

LifeStyle

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June 2007

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The Well-dressed Bedroom

Frette, Trussardi, PASAYA and Dinosaur

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The City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia



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上海风情录

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Wine Flights

The New Prerequisite for Wine Service Excellence

In my last wine column for LifeStyle I said that 2007 would be the year that flights of wine would finally take flight and just as predicted they have done so globally, as if on cue from the wine gods. Although this phenomenon is already global, it is a point of differentiation that can set your hotel or restaurant apart from the rest and better entertain your guests in China as they have come to expect to be entertained.

Why? Simply because the world is now taking its lead from Asia and so travelers to China as well as those who live and work in Asia expect to experience the best and brightest ideas and concepts before they have become globalized. If you took my advice last November, I am confident your business has improved and your customers are far more pleased with your wine service; if not, let this be your final wake-up call and there is no time to waste.

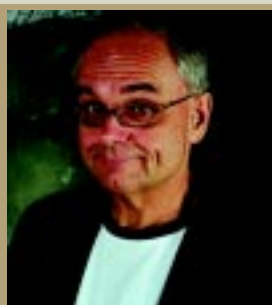
The first step in establishing your Wine Flights Program is to evaluate your entire wine list. I have now dined in some of the best restaurants in hotels and themed restaurants from Beijing to Hong Kong and I know who is doing what and why. I have seen a distinct pattern that is not global and that really needs a reality check if wine lists in China are to become world class.

Most of the wine lists on the mainland and to some degree in Hong Kong are importer-distributor dominated. Since no one distributor ever has the best of everything, this is simply not in the best interest of the consumer or the restaurant and the degree to which one of the

major wine distributors controls a restaurant or hotel wine list is the degree to which the list could have been better.

Why? Because if one's goal is to create a destination wine program, the wine selection process is focused on reviewing the portfolios of every good supplier with whom one has the opportunity to do business and take what will best delight and excite one's customers, not whatever will best satisfy the distributor salesperson or distributor owners with quid pro quo on the backside. Whenever I create a wine list, I draw from at least four wine importer-distributors: If a distributor is not satisfied sharing the list for the right reasons, I show them the door, regardless of their power and connections. You must assert yourself as the customer, not the servant. You will decide the list, not those who would profit from your business.

A quick look at any wine list quickly reveals the nature of the process that created it: There can be no secrets in this regard. So, first, select the best values from wherever you find them in your market from the vendors whom you trust and who do business in a manner that is consistent with your code of business ethics. Once you have determined with



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whom you will do business and the list is complete, it's time to decide which wines are to be served by the glass and by the taste in flights.

Of course one may offer every wine by the bottle, by the glass, by the taste and by the taste in flights if one has a professional wine preservation system such as the global leader without peer, the Le Verre de Vin, which is guaranteed to keep an opened bottle of wine fresh for up to 21 days if utilized as instructed by the manufacturer. Do I recommend this approach? Absolutely, it is the ideal

approach, but at the same time, this may not be practical for every restaurant, so let's look at the full range of possibilities in terms of wine portion service.

A good wine flights program rests on a well conceived wine list offering the customer a variety of wines from around the world at affordable as well as luxury price points. I cannot imagine a wine flights program in a restaurant that does not already have a very good wine by the glass selection. So, be sure that you are offering a generous number (if not all) of your wines by the glass. Next, consider offering every wine by the glass and by the taste (two ounces each) and price the taste at one third of a glass, which should always be a six ounce (or greater) portion. **(to be continued)**