

VINTAGE AND MARKET REPORT

THE 2001 VINTAGE

Introduction

After the hype around the 2000 vintage, and whatever 2001 produces it will be difficult to claim it is superior to 2000. The new 2001 vintage is generally considered to be between 2000 and 1999, there are however some very contrasting situations which make it a very difficult to give an accurate overall impression.

VOLUMES

	<u>2001</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>
<i>Production in thousands of hectolitres</i>				
Appellation Contrôlée red	5,859	5,989	5,928	5,695
Appellation Contrôlée white	701	816	879	884
Vin de table red	20	20	21	31
Vin de table white	18	21	28	52
Wines sent for distillation	182	259	593	246
Total	6.780	7,105	7,449	6,908
Number of growers	NA	11,760	12,052	12,455
Planted area (in hectares)	118,164	118,156	116,679	115,216
*Average AOC yield (hectolitres per hectare)	56,9	60,4	64,3	60,2

Note: Average AOC yield calculated as: (AOC volumes produced + volumes sent for distillation) / planted AOC area..

The figures given above may differ slightly from those given in previous Vintage and Market Reports. This is due to the fact that the figures used for each are based on early statistics from French customs and are subject to slight modification later. The discrepancies are minor.

The 2001 harvest produced 5% less than 2000 and 9% less than 1999. Bordeaux now produces an average of 7 million hectolitres on a regular basis, which is 40% higher than an average crop 20 years ago.

White wine production continues its clear downward trend. The best dry whites are excellent and deservedly sought after. They sell well, are profitable and are in short supply. Other producers, churning out standard quality wine, with no vice but no virtue are faced with serious distribution difficulties, the wines soon lose their freshness, prices keep dropping and cellars keep filling. As a result many growers are re-grafting their vines with more lucrative red varieties.

The number of hectares under vine seems to be stagnating but this does not reflect the true situation, as plots are temporarily out of production after having been pulled up for re-conversion to red varieties or higher quality root stock. European regulations severely restrict the attribution of new planting rights, so all new plots are snapped up as soon as they become available.. Over the last five years Brussels has authorised France to plant a total of **10,000 extra hectares, of this Bordeaux has been allocated 12%.**

In the future we will probably see a very slow and gradual increase in planted area as growers acquire new rights. However this increase in vineyard capacity will be compensated by a decrease in overall tonnage as the search for higher quality leads to more modest yields. It is conceivable that in some exceptional circumstances volumes will reach the billion bottle mark. Reaching 7,5 million hectolitres is certainly not an objective but merely a marker that illustrates the very large volumes of wine produced around Bordeaux.

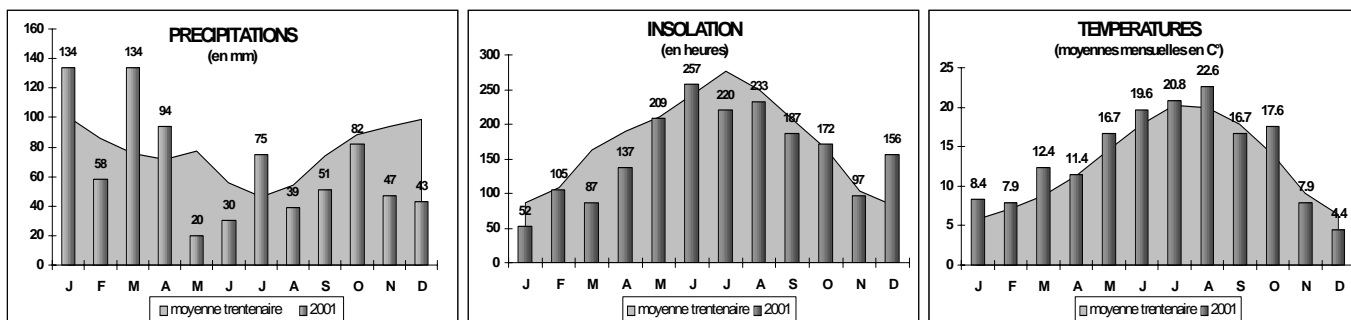
There is, however, another line of thought, which argues that the market is increasingly selective, allowing only the best wines to stay and condemning sub standard wines to disappear. The argument goes that this will gradually lead to the uprooting of correlating vineyards and the reduction of planted area by 20%.

