

NEW ZEALAND WINE DEBUTS IN FINE DINING RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS IN MYANMAR

Elsie Chen

New Zealand wine is coming to hotels and fine dining restaurants in Myanmar with New Zealand winemakers Misha and Andy Wilkinson unveiling their products Misha's vineyard wines in Yangon last week.

Misha's vineyard work with local distributor Ikon Mart to serve their wines in restaurants and hotels. "Myanmar is a growing and an increasingly important market in South East Asia. Wine culture is quite new to Myanmar. It is so exciting here," Misha Wilkinson said.

She was confident that her wines would be well accepted in Myanmar. "The food here is sort of light style and spicy and that works really well with the cool climate wine in New Zealand. Our Limelight Riesling which has a very refreshing flavour works really well with local food,"

she said. Anthony Blardony, manager of The Yangon Restaurant also said, "If you try Mohinga with Lime-light Riesling, it is so amazing."

Since Myanmar opened the door to foreign wine suppliers to distribute their wines on the local market legally in 2015, wine culture has started to get popular with an increasing number of people consuming wine.

"It amazed me how young people start to dine. They are learning how to drink wines and they are not shy to ask how to do the tasting. It is always nice to be part of something growing," said, Anthony Blardony.

People's lack of wine knowledge is considered as the main challenge as wine culture is new to Myanmar. Wine is not something that people necessarily grew up with, so people need more confidence to learn about wine, Misha Wilkinson said.



"The only way to understand wine is exposure to it. So, get a couple of good friends together, buy a bottle of wine, taste it and learn about it," Misha Wilkinson suggested.

"People will drink four to five cups of tea a day, but there are not ready for a glass of wine," said Aung Than Htay, Managing director of Ikon Mart. He said wine culture was still not generally popular so local fine dining restaurants and hotels are good starting points to educate people about wine.

More wine education for Myanmar people and wine training for restaurant staff is needed. "Myanmar needs to get ready very fast. It's such a beautiful country and tourists increasingly coming to the country," Misha Wilkinson said.



Photo: Ernest Chan



Photo: Zhang Deming Tedmond