

Legend of the Grand Cellar

The Changyu Grand Wine Cellar began construction in the 20th year of the Guangxu reign of the Qing Dynasty (1894) and underwent two collapses and three reconstructions before being completed. When the large wine cellar was first built, due to the lack of mechanical excavation equipment and the sandy soil, the cellar collapsed shortly after construction due to water seepage. The then General Manager Zhang Chengqing and Ba Bao decided to rebuild using foreign methods, with iron beams arched and steel brick walls built, which seemed relatively sturdy. In the spring of 1896, the large wine cellar was built and could store more than 30000 boxes of wine. In that year, Zhang Bishi and Zhang Chengqing purchased processed oak boards from Austria and Italy through Babao, and hired European craftsmen to make them, with steel hoops embedded, into oak barrels for wine storage. However, only 5 years later (1901), the large wine cellar partially collapsed due to technical issues. Subsequently, due to the wet underground, the steel parts were severely rusted, and the rainstorm continued to fall, the large wine cellar was washed away by the flood, and finally lost its protection. After several failures, Zhang Chengqing and Ba Bao gathered the workers to come up with ideas and brainstorm. They agreed to use a stone arched structure at the top of the wine cellar, with the walls made of stones and lime, and the water used to mix the lime was boiled from glutinous rice, combining soil and foreign elements. The walls were then filled with random stones to make the cellar exceptionally sturdy. The wine cellar is also designed with a clever drainage system, which discharges seepage through hidden ditches to ensure that the wine cellar is not leaking or damp. In 1905, the newly completed large wine cellar penetrated 7 meters underground, 1 meter below sea level, covering an area of 1976 square meters. Eight arches crisscrossed the cellar, and the temperature remained constant throughout the year with moderate humidity, providing ideal conditions for wine aging. The intelligent architectural structure of the Changyu underground wine cellar is praised by the Chinese and foreign architectural circles as a "wonder in the history of Chinese architecture".

Stepping down the spiral stone steps of the Changyu wine cellar, it feels as if one is stepping into a medieval European story. In addition to the aroma of wine, there is also a distant and nostalgic atmosphere in the ancient and deep arched cave. It is said that when it is quiet at night and you are at the end of a certain corridor, you often hear intermittent echoes. Some people say that this is the noisy noise made on the construction site during the wine cellar construction, and even more careful people can vaguely distinguish Zhang Chengqing's intermittent Guangdong accent.

In March 2013, the State Council approved and announced the seventh batch of national key cultural relics protection units (a total of 1943) and projects merged with existing national key cultural relics protection units (a total of 47). The underground wine cellar at the original site of Changyu was listed. The underground wine cellar at the original site of Changyu belongs to the category of important historical sites and representative buildings in modern times, with the number 7-1782-5-175. This means that the oldest wine cellar in Asia has been fully protected and improved, with greater recognition and reputation.