and accounts for 85 percent of production value.

Yunqing, vice-chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress NPC, announced the opening of the expo. Bai Licheng, vice-chairman of the Chinese people's Political Consultative Conference, also attended the opening ceremony.

## Expo visitors get taste of local ethnic culture

By XIE FANG and  
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As visitors to the second China (Guizhou) International Alcoholic Beverage Expo sample the province's many varieties of liquor, they will also be getting a taste of the diverse ethnic cultures that produce them.

The province's ethnic groups have played an important role in the development of the province's alcohol industry, said Wang Shizuo, a professor at Guizhou University.

Wang's research has shown that the traditional alcohol culture of the Gelao ethnic group has been vital to the emergence of Moutai, the nation's most famous liquor.

The so-called national liquor of China, Moutai is one of three world-famous liquors, along with Scotch whisky and French cognac. Named after the town of Maotai, the town of where it originated, the alcoholic product is known worldwide for its characteristic pure and transparent color as well as its strong, mellow fragrance, smooth taste, and cool and refreshing flavor.

Wang's research discovered that the ancestors of today's Gelao people started living in communities in the Maotai region thousands of years ago. At that time, the geography in the region was extremely suitable for alcohol production, and so it spawned a strong alcohol-producing culture.

"Maotai's unique setting and climate account for the sauce-like fragrance of the liquor," Wang explained. "The town is surrounded by three mountains. This natural 'cage' produces the proper humidity and temperature that make it an ideal venue for liquor production."

"Sauce-fragrance liquor is gener-

ally produced from rough alcohol made with high-quality wheat, locally produced high-quality sorghum and water from the Chishui River that runs through the town. The traditional method involves at least eight cycles of fermentation and nine rounds of high-temperature distillation under strict conditions. After the processes, the liquor batches are stored at least five years in jars before they are put on the market."

Wang said he believes that the techniques for making Moutai were passed down from the ancestors of the Gelao people and improved generation after generation.

Yuan Renguo, chairman of the Kweichow Moutai Group, supports the professor's findings.

"According to historical records, in 135 BC an envoy named Tang Meng drank sauce-flavored liquor produced in Guguo (today's Moutai Town) and brought some to Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (156-87 BC). The emperor spoke highly of the liquor, and it was regarded as Guizhou's tribute to the royal family."

The alcohol has grown in popularity since then and was introduced to the Western world when Mao Zedong served Moutai at state dinners during Richard Nixon's state visit to China in 1972. His Secretary of State Henry Kissinger remarked to Deng Xiaoping that "if we drink enough Moutai, we can solve anything."

Other renowned Guizhou alcohols also have their own cultural stories. Both Guizhou Xiongzheng alcohol and Guizhou Longcheng alcohol trace their roots back to the ancient Bouyei ethnic group, according to the producers of those types of liquors.

The Bouyei people, who live in a natural and beautiful environment,



Visitors line up to try wine at the booth of Australia's Ausino Rose Valley Estate at the Guizhou Alcoholic Beverage Expo.

are fond of drinking homemade rice wine and corn wine.

"They have a custom to share guests among village members. When one family has guests coming, the whole village will regard them as their own guests. They are invited to all the households in the village to drink alcohol," said Zhang Zaibin, chairman of the Guizhou Xiongzheng Alcohol Factory.

Another famous brand, Guizhouchun alcohol, was originally produced in Xingyi, another place mainly occupied by the Bouyei people. The alcohol has gained fame around the world thanks to its clear appearance, rich grain and classic taste.

Despite its success, the Bouyei people have not stopped innovating new alcoholic beverages. To meet the demand for alcohol with a softer taste, they recently produced and developed a newcomer named Qixiang.

Qingjiu alcohol is another of the province's liquor brands, and it originated in Guizhou's southeast, where the Miao ethnic



People of the Dong and Miao ethnic groups promote diverse ethnic cultures at a booth displaying Qingjiu alcohol.

group live. The Miao people have more than 100 festivals, the most famous being the Lusheng Festival, Guancang Festival and Sisters' Meal Festival.

