



wine

BUSINESS

— *asia* —

Old World Vs New World

The battle comes to Asia

Grape Expectations

What's new in global varietals

Sommeliers of Asia

Chng Poh Tiong gives incite into Asia's first regional
Sommeliers Association

PLUS...

Exclusive interviews:

David Henderson - Montrose China

Bob Campbell - New Zealand

Martin Jones - Starwood

Asia's wine business publication



Q: Do most of the wine importers in Asia Pacific do a good job of sourcing good value in premium wines and are they good partners for your hotels in terms of customer service, staff training and the marketing of wines? Does this vary by country; if so what are the extremes?

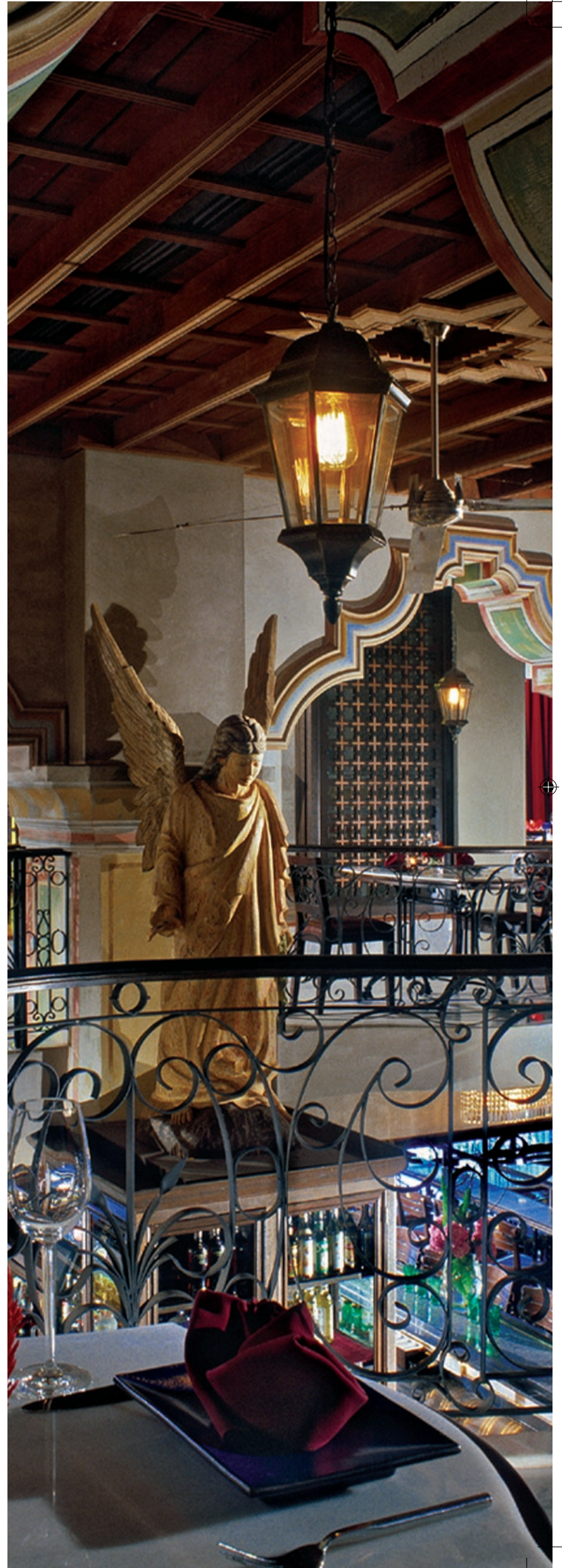
A: This certainly does vary from country to country. In some locations, price really prohibits the purchase of higher end wines, especially when we are serving by the glass. There are selective importers, thank goodness, that do concentrate on good value premium wines, but this is the minority rather than the majority for importers, and consumers. We generally get excellent support from our wine partners. Training, wine dinners, and marketing support is generally excellent. In most cases however, though not exclusively, this is provided by the larger wineries with multiple labels

Q: What do you really look for in a good wine importer? Do you see the professionalism of the typical wine importer in Asia improving? If so, why?

A: Due to cost, our best partners are those who will go out of their way to bring in some premium or unique labels in addition to the bulk they bring in for the majority of their customers. We, like everyone, prefer to have some exclusive labels on our lists, giving us a point of differentiation. I would say the professionalism of wine importers in Asia is excellent. There will always be some who are just out to make a buck, but generally, with the increase in knowledge of wine, not only by hotel associates, but also of our guests the consumers, they are no longer satisfied with an inferior wine at a high price. The consumption of wine and Champagne is becoming a prevalent pastime associated with relaxation and socialising, this should help us see an improvement in the number and quality of labels coming in to each country.

Q: How important is it that wine supply be improved in all your Asia markets for the profitability of the Starwood WOW programme?

A: Our programme is not only profit driven, it is designed to give our guests a choice and allow them to further educate themselves by being able to taste and compare various types of wines. Naturally though, we do want to make money out of it. The last thing we want is to have a list full of cheaper wines because we can't afford to open wines that are too expensive, and at the same time, we don't want to open premium wine and serve by the glass if the price we need to charge is too high. Supply of





(increased labels) to us, at the right price will ensure we can offer variety and value for money

Q: If a winery is interested in being considered for your next mandated Asia Pacific programme that begins in March of 2008, when will you begin the process of evaluating new contenders?

A: We are very happy with our current wine partners, and of course we want to ensure they are happy with the programme too. We will give them the first option to renew with us, and will probably do this mid 2007. At the same time, we have many major wineries that have expressed an interest in partnering with us. The key for us is that our partners must have distribution in every country that we have hotels

Q: What will be the most important wine trends over the next five years for Asia Pacific?

A: We are seeing a lot of emerging interest in Argentina and Spain, our partners Terrazas and Marques de Riscal are providing us with some excellent product. However, some of the most unique things we are seeing is the appearance of 'Asian' wine such as that from China and Indonesia, it will be exciting to see how these wines develop and if they can become truly international in both quality and distribution

Q: What are your favourite wines and why?

A: I'm a self confessed New World Wine drinker, but I can appreciate wine from all regions. The wine I like the most is the wine I get to share with my friends, especially new ones we haven't tried before. Drinking wine is a great way to relax and have some fun – cheers!