Should Bordeaux seek to maintain or reduce volumes produced ? The answer lies in the strategy it chooses to define and pursue...but more about that later.

THE WEATHER

Looking at monthly weather charts over the last few years comparing them to 30 year averages, it is notable that temperatures have very often been higher than normal. This is just one more piece of evidence showing global warming to be a reality.

The tables below show weather readings taken at Mérignac Weather Centre for 2001 compared with the 30-year average. Credit CIVB internet site.



After almost continuous rainfall during the last two months of 2001, and January to May saw a total of 440 mm of rain which is almost identical to 2000. Both years are well above normal but in 2001 the rain came sooner, leaving May to be very dry when it was very wet the year before. Temperatures and sunshine were also higher than in 2000. Flowering conditions were excellent. The flowering process itself was quick (which is good as it preserves the chances of consistency and evenness of grape maturity) but not always completed to perfection, as signs of *coulture* and *millerandage* were detected. This was caused by hydric shock (a result of the dry weather in May) but was only evident on those sandy plots with very little capacity for water retention .

It was soon very clear that 2001 was going to be much less prolific than the previous two vintages as bunches were fewer and smaller.

Then came June, which was dry, warm and sunny (rather more sun than in 2000) and July, which was warm but also dull and very wet ; June 2000 wasn't great but June 2001 was even wetter especially the first half of the month. The Entre-Deux-Mers suffered from hail damage during violent storms in the last week in July.

Mid July is the time of colour change. At this stage the vine needs a hydric shock as the sudden shortage of water in the ground, coupled with a rise in temperature and a lot of sunshine, stimulates the plant into channelling its energy towards fruit ripening rather than shoot growth. Too much water and not enough sun prevented this desired phenomenon. The effect was to spread the veraison over a longer than ideal time span, hence annihilating the benefits of the quick and even flowering. The excess water caused the grapes to swell (berry size was larger in 2001 than in 98, 99 or 2000). This characteristic was more heavily marked for Merlot than Cabernet Sauvignon and was evident right up to picking.

August was much dryer than the 30 year average but the little rain that did fall contributed to maintaining high levels of moisture in the ground and preventing the sought after hydric shock mentioned above.

It was crucial for growers to be in the vineyard, monitoring the evolution of each plot, anticipating the consequences and taking appropriate action. Some of the ways growers could help the grapes reach full maturity were : reducing and spreading the fruit load, removing new growth shoots, eliminating late ripening bunches, allowing more sunlight to reach the grapes by removing lower foliage, sewing grass between rows to absorb excess nitrogen and ensuring good protection against mildew.

September was relatively cool ; temperatures slumped to 12°C south of Bordeaux and kept just 2°C warmer north of the city. The little rain that did fall in September (51mm) was concentrated around two storms one on the 21st which hit the whole area and the second on the 28th , which only hit the Médoc.

Despite plentiful sunshine, temperatures remained relatively low. The cool weather favoured long, slow ripening which is conducive to finesse and elegance in the wine. To benefit from the slow ripening the grapes must be in a perfect state of health to hold out without rotting.

October was dry (82mm of rain), warm (the average temperature was 18°C, which is 4°C higher than the norm) and sunny (172 hours of sunshine), providing fabulous conditions for making sweet white wines.

Then temperatures dropped significantly but the weather remained dry and sunny. The year closed with an exceptionally cold spell for a couple of weeks before Christmas leading some to believe that maybe the weather isn't warming up after all !

THE WINES

Dry white wines

The cool weather in September contributed to preserving the fresh, fruity primary aromas throughout vinification. In 2000 the heat of the sun had sometimes burnt the grapes producing wines that could seem a little heavy. This year conditions were excellent and the wines reflect it. They are beautifully balanced, showing clean, expressive, fragrance on the nose, with good round fruit on the palate, supported by excellent acidity. 2001 is a very good year for dry white Bordeaux's.

Sweet white wines

The vintage is even more extraordinary for sweet wines. Botrytis spread well, the higher than normal temperatures in October dried out the grapes and lead to high concentration. As a result, the wines are extremely aromatic, showing perfect balance between fresh fruity aromas and fat, deep, rich concentration .The sweet white wines show great complexity and finesse.