Qingjiu alcohol is indispensable at all of the festivals. The low-alcohol sticky-rice wine, generally stored for generations, is often used to treat guests and reflects the Miao people's honesty and warmth.

As Wang said, Guizhou's alcohol industry, led by the increasingly popular Moutai, is gradually taking shape thanks to the province's unique mix of splendid ethnic culture and innovative spirits.

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## Exchange promotes liquor as investment

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The Guizhou Liquor Exchange, a new platform for trading liquor, formally opened on Sept 6 in Guiyang, signifying the further development of the province's alcoholic products as luxury commodities for investment.

The opening of the exchange was one of a series of events for the second China (Guizhou) International Alcoholic Beverage Expo.

The establishment of the platform, the first in Guizhou and the second in the country, means finished liquor and base liquor can be traded through financing like stock shares and funds.

There are at least 10 liquor-trading platforms in China, which were mostly set up in 2011. In September 2011, China's first liquor exchange for *baijiu*, a type of clear Chinese liquor, was founded in Sichuan.

While the exchange in Sichuan mostly deals with a variety of *baijiu* characterized by its strong fragrance, the Guizhou Liquor Exchange deals with so-called sauce fragrance *baijiu*, said Chen Lei, chairman of the Guizhou Liquor Exchange.

"Despite the fact that Guizhou's liquor is widely known, we don't have such a big share of the country's overall market," Chen said.

In 2010, the sales volume of Moutai, the province's most well-known brand, reached 14 billion yuan (\$220.68 million), accounting for about 80 percent of the liquor sales value of Guizhou province. However the industry needs more than just Moutai, Chen said.

"We are lucky to have Moutai, the clear Chinese spirit that is also the national liquor of China, but other brands also need to seize the opportunity and expand their business in order to boost the whole industry," Chen said.

Effective marketing is considered vital to the business, which is why the liquor-exchange platform was established. What sets it apart from other platforms in Beijing and Shanghai is that the Guizhou exchange is the first to implement financing and electronic commerce, Chen said.

"The particularity of *baijiu* makes it valuable for collecting and storage just like some fine wines, the quality of which improves with age," said Han Xuesong, deputy general manager of the Guizhou liquor exchange.

"People are willing to put their money into quality liquor as an investment, but they need a platform to monitor price changes just like that of futures trading."

Han said bringing financing into liquor trading allows buyers to track the market of listed companies and know when to buy in or sell out. In addition, the exchange offers a business-to-customer electronic commerce platform, which will make it convenient for dealers to track their investment.

"We are also the first liquor exchange in China that has extensive cooperation with financial institutions, such as banks, trusts and securities," Han said.

"Various types of liquor-related financial products will be jointly developed and brought to our investors."

Guizhou's Vice-Governor Meng Qiliang said the liquor exchange brings innovative financing to the liquor industry, creating a bridge to connect investors with the province's alcoholic beverage industry. The surge of external investment will help boost the development of the industry.

"Accelerating the development of the liquor industry has been a major task for the government of Guizhou," Meng said.

"The liquor exchange is an ideal way to expand our influence and attract attention from the outside world."

Chen said several foreign wine companies have already shown great interest in the liquor exchange and are willing to cooperate with local distilleries.

"A lot of them are from Spain or France, both of which are countries famous in the wine industry. The synergy between wine and *baijiu* will generate a magical chemistry," Chen said.

"It will grant local companies a great opportunity to foray into overseas markets and make the industry much more globalized." After a few months of pilot operations, the liquor exchange completed its first deal in August. More than 1,600 buyers succeeded in buying 62,500 jars of liquor worth 50 million yuan.

"The liquor exchange will form a luxury consumer market for Guizhou liquor and a financial market for investment in the province's liquor industry. Our goal is for the transaction volume of the exchange to reach 100 billion yuan by the end of 2020," Meng said.