



## Business Standard

### Drinking With the Masters

**(20<sup>th</sup> October, 2012 – Alok Chandra)** Singapore Airlines recently hosted a unique event: a tasting of 10 Grand Cru Burgundies for 35 journalists and wine writers from around the world, tutored by three masters of wine (MWs): Steven Spurrier, **Jeannie Cho Lee**, and Michael Hill Smith.

Dubbed 'Walking With the Masters', the tasting allowed those present a peek into the wine selection process at the international carrier, a painstaking affair that involves selected suppliers submitting their wines for blind tasting by the three MWs above, who get together two or three times a year to taste up to 500 wines in the course of a week or more.

The exercise takes into account the need to have different quality wines for different seat classes, with the best wines being served in First Class, very good wines in Business Class, and good wines in Coach. What complicates the exercise is the fact that taste changes with altitude: a wine that tastes good at sea level may be completely different at 35,000ft due to the differences in pressure and humidity, which tends to accentuate sensitivity to sugars and acidity.

The list of wines served aboard Singapore Airlines' flights changes from place to place, and of course would simply be too long to repeat — a few of the wines we tasted (from their First Class list) were:

- **Moet & Chandon Dom Perignon Brut 2003 Champagne, France**  
Released only in December 2011, this 93-point sparkling wine (sorry, Champagne!) is mouth-filling and creamy, without the underlying zing of wines made in cooler years (remember 2003 was one of the hottest summers ever in France?), but still a very fine drink.
- **Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2011, Marlborough, New Zealand**  
The world's most famous Sauvignon Blanc, a tad expensive as compared to others in the neighbourhood (think Saint Clair or Astrolabe or Sileni), this wine is aromatic and lively with lovely grapefruit, white peach and elderflower notes. The palate is ripe and fruity with fresh citrus and tropical fruit characters as well as subtle greenness.

- Reichsgraf von Kesselstatt, Piesporter Goldtropfchen, Riesling Kabinett 2007, Germany The wine is as much of a mouthful as the name: beautifully fragrant, with notes of grapefruit and (surprisingly) raspberries and peach jumping out of the glass, and a subtly oily palate that disguises an unobtrusive sweetness. Given 90 points and ranked 79th out of the Top 100 Wines of 2008 by Wine Spectator.
- Chateau Cos d'Éstournel 2004, St. Estèphe, Bordeaux, France A 94-pointer, this inky dark red wine has intense aromas of berries, black currants, cherries, herbs, and liquorice. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and a long, lingering finish. Just fantastic. The 2003 vintage was #2 in the Wine Spectator's Top 100 Wines of 2004!

The breadth of knowledge and expertise required to select a suitable portfolio is immense, and the three wine consultants above do this with unfailing regularity and utter impartiality — quite a task, since they taste over 1,000 wines annually.

So the next time you fly this airline and ask for a wine, remember that you're in good company: the wines have been selected by world-renown experts and the more than two million bottles are served by cabin crew well-versed in wine knowledge.

As the Chinese say, *Gan Bei!*