

HOTEL

ASIA PACIFIC

For hospitality professionals



Official Publication

Management

THE INDUSTRY STRUGGLES TO ITS FEET

**Reggie Shiu:
A Friend
Remembered**



Carrying on the tradition

Erich Steinbock, Ritz-Carlton's worldwide VP of F&B, follows in illustrious footsteps

By Fred Tibbitts

SETTING the standard and the tone for a premium wine programme that affects hotels around the world carries far more responsibility than just a US programme. How do you approach this challenge in Asia Pacific?

We involve our directors of F&B in the educational parts of our wine programme, but leave product selection to the individual locations because of the different market demands and variable availabilities.

Do you organise wine festivals or promotions for all your properties in Asia Pacific? How is this handled?

We have wonderful events throughout the region. *The New World Food and Wine Festival* in Singapore has become one of the most renowned culinary events in Asia, and other hotels have followed with similar events.

Each is organised by very talented local Ritz-Carlton ladies and gentlemen. The decision-making is decentralised, but we help and learn from each other.

Is your primary US guest profile similar for the international markets, or does it vary by region? Does this translate to a variety of wine preferences and expectations and, if so, how do you manage it for Asia Pacific?

We take a very individualised approach to our product selections. We do feature those brands that have strong presence in the luxury-market segment throughout the world.

However, we look for cutting-edge products in each market, as well. Those tend to vary from one location to the next.

What do you find to be the Ritz-Carlton guests' preferences in Asia Pacific?

Our guests travel the world and are very educated about wine. Geographic preferences are not as prevalent as they used to be, and our guests have become more adventurous with their selections.

The new- and old-world definitions have become less important.

Do you rely on your wine partners or the sommeliers at each property to ensure

proper wine training among staff?

We combine the efforts of both. Our sommeliers' key function is the education of our staff in beverage knowledge. At times he/she will reach out for suppliers to assist.

Is your wine programme similar to the Marriott Gold Standard Programme, or are they entirely different?

We have used some of the structure of the *Marriott Gold Standard* programme, but our products tend to be geared more to the luxury market.

We share information and resources with our parent company, but we maintain autonomy.

It has been said that, if hotels have extensive wines-by-the-glass programmes, half-bottles are not necessary. Do you agree with this position?

We do not take an across-the-board approach to the wine programmes. Wine lists and wine-by-the-glass decisions are driven by the desires of our guests, which we interpret into restaurant concepts. Different concepts demand different wine programmes.

We have seen a slightly higher demand for half bottles, and wine-by-the-glass programmes continue to increase in size and variety.

What are your favorite wines – and why?

It is difficult to find a bad glass of wine. When we travel to our hotels, we love to drink the local wines or match the food with the chef's favourite wine. Chances are high that those matches work best.

Our company has a rich history in food and beverage, beginning with Cesar Ritz and Escoffier. Any wine that brings this history to life is near to our hearts – and palates.

Marnier Lapostolle helped to launch our name by providing funds for the *Ritz* in Paris, so *Casa Lapostolle* from Chile is a sentimental favourite – besides being delicious. We also feature *Ritz Champagne* at most of our hotels. □

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