

Otago Daily Times

Asia opening up to NZ wine

By [Charmian Smith](#) on Wed, 9 Feb 2011

Several influential wine journalists from Asia were guests at the Central Otago Pinot Noir Celebration held in Queenstown recently, among them Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, of Singapore, Tomoko Ebisawa, of Japan, and Jeanie Cho Lee MW, of Hong Kong.

New Zealand wine has a very good reputation throughout Asia, especially in its main markets - China, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore - according to Lisa Perrotti-Brown.

The reputation of New Zealand wine was growing in Asia and you could find most of the top labels in China and Singapore. It started with sauvignon blanc, as it always did, and grew from there, she said.

Tomoko Ebisawa said that although the Japanese preferred to stick with French wines, the younger generation preferred the purity of fruit in wines from places like New Zealand. She said New Zealand wine in Japan cost little more than in New Zealand.

According to Jeanie Cho Lee, Chinese people had a preference for red wine, which was associated with health. However, China was so big and markets were different in each city, so it was like several different countries.

Wine was no longer limited to the big coastal cities of Shanghai, Beijing or Guangzhou, but could be found in secondary cities such as Xian or Chengdu following the economic cascade that was steadily moving inland from the coast, she said.

New Zealand Wine Growers global marketing director Chris Yorke said China was one of the key growth areas for wine exports.

The free trade agreement with China had had a big effect and the market had grown 14 to 15-fold in the past four years from \$1.2 million for the year ended June 2006 to \$17 million for the year ended June 2010, which equated to 1.39 million litres, he said.

More than half of that was red wine, which was unusual for New Zealand wine exports, Mr Yorke said.

Japan was an older market for New Zealand wine, but it grew 48% in the past year and Singapore grew 20%.

However, the market required investment both in time and money to develop brands and to get wine into five-star restaurants and hotels, he said.