



GINSBERG+CHAN WINE MERCHANTS ASIA

Are You Being Served?

Word-of-mouth is helping carve a niche for JASON GINSBERG and MANDY CHAN who are putting more than just their names into their growing wine business.

What could an ambitious, relatively young company bring to a cash-rich, sophisticated wine market that's not exactly starved of quality suppliers?

"That's the thought we started with," says Jason Ginsberg, who with Mandy Chan founded Ginsberg+Chan Wine Merchants Asia a few years back.

"I guess we spotted a niche. It was easy to see that fine wine appreciation was well and truly entrenched in Hong Kong as were some very reputed and authoritative suppliers. The wine investment market is mature and growing and we felt that there was room for a new comer with a passion for service, a 'can-do' attitude and a love of people. I think, that's what we started with."

We entered with a bit of caution after all we came from very different settings, says Mandy. "Jason's sojourn into business took the form of an independent music store in Vancouver, after which he had a successful career in real estate. I spent many years working in various software labs for IBM before making a big departure to start Ginsberg+Chan Wine Merchants Asia."

First Steps

The idea of Wine Merchants Asia really began as a means to an end with the goal of being able to live in Asia, says Mandy. "We wanted to be able to travel in this region more with our young family and for them to have more experiences. Being travellers, food & wine lovers and great dinner conversationalists we pondered what we could do with our other more professional skills. Selling



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collectible wines started as a suggestion but as we began to consider it more seriously we quickly saw the huge business potential.

"Hong Kong had just abolished wine tariffs, the financial markets had dropped presenting good buying opportunities in the wine world. If there is one thing that we are good at it is, seeing opportunities

and acting upon them quickly. And so we enrolled in formal wine schooling at night, worked on our business plan for a year and started purchasing private collections."

"We entered with an eclectic mix of all the best wines from the across the globe -- a great selection of older Burgundies, Bordeaux, Northern and Southern Rhone,

Alsatian, German, Italian, Hungarian, Austrian, Cult Californian and vintage Ports. Today, we carry a similar mix but with the addition of some Australians and Champagne. We sell from our online 'shop' which makes it easier for visitors to buy even from the comfort of their homes. Our wines, being the nature that they are, are all stored in a professional wine storage to ensure their provenance."

Service with a Difference

"Our small but rapidly growing customer base comprises a mix of wine connoisseurs, fine wine investors, institutional buyers and even people who just want to have a small but quality supply of very special wines for their private occasions," explains Jason.

"We keep our prices competitive and our website accurate and informative. Our customers come back to us because not only is the provenance of the wine excellent, but we offer a pleasant, knowledgeable, fast, efficient and flexible level of service.

We care about every single bottle we own and we care about every single customer and their individual experience. Perhaps this is so because we didn't originate from the wine or hospitality industry and we carry no pretension even

though these fine wines do demand a certain type of seriousness."

Growth Prospects

Trends-wise, says Mandy, the Hong Kong market is just in its infancy even though there are many really sophisticated collectors here. "We see studious collectors in China that want nothing but to learn how to enjoy wine properly. Hong Kong is definitely a Bordeaux market whereas Singapore has been seeing a quick rise in Burgundy fans. I think we will see Burgundy grow more quickly in China than Hong Kong. Overall we seem to have the most adventurous wine collectors find us. We have seen many clients come to us because they were looking for old German Rieslings, Californian Cabernets or a single bottle of Tokaji."

"Wine is growing as investment vehicle too and of course, Bordeaux being the blue chip of wine will always have a place in that. High end Burgundies will command a premium because of its scarcity. Burgundy fans tend to be a very passionate lot and this helps maintain the value for those who are investing in this specific region of wines."

We will grow by constantly listening to our customers and analyzing ourselves,

says Jason. What is most important is that we absolutely love our wine, tasting them, sharing them, learning about them and collecting them ourselves. Our goal is to grow slowly and carefully and have a loyal staff dedicated to providing the best service possible to our customers.

Key to Growth

"The key to our growth is in how we work with our customers. Being in the luxury market, we consider each customer to be unique and important. To that end, even though our demeanor is casual (we like to wear jeans) we take all engagements with our customers seriously. We've had customers who have requested that we meet them before they board their ferry to Macau or deliver their wines to their hotel rooms when they arrive (we have quite a few business travelers) or deliver their wines straight to their cellars. We have clients from Taiwan, China and Japan that call us for special requests for example old bottles of Burgundy that you just can't find easily in Asia. The focus is on what you are able to get for your customers, how fast and at what price. This is a very competitive market and often the quality of service makes all the difference." ■



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