

Asia's first Master of Wine
Jeannie Cho Lee shares her insight
on pairing Eastern flavours

亞洲第一品酒專家李志延漫
談東膳西釀的學問

Match made in heaven

What is the biggest myth regarding pairing wine with Asian food?

The biggest myth is that the Gewürztraminer variety is the best pairing for Chinese food. Those unfamiliar with the cuisine find the spices and condiments strong and believe that intense aroma and residual sugar component are balancing. Those who are familiar look for wine that enhances, rather than changes. Additional sweetness is usually unnecessary. You want something dry, supportive and refreshing that counter balances, but doesn't add aroma.

關於亞洲菜配酒的竅門，最常流傳的誤解是什麼？

很多人都認為格烏茲塔明那（Gewürztraminer）類別的酒最適宜配中菜，因為他們誤會中菜都辛辣而且放很多調味料，故此要配香氣濃烈及甜度高的酒來中和。熟悉中菜的話，就懂得選擇能夠提味而不是改變菜餚味道的酒。配搭的酒通常不用太甜，只要乾身、清新並能夠烘托菜式就可以，無需增加額外的味道。

What would you recommend instead?

For Cantonese dim sum, a dry-style Riesling or light-bodied Pinot Noir from New Zealand or Burgundy. They are uplifting, have light acidity and play a supporting role to food, which doesn't alter the balance of seasonings.

那你有什麼更好的推介？

廣東點心最宜配乾身不太甜的雷司令（Riesling）、輕口的紐西蘭黑皮諾（Pinot Noir）或勃艮第產區出品。這幾個選擇都能夠提升味道、微酸口感更襯托食物的原味，而不至於破壞整體的調味。

What is your pairing rule of thumb?

Experiment by opening more than one bottle of wine. We enjoy Asian meals at home with a spectrum of diverse flavours on the table, such as condiments like XO sauce, sweet and sour sauce, vinegar dip and this should be reflected by wine. You can open a few bottles at the same time, there's no need to serve sequentially.

你配酒的黃金規則是什麼？

多作嘗試，我試酒不會只開一瓶。在家享用亞洲菜時，我們的餐桌上通常備有多種不同口味的醬料如XO醬、甜酸醬及酸汁，各有味道相配的酒。所以我鼓勵一餐開幾瓶酒，未必要喝完一瓶才再開。

Which wines should be avoided when pairing with Asian cuisine?

For cuisines with strong spices and a component of chilli like Southern India, Korea, and Sichuan, I'd avoid full-bodied, oaky reds because the tannins accentuate chilli and make it taste bitter.

哪些酒不能配亞洲菜？

香料重、用辣椒做的菜式如南印度菜、韓國菜及四川菜，我就不會配重口、橡木味的紅酒因為當中的單寧會突出辣椒的味道，變成苦味。

Why are Asian wine pairings more complex?

Chicken with black bean sauce goes well with Australian Grenache, for example, but if you add vegetables or onions it becomes a different dish. So I would then suggest a New Zealand pinot noir because it has a more savoury element that echoes the flavour.

亞洲菜配酒的學問為何比較複雜？

舉個例子，豆豉雞與澳洲歌海娜（Grenache）是絕配，但豆豉雞的材料再加上蔬菜或洋葱就變成另一道菜，這時配隱約帶鹹香味的紐西蘭黑皮諾（Pinot Noir）又比較對味了。

Which wine pairing was most memorable?

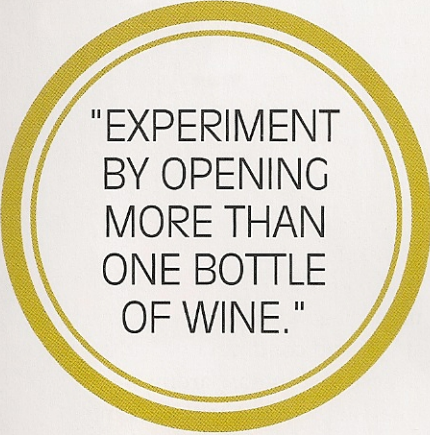
Abalone and Chateau Aubion. I thought it might not work because it's a full-bodied classic Bordeaux, and I'd usually choose a light to medium-bodied red for seafood, but it went well because the braising and sauce gave it a meaty texture and richness. There were many tannins but they really mellowed. By the time it was served after being decanted, they were softer and brought out the fruit. It was lovely pairing that surprised me.

說說你最難忘的絕配？

我試過用重口的經典波爾多葡萄酒歐•布利昂堡(Chateau Aubion)配鮑魚，初時還以為合不來因為配海鮮我通常選輕至中口味的紅酒，但結果慢火炆煮的鮑魚與醬汁竟賦予一種肉類的質感與豐腴，出奇地合拍。歐•布利昂堡屬於高單寧但入口十分香醇，當日我們醒酒後才品嚐，入口更柔滑而且將果味完全帶出，這極佳的組合令我驚喜之極。

How does Hong Kong measure up as wine city?

Wine is easy to enjoy as the selection and knowledge has grown. Hong Kong comes close to Japan, who has a huge sommelier community, so their knowledge is greater, but they had a decade's head start.



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香港稱得上是個品酒之都嗎？

更多人開始視品酒為興趣並加以研究。品酒方面香港的地位接近侍酒業成熟的日本，日本侍酒師這一行比香港早十年興起，因此他們的相關知識非常豐富。

What are Hong Kong's current wine trends?

Over the last three years I've noticed people have changed from swinging between Bordeaux and Burgundy to experimenting with different regions and styles, such as Argentinian Malbec, whereas six years ago there wasn't much interest. People are still drinking more red than white,

but they are looking beyond familiar styles.

The other thing is that women in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Korea are making more of an effort to understand the beverage. Older women felt their husbands and boyfriends dominated the realm and I now see a lot more women gravitating towards it, which is wonderful.

香港目前的品酒趨勢發展如何？

我發現過去三年人們開始改變以往習慣，有興趣嘗試勃艮第或波爾多以外其他產品及類型的酒，例如六年前沒太多人留意的阿根廷馬爾貝克（Malbec）。總體上仍然較多人喜歡喝紅酒多於白酒，但不再限於幾個熟悉的產區。

年紀較大的女性覺得酒只是丈夫或男朋友之間的男人話題，近期我卻發現香港、新加坡、日本及韓國的女性比男性更樂於花時間研究品酒知識，而且相當之熱衷，這絕對是好現象。

What does the future hold for Asian wine?

Look out for wonderful, quality wines from China, India, Japan and Thailand due to the technology and capital invested in the industry and increased demand. We should consider embracing rice wine; sake pairs beautifully with Asian cuisine. Chinese rice wine has done well, because the base is the same in the meal and alcohol, and goes with just about anything.

你覺得亞洲酒類的前景如何發展？

當下投資酒業的科技規模與資金都相當龐大，需求亦與日俱增，所以我們可特別留意中國、印度、日本及泰國出產的優質佳釀。米酒類很值得品嚐，可以開始考慮轉喝，例如跟任何亞洲菜都配搭得美妙的日本清酒；中國米酒亦有機會大行其道，配米飯為主的中菜效果最好，差不多任何菜式都沒問題。 •