

The Wine Life

(PART I)

The daily management and handling of wines in a competitive environment is not exactly everyone's cup of tea. LIM HWEE PENG, CSW features six of these professionals and provides a glimpse into their 'wine life' in the first of a two-part feature.

By Lim Hwee Peng

LIM HWEE PENG, CSW is an experienced wine educator, certified by CIVB (Bordeaux Wine Marketing Board) as an International Bordeaux Wine Educator; a Certified Specialist in Wines (CSW) from Society of Wine Educators, USA; certified Educators from Napa Valley Vintners Association, and recently gained a Diploma in Burgundy wines from BIVB (Burgundy wine marketing board). Lim's passion for wine has also been rewarded with two World Gourmet Summit Regional 'Wine Article of the Year' awards. Some of his current pre-occupations include being the facilitator for Singapore Airline (SIA) Sommelier group; Wine facilitator for SOPEXA, AUSTRALIA and California Wine Institute. He can be reached at hweepeng@winecraftmktg.com



Mr. Derrick Lim, Chief Sommelier, St. Regis Hotel, Singapore

How and why did you become a Sommelier?

Being a good sommelier is like being a good orchestra conductor, it's all about showmanship and the art of interpretation. I also enjoy exploring the harmony between different flavours of wines and food. The satisfaction that I gain after every successful matching effort is similar to a conductor completing his task in a concert.

In your professional opinion, what are the current wine trends in the Singapore F&B and wine scene?

Wine enjoyment is no longer a status of luxury living, it has evolved to become the object of lifestyle and investment. Many still look for “Big Châteaux” names, but at the same time, there are consumers seeking little known but good value wines.

For a visitor to your outlet, what are the wines that they should sample, and why?

Wines for ladies – Château de la Saint-Martin Vin Cuit, Provence, France. It is unique, because this wine has been ‘cooked’ (hence, Vin Cuit) in its production process, resulting in a wide range of flavours with a caramelised nose and a gentle touch of smokiness. Wines for gentlemen – Château Pichon-Lalande 1997, Bordeaux, France; a wine of great value which provides ultimate enjoyment. The ‘97 vintage in Bordeaux is drinking well now. Wines for romance – Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage 2000 Rosé, Champagne, France; this is a seductive champagne with a complex nose and spicy touch.

Briefly share with us the highlights of your outlets’ wine selection.

The focus of our selections changes regularly. Every month in Les Saveurs (All Day Dining French Restaurant) and Decanter (Wine Bar) until December, we are promoting Bordeaux wines. We will be featuring eight wines from each commune in Decanter wine bar, where our guests can enjoy all eight wines at a very attractive price. In Les Saveurs, our executive chef will also create a monthly degustation menu to complement the wine selection. For the month of July, we will be featuring wines from Margaux including Château Palmer 1986, Château Rauzan-Ségla 2002 and Chevalier de Lascombes 2003.

What was the most interesting request by a customer?

I was once asked to chill down a bottle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape rouge, which the guest insisted on, for it to be matched with a cod fish dish.

Ms. Elodie Jaglin, Sommelier, Au Petit Saut

How and why did you become a Sommelier?

I became a Sommelier by chance. I have a diploma in Oenologie in Toulouse, then made some wines in Loire Valley before coming to Singapore. When Chef Patrick Heuberger sought my assistance in creating a wine list for his restaurant, I ‘accidentally’ became a Sommelier. Though my background is not in hospitality, it is my passion to share and recommend wines to wine lovers.



In your professional opinion, what are the current wine trends in the Singapore F&B and wine scene?

There is a growing interest for wines in Singapore and consumers are becoming more knowledgeable in wine. They have evolved from an interest for new world wines to seeking out complex and racy wines. As for French wines, I have noticed that the trend is moving from Bordeaux to Burgundy wines.

For a visitor to your outlet, what are the wines that they should sample, and why?

It really depends on what they are looking for. The wine list focuses on French wines (since the cuisine is French). It is also my pleasure to recommend wines made by talented winemakers of a lesser-known origin, for the non-snobbish and educated palates.

Briefly share with us the highlights of your outlets’ wine selection.

For those passionate wine lovers who trust their own palate, we have a selection of boutique wineries from niche regions made from the native grapes, such as Trelans by Alain Chabanon (blend of chenin & vermentino), Seve D Automne from Domaine Cauhape (Gros Manség), or La Brova by Louis Magnin (100 % mondeuse) or Chateau de Fesles, Bonnezeaux (Chenin Blanc).

What was the most interesting request by a customer?

A guest brought a simple Bordeaux Superieur from the supermarket and wanted me to decant it with lots of care like a Grand Cru.



Mr. Maximilien Fedkiw, Chef Sommelier, Le Bistrot du Sommelier

How and why did you become a Sommelier?

Since my teenage years, I was trained in fine dining service at the Hotel Prince de Galles, Paris. During that period, I was once attached to the restaurant Sommelier, and was charmed by the intricacies of his job – the skill needed for decanting, the knowledge required to put forward the right recommendations with regards to the pairing of wine and food and so on. From that moment onwards, I always requested to have training with the Sommelier wherever I went. After graduation and completing my conscription with the French army, I knew I had to be a Sommelier and came under the wing of Frederic Lebel, Chef Sommelier of Les Ambassadeurs, Hotel De Crillon, Paris.

In your professional opinion, what are the current wine trends in the Singapore F&B and wine scene?

French wines are still the top choice but in the last few years, Italian wines have shown improved performance due to the increasing number of Italian restaurants. Champagne has seen a very welcoming market here over the last few years. Of late, Rieslings from France, Germany, Italy and Australia have been very much in demand too.

For a visitor to your outlet, what are the wines that they should sample, and why?

In Le Bistrot Du Sommelier, we have a 400-label wine list (and are still in the process of adding more labels). We try to have wines to meet every request, and if not successful, offer some excellent alternatives. We also like to introduce customers to lesser known wines from outstanding appellations, such as Jura or Corsica. The resurgence of Languedoc Roussillon over the last decade has produced wines such as Domaine Gauby, Clos des Fees, Alain Chabanon and Domaine de L'Elephant, which are all beautiful wines that express the essence of Grenache Syrah and Mourvedre.

Briefly share with us the highlights of your outlets' wine selection.

We have a gorgeous selection of Champagne, featuring extremely rare names such as Bollinger Vieilles Vignes Françaises 1997, Salon 1997 and Jacques Selosses. For the sparkling, there is a fantastically refreshing Cava from Agusti Torello Mata Gran Reserva 2002. Also, Mediterranean wines of France and Italy, and Terre Delle Nere Etna Rosso from Sicily. For Bordeaux wine lovers, we proudly host a Chateau Ausone 1976 and Chateau Mouton Rothschild vertical including the 2000, but not forgetting the boutique chateaux such as Tertre Roteboeuf and Roc de Cambes. From Burgundy, there are wines from Domaine Leflaive, Prieuré Roch, Dominique Laurent and Vincent Girardin, all carefully selected to excite our customers. From the Rhone Valley, we have outstanding wines such as Paul Jaboulet Hermitage La Chapelle, Chateauneuf du Pape from the master winemaker Henri Bonneau, and boutique and high in demand Crozes-Hermitage from Alain Graillot from northern Rhone. From Tuscany and Piemonte, we have Paolo Scavino, Domenico Clerico, Rampolla, and Sassicaia.

What was the most interesting request by a customer?

A guest once requested for a vertical tasting of Domaine de Trevallon, a cult wine from Provence. I responded with vintages 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2003, as well as introducing some Trevallon white wine that was produced in extremely limited quantities. All my recommendations were met with the warmest appreciation.