Red wines

Overall the quality of the 2001 vintage is very good, somewhere between the last two vintages; a little less powerful, with less depth and less length than 2000 but more generous, fatter and rounder than 1999. The good weather in October allowed the Cabernet Sauvignon to complete its long, slow ripening cycle and reach full maturity. However, excellent Cabernet Sauvignons grapes had to be watched from July right up to the last day of picking, around the 12th October. The vines had to be kept under tight control, to obtain a spread of the fruit load and low enough yields. In the Médoc, those who produced good Cabernet Sauvignon will have included a high proportion in their blends giving the wines added freshness, elegance, length and class. Those who did not will have produced fat, generous wines but usually lacking class.

Cabernet sauvignon still accounts for 51 % of Médoc vineyard but there is no doubt that it was important to have worked hard on this variety to produce the best wines this vintage. The problem is that over the last 10 years properties have often been eager to plant Merlot which ripens earlier, is more appealing when young, is more generous and softer and which makes easier drinking wines. Another reason is that Merlot is far more resistant to wood ravaging diseases such as Eutypiose and Esca, which spread and progressively kill off the plant completely.

The Merlot ripened early while the Cabernet Sauvignon had difficulty and was late. Consequently harvesting had to be spread over a long period in order to take these differences into account. Furthermore if the size of the bunches was small, the individual berries were large and this explains the lack of depth and length in some wines.

At the top end or at "cult wine" level as modern terminology would have it, properties will have done all the required work in the vineyard to ensure optimum quality and a very consistent result across the board. Wines are good showing very dark colour, generous round ripe fruit with good concentration. There is occasionally evidence of over extraction, in which case the wines end a little short and lack finesse. Although tannins are high and ripe and the wines are very pleasurable, they generally lack the sheer depth of the 2000 vintage. Top performers will, in some instances, have produced wines superior to last year but these will certainly be exceptions.

At more modest levels, the wines will range from lean, dilute wines which suffered from excessive yields and insufficient attention in the vineyard to deep, rich, ripe vibrant wines from the best growers. Hopefully the first category will be eliminated on *label* tastings, which are thankfully becoming much more severe in selecting the wines which will be granted AOC status.

THE MARKET

Much was said and written about Australian wines overtaking French exports to the important UK market sometime around October 2001. There appears to have been a fair amount of ambiguity as to the figures used to sustain this assertion. The year closes with Australia having shipped 1.833.339 hectolitres for a value of 457.219 K€ This is

exactly half the volume of French wine exports to the UK totalling 3.647.626 hectolitres, for 1.064.201 K€ Nevertheless, this can be no source of satisfaction and there is a definite need for French wines to regain ground on export markets.

Bordeaux and the Domestic Market

Sales of Bordeaux wines in France are back on an upward trend but this has only been achieved by the resurgence of cheap offers in major supermarket chains and hard discount stores, which have absorbed 12% of volumes sold on the home market.

Luckily for Bordeaux, the rate of penetration of New World wines on the French market remains slow ; they represent less than half a percent of volumes consumed. However this can only be a short reprieve. French chauvinism will probably hold out for a few more years but eventually younger consumers will favour open competition and the discovery of different wines. There should be just enough time for Bordeaux to pull up its socks, return to a strong position and counter the unavoidable competition.

It seems absurd that a country like France is subjected to the ridiculous Loi Evin which, in an attempt to curb alcohol abuse, prevents almost any form of communication on alcoholic beverages assimilating wine to a form of drug. One ridiculous example of the excesses of this is, the village of Margaux which was stopped from using its post mark “Margaux, cinq communes pour un grand vin”. To think that some candidates in the forthcoming Presidential Elections are advocating the legalisation of Cannabis! At the same time, Canada, France’s sister country, through its state controlled distribution has a declared objective of increasing per capita wine consumption by **40% over the next 5 years**. The positive side of the Loi Evin for French Wines is, of course, that it makes entry into the domestic market even more difficult for foreign wines, protecting local production against the hugely powerful New World marketing competence and efficiency.

