

The Australian

Winemakers thirst for Chinese palates

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Simon Tan is in Adelaide to advise Australian winemakers on how to crack the massive Chinese market. Picture: Kelly Barnes

Source: The Australian

SIMON Tam has some harsh words for Australian winemakers eagerly eyeing the Chinese market. "It's all about being humble."

"If you come here and say, 'We are the best', the Chinese aren't going to believe you," Tam said yesterday.

The director of the Chinese Independent Wine Centre offered the cold truth to a wine industry conference in Adelaide full of winemakers trying to tap into China's "ferocious" buying power.

"However multicultural we are, we really don't have the expertise or the experience to communicate properly with the Chinese," said Mr Tam, an Australian citizen who has lived in China for the past 20 years. "Selling a unique message is so important, and to be honest I think most people don't have one. Cultural communication is the difference between people remembering your brand and remembering someone else's brand."

All eyes are on China as the next big battleground for the Australian wine industry, wanting to win the nation's huge and increasingly affluent middle class. Australia holds 20 per cent of China's imported wine market, second

behind France, with exports expected to grow by up to 50 per cent this year. Sales are led by mega-brands such as Penfolds and Jacob's Creek, with the latter embarking on a major drive to boost its Chinese prominence.

Later this month 614 Chinese employees of Pernod Ricard, which distributes Jacob's Creek in China, will tour the winemaker's Barossa Valley estate and learn more about the wines. Stephen Couche, managing director of Orlando Wines, which owns Jacob's Creek, said the week-long trip aimed to enable more effective selling strategies.

"Recent research indicates there are as many as 200 million Chinese people for whom bottled wine is seen as an element of the desirable lifestyle, and Australia, along with France, is seen as a preferred supplier of this wine," Mr Couche said.

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