

SE **Business**
HD **French boss wants more bubbles in economy**

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Philippe Guettat would love Australians to have a bottle of chilled champagne on their dining table — not just at Christmas or on a birthday but all year round, taking a leaf out of the French way of life.

This is not an unusual dream given Mr Guettat is the global chief executive of Martell Mumm Perrier-Jouet, a division of French drinks giant Pernod Ricard, putting him in charge of iconic champagne brands GH Mumm and Perrier-Jouet.

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He is also the boss of Martell cognac, which due to the austerity drive in **China** has suffered sharp sales declines, making Australia's double-digit growth in champagne consumption even more alluring to the French **group**.

Mr Guettat believes as Australians increasingly grab for a bottle of champagne — one of his brands preferably — the nation could quickly rise up the ranks to become one of the biggest drinkers of bubbly in the world. Australia has climbed from eighth to sixth-biggest importer of champagne, helped by slowing sales in other parts of the world beset by financial crisis and recession, just as local drinkers are enjoying champagne at sliding retail prices.

"I think we should see this progress even faster, and I believe very quickly Australia will be a top five champagne market globally. This could happen pretty quickly, actually," Mr Guettat told The Australian from inside the Mumm marquee at Melbourne's Spring Racing carnival, where the **brand** is official champagne of the event.

It is estimated 10,000 bottles of Mumm will be opened at Flemington over the carnival, which along with its sponsorship of Formula 1 racing are the champagne house's key promotional platforms for the Australian market.

Mr Guettat said Australia was perfectly placed to consume more champagne. "First of all it has a strong **wine** culture, a lot of understanding of what **wine** is really about," he said. "Australia also has a strong bubbly culture with very good sparkling **wine** here, and really that's helped to build awareness of champagne. There is also a strong aspiration here for the French way of life, and a lot of kinship as well between the Australian and French culture." Mumm has poured **millions** of dollars into the Australian market over the past four years, helping the nation become the champagne house's biggest export market. More Mumm is **sold** in Australia than in traditionally strong champagne markets including Britain, Germany and Italy.

Mumm, the third-biggest selling champagne **brand** in Australia, is still easily outsold by Moët & Chandon, which is believed to have more than 50 per cent of the local market.

Champagne sales in Australia have been boosted by the relatively buoyant economy, especially when compared with the struggling economies of Europe and North America, while a strong exchange rate combined with intense competition between retailers Woolworths and Coles has pushed down the average price of champagne to historically low levels. Mr Guettat said Mumm was growing faster than the market and taking customers from other brands. He said the key to fuelling growth in Australia was to widen the beverage's appeal.

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