

Grape Commander

Speaking of Xishawang, the older generation knows that it used to be the outskirts of Yantai, with yellow sand everywhere. After its opening, Yantai became one of the largest ports in northern China, with some foreign businesses and Chinese capitalists gathering in Yantai. In 1917, the Yantai Branch of China Merchants Shipping Company established the "Zhipu Orchard" with the then Fushan County. Apple seedlings were introduced from the United States and successfully planted, marking the beginning of the grafting history of Western and local apples. Afterwards, more than 30 well-known enterprises such as Mobil Bank, Deshun Xingzhong Factory, Liquan Company, and Futai Commercial Bank purchased sandy land in Xishawang.

According to Feng Yibiao, an agronomist, in the 1960s, Chang Yu's base in Xishawang covered an area of 1006 acres, including 860 acres of vineyards. The reason for choosing Xishawang at that time was because there were many sandy areas, low humidity, and few pests and diseases. About 400 grape trees were planted per acre at that time. The workers in the vineyard were all recruited from various counties during the steel refining period, totaling more than 40 people. When tying grape branches, they also needed to seek help from surrounding rural areas and schools, with a maximum of over 2000 people. At that time, Xishawang planted all 124 grape varieties introduced from abroad by Changyu in the early stages. There was also a dedicated variety garden in the park, covering about 8 acres, with 23 grape varieties, each with 5 to 6 grape trees.

At the end of August 1979, Marshal Ye Jianying visited Changyu Vineyard. Ye Shuai is the second party and state leader to visit the vineyard. When he visited, it was the season when the grapes were ripe, and the vineyard was a lush scene. On the small path in the vineyard, Ye Shuai walked and occasionally looked at the surrounding scenery, saying, "If we had to talk about it, I really have a connection with Chang Yu." Everyone was puzzled, and Ye Shuai explained, "I and Zhang Bishi, the founder of Chang Yu, are both Hakka people from Meizhou and can be considered fellow villagers!" The horticultural staff and accompanying staff applauded happily after listening.

During the visit, horticulturist Feng Yibiao introduced to Ye Shuai the various grape varieties of jade like jade and purple red like agate, which he had prepared in advance. When he introduced Riesling, he said, "Ye Shuai, look, this is Riesling grape.". After hearing this, Ye Shuai found it very interesting and said, "Do grapes also have commanders?" The horticulturists present answered in unison, "Not only have commanders, but there are also generals.". As he spoke, he pointed to a grape tree and said, "Ye Shuai, please take a look. This is General Li's grape."

After seeing the vineyard, everyone gathered under the longan grape trellis like an umbrella to cool off. According to Feng Yibiao, an agronomist, this grape tree is about ten years old and has an annual yield of 1500 pounds. While enjoying the cool breeze, Ye Shuai occasionally conversed with the staff and asked some technical questions. Everyone was talking, smiling, and the park was filled with cheerful laughter. So much so that I even forgot about preparing ink, paper, and inkstones in advance for Ye Shuai to write.