

AUTOMOTIVE

Lexus series compares culinary arts to car craftsmanship

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Lexus has teamed with Cond Nast on a content series. Image credit: Cond Nast

By SARAH JONES

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is exploring the stories of the paths tastemaking chefs and food purveyors take to mirror its own creative and artisan process.

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Produced for Lexus by Cond Nast Creative Studio, "Journeys of Taste" is unfolding in four parts across titles including *Vogue*, *Cond Nast Traveller* and *GQ*. Through this first creative partnership between Lexus and Cond Nast International, the automaker will be able to reach a global audience of readers in almost a dozen markets.

"At Lexus, we strive to create amazing experiences for our clients," said Spiros Fotinos, general manger **Lexus** global brand division, Nagoya, Japan. "But we want to do that in our own unique way, by defining a unique point of view, a unique taste.

"Just like a great chef or a great wine maker, we consider all elements from the raw materials, the design, the driving feeling to how we will ensure everyone feels like a guest in our home when they visit us," he said. "The culinary series provides a platform to share those values around a passion point that appeals to many luxury consumers."

Food for thought

The first episode of Journeys of Taste debuted on Dec. 4 across *Vogue* digital platforms, including its video hub.

This chapter centers on vintner Emma Gao, who is working to turn Northwestern China into a winemaking hub on par with Australia or California. In the five-minute short, she explains how she is turning around the view of Chinese wine as something mass-produced into a labor of love that is more focused on quality than quantity.

Ms. Gao studied winemaking in France for years, bringing back processes such as using French oak barrels to cold macerate grapes.

The camera follows Ms. Gao as she heads to her family's vineyard in a Lexus vehicle. Footage lets viewers into the first day of the harvest of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.

Future episodes with other tastemakers will premiere in the coming months, through May 2019.

Profiled in the second installment is chef Vladimir Mukhin of The White Rabbit, who is pushing Russian cuisine forward with farm-to-table dining. Mr. Mukhin is shown traveling around Moscow for elements of a new dish.

Chef Miles Thompson will appear in the third film. The culinary talent takes Lexus' UX on a trip to create a new food project.



Lexus UX. Image credit: Lexus

Episodes will run in markets including Australia, Canada, China, France, Japan, India, the Middle East, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"Working with Cond Nast allowed us to ensure that the stories are told in an authentic and engaging way for their audiences while staying true to our brand," Mr. Fotinos said. "In addition, culinary is a territory that can be explored in many ways, so we can appeal to the varied audiences of the different titles.

"Furthermore, the Cond Nast titles have a broad geographic and demographic reach, and the digital-focused delivery will allow us to understand how audiences are engaging," he said.

This is also the first time that Cond Nast International will be cross-promoting native content among its brands, giving Lexus' videos an even wider audience.

Lexus is the first client of the newly formed Cond Nast Creative Studio, which brings together the publisher's 11 creative content studios into one entity. This Cond Nast International unit will work with brands on everything from events and native content to custom research and talent consulting.

"First of all, Cond Nast was able to provide a one-stop shop solution from ideation to production and media buys," Mr. Fotinos said. "Additionally, we have established relationships with Cond Nast in all our regions, making the partnership easier.

"Finally, the Cond Nast titles give us the right coverage in the markets and to the audiences we wanted to reach," he said.

Telling stories

Beyond Lexus, Cond Nast International has been forging long-form content partnerships with brands.

For instance, Italian fashion label Gucci teamed with Cond Nast men's magazine *British GQ* to highlight the stories of creative individuals.

The second installment of their collaborative series "The Performers" follows five influential men as they travel to a place that shaped them. Rather than one-off articles, today native content partnerships often revolve around ongoing campaigns or series, allowing a brand and publication to make more of an impact ([see story](#)).

"I think a longer-term program helps the consumer 'converse' with the brand as opposed to being 'talked at' for 30 seconds," said Vincent Krsulich senior vice president of **Martini Media**, New York. "It also gives Cond Nast an opportunity to study and track the interactions and engagements.

"If Cond does it right, they can provide real, thoughtful insights at the campaign's end," he said.

At a time when luxury brands are placing so much emphasis on tracking the consumer journey, new research shows that consumers spend the majority of this time in the influence phase, where brands are missing out.

According to Cond Nast, the beauty industry sees the most time spent in the influence phase, taking up 80 percent of

the customer journey. Fashion and tech follow beauty but with significantly lower time spent in influence, at 69 percent and 65 percent respectively ([see story](#)).

"I read some crazy stat this year that nearly 90 percent of TV viewers skip advertising," Mr. Krsulich said. "If you are a big luxury car brand like Lexus, you really need to think about your media mix.

"Branded content in video form is a great way to tell a connected story through sight, sound and motion," he said. "Many argue that branded content gets more attention and creates a better connection between the consumer and the product.

"Cond Nast specializes in a luxury audience, so it makes sense that Lexus would turn to them to help create a program through the voices of *Vogue*, *Traveler* and *GQ*."

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