

SE General
HD Rough reds sour top wine exports
BY Ray Jordan
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At first glance — and even a second — the bottle of wine appeared to be an Australian icon, a Penfolds Bin 389.

The label design, size, colour and even the bottle's fine laser etching code all indicated the real thing.

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But it wasn't.

This was a fake, one of millions sold in China's retail stores and bought by The Weekend West for about \$80 from a small shop in Guangzhou.

The genuine article generally sells for about \$150.

Subtle differences on the label suggested it was a fake but the ultimate proof was in the tasting.

The wine bought in China, sealed under cork, was put to the test against the genuine article — a bottle from Steves Fine Wine and Food in Nedlands sealed with a screw cap.

Helping the assessment were Steves wine manager Michael Hartley and Lamont's wine consultant Erin Larkin.

The wines were tasted blind and the result was unanimous — one was definitely not the real thing and clearly inferior.

The bottles were examined in detail after the tasting and it was evident the colour of the Penfolds name was slightly different, the label edges were a little too sharp (though you needed good eyes it pick it up), the laser etching was faint and the quality of the paper inferior.

But without close examination, all agreed the fake looked good, even down to the "Penfolds" stamped on the cork, though it was inferior to what Penfolds uses for its export wines.

The wines and bottles were sent to John Watling, at the University of WA's centre of forensic science, who did a more rigorous analysis.

He confirmed the wine from China was different from the one bought in Perth.

He pointed to the wine being a blend of Australian wine, probably wine concentrate, and wine from another country.

"We have tested samples obtained in Asia purporting to be Australian wine where the contents had definitely never seen a vineyard — just apple juice and chemicals," Professor Watling said.

Wine counterfeiting is big business in China and, despite what authorities might claim, much of it is run by heavy-handed people not keen on having their profitable businesses threatened by scrutiny.

The wines targeted are generally **brand** leaders, such as Penfolds from Australia and First Growths from Bordeaux, where the profit margins are greater.

Trade fairs in Guangzhou have had “Benfolds” for sale and Penfolds Bin 888 to cash in on the **Chinese** lucky number eight.

While acknowledging the problem, Penfolds is particularly guarded about the technology used to protect its brands and how it detects the fakes.

A Penfolds spokesman said there were a number of aspects of the label, capsule, seal and bottle that gave information to detect a fake.

“Penfolds protects its rights vigilantly and has in place dedicated practices to combat counterfeiting and fraudulent mimicking of our **brand** and products,” the spokesman said.

‘One **wine** was definitely not the real thing and

clearly inferior.’ ”

RE china : China | austr : Australia | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | bric : BRIC Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dvpcosz : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia

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