

# LifeStyle

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November 2006

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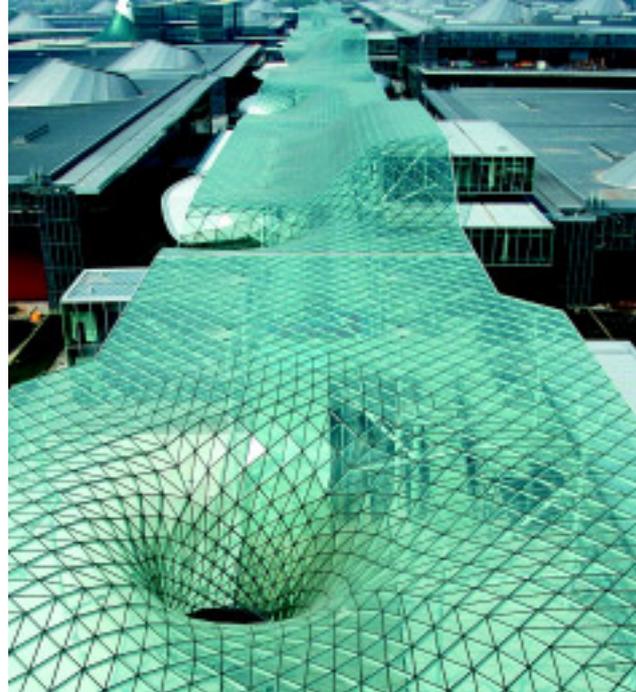
# November

## LifeStyle

### Profile

96 Perfectionism With a French Touch  
Exclusive Interview with General Manager,  
Sofitel Plaza, Xiamen

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### Fine Dining

#### 106 Something Vibrant Under the Sun

The design created by Yamagiwa Junpei (MYU PLANNING & OPERATORS) for SUN with AQUA JAPANESE DINING & BAR, overturns conventional concepts of Japanese restaurants. The venue is a brand new comprehensive dining facility, consisting of the Japanese Dining SUN and the AQUARIUM Bar, both located on the second floor of Bund 6 in Shanghai.

#### 108 Word of Mouth

Vedas was named after the sacred Hindu scriptures, the oldest surviving texts in the world. It offers royal cuisine from every corner of the vast Indian subcontinent, carefully prepared by a team of master chefs from India.

#### 110 Mexican Tastes

Texan Bar & Grill at Holiday Inn Lido Beijing is a unique Texan dining restaurant splendidly decorated in Mexican style, offering the best steaks in town including rib-eye, sirloin, T-bone and tenderloin, plus Tex-Mex favorites.

### Wine

110 Wine Trends in China That Will Matter in 2007



# Wine Trends in China

## That Will Matter in 2007

If you know that wine has now become part of the Chinese culture, you know that the times they are a changing. It's time to re-evaluate your wine program.

The wine trends that will matter in 2007 for hotels, restaurants and bars are all about expanding your wine selection and making every wine available in as many formats as possible. Every wine should be offered by the taste, by the glass and by the bottle.

Across China, new consumers are trying wine to see if they like it: Those who already partake are becoming more adventuresome and trading-up, while the real enthusiasts and the hotels, bars and restaurants they frequent have declared open war on "ho-hum" wine lists.

Given the tremendous increase in wine consumption in China (Estimated at 30% annual growth), why is it okay to carry a wide selection of the most popular domestic and imported beers, including the top microbrews and an endless variety of flavored everything (of course one must have Grape, Blueberry and Pomegranate vodkas), a dozen Single Malt Scotches, every type of American Whiskey...yet when it comes to wine by the glass, very often it's red, white and rose. This approach might have passed muster in the 1960's, but this is 2007, and it's time to become a beer, WINE and spirits destination.

