

A Toast to Hong Kong as a Wine Hub

Australian Vintage has achieved tremendous growth in business in Asia after setting up its regional office in Hong Kong

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**Nicolas Heretiguian, General Manager - Asia
Australian Vintage**



Leading Australian wine company Australian Vintage began exploring Asian markets some seven years ago but it was not until two and a half years back that a decision was made to set up a regional office in Asia. A number of cities were considered, and Hong Kong was chosen in the end.

“They made what I think was the right choice to set up in Hong Kong,” Nicolas Heretiguian, General Manager - Asia, said.

“Hong Kong gives us the opportunity to be working with Mainland China and also the rest of Asia, because this is not only a local office but an office for Asia. Hong Kong, for us, is a hub for our Asia operations.”

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The office is manned by four, focusing on sales and marketing. There is also a sales representative based in Shanghai. In the coming year, Heretiguian has plans to hire another person for a regional role and perhaps move into a bigger office.

Business is growing. “Two and a half years ago, we shipped about 200 containers to Asia, and this year we are shipping about 300 containers. We achieved a year-on-year growth of about 30 percent in business from 2016 to 2017 just by having an office here,” he said.

Being based in Asia, Heretiguian has been able to open up new markets. The first major development following the opening of the Hong Kong office was the signing of a long-term, strategic country-wide distribution agreement with COFCO Wine & Spirits, a division of China’s largest food processing, manufacturer and trader. The company’s signature retail label, McGuigan, can now be found at the more than 1,200 Family Mart stores in Shanghai, as well as outlets of Lawson and Lianhua supermarkets.

Most recently, a shipment has been made to Myanmar and McGuigan will become available for retail in the country starting January 2017. “We would not have thought of doing that from Australia before,” Heretiguian said. Australian Vintage sells its products in 18 Asian markets in total.

But Heretiguian added that it is about having the right product, too. “Australian wine, as a category, is getting more and more consideration and attention from consumers in Asia. It’s easy to drink, it’s soft, and there is fruit flavour on the back that the Asians like. McGuigan is perfectly fit for the Asian palate,” he said.

Having personnel on the ground in Asia has also led to important product developments for the McGuigan brand. Its cult-like product, McGuigan Black Label Red, has recently undergone a makeover for the Asian market, with a limited edition “Year of the Rooster” label due to make an appearance on supermarket shelves in the Chinese New Year. With six bottles of McGuigan Black Label Red sold every minute in Australia, Heretiguian is expecting big things for this product in Asia.

McGuigan features Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Chardonnay varietals grown in the Hunter Valley and has garnered many awards from around the world. Most recently it has once again been named International Winemaker of the Year at the 2016 International Wine & Spirits Competition in London and become the first winemaker in the world to win the award four times.

One of Australia’s largest vineyard owners and managers and responsible for 10 percent of the country’s annual wine production, Australian Vintage offers five brands of wine as well as tailored wine solutions, bulk wines and grape concentrate.

Australian Vintage

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