France absorbs 63% of Bordeaux sales in terms of volume (62% off trade sales and 38% on trade sales). Supermarkets represent 67% of off trade sales.

Bordeaux Exports

The remaining 37% of volumes sold are exported, and 74% of this within the EU. Effectively this leaves very little wine for the rest of the world.

The main export destinations for Bordeaux wines for 2001 are listed below. Comparative figures are given for 2000.

	Value in <u>'000 €</u>	% change <u>over 2000</u>	Volume in <u>hectolitres</u>	% change <u>over 2000</u>
Germany	170.860	- 7%	425.418	-10%
Belgium + Lux	161.373	- 6%	360.432	+ 1%
United Kingdom	158.431	- 3%	335.113	- 3%
USA	161.956	+ 4%	132.915	-10%
Japan	127.280	- 6%	132.599	+ 8%
Switzerland	103.456	- 2%	103.246	+ 9%
Netherlands	56.513	-12%	177.885	- 4%
Denmark	55.344	- 6%	142.674	- 3%
Canada	45.654	+ 5%	79.892	+ 5%
Hong-Kong	17.409	-12%	14.212	-14%
Other markets	126.651	stable	207.937	stable
Total exports	1.184.927	- 4%	2.112.323	- 3%

Competition, a history of fluctuating pricing and irregular quality, coupled with inadequate and insufficient communication, has lead to sustained loss of market share but worst of all, loss of volumes and turnover in absolute terms in many leading markets.

These poor results have resulted in reduced trading on the Bordeaux market place and to increased frustration on the part of growers. Many have invested heavily in quality, improving equipment, staff-training and introducing new-methods. They are producing far better wines but are still finding it difficult to sell them despite current low prices. Of course, high quality and competitive pricing are prerequisites, without them there is no future, but they are not

sufficient to guarantee success. Solid distribution networks sustained communication, and long term marketing strategy are also necessary.

The Market for Grands Crus Classés

Trading in Grands Crus Classés on the Bordeaux market place has become very slow outside the *en primeur* campaign. 80% of transactions are for volumes of 2 cases or less. This is simply due to the fact that after the repositioning of many Grands Crus at higher price points, the whole world focuses on Bordeaux's top wines during the *en primeur* campaign, leaving little scope shown by some for further trading during the rest of the year. Added to this is the propensity for increasing prices further when the wine finally becomes available.

It is interesting to look back at the 2000 campaign which was extraordinary from many points of view. We remember 2000 for the buoyant demand despite some very high prices. The average price increase was in fact 22%, which is certainly a very generous rise but probably not as spectacular as the rate most people would give at a guess. More than half the wines offered *en primeur* saw their price rise by less than 15%, but as always we tend to focus our attention on the top 30 wines, which went up by more than 40% to reach a record 85% on first tranche allocations, prices being tripled by the time the 3rd tranche was issued. First growths are now being offered at 380€ a bottle.

In Europe, the change over to the Euro meant getting rid of national currency and wine provided a noble way of laundering undeclared cash.

However, extreme interest was shown from all over the world. Everyone, quite rightly, took up their first tranche allocations to speculate and benefit from their long standing loyalty which entitled them to a share of this much desired vintage. Customers who traditionally kept the wines for resale on a local basis adapted to the market and promptly re-exported to the highest bidder they could find, anywhere in the world. The USA, it seems, was the prime destination. As the fury of the campaign took an exponential trend, nobody could really identify any breaking point. Today, talking to buyers across the world, it appears that some stocks are still available and not finding takers. There is little chance these wines will generate much profit before a very long time.

The new campaign is about to get under way and traders across the world are wondering what Bordeaux will dare to do this year in terms of pricing. Many are warning Bordeaux's top growth owners once again about the necessity for prices to drop in order to generate keen trading on all markets. However overgeneralisation is a dangerous thing. If one looks at prices of the top wines from Italy, Spain, California or Australia, the best and most sought after Bordeaux wines are comparatively priced. What shocks us all is that the repositioning of these wines took place over such a short period of time, wine lovers finding that they could suddenly no longer afford a wine they had been drinking for many years.