This will be the year that "Flights of Wine" finally take flight in mass. Your customers want to be entertained and there is nothing more entertaining for a wine consumer than to be able to build his own flight of wines for sampling. It's easy to take flight with this amazing trend and here is how to get started:

- Determine which wines are your best sellers
- Source additional great values in wines that will sell for RMB 50 to RMB 100 per glass
- Decide if you want to offer set flights of wines or if you want to let the customer decide
- Produce your wine tasting placemats
- Decide how to transport the wines to the table

- Decide if the wines are to be poured by the bartender or at the table by the server
- Tell the world

### Determine What Sells Best

Determine which wines you presently stock are your best sellers. Involve everyone associated with your wine service with what sells best and why. Now ask yourself if these are the best examples of these types of wines available in your market(s) in terms of brand recognition, quality and value. Have you chosen your wines based on these attributes or for other reasons, such as personal preferences, personal relationships with certain suppliers or lowest pricing or "consignment" relationships? Now, re-evaluate these selections in view of the criteria suggested and consider this your core list.

### Source New Values from Everywhere

Okay, now let's improve that core wine list. You need to become one mean, competitive wine destination. The "New World" wines have been kicking the living you know what out of the "Old World" wines for some time now and folks, this is one trend that is not going to be reversed any time soon; so stock-up on the best wines you can afford from the following countries:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Chile
- New Zealand
- South Africa
- United States (California & Oregon)

At the same time the "Old World" has been working overtime to catch-up, so we can't overlook the best values from:

- France
- Italy
- Spain

Try to select the most popular red and white varietals from each country; the ones for which each

country is best known. So, you would want to source Gran Malbec from Argentina; Pinotage or Cape Blends from South Africa; Shiraz from Australia; Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand and South Africa; Pinot Noir from New Zealand, California, Oregon and France; Bordeaux blends from France as well as just about everywhere (in California Bordeaux blends are referred to as "Meritage"); Pinot Grigio from Italy and caves (some of the best sparkling wine values in the world) from Spain.

Most hotels, bars and restaurants offer their most popular premium values in the RMB 50 to RMB 80 per glass range; however, if you have the clientele and based on your positioning and your competition, go right up to RMB 200 or even higher if you have the courage. On the other hand, if you are not positioned as a luxury product, you may feel more comfortable starting your wines by the glass as low as RMB 45 and topping out at closer to RMB 90; however, if you are offering great quality along with exceptional value, don't be afraid to charge for it.

When I pleasure myself with a hamburger at a hotel, bar or restaurant anywhere in the world, I often spend two to three times as much on my glass of Cabernet Sauvignon as the cost of the hamburger; because for me, that's entertainment and I'm in "moo-shoo wine heaven". I'm not alone, so go for it.

### Who Decides the Wine Flights

The first question that must be answered is who decides the wine flights: The management or the customers or both. There is no simple answer, so let's look at the pros and cons of all approaches.

Some hotels, bars and restaurants simply let their customers create their own customized flights of any three wines on the list, two ounces each (one glass is equal to six ounces, so by serving three, two ounce samples, the bar cannot be accused of over-serving a customer). But if you go this route, it is important to code your wines by price tier, so that the price you establish for each flight is an av-



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FRED TIBBITTS, JR. IS THE EXCLUSIVE COLUMNIST FOR LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE IN FINE WINE SECTION AS WELL AS F&B CELEBRITIES WORLDWIDE.

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erage of the wines in that tier or some formula that protects your profitability. Depending on the size of your wine list, you may have two tiers, three tiers or even four or five tiers.

If you prefer to determine the flights, that's fine: It also provides the customers with very helpful guidance as to what wines go well with what foods on the menu, because you can create flights that are paired with your appetizers, sides, mains, cheeses and even desserts or just for enjoying without food. Offer as many flights as possible, using as many different wines as possible from your list. Flights can be organized by varietal (i.e. Chardonnays, Sauvignon Blancs, Cabernet Sauvignons, Merlots); or by region, type, color or just about any other common denominator under the sun. Remember, "Variety is the spice of life", so let your customers celebrate it every time they set foot in your bar or restaurant with a generous selection of wine flights guaranteed to please. Of course, you can always go both ways: Give your guests the option of creating their own flights or choosing from ones you have designed. Why not?

