

**BITE-SIZED** by Summer Block and Apple Mandy

## foodie fashion

Anyone who's ever seen a photo of celebrity chef Mario Batali will have noticed his bright orange Crocs, the comfy, if outrageous, plastic clogs he wears while stomping around the kitchen. Batali claims to have more than 30 pairs, and he always keeps a spare set or two in the dishwasher, warm and ready to wear.

The very colorful Crocs have made their way into many kitchens, where chefs appreciate footwear that's comfortable, non-slip and spill-resistant. But plastic clogs aren't the only gourmet fashion must-have.

Buzz Headgear, now available at Hotwind stores in Shanghai, is increasingly the preferred choice instead of traditional chef's hats

or hairnets in kitchens everywhere. These head covers made of fabric can be worn in a number of different ways, allowing for the sort of individual expression iconoclastic chefs crave. And Buzz's wide variety of colors and prints are certainly more stylish than the usual cafeteria-style headwear.

Of course, a classic's chef's uniform still requires the traditional tall white hat (or toque) and matching double-breasted white jacket. For chefs who want to play with convention, custom companies like Crooked Brook ([www.crookedbrook.com](http://www.crookedbrook.com)) will create toques and jackets in any shape and color you can imagine – even bright orange, to match your Crocs. ■



Crooked Brook



Crooked Brook

## saving grace

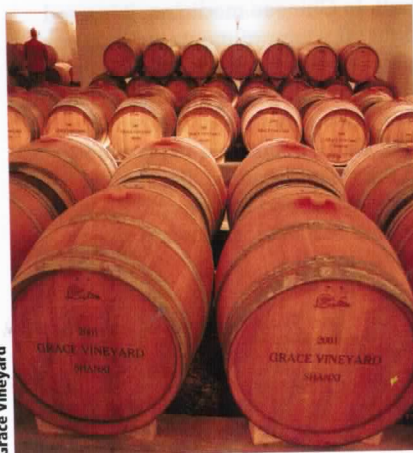
During a wine dinner held recently at Gui Hua Lou in the Shangri-La Pudong Hotel, CEO Judy Leissner commented: "There was tremendous effort, time, and resources dedicated to producing a high-quality Chinese wine." In all likelihood she was not referring to Chinese winemakers Great Wall or Dynasty but rather Grace Vineyard, China's first boutique winery, which happens to have been co-founded by her father.

Located in Taigu county, 40 km

south of Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province, Grace Vineyard (GV) was established in 1997 by M. Sylvain Janvier and Leissner's father C.K. Chan with the assistance of Professor Denis Boubals. In this balmy climate, grapes mature between July and August and harvesting begins in September. Last year, GV produced 500,000 bottles for sale throughout China. The vineyard pays careful attention to the quality of the grapes, from planting to hand-picking. All grape varieties and vintages are labeled according to international regulations and standards – in other words, nothing is fake.

Grace Vineyard's motto is that wine-making should be an art and not merely a commercial enterprise – an admirable aim, though one that keeps production quantity very low.

Grace Vineyard premium Chardonnay and Cabernet Merlot were both awarded 81 points out of 100 by *Wine Spectator* (November 2005). Wine expert Janice Robinson was impressed with Chairman's Reserve 2001, praising its "real fruit impact on the palate, unlike so many Chinese reds." ■



Grace Vineyard

## garlic and sapphires

With nine years' practice, the *Los Angeles Times* food critic Ruth Reichl is an expert at keeping her cool, a must when a typical day involves receiving an inbox full of hate mail and an answering machine full of messages from angry callers. But her cool factor only increased after replacing Bryan Miller as critic for the *New York Times*' influential food section.

That poise is clearly evident in the pages of her third memoir, *Garlic and Sapphires: The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise*, wherein Reichl reveals the wide discrepancy between service levels and food quality offered to different classes of patron. If you're dining with a high-profile government official or powerful CEO, don't be surprised if the raspberries on your dessert plate are larger than those of ordinary customers.

Cited by many as one of the world's best food critics, Reichl's is at heart a down-to-earth sort; in other words she expends her talents on more than just *haute cuisine*. For example, she covers tucked-away Korean restaurants and unpretentious Japanese eateries to sample handmade *wasabi*. Not content to simply eat out, Reichl also includes her own recipes for home-made *gougeres*, spaghetti carbonara, *matzo brei* and more.

Truly "a critic in disguise", Reichl visited each restaurant she reviewed as a different character: elderly Molly, hippie Brenda, demanding Emily, and several other eccentric personalities. For all her fiery opinions, Reichl's core message is simple: dining out should be a worthwhile experience for everyone. She encourages unappreciated, ordinary diners to speak up and ask for the service and quality they deserve. ■

