

Speech by Acting FS at opening ceremony of 2014 Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival (English only)

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Following is the speech by the Acting Financial Secretary, Professor K C Chan, at the opening ceremony of the 2014 Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival at the former Kai Tak runway this evening (October 30):

Peter (Lam), Pierre (Goguet), ladies and gentlemen, wine lovers,

Good evening.

Welcome to the festival that brilliantly summarises our philosophy of life in just three words: "wine and dine". Yes, the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival is now in its sixth year. And we're here to spread the good news.

The Wine & Dine Festival began the year after the wine duties were abolished in the 2008 Budget. Both the festival and the Hong Kong wine industry have flourished in the years since then.

Today, Hong Kong is the world's leading wine auction centre. We have signed co-operation agreements with 13 major wine-producing countries and regions. And more and more wine-industry events such as this festival and the TDC (Hong Kong Trade Development Council)'s Hong Kong International Wine and Spirits Fair are being held here.

We certainly know much more about wine than we used to. That's thanks to Hong Kong's first MBA on wine, a co-operative venture between the University of Hong Kong and the Bordeaux Management School. Thanks, too, to more professional training programmes for sommeliers and others in the hospitality industry, as well as an enhanced Wine Storage Management Systems Certificate Scheme.

We also enjoy more wines these days. Hong Kong people are popping the corks of New World as well as traditional Old World wine. And the pairing of Asian and Chinese cuisine with wine is becoming increasingly popular.

The Wine & Dine Festival is central to our maturing market - and our maturing tastes. The festival features wine from all around the world, bringing us fresh flavours, enticing trends and new favourites.

For that, my thanks to the wine-industry partners. Their continuing support of this festival has helped make it one of Hong Kong's most popular events. No less important, it fortifies this city's reputation as Asia's wine-and-dine capital.

My thanks, as well, to the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the Bordeaux International Wine & Dine Festival Organization. They are the makers, the bottlers, behind all this good festival cheer.

Indeed, the Wine & Dine Festival is just one example of the Tourism Board's innovative approach to promoting Hong Kong. Only yesterday, the Tourism Board unveiled its new Hong Kong Pulse 3D Light Show. High-tech, and highly entertaining, the 3D theatre will run each night throughout the Wine & Dine Festival - beginning right after the Tourism Board's multimedia light show, "A Symphony of Lights". And all of it lighting up the world's most beautiful harbour.

I'd say that, and the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, are worth raising a glass - perhaps a bottle - to.

Cheers.

Ends/Thursday, October 30, 2014

Issued at HKT 20:07

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