One of the best ways to entice your customers to try your wine flights is to develop great names for every flight, which can become a real source of pride for the staff to test their creative abilities and be relevant to your concept. Examples of fun names might be "Light My Fire" or "Light My Fire Mama" or "Chicken Chardonnays" or "Tomato Pasta Heaven" or "Zinsational" or "For Pinot Lovers Only" or "The Fine Art of Seduction" or simply "Rich, Full Bodied White Wines"; and don't forget "Bordeaux Blends from Around the World" or "Celebrate the Wonderful World of Bordeaux Blends" or "Everything Bordeaux" or "Cava This!" As your staff comes-up with better and better names, try them on a rotating basis to see which ones are most popular with your customers.

#### Wine Tasting Placemats

A big part of the success of any wine sam-

pling program is the quality and creativity of the wine placemats. It is imperative that both the customers AND the servers know which wine is which and trust me, once the three sample glasses are on the table without a placemat identifying each one, it is only too easy for the server to lose concentration and become confused as to which is which and if the server is confused, you know the guest will be confused.

I suggest you center from left to right across the placemat three circles that exactly fit the base of your wine glasses; then centered below the circles should be the name of the flight, then below center the name of each wine with the appellation and vintage in relation to one of the circles and your logo and hotel, bar or restaurant name in living color centered below each wine.

Then allow a space below the logos and indicate the grape variety, followed by a two or three line wine description and a few blank lines for tasting notes. You must employ a paper wine placemat with every flight, regardless of the delivery vehicle to the table.

#### How to Transport the Wine

Don't forget you need to insure a safe landing on the table, so the transportation logistics from the bar to the table are very important. You need to consider both functionality as well as design, because while you want the wines to arrive as poured and arranged from left to right as they are intended to be tasted, the exquisite elegance or simple elegance of the conveyance is definitely part of the entertainment package, make no mistake. If you are about class and style, invest in something just plain elegant that carries the glasses, but announces to the guests that they are in for a real treat; if you are about no elegance, just what you see is what you get, saw dust on the floor or whatever, then the most basic means of transport is in order, but again, either way, the vehicle must insure that the server knows which wine is which, so he or she may correctly identify each wine for the guest and

place the wines in their proper place on the tasting placemat.

If the wines are being poured at the bar, you are going to have some kind of carrier that holds three glasses: It may look like a piece of fine art or an obscure, plastic utensil from the kitchen; whatever speaks to the positioning of your bar or restaurant is the order of the day.

If the wines are being poured at the table, you need wine baskets or trays with individual bottle compartments that accommodate three bottles as well as wine baskets or trays baskets that accommodate six bottles, because if you are serving a single flight, it's three bottles to the table, whereas if you are serving two different flights, you'll need to transport six bottles. Of course if you have a party of four and each guest orders a different flight, one served can make two trips or two servers can team to make one trip.

#### Tell the World

Okay, so now you have designed and implemented the ultimate wine flights program on the planet: Time to tell the world "Effective immediately, our customers are in moo-shoo, wine heaven"! "Let the tasting games begin!" Get the word out every which way. You've now incorporated one of the hottest trends in wines by the glass and your wine sales and customer wine appreciation are about to go through the roof. Provide a meaningful incentive for every server to embrace the tasting program, so that everyone in the hotel, bar or restaurant, whether they be customers or staff share equally in their excitement over the new possibilities.

It's all about having more fun with food and wine and creating an atmosphere where everyone learns more about different kinds of wine and expands their range of understanding of what they like and what wines they like with what dishes. And that's what's going to be the big thing in 2007. Practice it and profit from it.

Over and out.