Now that the 2000 campaign is over, buyers will no longer have the pressure of taking up their allocations to guarantee supply of the Millennium vintage. They ought to be feeling rather more relaxed about the coming campaign. Many argue that returning to 1999 prices would be appropriate and indeed, for many, it would. The vintage, although very good, is generally not as great as 2000, and it does not carry the magical number. Many buyers will have spent their resources on splashing out on the 2000 vintage and will quite willingly abstain from further purchases for a few years if necessary. The down-turn in the world-wide economy, the events of September 11th, and the threat of terrorists attacks have all contributed to severely undermining people's optimism.

What will the 2001 campaign bring ? Prices will probably come down by 10%-15%, although there will almost certainly be significant variances from this possible average. Those chateaux which have priced themselves out of the market, will need to drop their price by 30%, 40% or maybe 50% to return to good trading levels. First growths will probably show a slight drop in price on the first tranche though prices in the second and third tranches (if they exist at all) will be much lower than last year. Other producers who were more modest in their price increases last year and may come down by less than 5%. At the other extreme, those who have been restrained in pricing in the past and who are producing very fine wines, (for example a very reputable property in Saint Julien), could actually increase their price by 20% and still keep everyone happy.

It will be up to each individual property to correctly identify its position in the market and price itself accordingly. It is also up to each individual trader to buy those wines he considers worth- while, given that the pressure of wanting to hold out to maintain allocations of the 2000 vintage no longer exists. All *en primeur* buyers must look at the performance of each wine in terms of intrinsic quality, pricing policy, past performance, stocks of previous vintages available on the market, image and level of demand, make up his own mind about what to buy and accept the consequences.

A strategy for Bordeaux wines

The need for a strategy

There is no hope (and no point) in developing a general strategy for the 250 châteaux of icon status that represent 3% of volumes produced in Bordeaux; they must cultivate their own individuality, personality and image.

As for the remaining 97%, the drop in performance on export markets has had the enormous benefit of convincing those who had not yet realised it, that coordinated action is now necessary. Today the context is perfect for implementing changes which could potentially be nothing short of a revolution for Bordeaux wines.

One leaf Bordeaux now seems to take out of the New World wine industry guide book is the writing up of a clear strategy, giving long term objectives that everyone abides by. Many of us regularly and openly criticise politicians, government bodies and official institutions but Jacques Berthomeau's report, written up after the last Vinexpo for the French Minister of Agriculture, probably constitutes the catalyst Bordeaux profession needed to address the issue.

Jacques Berthomeau did not mince his words, he basically says that French viticulture is chasing around like some headless chicken, fighting the best it can against anything it bangs into, with little purpose other than survival. He is mostly concerned of course by the fate of vin de pays producers in the south of France who are costing Europe 175 Million € in distillation and restructuring aid and France a further 77 Million €. Although his study addresses the whole of French viticulture, his fundamental objective is to get professionals to talk to each other and come up workable strategies, primarily in each of the two largest wine growing areas, Languedoc-Roussillon and Bordeaux.

As Jacques Berthomeau quite rightly points out, France needs to write down an overall vision of the future, a strategy which will be the corner stone of a new coherent retaliation plan. Producing something workable that everyone is going to agree to, will undoubtedly be a long, painful process, but after Wine Australia, Wine Vision from the USA, Bordeaux is now preparing for the launch of its "Bordeaux 2010" plan.

Change of attitude

Growers and négociants are focussing more and more on quality. The Bordeaux trade is coming to realise that the name "Bordeaux" is no longer sufficient to sell the wine (the excellent 2000 vintage has shown that producing good wine is not enough either!). What is needed is long term vision, producing only good wines on a systematic basis, eliminating everything sub standard, being consistent across the board, giving confidence and security, showing price stability and building image through well thought-out communication.

Another fundamental change is the gradual disappearance of the grower/négociant cleavage. The two have to develop much stronger links. This will lead to a much less active market place as growers will enter partnerships directly with négociants on a long term basis. In other words there will be a switch from a horizontal division (growers/ négociants) towards more useful vertical integration. This is surely the best way of ensuring quality improvement and price stability. Wines at the top end, which have already built up their reputation and benefit from spontaneous demand will continue to be most efficiently distributed by splitting allocations amongst many négociants. All others, in my view, would gain by entering strong exclusive partnerships with merchants.

