



Gambero Rosso

Italian Wine Guidebook Launch
1st Chinese Edition
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LAI SEE HOWARD WINN

The best obtainable version of the truth? But what if there are two?

The Rupert Murdoch and Wendi Deng story is some 15 years old but it still excites interest. Gary Davey, the former chief executive of StarTV, was ambushed by Peter Jackson, who was chairing a session at Casbaa's annual conference and, much to the amusement of delegates, demanded he recount how they met.

Davey gamely responded: "Well I suppose I should take the opportunity to tell the whole story." He went on to explain that Murdoch rang him from Japan and said he wanted to go to Shanghai. Davey said that might be difficult as he was stuck in Delhi.

Murdoch then asked: "Surely you must have somebody you can put me together with to go to Shanghai?"

Davey eventually thought of Deng, who at that time was working as an intern with Star TV. He rang her and told her she was to meet a guy and travel with him to Shanghai. "When I told her it was Rupert Murdoch I thought she would be shocked but she responded: 'No problem'," Davey said. They met at Hong Kong airport, and the rest, as they say, is history.

It's unclear if this version of the story conflicts with the account Bruce Dover gives in his book *Rupert Murdoch's Adventures in China* where he says he introduced them at a party at the Harbour Plaza Hong Kong Hotel.



Gary Davey: matchmaker or not?

Light to be shed on air quality

The US embassy in Beijing has infuriated the Chinese authorities by giving out its own air quality measurements, which differ markedly from the official Chinese ones. Unfortunately for the government most people believe the US figures. While air pollution isn't so bad here as in Beijing the problem in Hong Kong is that while the Environment Bureau puts out daily figures they can't be trusted.

When the University of Science and Technology did its own measurement of the air quality with its mobile real-time air monitoring van, its readings showed much higher levels of pollution than the government monitoring stations.

We also understand that the Environment Bureau is using outdated equipment which is no longer accepted in the US and many parts of the EU. The readings this old equipment gives can be out by as much as 30-40 per cent.

So, since the Hong Kong government is so reluctant to tell us the true air quality figures despite having plenty of money to buy modern equipment, perhaps the US consulate could do us all a favour and monitor the air quality for us.

Raising a glass, or three

We spent a gruelling afternoon yesterday sampling the 100 wines on offer at the Gambero Rosso tasting session. Fortunately these were no vins ordinaires but Italy's finest wines – those awarded "Tre Bicchieri" by Gambero Rosso, the bible for the best of Italian wine.

It covers 2,350 producers and 20,000 wines, and rates the wine, giving "Tre Bicchieri" (three glasses) to those it considers the best. The guide appears in Italian, German, English and this year celebrates its 25th anniversary by producing its first Chinese version.

The Italians are determined to put a dent in French dominance of

the Chinese wine market. Italian Consul General in Hong Kong Alessandra Schiavo, speaking at the event, noted that Italian wine exports to China had risen 126 per cent over the previous year while imports to Hong Kong have increased 76 per cent since 2008.

The Chinese version of the guide is a good deal shorter than the original as the tasting notes have been omitted. This is because it was felt much of it would have been meaningless to mainland Chinese readers, in that references such as "... broodingly dark aromatics of forest floor" don't travel well.

It's a pity, as the tasting notes are a good read. The description of Moschioni's '07 Pignolo is a case in point: "Majestically impenetrable in the glass, it rolls out a fragrant medley of cocoa powder and pipe tobacco that gives way to liquorice-veined ripe red and black fruits and a broad, powerful palate with marvellous depth."

Full marks for effort

It's hard to find anyone willing to plunge into the markets these days, with more than a few pulling initial public offerings. So it's nice to see MF Global having a go, even if it didn't have much choice. In its first day of over-the-counter trading, MF Global Holdings fell 80 per cent to 24 cents in pre-market trading last night in New York.

The shares fell 67 per cent last week. Bloomberg says MF Global stock hasn't changed hands during a regular trading session since Friday. NYSE Euronext suspended it before the New York Stock Exchange opened on Monday, hours before MF Global filed the eighth-largest US bankruptcy after failing to find a buyer over the weekend.

