



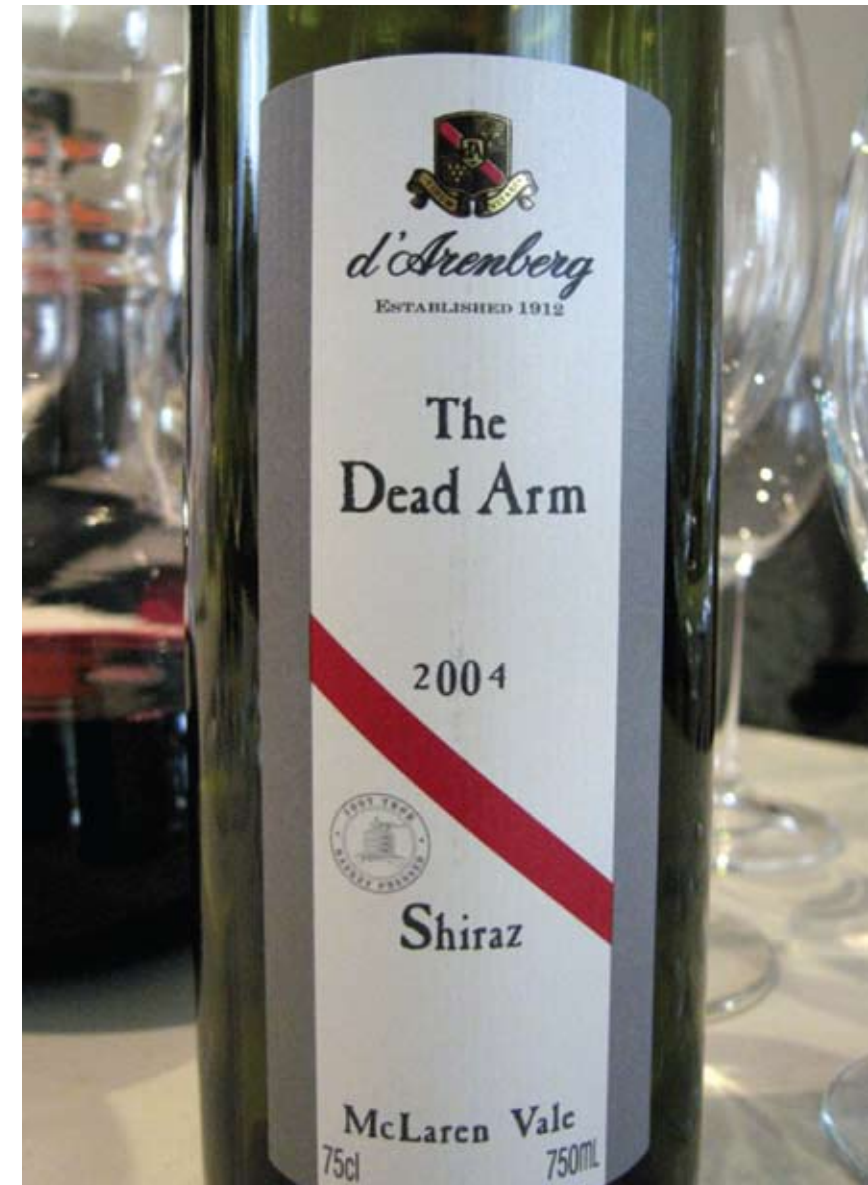
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GRILLED STEAK

A good tender steak is cut from the seldom-used part of the animal such as the ribs, the fillets on either sides of the spine but most of the meat's flavours actually come from fat within the muscle. 'Aging' is actually a slow but controlled breakdown of the meat fiber; it will also give a tender steak. The flavours of aged steak are more intense as a result of dehydrating and oxidation of iron in the meat. Raw meat is full of uncoagulated protein and cooking hardens it. Just compare a soft and hard boiled egg. Red wines come to mind immediately when the steak demands a wine. The tannins in red will bind with unset protein in a rare or even raw steak and make the wine softer. But if the equally assertively dry wine is paired with a well done steak where tannins have no 'free' protein to combine with. The wine will taste drier than it really is. Wood tannin in many 'full bodied' reds distracts from the real texture and flavour of a good steak. Look for intensely fruity wines with your favorite steak and serving sauce.

PERFECT WINES FOR GRILLED STEAK

BY SIMON TAM



D'ARENBERG DEAD ARM SHIRAZ

MCLAREN VALE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Distributed by Summergate Fine Wines. Tel. 2875 2566.

This South Australian iconic Shiraz is unusually stylish and elegant. It has benefited from acid retaining and flavour accumulating afternoon sea breezes during the growing season. The resultant ripe flavour fruit is handled with respect and minimal intervention, where the fruitiness is enhance rather than smothered by tonnes of oak. It takes half hours or so for this deeply complex wine to blossom its fragrant fruit and cigar-like smells and tastes. It is a medium dry wine and is well balanced with plenty of lifted, concentrated Shiraz fruit. It is mellow and silky now but can age for another 15years. Try d'Arenberg Dead Arm Shiraz with your father-in-law and a medium rare steak and white truffle butter.

