

The Perfect Mix

by Phyllis Lee

In the month of festivities and celebrations, Varsity brings you some recommendations for Christmas gifts to impress your friends and family.

The neighbourhood around Lan Kwai Fong is well known as a place where you can enjoy a glass of wine with your friends but did you know you can also make your own wine there too?

Situated on the sixth floor of a building on Queen's Road, Central, MUST Custom Winery is a small wine lovers' paradise. The friendly staff, soothing music, dim lighting and stylish interior makes you feel at ease.

The business was founded by a group of wine lovers in July this year. Their mission is to teach people how to appreciate wine and to let people have a go at making their own wine.

Apart from cabinets full of tidily placed bottles just like any other winery, one side of MUST is lined with the finished bottles of wine made by John Wong and Ed Stengel, the company's co-founders and winemakers.

More than 40 flavours of wines are offered at the winery and they include reds, whites, rosé and fruit wines. The fruit peel and pulp used to make the wines are imported from wineries across the world.

Different flavours such as pepper and vanilla can enhance the taste of the wine. The winery also has festive

editions of wine such as their port which is rich with flavours of fig, plum and chocolate and may bring a lot more sweetness to Christmas celebrations.

Apart from learning about and tasting the finished products, customers can learn about the various stages of wine-making. A wine-making class usually consists of around 10 students and each class makes roughly 30 bottles of wine. There are two stages to the wine-making process.

The first stage is the wine-making session, where students learn how to appreciate wine and make their own wine according to their preferences. They can alter the taste of their wine by adding dried fruit and adjusting the sweetness, the oak intensity and the percentage of alcohol in their customized wine. This whole process takes only 30-45 minutes. The wine is then left to ferment.

Four weeks later, the students participate in the bottling session where they make their own labels and shrink tops. The winery provides different kinds of patterned labels on which you can name your very own blend of wine and have customized text on the label.

Wong and Stengel say they decided to start this custom wine-making business because they had not found

any similar services in Hong Kong. Wong says they want to teach people how to appreciate wine, especially focusing on the different flavours and tastes of wine so customers can better match the most appropriate wines with specific meals. "We act as a bridge to teach people who do not know how to choose or invest in the most appropriate wine, how to appreciate it in a better manner," he says.

Wong says many Hong Kong people suffer from a headache after drinking wine because shop-bought wines contain high levels of sulphites used as preservatives. Wines produced by MUST Custom Winery do not contain any preservatives. This is one of their main selling points but it also means they cannot be stored for too long.

Candace Cheung, a saleswoman in MUST Custom Winery says that apart from wanting to introduce customised wines to their customers, they also want to offer wine that is good for the body. "The most important thing is to drink healthily and, at the same time, enjoy a wine that suits your personal taste," she says.

For more information, you can visit their website: www.mustwine.com.hk or visit MUST Custom Winery for yourself in Unit 603, 6/F Peter Building, 58-60 Queen's Road Central, Hong Kong. 

