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REFINED BY TIME

At the Wenjun Distillery in Qionglai, China, humble elements such as rice, wheat, and corn are transformed by toil, talent and time into one of the world's most distinctive premium spirits. Photo essay by **David Hartung**.

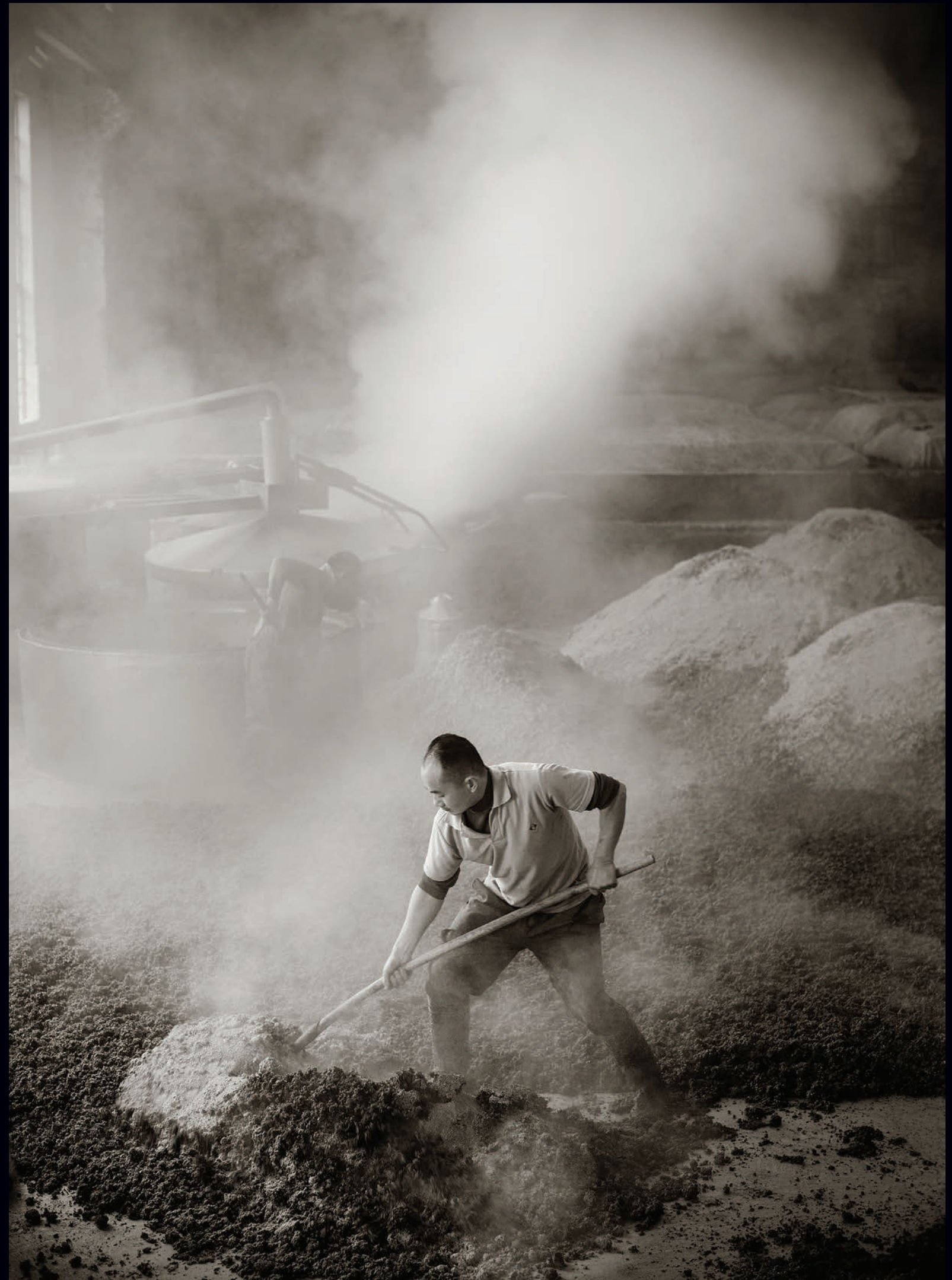
THE CHINESE HAVE BEEN MAKING BAIJIU for more than five thousand years. Wenjun has been popular for two millennia, ever since Zhuo Wenjun made the first sweet and mellow batch with water from her well. Today's spirit makers draw on their craft's ancient traditions as well as modern techniques developed during more recent times. They work with a sophistication belied by their surroundings, and with the knowledge that the years will reveal the quality of their work.

中国酿造白酒已有五千年的历史，自从卓文君用自家井里打上来的井水，酿出第一批甜美芬醇的酒以来，以她为名的文君酒便流传开来，至今已有两千年。现代的酿酒厂则运用古法酿造工艺，结合近期发展出的现代技术，在朴实的工作环境中，以精密复杂的程序酿酒；他们明白如此制出的精酿，会随时光显露真正的价值。



The creation of Wenjun starts with five Sichuan grains: sorghum, rice, wheat, corn and glutinous rice. Placed in covered pits, the grains are left to quietly ferment, aided by starter cakes that are handmade with grain, mold and bacteria following a method dating back four centuries to the Ming dynasty. After ninety days, some fermented grains are moved into stainless steel distillers. A portion ferments for another ninety days, to be distilled later into a smoother, richer baijiu. These Essential Spirits are used years or decades later during the blending process.

文君酒庄至今仍沿用「寇氏烧坊」的蒸馏入窖法和「曾氏曲房」的全手工制曲法等古法原酿。酿造文君酒，首先采用四川的高粱、大米、小麦、玉米和糯米等五谷，置入窖池，让谷类在窖池中静静发酵。九十天后，将酒醅移置不锈钢蒸馏器中蒸馏。部分酒醅会继续再发酵九十天，以蒸馏出更顺口醇厚的白酒。这些调味酒将在数年或数十年后用来调配新酒。





The remaining ingredients are removed from the distillers, cooled and mixed together with a fresh batch of grains and distiller's yeast before returning to start the fermentation cycle anew. Only twenty percent of the finest grade distilled spirits are selected to become Wanjun. 未蒸馏的原料从蒸馏器取出冷却后，和一批新的五谷及酒麴混合，再重新发酵。蒸馏出的酒中，只有最顶级的20%会留下调配为文君酒。

