

Speech by FS at 2023 Wine & Dine Festival opening ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the opening ceremony of the 2023 Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival today (October 26):

YK (Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Pang Yiu-kai), Allan (President of the Bordeaux Wine Council, Mr Allan Sichel), ladies and gentlemen, lovers of the good life all,

Welcome to the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival. As YK noted, it's been too long – five years – since we last came together in celebration of food and wine, family, friends and festive fun.

For this speaker, that makes one thing abundantly clear: not only is Hong Kong back in business, we're back in the business of pleasure. Of serving up the good life for the Hong Kong community and a world of visitors. Obviously, we have a lot of catching up to do.

And here, a special welcome to Mr Sichel from the Bordeaux Wine Council. I can't wait to tell you that Hong Kong people are true French wine lovers – last year, despite the pandemic, Hong Kong still imported 13 to 14 million bottles of French wine. But I am not too sure whether they like Bordeaux or Burgundy more. Perhaps you can tell me more.

Starting tonight and right through this glorious autumn weekend, booths and pavilions on this beautiful waterfront will be corking and pouring.

Alongside internationally celebrated wines from France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Australia, there will be a wide selection of wines from eight Mainland wineries, as well as from Moldova, Hungary and other Eastern European countries. They also include new-latitude wine from Thailand and, from Singapore, the world's first soy wine.

And plenty of whisky and beer to choose from, too.

With fine dishes plating sweet, sour, spicy and more – I'm sure we'll all be back for seconds and thirds. Whether it's Australian Wagyu ribeye or Chinese goose liver sausage, Jeju tangerine jelly or Parmesan cheese gelato, I am sure our stomachs will be delightfully filled.

But there is much more to just eating and drinking here. A "Tasting Theatre" debuts this year at the Festival, spotlighting star chefs, professional sommeliers, baristas and more. They'll feature master cooking classes, food and wine-pairing tips and family fun, too, including cartoon

cookie-baking sessions.

Ladies and gentlemen, enjoy. Enjoy it all, the wining and dining and culinary discoveries from all over the world, the live music and entertainment, the night-time ambience, getting together with family and friends, making new friends, and the many pleasures of life in Hong Kong, Asia's world city. Asia's good-times city, too.

Once you're all happily wined and dined, you'll want to check out the rest of Hong Kong – our arts, culture and heritage, magnificent country parks, world-class theme parks, and so much more.

This is all very much of Hong Kong: energetic and welcoming, happily merging the best of East and West. A place that awaits you to explore. Time and again.

My thanks to the Hong Kong Tourism Board and each and every one of Wine & Dine Festival's fabulous sponsors, for this year's festive showcase, for making memories for all of us.

I know you will enjoy this very special evening and the Festival days and nights to come. Cheers.