



Antipodian Invasion in Asia

By Lisa Perrotti-Brown

The first is the fruit forward styles and affinity to the varied cuisines available in Singapore. Granted, the vastly diverse climates / terroirs of New Zealand vs Australia create very different wines, but there are similarities between the nations in terms of the general intensity, purity and fruitiness of the styles. These characteristics can make for some corking pairings with the bolder flavours of South East Asia. I asked Singaporean-based Misha Wilkinson of Misha's Vineyard in Bendigo, New Zealand if she thought her Pinot Noirs had a particular affinity with Asian cuisine: "Absolutely! Living in Asia for 16 years and spending a good deal of that time travelling around Asia has enabled me to try most of the flavours that this region offers. And being a wine drinker, I'm always interested to know how to combine wine with my favourite Asian food. If you ask me what my favourite foods are, you'll find my answers nearly all Asian!"

While New Zealand wines may be popular in Singapore, their popularity is overshadowed somewhat by this country's overwhelming preference for Aussie wines. In terms of volumes of wine imported here, Australia has the lion's share accounting for an impressive 38 percent of this market. A key factor that I believe makes Antipodean and especially Australian wines so popular in Singapore is proximity and the positive impact of cross-tourism. That Australia and New Zealand are amongst the closest quality wine regions to Singapore and are in a similar time zone to most of Australia make them very appealing for tourists looking for their bucolic fixes and a drop of wine to boot.

On this topic, over lunch on Tuesday with Clare and Keith Mugford, owners of Moss Wood in Western Australia's Margaret River, I asked them their opinion on why Aussie wines are so popular here? "Well Singapore is almost like an extension of our domestic market for us. At only 5 hours distance from Perth, we've lost track of how many times we've visited and promoted our wines in this market. And we have a lot of Singaporean's visiting Western Australia. Singapore is our best Asian market!" Keith also mentioned Singapore's free trade agreement with Australia, which makes doing business here very easy. Sitting back and sipping a delicious glass of Moss Wood Pinot Noir with some Singaporean cuisine I thought to myself, "These guys can come as often as they like!"

G'day from the Hong Kong Wine & Spirit Fair. What a fortnight! I returned from the Land Down Under last week to meet and greet more Aussies and Kiwis in Asia than I think I've seen all year – and that includes my trips to New Zealand and Australia!

Last weekend the New Zealand Wine Growers Road-Show hit Singapore with a bang. They've been making their way round Asia beginning in Tokyo, then Singapore and now Hong Kong. There were so many high profile New Zealand wine brunches, lunches, masterclasses and tastings planned round this year's New Zealand Wine Fair, you'd had to have been a blind, nose-less teetotaler to have missed them.

Monday's New Zealand Wine Fair adeptly staged at The Hilton Hotel was a frenetic and rewarding day, packed with meetings and events. The main hall was heaving with trade visitors. Hosting some of New Zealand's biggest and best names in producers including Mt Difficulty, Awatere River, Babich and Alpha Domus, it's no wonder so many members of Singapore's wine trade were lured away from their desks / restaurants for a few hours.

Interestingly, Singapore is actually New Zealand's largest Asian export market. This is something of a phenomenon considering the relative size of Singapore's population, compared to say Hong Kong which is double the size and Japan at more than 30 times the people. I believe there are a few key factors contributing to the success of Antipodean wines in this small city state.