



English butlers find a new lease of life with super rich Chinese

Another indicator in the shift of wealth from West to East came to our attention recently: the increase in the number of English butlers invited to work for super rich Chinese and Russian clients, according to Bloomberg. It reports that the Guild of Professional English Butlers trained 20 per cent more butlers this year and is placing them with clients as soon as they are ready. As the guild's website explains, "Butler training is, in essence, training on how to provide outstanding service to an employer." W. Somerset Maugham once observed, "American women expect to find in their husbands a level of perfection that English women only hope to find in their butlers".

Fund managers, take a bow

Well done to the fund management industry for raising HK\$600,000 for the charity Returns Invested in Children and Education at a dinner this week. Some 200 fund managers and corporate service providers attended what was the organisation's first fund-raising event in Hong Kong. It was started in 2006 and raises funds from the investment community in Hong Kong, Singapore and Tokyo. It passes the money on to organisations in the region involved in improving the quality of life of children in giving them access to shelter, health care and education. Three children's charities this year have benefitted from the group's donations. These are: Goutte D'Eau Damnok Toek, an organisation in Cambodia working with children living with disabilities; Starchildren/CWS, a group in Nepal working with children infected, and affected by HIV/Aids; and Angkor Hospital for Children, a paediatric hospital and education centre for Cambodian health workers.

It's bonus time again

Bonus season is coming round again. First off the block in Asia is Jefferies, which made its announcement on Tuesday. A high proportion of bonuses were guaranteed so most staff will have been happy. Those who did not have guaranteed bonuses were mostly research support staff and these were awarded on the basis of what they could expect in an "average" year. Jefferies' research had a good year, acquiring top positions in five categories in the Asia Money Equity Research awards, more than any other broker. Nevertheless we hear not everyone at Jefferies went home happy.

Good vintage on the mainland

Chinese wines took the top four places in a China vs Bordeaux blind tasting competition on Wednesday in Beijing, Reuters reported. But it wasn't exactly a thrashing of the world's most elite wines by Chinese upstarts. The wines were all red – well, what else would you expect in the People's Republic? – mostly cabernet sauvignon-based Bordeaux-style blends. The Chinese side was represented by five of what are considered among the best Chinese wines produced. The French wines were five reds from Bordeaux negociants and commercial labels, not chateau-bottled wines. It didn't replicate the 1976 tasting of California vs Bordeaux in Paris, in which a top red and white from Napa Valley beat out famous French labels. But it shows Chinese wines have the potential to become great, said Jim Boyce, who helped organise the event. "The one thing this tasting showed is that China can make good wines," said Boyce, who runs grapewallofchina.com, a blog about Chinese wine.

Revenge over champagne

While the French aren't afraid of blind tastings, they've been known



Calling your bubbly "champagne" can lead to all sorts of hassles.

to fight dirty. They were flabbergasted years ago when Australian champagnes comfortably thrashed the French bubbly. So they didn't get mad – they got even. To our best recollection, they succeeded in using litigation to compel the Aussies to stop describing their award-winning bubbly as "champagne" because "champagne" could only refer to something produced within the Champagne region in France.

Pawn shops never had it so good

One of the few growth areas in Greece's anaemic economy is the pawn shop sector. They are springing up all over Athens, Reuters reports, as citizens hunt for instant cash. The government has issued guidelines to protect citizens from being ripped off by unscrupulous pawn shops buying their gold and silver. "We urge consumers to weigh their objects at home," an agency said. Consumers should seek independent valuations of their family silver, check gold prices and compare pawn shop offers for jewellery, it warned. "Fliers and advertising material promising particularly high prices should be treated with caution." One poster at a bus stop reads: "In Gold We Trust".

> CONTACT US

Have you got any stories that Lai See should know about? E-mail them to howard.winn@scmp.com