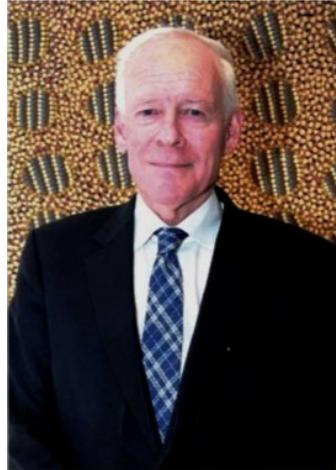


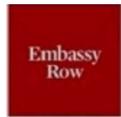
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Australians toast day with wine
Ambassador George gives annual reception a vintage twist with festival



AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY TOASTS HOLIDAY WITH WINE FEST

BY **THÉRÈSE MARGOLIS**
The News



Breaking with tradition and the usual midday diplomatic reception to commemorate the anniversary of the 1788 arrival of the First Fleet of 11 convict ships from Great Britain and the raising of the Union Jack at Sydney Cove, Australian Ambassador to Mexico Timothy Spencer George and his wife Geraldine George decided to instead mark their national day last month with a trade show and tasting of one of that country's premiere exports, wine.

The daylong festival, which was cosponsored by the Australian Embassy, Wine Australia, Riedel and Wine Spoor (one of the major importers of Australian wines in Mexico), included the participation of 60 Australian estates from 12 different regions of the country.

"Australia is one of the most important wine producers in the world," George told his guests at the start of the event.

"We produce excellent wines and are the fourth-largest exporter worldwide in terms of value." (Aus-

tralia is the fifth-largest exporter in terms of volume).

But while, according to the Australian Grape and Wine Authority (AGWA), global Australian wine sales accounted for about \$181 million in 2014, Mexico purchased only \$1 million, down from \$14 million in 2006.

Notwithstanding, George said that with the promise of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) – a proposed regional regulatory and investment treaty with an eye to increased trade that includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam – two-way commercial relations between Australia and Mexico will no doubt grow, including in terms of wine sales.

"My vision regarding the future relationship between Australia and Mexico is not limited to boosting the sale of Australian wines," he added.

"It would be fantastic if we could see greater cooperation between the two countries in terms of all aspects of wine production."

George pointed out that for nearly a century, Australian enologists have worked closely with their coun-

terparts in France, Portugal, Spain and Chile and said that there could be a similar interchange with Mexican wineries.

"Australia, with the 12th-largest economy in the world and a solid economic model that has a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific region, has very good relations with Mexico," he said.

"However, there is enormous potential to broaden those relations and I see wine playing an important role in that process."

George said the exchange of high-level visits in 2014 – including a state visit to Canberra in November – have helped to set the groundwork for closer binational cooperation.

Currently, combined two-way trade is about \$4 billion, making Mexico Australia's largest trade partner in Latin America.

Australian investment in Mexico amounts to about \$5 billion and is primarily in the financial services sector through the Sydney-based Macquarie Group's infrastructure fund and real estate financial holdings with a combined worth of about \$4 billion.



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Australia produces excellent wines and are the fourth-largest exporter worldwide in terms of value.●●

TIMOTHY SPENCER GEORGE
Australian ambassador to Mexico

Mexican investment in Australia has largely been concentrated in private real estate and manufacturing, although one of Mexico's largest food companies, tortilla manufacturer Gruma, has a plant in Victoria and in 2009 Mexican manufacturing company Metalsa acquired two manufacturing plants in Melbourne.

George said that two-way cooperation between his country and Mexico also includes agriculture, where he said Australian firms offer expertise and knowhow in issues of water management, improving land productivity, fostering

agrobusiness activities, embracing new technology and encouraging investment.

There is a comprehensive framework of bilateral agreements which supports increased cooperation, including a bilateral Plan of Action, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in Agriculture, an MOU on Mining, an MOU on Political Consultations, an MOU on Education and Training and an MOU on Energy.

In 2009, Mexico joined the Australian-led Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute (GCCSI) as a founding member.

Australia Day marks the anniversary of the landing of the first European settlers on that continent, led by Capitan Arthur Phillip, who unfurled the Union Jack in what is now Sydney Cove in the early morning of Jan. 26, 1788, proclaiming British sovereignty over Australia's eastern seaboard.

The commonwealth was formally declared Jan. 1, 1901, but for the country's citizenry, Jan. 26 has always been considered the country's Foundation Day, or Anniversary Day of the New South Wales colony, which in a sense was to become Australia.



New Zealand Ambassador Clare Ann Kelly, right, with Australian Embassy First Secretary William Graeme Page Blomfield

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Australian Ambassador to Mexico Timothy Spencer George, right, with Wine Australia regional director for North America Angela Slade