

Though France still leads the market in Hong Kong,  
old and new exclusive suppliers expect  
a great prospect in Italian wines: it is just a matter of time

# Our selection of five great wine distributors

*by Judith Ki photos by Keith Sin*

**F**acts show a significant progress in all wines since the government abolishment on wine duties in 2007, where Italian wines have grown by 198 and 287 per cent in volume and value respectively. Though our selection of the best fine wine distributors in Hong Kong imports and sells not only Italian wines, they have all utilized the opportunity alongside the increasing number of restaurants, promotional activities and better education. Some opt for medium family-owned vineyards to bring the authentic side of Italy while others are conscious on brands and estates for definite quality assurance. Regardless of whether they would in the future overrun French wines in terms of popularity and sales, these distributors are one of the core members to bring us great, exclusive wines for ultimate enjoyment.



## Lorence & Co.

For over 50 years ago it has been supplying Italian fine food to on and off premise clients before it began its wine distributing business, respecting the strong culture of food and wine pairing.

Director Arthur Tse brings in a total of 26 wine brands of near 300 bottles from regions including Piedmont, Tuscany, Abruzzo and Puglia, and has not long ago introduced wines from Sicily, which covered a vast price range to suit different clients' needs. Prosecco and grappa are too on the list.

Within, a representative one is Domini Veneti Amarone Espressioni, a set of five bottles made from the same grape varieties but grown in five valleys of the Valpolicella Classica region to tell how different soils and microclimates can affect wine production; while limited edition "Milo Manara" DOC from the same winery is a popular one among wine collectors. At the top floor of the same building lies its retail store and an open kitchen for pairing events.

### Lorence & Company

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10 Ka Yip Street, Chai Wan  
tel. +852 2557 6123  
[www.Lorence.hk](http://www.Lorence.hk)



## Liquid Assets

Beer and wine halve its business, and the majority of imported wines are from Italy. It includes 38 wineries from 12 regions, premium ones include Cascina Bruciata and Cavallotto from Piedmont, Fontodi from Tuscany and Brunelli from Veneto.

About three times a year, Italian General Manager Paolo Ponghellini and his staff explore wines back in his home country that carry potential to enter and blossom in the local wine scene.

The wineries share a common background. "We select the traditional style, mainly family-driven and owned vineyard estates," Paolo says. What adds value apart from its content and quality are the tradition, history, culture and artisanal production methods behind. Ferrari is an outstanding example. It has a wide client base, including Western and Chinese individual consumers, food and beverage companies, fine dining restaurants, hotels and cafés.

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## Valdivia Ltd.

Operating since 1975 with arguably the oldest history, half Italian and half Danish Managing Director Claudia Capelvenere continues with her mother's business, distributing Italian fine wines exclusively to the Hong Kong wine scene.

With the goal to "supply and keep clients happy and let them appreciate wines that value for money", at retail shop Castello del Vino it sells an extensive range of near 700 wines from 59 both family-owned vineyards and world-renowned estates.

Apart from Amarone, Barolo, Barbaresco and Chianti – the four major Italian wines to serve developed palates, it offers easy-drinking wines for young clientele who are in love with exploration, such as 2010 Zonin Valpolicella Ripasso.

She also brings in air-shipped Italian food, yet believes that people should not rely too heavily on food and wine pairing because the overall experience is what brings true enjoyment.

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## Jebsen Fine Wines

Having just celebrated its 22th anniversary, it is one of the wine distributors with a long history in Hong Kong. As well as off-premises and on-trade sales that include restaurants, it targets near 3,000 individuals from Jebsen Fine Wines Club and more in the online shop, offering wines from around the world. It carries eight exclusive Italian wine brands, namely Marchesi de Frescobaldi, Luce and Pio Cesare. They are world-renowned names yet also family brands with 700 or 800 years of history. Given that "wine-making is an art but too about science", General Manager Donny Ho believes the combination of refined traditional methods and high level of technology that only branded estates can have guarantees the production of top quality fine wines. Donny has recently brought in Gulfi from Sicily, a relatively less popular region among local wine consumers. He intended to bring excitement on the palates and feedbacks are positive.

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## Hopant International

Founder and director Calvin Yuen has been particularly fond of Italian wines since over a decade ago, and passion is what drove him to further explore via the role of a distributor.

He receives wine samples now and then, remarks notable ones, and in his annual trip to Italy he visits respective vineyards to taste other wines and meet the manufacturers. Majority of wines chosen are made from medium to medium-large sized Tuscany vineyards exclusive in Hong Kong. Others include Umbria, Piedmont and Vapolicella.

Within, Recchia Amarone DOC 2007 and Ca'Bertoldi Amarone DOCG 2004 have gained popularity while Pietro Rinaldi Barbaresco DOCG 2008 is one that enthusiasts could enjoy at 8 ½ Otto e Mezzo BOMBANA, perhaps the most famous Italian restaurant. "For most Hong Kong people and new drinkers, they must taste the wines along with food for a better exposure and greater impact," he says. 🍷

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