The fundamental change in attitude goes further. The cooperative system illustrates the point perfectly. In the past there was little room for the best to stand out and be rewarded, all grapes were picked, vinified and sold without differentiation. Everyone had to be treated in the same manner, good wines were mixed in to improve the less good batches and the result was in totally neutral wines. In fact, the system was more to do with looking after the mediocre than rewarding excellence. Today things are changing, the best and most forward looking cooperatives have severe quality control procedures and those producing the best grapes have their wines vinified separately and turned into a special *cuvée*. They are rewarded for their good results. Another example is the annual series of blind tastings organised by the Syndicat Viticole de Bordeaux & Bordeaux Supérieurs to identify 5 wines to be elected *Talent du Millésime*, in other words growers who have produced the best wines of the vintage. Rewarding the elite and those who have the best results is, I think, a real change from traditional *mutualisation*, which encouraged people to do as little as possible and then ask for government help when the situation became financially untenable. Instead of levelling from the bottom as in the past, the system is gradually pulling from the top.

Upstream quality control

Brave efforts are being undertaken by motivated parties within the different Syndicats Viticoles to improve quality control. As part of upstream quality control, vineyard visits by specialised technical teams identify unsuitable plots, badly managed vines, low plant densities or excessive yields. These visits are carried out to help and inform but will lead whenever necessary to the loss of the right to use the AOC denomination for the grapes coming from unsuitable plots. The same is done in the cellars to ensure good wine making rules of practise are being followed. This has resulted in some growers giving up their wine-making to concentrate on producing high quality grapes to be sold to a winery.

Horizontal concentration

The average property size is gradually increasing and very small, part-time growers are disappearing. Their vines are being bought up by young, well trained, ambitious growers, who can only justify investing in modern equipment when they can spread the financial cost over a large enough area.

Rules of production

Calls for simplifying production rules are frequent. However there is little doubt that without these regulations many mistakes would have been committed in Bordeaux over the last 5 years; we would have had a totally uninteresting Vin de Pays category, we would be oaking wines using wood chips, increasing yields, mixing up to 15% exogenous wines into blends, compensating dilution due to excessive yields by mechanical concentration and probably more. The wines would be cheaper, quicker and easier to make, and virtually devoid of all identity and all authenticity. We would, in short, have thrown the baby out with the bath water.

Of course, no business can live by ignoring market forces and consumer satisfaction ; it is absolutely necessary to adapt to shifting pattern's demand, but Bordeaux should not aim at satisfying the average need of 80% of consumers, rather it must concentrate on fulfilling 10% of each consumers most exclusive needs.

None of the existing rules hinder research or quality development, they do however make up a number of constraints which are designed to prevent us from taking short cuts and do ensure Bordeaux's identity is preserved. Strict regulations will preserve identity and positive attitude, while willpower will guarantee quality and Bordeaux needs both to thrive.

'Label' tastings.

Another tentacle of the quality control octopus. It was suggested that the granting of AOC denomination should be examined on a vat by vat basis rather than an average property basis as is today the case. The task of tasting 80.000 maybe even 100.000 samples remains daunting and is the main barrier to the implementation of such a measure, which would undoubtedly be very effective. A rather more manageable alternative, which is the solution Bordeaux is gradually moving towards, is the testing of each vat from properties which have been spotted for unsatisfactory results in previous tastings or which follow on from technical visits in the vineyard or the cellar. These measures would be usefully reinforced by extending vat by vat tastings to a range of properties picked at random including Grands Crus who are not always totally blameless in allowing a declassified, low quality vat to be sold in bulk on the market !

Downstream quality control / Suivi Aval de la Qualité (SAO)

Implemented in few people realise how far reaching downstream quality control is. It is a continuous process, during which some 2.800 wines each year are purchased off the shelf from distributors throughout the world and tasted blind by three people in Bordeaux. Wines are marked A(excellent), B(good), C(no problem but lacking interest), or D(sub standard). Any wine classed D is traced back to the negociant, the grower, the courtier and respective AOC Syndicat Viticole.

