

Leonie McKeon recently delivered a workshop in McLaren Vale, South Australia, titled 'Chinese cultural awareness for the wine industry'. The following article discusses the key points in her presentation.

# Bottoms up to doing business in the Greater China region

By Leonie McKeon<sup>1</sup>

**干杯** 'Gan bei' is the Chinese equivalent of 'bottoms up', and its near literal translation is 'dry cup', meaning you're not to leave anything in your glass. Believe it not, knowing or not knowing this piece of information can make or break a business deal in China and the greater China region. So, if you are thinking about dealing with this part of the world, then it's probably a good idea to keep reading this article.

## LET'S DRINK TO THAT

The Chinese phrase 'gan bei' is often used when Chinese hosts are proposing a toast at dinner. When the host offers the guest 'gan bei', the guest is expected to say the same back and then empty his or her glass. This may happen for a few rounds during the meal. The guest is expected to toast the host and say a few words of appreciation about the food and their friendship. There is a saying in Chinese business: friends before business.

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Many of our clients ask: "If I am put in the position of being a guest and I need to make a small speech, what is the culturally appropriate thing to say?" We suggest the following example:

*"We feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to visit your wonderful country. Thank you for your beautiful food and generous hospitality. We are looking forward to continuing to develop a long-term relationship. Your friendship is important to us and we wish you and your families' good health and a happy life. China has really exceeded our expectations. You have such beautiful architecture, friendly people and delicious food. We would really like you to visit us in Australia, as we would like to return this wonderful hospitality we have experienced in China."*

## REMEMBER

- if the Chinese person you are toasting is an important person, you need to place the rim of your wine glass below his or her's to show respect
- prepare your interpreter so he or she can translate your speech of appreciation to your host appropriately.

## 'CHEERS' AND 'GAN BEI'

In Australia, we have a similar word to 'gan bei', namely 'cheers'. Most of the time, we leave some alcohol in our glass in preparation for the next cheers. In China, people generally drink alcohol all at once. The aim is to drink a full glass in the shortest possible time, or drink as much as one possibly can.

## GETTING TO 'GAN BEI'

Before you are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to participate in a 'gan bei' session there are a few things you need to prepare, besides a large box of Panadol for your headache the next morning!

It is important to get the pronunciation of your Chinese contacts' names correct and understand which part of the name is the family name and which part is the given name.

Prepare some gifts that are meaningful and displayable. These gifts do not have to be expensive. Some appropriate gifts would include:

- something reuseable, such as a business card holder
- items made from Australian wool
- Australian opals (they can range from tie pins to plates).

Some gifts that are not appropriate include:

- clocks
- letter openers
- anything labelled 'Made in China'.

## TRANSLATE YOUR MATERIALS

You will need to have your promotional materials translated into Chinese, as this will demonstrate your level of commitment. It also shows respect for the language and cultural differences of your Chinese contacts.



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#### REMEMBER

- you only need to translate what is relevant to your Chinese counterpart
- not every English word is translatable due to the linguistic and cultural differences
- you may need to modify the content to suit the target audience
- keep the content simple
- use plenty of images.

#### THINGS YOU NEED TO LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING A TRANSLATION SERVICE

- a reputable translation service that understands the wine industry and, therefore, will understand wine terminology
- ask the translation service if it uses a second proof reader to ensure a perfect translation
- it is important that the service offers to check the finished product after the Chinese has been imported into your brochure or document.

#### IT'S ALL ABOUT THE 'RELATIONSHIP'

In China, no-one drinks by themselves, and each time the glass is raised it is aimed at manipulating the relationship in one way or another. A relationship in Chinese culture refers to a business relationship, and carries the same importance as a strong friendship, marriage or partnership. For any relationship to last the test of time it needs to be continually thought about and nurtured. There is another saying in Chinese business: no relationship, no business.

#### REMEMBER

- to conduct business with Chinese people, first you need to be their friend
- always use the formal approach when addressing a Chinese person, which is 'title' plus 'family name', e.g., Mr Wang

- understand that the family unit is important to Chinese people
- a handshake and a slight nod is the appropriate way to greet a Chinese person.

#### WAYS YOU CAN CONTINUE TO DEVELOP YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHINESE CONTACTS

- show interest and ask about their family
- keep in continual contact to show consistency
- acknowledge Chinese celebrations, such as Chinese New Year, the Moon Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival.

#### IT IS GOOD FOR OUR HEALTH

In Chinese culture, red wine is often perceived to have a strong medical purpose, therefore, food and wine matching is an unfamiliar concept. Australia is seen as a clean, green country and, therefore, buying Australian wine means you are buying a clean product.


#### REMEMBER

- the reasons for buying wine in Australia are not the same reasons wine is bought in China
- health is important to Chinese people.

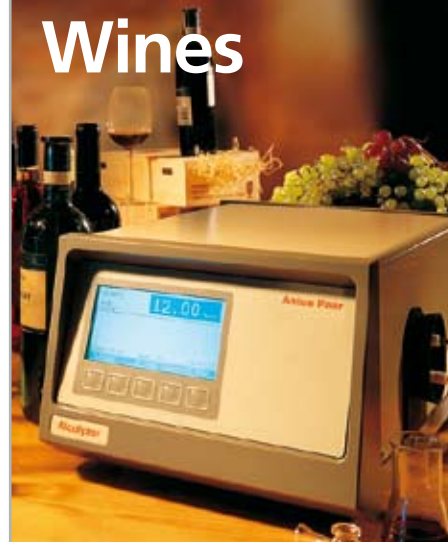
#### DO YOU HAVE 'FACE'? DO I HAVE 'FACE'? WHAT IS 'FACE'?

'Face' is not related to self-esteem. Rather, Chinese people see themselves as an extension of others, so it is important to be accepted into the group. Group recognition is more crucial than self-achievement.

'Face' has a strong relationship to the purchasing of Australian wine as Chinese people often give wine as a gift to give 'face'. Also, Chinese people often drink more than they are capable of for the sake of saving 'face'.

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