



The Gabb family's boutique winery, Journey's End, recently made a great impression in Asia. Sonja Burger reports.

Rollo Gabb says the Asian market wants authenticity and elegance.

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Journey's end pleases ASIAN PALATES

BOUTIQUE WINERY JOURNEY'S END, SITUATED ON THE SLOPES OF the Schaapenberg Hills above Sir Lowry's Pass Village in the Western Cape, triumphed at the 2010 Cathay Pacific Hong Kong International Wine and Spirit Competition. The winery took the Best South African Red on Show, as well as the Best Merlot on Show.

The Cathay Pacific Hong Kong International Wine and Spirit Competition has a thoroughly Asian focus and is designed to accommodate the taste and consumption preferences of the Asian market. This year's judging panel consisted of wine experts from China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. Categories were judged by country, region, variety and style. A world-first Chinese food-and-wine-pairing category was introduced this year.

Journey's End winemaker Leon Scheepers ascribes the winery's success in the Asian market to a wine style that draws inspiration from Europe rather than the New World.

"The Asian market is used to the European style, and our cool climate wines appeal to this market. Initially, we thought they would prefer less wooded, medium-bodied wines, but we've discovered they prefer full-bodied wines."

Western Wines, established in 1980 by Roger Gabb, evolved from a Shropshire-based garage outfit into the UK's largest branded supplier of South African wine. Roger – who initially conceived what eventually turned into a globally successful Western Wines brand, Kumala – used that experience and vision to build another brand at the premium level, Journey's End.

His son, Rollo, is Journey's End's marketing director. Rollo says the Chinese market for premium wine is specifically tuned-in to authenticity. "The Chinese like to know which vineyard the wine is from and, most importantly, that it has a finite quantity," he notes.

"With regard to the Asian palate, it's important to understand that different regions have different palates. There are very wide differences between Guangzhou and Shenzhen in southern China and, say, Beijing. These are all entirely different to Shanghai, which is again different to Hong Kong. The unifying factor would be one of very good fruit and elegance. The success that Bordeaux is having gives a good stylistic pointer ... think wall-to-wall Chateau Lafite 1982 at your local supermarket." |fw