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CITY



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Michael Wong and photographer Ike Eichensehr



Ankie Beilke

All wrapped up in knots of love for charity's winter warmer

As the weather cools, thoughts turn towards those who might need help keeping warm in the approaching winter nights. To that end, Lane Crawford has pledged to donate a minimum of 3,000 blankets to the Crossroads Foundation, to be distributed locally and internationally to families in need.

To kick off the "Wrapped with Love" initiative, Lane Crawford fashion director Sarah Rutson and Crossroads Foundation spokesman David Begbie invited special guests and celebrity do-gooders to IFC's Isola last Friday for a special knitted quilt ceremony, where each guest contributed a square piece to be stitched together to form a colourful and cosy quilt, symbolising the efforts between the partners.

Among contributors such as socialite Anna Yau Hoi-man, model Janet Ma, Yvette Yuen and designer Barney Cheng, businesswoman Dr Christie Wo Man-shan came up with a smiley face made up of multicoloured buttons.

"I thought the square format for a smiley face was somewhat different from the normal circular shape. I used the buttons because I wanted to create something more three-dimensional," she said. "I've had plenty practice for this charity effort, as I have in fact knitted scarves and things for my boyfriend in the past – funny thing is that he didn't believe that I had knitted those gifts myself."



Christie Wo

Photographer Ike Eichensehr brings a little bit of Eden to HK with orphanage fund-raiser

Temperatures soared as models wearing devilish angel-wings welcomed guests to the Angels for Orphans gala dinner and auction on Friday night.

At the event, Hong Kong-based American photographer Ike Eichensehr launched his second book, *Eden*, a veritable who's who of Asian fashion and cinema in various states of undress. All proceeds from book sales went to the charity Angels for Orphans.

"A lot of the models I've worked with over the past decades have been involved in some way with Angels for Orphans," said Eichensehr. "It's been a fantastic night. Over US\$30,000 was raised."

"I've known Helen Whitman for years, and knowing that all of the money goes to a great cause made the night more meaningful," he said, referring to the head of Angels for Orphans in Hong Kong.

Five large prints of Eichensehr's work were also sold. The book, HK\$800 each, includes passages by shoe designer Jimmy

Choo, stylist Kim Robinson, businessman Allan Zeman, actress Michele Reis Lee Ka-yan and Steve Leung, architect and interior designer. They wrote about what Eichensehr's work means to them.

Despite the presence of the crème de la crème of the city (including artist Simon Birch and model Rosemary Vandenberg), all eyes were on supermodel Cara Grogan, resplendent in a billowing green gown.

Proving that with great beauty comes great purpose, Grogan was the emcee for the evening. She has also worked for the charity.

"I spent two months working in an orphanage," she said before the evening started. "Every bit of money raised goes straight to the children and, believe me, from my personal experience volunteering at an orphanage, these children need our help. They changed my life forever, help us change theirs."

Eden is available in all noted bookstores starting today. P. Ramakrishnan



Helen Whitman and Cara Grogan

Consul general caught up in whirlwind of food and wine to promote Italy

It was a busy week last week for Alessandra Schiavo, consul general of Italy in Hong Kong and Macau. On Wednesday alone, she had to be at three different functions to promote Italian food and wine.

As Italy was the partner country

of this year's Hong Kong Wine & Spirits Fair, which just wrapped over the weekend, more than 200 Italian wineries took the opportunity to introduce their products to locals.

The consul general mingled with press, buyers and wine connoisseurs

at the launch of the first Chinese edition of Italian food and wine magazine *Gambero Rosso's* guide book *Vini d'Italia*, then headed to a wine tasting of 100 top Italian wines in Island Shangri-la. She was joined by Luigi Salerno, chief executive officer of the Gambero Rosso Association.

"Since Italy is the world's largest wine producer and we invested so much in innovating and blending grapes, it can get overwhelming sometimes," said Schiavo at the event. "So the guide book is the equivalent of the Bible for wine lovers and connoisseurs."

By translating the book into Chinese, the publishers hoped to create a buzz in Hong Kong and mainland markets, Salerno said.

"We translated the book into English and German 20 years ago and now it's time to attract the attention in China."



Marco Sabellico, Alessandra Schiavo, Riccardo Ricci Curbastro and Luigi Salerno at the launch of *Vini d'Italia* in Chinese.



Janet Ma



Sarah Rutson



Barney Cheng



Crossroads president David Baxter

