## Julius Bär

# WEALTH REPORT ASIA

LUXURY WINE FEATURE

MAY 2018

Front cover: Ao Yun Landscape, Yunnan, China Photograph by Moët Hennessy

### FULL-BODIED LUXURY

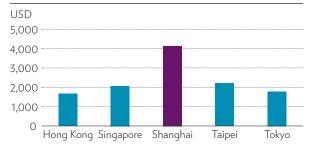
The Julius Baer Wealth Report Asia monitors the cost of living in luxury and wealth creation trends in Asia. Fine wine is one of the oldest luxury product categories and a key component of our lifestyle index. In this feature, we examine the demand drivers and price trends for fine wine across Asia.

### THE POWER OF ASIAN TASTE

The luxury wine market's centre of gravity has tilted eastwards, reflecting the shift in economic power. With a population of more than 4.5 billion,<sup>1</sup> Asia Pacific is one of the key regions seeing a sharp rise in demand for fine wines, driven mainly by China and Hong Kong.

Consistent with previous years' findings, the price for a bottle of Château Lafite Rothschild 2000 remains most expensive in Shanghai at a cost of USD 4,142 and amongst the most price competitive in Hong Kong (USD 1,677). Luxury wines such as the Château Lafite Rothschild continue to be highly sought after in China because of the quality and perceived status symbol.

### Prices of Château Lafite Rothschild 2000 across key wine markets in Asia



#### As of 20 April 2018

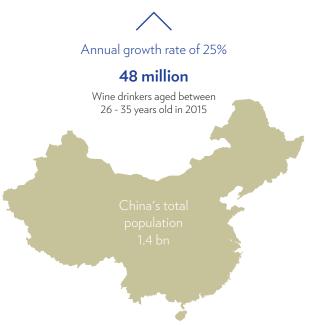
Source: Julius Baer Investment Publishing Asia

Apart from higher taxes in China, luxury wine prices are driven by continued strength in Chinese demand, amid rising disposable incomes, aspirational consumption, increasing westernisation, and the rapid sophistication of drinking rituals. As a result, consumption habits have evolved from buying wine as gifts to buying wine for personal consumption. Millennials are also catching on to this trend.



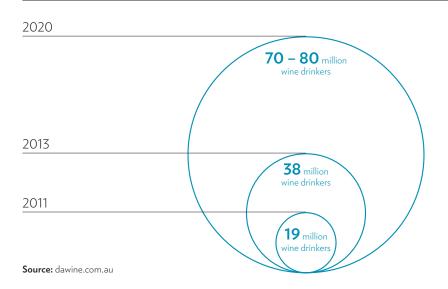
<sup>2</sup> FT.zcom – 'China's growing pains', 15 April 2016





Source: Chinese Business Network Data, China Daily

By 2020, China is set to become the world's secondlargest wine market.<sup>2</sup> Wealthy Chinese are not only scooping up fine wines, they have also developed a taste for Bordeaux vineyards. Notably, Hong Kong has become an important sourcing hub for mainland consumers and is the second most important wine auction market in the world after New York City.



#### Number of Chinese wine consumers

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#### 'MADE IN CHINA' ? LIKE!

Premium no longer solely equates to foreign. Recent surveys have shown that the mainland's affluent millennials, the bulk of the wine drinking population, are more open-minded and less dismissive of locally produced goods compared to their parents' generation.

According to Euromonitor International, China is likely to come of age as a producer. With major international houses investing heavily in production in the country, Chinese wine exports will soon make their presence felt on the international stage. Mr Christophe Bourrie, Managing Director of Prestige Brands at Moët Hennessy, comments, "I would say luxury Chinese wines will be coming into the market in the near future."

#### A GLASS ABOVE THE REST

An example of such a wine is Moët Hennessy's first luxury wine brand in China, Ao Yun, a Cabernet Sauvignon that costs more than USD 300. Since its launch in 2017, its rarity and high quality have already drawn attention from the global wine industry.

