

From HK, with generosity

25 Feb 2010 by Jancis Robinson

Last night's wine dinner in Hong Kong in aid of [Room to Read](#) broke all records and raised more than \$2 million for this wonderful, and wonderfully run, organisation that is so busy bringing educational opportunity to the third world. This beats our [£1 million raised in London](#) last November and was helped in no small measure by founder John Wood's usual pocket-emptying trick, but also by a heartfelt presentation by their director of operations in Sri Lanka, the delightfully named Glenfry De Mel. There was also a heroic effort on the part of François Curiel, head of Christie's in Asia, who auctioned brilliantly despite the tongue-loosening effects of alcohol and despite having been in HK for only one month.

My job was to choose the wines, supplied at a very generous discount by importer ASC. I was determined to try to demonstrate to this moneyed crowd, steeped in first growths and the like, that delicious wine is made outside Bordeaux and Burgundy. I softened the blow by choosing one classic wine in each pair but made them taste a less classic one alongside.

For me the liquid star of the night was **Oremus, Mandolas Dry Furmint 2006 Tokaji**, which confidently held its own alongside **Louis Jadot 2007 Corton Charlemagne** (a good wine that ideally should be kept a few years of course). The Hungarian single-vineyard white was equally full bodied and had real tang, verve and persistence with a hint of smoke and fire. They both went well with the first course of prawns, salmon tartare and a lightly chilli'ed guacamole thingy.

Our red burgundy was another Jadot wine, **Louis Jadot, Clos des Ormes Premier Cru 1998 Morey-St-Denis**, in which, at last, the tannins had nicely retreated and the wine is in its prime now with real savoury depths. But the Australian, **Stonier Reserve Pinot Noir 2007 Mornington Peninsula**, was not shamed by it. This is obviously more youthful and delicate but is a fine, particularly pure Pinot by any standards.

The two bordeaux-style wines were very different indeed. Our old friend **Colomé Malbec 2007 Calchaquies** from Donald Hess's sky-high vineyard (with a 15% admixture of ancient Tannat, Cabernet and Syrah) is very powerful but has a certain high Andean purity about it. Not a trace of pollution at close to 3,000 m! It went particularly well with our rare beef. But the wine that everyone kept coming back to was the **Ch Pichon Lalande 1999 Pauillac**, a particularly successful 1999 in which the dominant grape variety, 47% of the blend, is Merlot.

And then, finally, with assorted cheeses and particularly inspiring with some top-quality parmigiano reggiano, was a sweet, but not too sweet, sherry, **Lustau East India Solera**. Though by that stage the attention had firmly switched to bidding and giving.

Several HK donors had been particularly generous with the lots in both live and silent auctions, including a relative of Paulo Pong of Altaya who donated the most amazing wines, both in quantity and quality. The first lot, for example, was a case of Ch Talbot 1982. There were verticals of Kistler Chardonnay, a flight of top right bank 1989s, a dream lot of 1990s, a magnum of Penfolds Grange... As you can tell, I forgot to keep a copy of the fat programme booklet in which the Conrad Hotel staff had painstakingly stuck different colour stickers next to each wine to avoid confusion on the table. But I will not forget the evening. See the preparations below.