

The Burgundy Briefing

news, views and tastings

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News

New Record for a case of wine at auction

A 12 bottle case of Romanée-Conti, Domaine de la Romanée Conti 1978 fetched a record £93,500 (\$175, 032) at Christie's, London on 15th June. The previous record was a case of 6 magnums of Romanée-Conti, Domaine de la Romanée Conti 1985, which made \$170,375 at Christie's, New York in March of this year.

The sale itself was highly successful, reaching around twice the pre-sale estimate. Many of the individual lots far exceeded their pre-sale estimates. A single magnum of La Tâche 1945 fetched £34,100, over ten times its pre-sale estimate. Chris Munro, responsible for the auction, declared it 'a superb sale with frantic activity both in the room and on the banks of telephones throughout the day'. The sale reaped the highest total for Christie's London Wine Department since the Millennium Sale in October 1999.

Positive Burgundy export results:

In challenging times for French wine, Burgundy is among the few regions to offer positive year-end results with 2% increase in volume and 6.5% increase by value. This is largely due to strong export figures recorded in the last quarter of 2005 – an improvement of 21% by volume and 14% by value for the same period in 2004.

Falling Land Values

Figures released by rural investment specialists, SAFER show the price of wine-growing land in Burgundy has fallen by 2.5% in 2005. This decline in land prices is approximately average for French AOC vineyards, although in the Sud-Ouest, Languedoc-Roussillon and Vallée du Rhône prices declined by over 10%.

New proposals received with resistance:

Proposals by Dominique Bussereau, France's Agriculture Minister, in his national plan for the wine industry, have created a ripple of disquiet in Burgundy. Of principal concern is the proposal that only Vin de Pays wines may be identified by the grape variety, which would affect the labelling of Bourgogne Pinot Noir and Bourgogne Chardonnay.

New winemaker at Maison Joseph Drouhin:

New winemaker Jérôme Faure-Brac has joined the team at Maison Joseph Drouhin. Formerly at Maison Albert Bichot, Faure-Brac will take full responsibility at Drouhin at the end of 2007.

Burgundy targets Russia:

In 2006 Russia will join South Korea as the core of Burgundy's promotional campaign. Russia is now the 12th most important market by value for Burgundy – a marked change from 20 years ago, when the consumption of wine was negligible. The BIVB organised a seminar in Beaune on the 8th June to enable its members to learn more about this emerging market. Many subjects were discussed including the distribution between importers and retailers, the legislative framework, modes of promotion and consumer profiling.

Further Fall in Wine Sales in French Restaurants:

Wine sales in French restaurants have fallen a further 2% by volume and 5% by value in 2005. In an effort to adapt to demand for wine by the glass, the BIVB has designed a high-quality 10-litre bag-in-box that can be personalised by each producer.