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London palates experience Bric wines

By Louise Lucas

British companies are desperately trying to sell goods and services to the fast-growing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China. But this week sees a role reversal as the Bric countries bring their wines and local liquors to the UK.

In a first for the London International Wine Fair, now in its 33rd year, delegations from all four Bric countries are in attendance. That is despite the fact that Indian wines or Chinese baijiu roll off the tongue rather less easily than, say, Burgundy and vodka.

Barry Dass, managing director of India's Namaste Wines, concedes that the nation's wines have not had the best reputation. "But better days are to come, and the potential for Indian wines is huge in the international markets," he says.

On Wednesday, buyers at the fair were keeping an open mind. Bibendum, the independent wine merchant, said it was already shipping wines from India. "It's not the biggest player but they are doing some interesting stuff," said Michael Saunders, managing director.

Brazil is hoping to make a name for itself alongside its better-known neighbours – at least by oenophiles – Argentina and Chile. Like the former, Brazil's wine industry has its roots with Italian immigrants. Although exports are relatively young, the country has scored a coup: Brazilian wines will be among those served during the Olympics.

The country is promoting its sparkling wines, which will be priced similarly to their (equally novel) English peers. Mr Saunders, who said that Bibendum was in talks to secure Brazilian partners, added that Brazil's climate meant many of the wines had European nuances.

"I think there's an element of romance about South America," he said. Add in London's "huge meat revolution", with proliferating steak and burger restaurants, and he sees a buoyant market for Brazilian wines in the UK.

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