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For hospitality professionals



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New Looks for Old Hotels

Testing times

Doug Barber, GM of the **Sofitel Jin Jiang Oriental Pudong Shanghai**, is about to launch a wine programme that could be adopted by the brand throughout China

By **Fred Tibbitts**

HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE your hotel, the **Sofitel Jin Jiang Oriental Pudong Shanghai** to the other Sofitels in China in terms of number of rooms, number of restaurants and bars and banquet space?

We are perhaps a little larger, and certainly will be after our new tower is completed. We are now under construction with an additional 400 rooms.

I understand you are in the process of launching a new wines by the glass programme that, if successful, could become a model for other Sofitels in China. What does this programme involve?

We will be offering an expanded variety of wines by the glass from a number of countries at several price points, including flights of two-ounce tastes of our wines – such as Bordeaux blends from around the world to better entertain and educate both our Chinese as well as our Western guests.

What type of wine-preservation system do you intend to employ and why?

We will be using the same system I have worked with very successfully in both Hong Kong and Seoul, the *Dual System Le Verre de Vin*. It keeps all wines – both still and sparkling – fresh for up to 21 days. This means I can offer any bottle of wine by the glass, no matter how expensive, without fearing wine waste. And, of course, it means additional profits as well as customer satisfaction.

Will you be desktop publishing your wine lists or producing something more permanent from an agency?

Our new lists will be colourful, easy to read and understand, and very informative. Each wine will be represented by a digital picture of the front wine label, plus tasting notes and suggested dishes. But we will desktop pub-



lish the prices on an insert that we can change whenever we need to do so.

How are you going to define wine-training excellence for your servers as part of the new programme?

We are going to be having one of the top wine educators in Asia, Tommy Lam, come in from Singapore to write the wine-training and service outline and to train our restaurant managers as well as our wait staff. He is a University of Bordeaux Wine MBA – the only one in Asia, I believe.

How do you feel about wait staff incentives?

I feel you should reward the staff for sales excellence in terms of promoting and selling all the wines in the programme, not just the wines from whichever wine partner is willing to provide the best financial or other incentives, because then it becomes a distributor-driven programme and you are no longer in control.

What are your favourite wines and why?

I was afraid you'd ask me that question! Although it may seem that I'm avoiding it, I really don't have one. There are so many great wines on the market today that it's just a great experience to try new ones to suit the occasion and the palate. □



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