

HOTEL

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revs up the

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HOTEL ASIA PACIFIC

The industry's new
pecking order



Shangri-La takes
the spa plunge

Chi
THE SPA AT SHANGRI-LA





The value challenge

Fluctuating costs are a constant problem for **Brian Yost**, **Marriott International's** VP of beverage

what significant global wine trends do you see influencing the structure and dynamics of your wine programme for 2004 and beyond? How do you see those trends playing out in Asia Pacific?

"Badge Quality" was once about finding the most expensive wines to consume, but today it's about finding great values. Our guests are looking for quality wines from a variety of growing areas, such as Tempranillo and Viognier.

The *cabernets* from Chile are a very good value, while Australian *shiraz*, California *pinot noir* and New Zealand *sauvignon blanc* are all hot.

Our guests have far greater expectations than ever before, as they know much more about wine. We must constantly work to further educate our service staff.

The international fluctuations of the US dollar, the South African Rand, the Thai Baht, the Yen and other currencies plays a significant role in the viability of numerous of the international wines in the *Gold Standard Programme for Asia Pacific*, so we must constantly monitor the delivered cost of this programme overseas to ensure that our guests are receiving good value.

Do you think in terms of "New World" and "Old World" wines? If so, how important are the new and the old to your customers around the world, and particularly in Asia Pacific?

"New World" and "Old World" are industry labels – I've never heard a guest use them. Our guests speak about appellations, wine-producing countries, points of origin and wine styles.

But I will say that, in terms of countries like China and areas like "Indo-China", the historical "spheres-of-influence" efforts by the former colonial powers have motivated these countries to produce their own wines, even if they do not compare in quality or value to those from the western and southern hemispheres.

Around the world, and in particular with the European countries, the strong nationalistic pride of each wine-producing country expresses itself as their consumers prefer to drink their own countries' wines before sampling imported ones.

What were the most successful food and wine promotions you ran in 2003, and what do you have planned for 2004? Do you run these promotions globally or do they vary by region?

Last year, we ran four global promotions, all successful. We did a spring Mediterranean promotion featuring

the wines of France, Italy and Spain, in which 368 hotels participated. Our summer beverage promotion, with 451 participating hotels, featured speciality drinks and lighter wines.

Our autumn promotion, with 427 hotels participating, was about alternative cuts of beef and hearty red wines, as well as selected white wines.

We finished the year with a winter beverage promotion, featuring vodkas and red wines, and had over 300 hotels participating globally. This year, we are running two restaurant and two beverage promotions.

How do you ensure that your wait staff and bar and restaurant managers are trained worldwide to maximise the success of your wine programme? Do you outsource this important function anywhere?

We train our service staff in several ways, including using *The Marriott Complete Guide to Beverage*, which covers product knowledge, sales and service and current portfolio information. It is taught to all our F&B associates.

In Asia Pacific, particularly, we find it necessary to offer translated versions of menus, including the wine menus. We rely on each hotel to determine the best translation of our stock menus and have them printed locally.

Do you set the standards for wine preservation, or is it the responsibility of each hotel to decide how best to preserve their wines-by-the-glass selections?

We don't set standards for wine preservation, because our hundreds of hotels have such differing needs based on their number of outlets and the number of wines they offer by the glass.

Instead, we recommend three systems for their use: the *Le Verre de Vin*, which is the most sophisticated system available, as well as the most expensive; *Private Reserve*, which combines three gases and is a "middle-of-the-road" approach; and the *Vacuvin*, which consists of a hand pump and rubber stoppers to provide minimum protection for the most basic situations.

Where is the greatest growth for you in Asia Pacific, and what are the most popular wines for your customers in the region?

Our greatest growth is for our 4- and 5-star hotels in China, Indonesia and Malaysia. Our most popular wines are from Australia, California and Washington State. □

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