



## Local patronage **an uphill task for** Queensland wines

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The Queensland wine industry has been buoyed by the success of several of its wines but it is still fighting to gain acceptance within its own borders. **Alistair Roberts**, owner of Tukka Restaurant in Brisbane, shared his tips to help Queensland wineries, and indeed all wineries, 'get their foot in the restaurant door'...

The fact that Queensland wine is playing a 'catch-up' game was highlighted during the recent Queensland Wine Business Conference in Toowoomba [Grape to glass – adding value to your business] by Alistair Roberts, owner of Tukka Restaurant.

He had posed the thought... "Queensland restaurants ought to support Queensland wine", then added... "you and I believe this, but it isn't true".

His restaurant, however, is a far cry from the norm.

Roberts said 30% of Tukka's wine list including the whole front page was dedicated to Queensland wine. "It makes up 40% of our total wine sales," he said. In fact, he said that featuring Queensland wines had proved to be a competitive advantage.

Roberts, who gained a degree in international management and marketing from Manchester University, has served on the boards of Brisbane Marketing, and Restaurant & Catering Queensland, started the Tukka Restaurant in Brisbane in 2002. He has recently formed a coaching company, Ignition!, which is designed to help businesses achieve their potential and to market themselves successfully. Roberts' main advice to the wine industry on gaining ground in the restaurant trade was to make a point of difference.

He said Queensland food and wine producers have the opportunity to work



**Alistair Roberts says Queensland wine is fantastic and can be matched perfectly with any local produce.**

together for mutual growth. "There is a growing popularity for restaurants to list regional producers on their menus and to actually name the farms.



“Matching this with a regional winery is even better,” he said. Roberts offered this advice when matching Queensland wines:

- it's no different to matching any other wine!
- look at the characteristics of the wine and either complement or contrast the characteristics of the food
- if you want to promote your wine, then start with the wine and create dishes around its features - why not contact and employ a chef to create some dishes that match perfectly?
- if you are good at this, offer your services to the restaurants you want to work with - this is something you can give them.

On the negative side, Roberts said that if people you had approached don't like Queensland wine, then don't waste your time. On the positive side, spend more time on those who are 'convertible'.

Think about your plan of attack and go for the low-hanging fruit first, i.e. those who are going to be most interested in Queensland wine, those who have most to gain from featuring Queensland wines (tourist restaurants and regional restaurants), any restaurants making a feature of Queensland produce, then follow with approaches to restaurant associations.

### Tips for working your way up the wine list

- first impressions count - be exciting and passionate
- learn about the restaurant
- make an appointment
- menu - what matches can you suggest? where does your wine fit?
- regional focus - bundle your wine with local products
- approach this as a partnership, not a hard sell
- know your strengths - you can't be everything to everyone
- credibility - awards, write ups
- ask them how you can work together - what do they need?
- be professional - be on time, return phone calls
- make a personal connection - deal with one person
- only approach with a quality product and be proud of it
- support the restaurant - patronage, website links, co-marketing
- supply good information - timely and accurate tasting notes
- BE PROACTIVE!

- supply-demand balances, which will underpin the Australian wine sector's fortunes over the next five years?
- current and forecast pressures
- business expansion strategies
- export business development strategy
- targeting market segments based on where they actually exist rather than traditional 'mythical' means
- assisting growers in matching production with market orientation to result in more effective and efficient marketing.

*The conference will be held in Melbourne on 19 October and Adelaide on 20 October. To register contact (03) 9641 7400 for Victoria or (08) 8113 5507 for South Australia, or register at [www.icaa.org.au/training/wine](http://www.icaa.org.au/training/wine)*