

China develops fine taste for SA product



EXPERIENCE: Food & Beverage Import-Export's Frank Bueti, Tony De Corso and Michael Higgs in the Central Market.

Picture: BRODIE CAMPBELL

ADELAIDE food and wine exporter Food & Beverage Import-Export is closing in on a dream of building substantial new markets in China with a range of South Australian products.

Partners Michael Higgs Sr, his son Michael Higgs Jr, Tony De Corso and Frank Bueti have taken the company from start-up to making significant progress in developing partnerships with key Chinese importers and building strong demand.

They were recognised for their success at the Hong Kong Australia Business Awards in August by winning a special judges award.

Food & Beverage Import-Export has been developed to provide a range of food and wine products to meet the fast-growing demand for higher quality food and wine from the increasingly affluent Chinese population.

Mr Higgs Jr, who has a long

SILENT ACHIEVER

NIGEL AUSTIN



history in importing from Hong Kong and China with family company R2 Procurement Partners, says the partners are confident that there is significant potential for South Australian food and wine products in China.

"They have signalled that they are going to want an increasing range of food and wine products from South Australia and they already have a good awareness of the state and its wine regions such as McLaren Vale and the Barossa Valley," Mr Higgs says.

He says while Food & Beverage Import-Export is a relatively new company, it has done pretty well

pretty quickly and looks like it's going to grow quite significantly.

"Right now we are growing at a rate we are comfortable with and we are expecting significant expansion in the next 12 months," he says.

And they have just opened a small office in Hong Kong to help promote products from the South Australian companies they are representing.

"They see South Australia as producing very clean and green products and that is the focus of our business," Mr De Corso says.

"The increasingly wealthy Chinese consumers want to be sure they are getting good quality products and they are also looking for good value for money."

Mr De Corso says Food & Beverage Import-Export is like a conduit between South Australia and China and Hong Kong.

"We've sold container loads of

wine and they've asked us to go back and present a range of seafood, pastry and more wine brands which we are doing in the next few weeks," he says.

While the partners are patiently building the business, they hope it will reach the stage where they can focus on it.

"We are very patient at this stage because we all have other businesses and we are not desperate for Food & Beverage Import-Export to grow too rapidly," he says.

The Higgs family business R2 Procurement Partners, which won an import award at the Hong Kong Australia Business Awards, has been operating in China and Hong Kong for close to 30 years.

"We have good knowledge and experience in doing business in the region which is helping significantly with the new business," Mr Higgs says.