HERMITAGE BLANC

'LE CHEVALIER DE STERIMBERG' 2005

Distributed by Links Concept Company Limited. www.linksconcept.com.hk
Tel. +852 28022818 or in Macau through Seapower Trading Co., Ltd. Tel: (853) 2872 7222 Fax: (853) 2872 5726



This classic and creamy Rhone Valley white has for a long time been shaded by the Rhone Valley white star-Condrieu. Hermitage

Blanc is made primarily from two little know white grapes, Marsanne and Rousanne. In Australia, Marsanne goes against it traditional oxidative behaviors to produce lovely age worthy 'honeyed' like wine. But it is fair to say that it is Rousanne that gives the blend backbone and freshness. This Hermitage Blanc is light yellow in colour with excellent 'honeysuckle' and 'jasmine' perfume. The palate is lush with pleasing creamy texture, almost Chardonnay-like. The exotic flavours, lubricating texture and chilled temperature lends itself to poached veal saddle and other fully coagulated protein meat items. Also try pieces of crumbly Parmesan cheese with this Hermitage Blanc. It's completely seductive.

PINTAS 2005

DOURO, PORTUGAL

Distributed by Vino Veritas.
Tels. 2885 1180/ 2871 8231



Pintas is one of a growing band of modern Portuguese classics. This Douro red combines elegance, concentration and unique Portuguese taste. It has a simple and appealing label and

is made in such minuscule hand crafted quantity. This is the perfect red with a juicy aged steak. The wine has plenty of savory notes, and unique feature that is typical of Portuguese grapes. There are tones of fruit but encapsulated in perfect balance. Skip the sauce on the steak just a small pinch of salt and some freshly grounded pepper to highlight the wine and steak.

HONG KONG WINE ROUND UP

Half-an-year after the introduction of the “zero tax” over wine in Hong Kong, the SAR is still far from becoming the international wine hub promised at the time, let alone the price cuts that wine lovers were expecting. Here *Simon Tam* explains why Hong Kong must do much more than over-priced wine auctions

IT IS six months since the start of the zero tax regime and it has certainly spurred on some dynamic feelings in the Hong Kong wine market. While I have always had my doubts about the effectiveness of just declaring a ‘hub’ and hoping it would happen, I had hoped it would lead to lower prices and better value for money – a practical rather than emotional impact for drinkers. I’m not holding my breath.

The evidence of a new buzz around wine is in the increasing number of auctions, dinners and other wine-oriented events around town. Consumers for the most part are yet to feel the benefit though. Every-day drinking wine is only slightly lower in price at the supermarket and restaurant prices seem to be as high as ever.

Wine merchants are blaming the high price of oil and the unfavourable exchange rates of the Euro, the Australian and New Zealand dollars for not having savings to pass on to consumers to date. Importers also still no doubt have stock that was taxed that they will have to sell before untaxed stock. Let’s hope we start seeing the savings at some point soon though.

Savings to consumers should be one key test of whether Hong Kong can really become the ‘wine hub’ the government is aiming for with the introduction of zero tax. Another key test is the confidence

of the wine industry itself. Boris de Vroomen, co-chairman of the Hong Kong Wine and Spirits Industry Coalition has been calling on the government to build specialist storage facilities for wine, out of government funds. Surely if the wine industry was confident in Hong Kong’s future as a centre for the China wine trade it would be investing its own money?

The government is certainly trying to build momentum for the hub. The Trade Development Council’s rapid reaction to the regime with its attempts to organise Hong Kong’s own wine show for this month is evidence of that.

The hard work and admirable intentions may be a little misplaced though. The TDC’s experience in organising all manner of trade shows is second to none but this is their first wine expo. The TDC is working hard to raise awareness but many of the world’s winemakers attended the recent Vinexpo show and may be reluctant to come all the way back to Asia for another show, especially Europeans who are now in the middle of their harvest.

The show will have the normal surrounding circus of wine dinners and seminars but my own International Wine Centre will not be participating as we have different educational aims and concerns than the organisers.

Talking of the hub and expensive prices, Hong Kong has of course

seen some wines auctioned at stratospheric prices and more auctions are promised.

The recent Acker Merrall & Condit auction of 922 lots smashed Asian records, especially for a case of 1990 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti and a case and a six magnums of World War II era Château Mouton Rothschild. All very exciting no doubt for buyers, sellers and particularly the auctioneers. I have my doubts as to whether these were good buys. The wine is, however, eminently replaceable and the prices (HK\$1.89 million and HK\$3.6 million respectively) outside the frenzy of a passionate, Champagne-fuelled auction seem just a little steep.

Take Lot 576 for example, the case of Burgundy from 1990 which is wine that cost £380 for the dozen bottles on its release in 1990. The current price according to Decanter.com’s authoritative tracking is in the region of £960. Let’s hope that the Singaporean purchaser hasn’t been feeling too deflated when comparing that price to the £119,335 that he paid! At least he can console himself with 12 bottles of very nice wine.

The generous purchaser will also no doubt have been given a congratulations card by the auction house, as many auction houses do indeed like to hand these cards out to high-spending bidders. These bodies are also in the business of spurring on spending by boast-

ing about records and breaking them. Both traditions contribute to a high-spending atmosphere. Whether they do wine buyers any favours is another matter altogether.

Wine auctions should really be in the business of supplying difficult-to-find wines as well as unique experiences. If you want to get the best out of an auction, my advice is to leave your emotions at home, stay away from the Champagne and emulate property developers who barely register the flicker of an eyebrow when they attend multi-billion dollar land auctions. There may be less of a “Wow! Factor” in attending the auction but you will probably make better value purchases.

In my view you need to be disciplined and hard-nosed to do well in the wine market.

It will be interesting to see how the wine industry prices the new vintages from the southern hemisphere’s March and April harvests. These wines are hitting Hong Kong’s shelves around now and are ideal and very welcome for the boiling tropical heat.

The Rieslings, un-oaked Chardonnays, Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs are all expected to have a delightful freshness.

As I always say, wine is just like a man: it needs a lot of stomping on before it becomes something acceptable to have with dinner.

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