Ao Yun, which is Mandarin for 'flying above the clouds', is a reference to the Himalayan foothills in which the grapes are grown.

The justification behind its USD 300 plus price tag lies in the production process, which, quite literally, remains an uphill task. "There are multiple difficulties making a great wine like Ao Yun in Yunnan. The altitude is a logistical challenge. You have to make a four-hour drive from Shangri-La, and then finally you are going to produce this wine from four different villages, up to 2600m in altitude in the region," says Mr Bourrie.

### Why did a luxury company known for elegant champagnes choose China as its production site?

"The location is really the determinant, with most quality wines coming from terroir (a particular region's climate, soils, and terrain that affect the taste of wine). We specifically chose Yunnan for the weather and soil quality, and it's very similar to Bordeaux," explains Mr Bourrie.

#### How does Ao Yun fare on the taste scorecard?

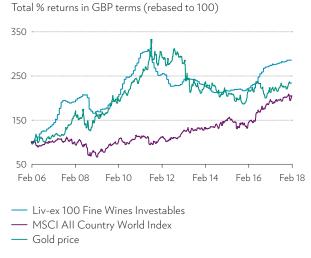
"I think Ao Yun being a Chinese wine has been one of the most highly regarded wines by experts and journalists all over the world. And they are amazingly surprised when they discover it's a Chinese wine because they had a preconceived idea about it. In China, you can do excellent wines that are comparable to those in Bordeaux, Napa vineyards, and Australia. I would say the wine cycle is seven to ten years. So we bet on the future," says Mr Bourrie.

#### READING THE WINE DREGS

If wine is a bet on the future, what do the dregs say about the investment outlook for fine wines?

According to Cult Wines, China's stricter capital controls have given the impetus for China-based clients to look at alternative investments such as fine wine. This trend is expected to continue. As far as alternative investments go, fine wine has a few advantages. Although wine's intrinsic value may be debatable, its market value is not. Purchasing fine wines has become more popular, not just as a passion, but also as an investment. The industry's leading benchmark, the Liv-ex 100 Fine Wines Investables Index, tracks the most 'investable' wines on the market – around 200 wines from the top 24 Bordeaux châteaux. This index has been less volatile than stocks or commodities, including gold, which is typically seen as a safe haven asset. Over the 12-year period, it has returned more than 250% in GBP terms. As such, investors would do well to take a long-term view on their wine investments.

#### Fine wines outperformed global equities and gold



As of 28 February 2018

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., Julius Baer Investment Publishing Asia

#### A buying opportunity



#### Characteristics of wine for investment

- Secondary market
- Ability to age
- Long track record
- Critical acclaim

However, fine wine is a luxury investment that carries risks. Supply depends on the whims of weather and demand can fluctuate. Other risks include low liquidity, given that the market is small and dealing costs are high; lack of independent regulation and currency risk, as the best wines are mainly traded in sterling; and lack of sufficient physical storage. Investors would do well to undertake due diligence with respect to the potential pitfalls such as pricing and limited liquidity.

Nevertheless, with demand rising year-on-year and the quality of wines improving at a similar pace, we are likely to see an upward price trend in the world's most sought-after wines over the next five to ten years. Better availability of price information and increasing demand in emerging markets, particularly China and Hong Kong, have created a bull market for fine wine. This underscores China's rising status in the luxury wine world. We see a strong potential for this market as the number of collectors and consumers continues to grow.

In conclusion, investors can take into consideration that this liquid asset is not only drinkable, but also investable.

We are likely to see an upward price trend in the world's most sought-after wines over the next five to ten years.

## FINE WINE BY THE NUMBERS



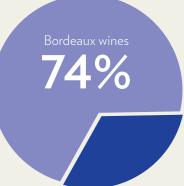
The most expensive bottle of wine sold was the Château Lafite Rothschild 1787, which went for **USD160,000** in 1987. Once owned by Thomas Jefferson, this wine will likely never be consumed.

Source: Forbes



Bordeaux wines accounted for 74% of **Liv-ex** trade (as of January 2018).

Source: Guinness Book of Records



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