

First Asian Wine Master Brings Asian Vocab to Wine

2011-09-13 19:55

The first Asian Master of Wine wondered why only Western ingredients were used to describe wines and decided to try using those from Asia.

“The significance of Asian cuisine is a pretty major force all over the world. You see Chinese restaurants, Korean restaurants and Japanese restaurants everywhere. So the ingredients we use for cooking are actually universal. But in the world of wine they were never used,” Jeannie Cho Lee told The Korea Herald on Thursday at Park Hyatt in Samseong-dong, southern Seoul.



“The international wine language is Western. We are taking borrowed language that has been handed down to us, even though wine is now becoming more and more local. China is the sixth-largest producer of wine now, and Asia is the fastest growing wine market. There is a need to rethink how we can make it uniquely ours.”

Since earning accreditation as a Master of Wine in 2008, Lee has been working as a wine critic, consultant and educator based in Hong Kong. She published her first book “Asian Palate: Savoring Asian Cuisine and Wine” in 2009, introducing ways to match wines with Asian cuisine. It won the Gourmand Award’s Best Food and Wine Pairing book in the World against nearly 6,000 other books from 136 countries and was also short-listed as one of the four books considered for the prestigious Andre Simon Food Drink book awards in 2009.

She recently released her second book titled “Mastering Wine for the Asia Palate” on describing the taste and smell of wine through Asian spices and ingredients, and is currently on a book tour of 11 Asian cities including Hong Kong, Hangzhou, Beijing, Seoul, Taipei, Bangkok and Jakarta.

Lee expected there would be a difference in response from Asian readers and Western readers, but has yet to see for herself as the book has only just been launched.

“I’m guessing, among the Asian community, the reaction would be, ‘Oh, I get it now. I find a different connection with wine because I can actually appreciate it with ingredients I know and am familiar with,’ and among the Western community, they would think ‘That’s novel, interesting, different. I never looked at it that way,’” said Lee