Each party is requested to provide explanations. In the event of repeated infringements, tighter quality control measures can be taken where necessary. This can include further sampling, vat by vat tasting, vineyard visits to identify difficult plots and cellar visits to identify poor winemaking conditions. As a final recourse it is even possible to call on the DGCCRF (watchdog against fraud) to have specific batches declassified and ordered for destruction. Although this process alone will not be enough to rid Bordeaux of sub standard wines, it enables the CIVB to start a database which will help measure progress and pinpoint priorities, as well as show all concerned that the quality issue is taken seriously and that a wine which bears the name Bordeaux must be worthy of its label. Progressively the consumer will associate Bordeaux with reliable quality, elegant style and think of it as a safe buy.

Price stability.

There is some attempt at price regulation in the long standing practice of *reserve qualitative*, whereby a syndicat viticole can decide to allow only a proportion of the latest harvest to be released on the market, holding back the remainder. Requests have been formulated to have outside consultants devise a scheme that would help the profession collectively to reduce price fluctuations by levelling out peaks and troughs. If paid high enough fees I am sure they will be able to devise an imaginative plan. But surely the best way to stabilise prices is to have long term strategies to meet long term objectives, backed by long term partnerships between growers and négociants. Négociants want a regular supply of very good wine at a stable price, the grower needs to have the security of on-going distribution to be able to invest further in quality. Stability can only be achieved if both work hand in hand. Old habits die hard but attitudes are gradually changing as the antagonism between producer and distributor subsides.

Development of Brands

Brands are something of a recent development in Bordeaux. Rather than being faced with thousands of châteaux names which come and go depending on their distribution agreements, quality, ownership and price, distributors and consumers are understandably becoming much more open to brands. There is room for brands at many different levels as they fulfil a diversity of requirements including quality consistency, price stability, image building, marketing development, volume trading and distribution protection. Brands do not necessarily need to be multi million case

concepts; there is room for smaller brands although their existence is only designed to supplement the lack of integration between growers and distributors.

Image building.

Old fashioned, elitist, complicated, daunting, expensive, distant, inaccessible and reserved for the connoisseurs and true enthusiasts. New CIVB led advertising campaigns (such as Bordeaux ... a world of finesse), attempt to shift this image with a message that says Bordeaux wines are easy-to-drink, affordable, uncomplicated, yet have elegance, balance and diversity.

Generating greater awareness.

Studies have shown that half the wines produced in the Bordeaux area do not clearly state the name "Bordeaux" on the label of the bottle. Professionals are aware of the 57 different appellations but how many consumers will link "Graves de Vayres" or "Sainte Croix du Mont" to Bordeaux ?The aim must be to ensure that every single bottle carries the new Bordeaux logo, clearly stating its Bordeaux origin. With 900 millions bottles shipped every year, the potential for increased awareness of the Bordeaux "brand" is enormous, providing, of course, the quality of the wine deserved to be called Bordeaux.

Promoting exports.

Bordeaux is far too dependent on the domestic market and needs to increase the proportion of volumes sold abroad from 37% to 60%. Proposals have been drawn up to double promotional budgets over the next five years, allowing Bordeaux to benefit from far greater visibility and broader coverage in all important markets.

Conclusion

A revolution might have been under way, unfortunately it is unlikely..... The current trade organisation is what needs the greatest shake up, maybe privatisation would be an answer. There are far too many unions, syndicates, groups, committees, bureaux.....Any decision making is far too long winded and exceedingly frustrating for those who are trying to implement them. So there will be no revolution but Bordeaux is certainly entering a phase of permanent and accelerating evolution.

Steam is plentiful, the pressure is building up, the engine is moving and gaining momentum, dragging a few reluctant carriages behind it, the heavy Bordeaux train is on the move and no stops have been planned but, as yet, neither has the route! The sooner a coherent strategy is defined the better.

More reliability in terms of quality.

Better understanding of what Bordeaux stands for through better communication.

Greater price stability

Some of the most prestigious wines in the world but also a vast array of well made affordable wines providing enormous pleasure if not high Parker points.

Allan G Sichel

April 2002

Our thanks to the CIVB archive department for providing enormous quantities of statistical data.

Copies of previous vintage reports are available and we will be happy to send them to you.

For further information, please contact Valerie Frestel on:

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