

Speech by FS at 2018 HK Wine & Dine Festival opening ceremony (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the opening ceremony of the 2018 Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival today (October 25):

Peter (Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Peter Lam), Mr Delaux (Deputy Mayor of Bordeaux, Mr Stephan Delaux), Allan (President of the Bordeaux Wine Council, Mr Allan Sichel), Mr Jiang (Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of China Construction Bank (Asia) Corporation Limited, Mr Jiang Xianzhou), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, wine lovers all,

Good evening.

Welcome to the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival on this lovely autumn evening by the harbour in Asia's world city. And Asia's wine city, too.

This year, we celebrate the Festival's 10th anniversary – a decade of wining and dining, of drinking in the good life here in Hong Kong.

In Chinese, the number 10 has the meaning of perfection.

I think the Wine & Dine Festival found its way to excellence a good while back. And year after year, it just keeps getting better.

This 10th anniversary festival, ladies and gentlemen, is the most ambitious to date. Certainly the largest, expanding past the Central waterfront. More than 30 countries and regions are participating, a big jump over last year's 21 countries and regions. Booth totals are also expanding – to 450, up from 400 last year. They include, I should add, nearly 320 wine booths in six thematic zones.

In celebration of the Festival's anniversary, Wine & Dine 10th Edition Specials are on offer, together with a series called 2009 Vintage, which includes selections from Robert Parker's 100-Point red wines. That sounds almost perfect.

Speaking of which, you'll want to pick up the Perfect 10 Passport, a winning combination of wine and food pairings to share with family and friends, new and old.

Speaking of food, two new zones have been introduced – International Street Eats and Coffee Fiesta, the latter filled with lots of sweet treats.

I'd say we deserve them. With the help of this annual autumn celebration, Hong Kong has emerged as Asia's wine hub and a global centre for

wine trading and auctions. In the first half of this year, we imported more than HK\$6 billion worth of wine from all over the world. That, ladies and gentlemen, reflects year-on-year growth of 9 per cent.

Our top three wine importers in 2017 were France, Australia and the United Kingdom.

In June we signed an MoU with Bordeaux, our long-time partners in wine-and-food tourism promotion.

Another MoU – this one expanding co-operation in wine-related education and manpower training between Bordeaux and Hong Kong – is in the pipeline, or perhaps it should be a "wine line".

The agreements will boost our role as the ambassador for the best wines from Bordeaux and other resplendent wine-making regions.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Wine & Dine Festival is like vintage wine – maturing, and improving, with each passing year.

I know you will drink in, and savour, every memorable moment.

For that I am grateful to the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the Wine & Dine Festival's fabulous sponsors.

May I wish you all good health and happiness, with good food and good wine. Cheers!

