

Lee mixes Asian food and wines

By Miral Fahmy Nov 10 2009 , Reuters

Tags: Asian, Food, wine, News

SINGAPORE: If you've ever puzzled over the perfect wine for Thai tom yum soup or south Indian fish curry, a book by Asia's only master of wine takes the guess-work out of pairing an essentially western drink with Oriental food.

Jeannie Cho Lee, a wine writer, judge and lecturer based in Hong Kong, said the sheer diversity of Asian food, and the fact that one meal can have a myriad of flavours, made it extremely challenging to find matching wines.

But with wine playing a bigger role in Asian dining, she said the two key elements to look for were acidity and versatility.

"Because of the way we eat, which is more communal and has a huge variety of flavours, any wine must be able to go with this range, but also not to overpower it," Lee said. "It is also very important for wine to be refreshing, with enough acidity to stand up to our spicy, fried food."

Lee's book, the glossy, coffee-table offering, *Asian Palate*, launched last week, highlights the increasingly prominent role of wine in a part of the world that only really started embracing the drink in the past decade. Divided according to the cuisines of 10 cities from Hong Kong to Bangkok to Kuala Lumpur and Mumbai, the book distills what has been a labour of love for Lee, the only Asian to hold the "Master of Wine" title from the Institute of Masters of Wine, dedicated to promoting the wine trade.

South Korean-born Lee's interest in wine began at Oxford University.