

# THROUGH THE GRAPPEVINE

The Latest from the French Food & Wine Industry

VOLUME 4, WINTER 2006

## PROMOTION NOTES

### EAT – European Authentic Tastes: “Picnic in the Park”

#### *A taste of Europe in the heart of NYC!*

On Wednesday, September 21st, a bit of European summer was enjoyed in the heart of New York City during an “Authentic European Picnic in the Park.” This fun and flavorful event was organized for the EAT – European Authentic Tastes – campaign, a program financed by the European Union to raise awareness of the four European Quality Designations: PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication), TSG (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed) and Organic Farming. Central Park’s landmark Tavern on the Green was the setting for the al fresco evening, with a terrace decorated in a sea of traditional red and white picnic checks.



250 guests sampled and savored over 70 authentic quality designated products coming from 13 European countries, including such French specialties as Roquefort, Comté, Beurre d’Isigny and sweet Pruneaux d’Agen. The abundant buffet was paired with a selection of fine European beers including Belgian Framboise, a traditional lambic beer infused with raspberries. The crowd also enjoyed an array of authentic European entertainment, such as French Musette and Spanish Flamenco. Each guest also had the chance to remember the evening’s festivities with a souvenir caricature, just like the ones drawn by the artists who crowd the steps of Montmartre. It was an authentically European good time!

For more information on the EAT program, please contact Ann Connors at [ann.connors@sopexa.com](mailto:ann.connors@sopexa.com).

## INTERVIEWS

### THE STATE OF FRENCH WINES IN AMERICA

To see how French wine imports were doing stateside, we decided to speak with two longtime American importers, **Bill Deutsch, CEO, W.J. Deutsch & Sons Ltd.** and **Martin Sinkoff, Director of Marketing, Pasternak Wine Imports.**



Bill Deutsch, CEO  
W.J. Deutsch & Sons Ltd.



Martin Sinkoff, Director of Marketing  
Pasternak Wine Imports

#### *How did you get started in the wine business?*

**BD:** I started in the wine business in 1960. I had been auditing the books of Gold Seal Vineyards in Hammondsport, NY. The company ventured into the French wine business, importing the wines “Maxim’s de Paris.” Gold Seal needed an administrator and I was offered the position. In time, that led to my exposure to wine sales and sales management. We used a lot of shoe leather in the 1960’s to sell wines from New York State, California and France. Wines and Champagnes were still in their infancy.

**MS:** France seduced me (I am happy to report) when I was underage, sometime around my 11th birthday. The language, the culture and food were overwhelmingly intoxicating to me, an American teenager. I spent my summers on exchange programs and my senior year in France finishing high school. My love of France was the foundation for my interest in wine. And when I had to decide how to earn a living, the wine business was the best idea among several. It seemed to be the ideal way to unite my separate passions: food, France, writing and travel.

*You’ve had great success with some now well-known French wines. Please tell us what went into launching these French brands, and what you’re doing now to ensure their continued growth.*

**BD:** I launched Georges Duboeuf with his Beaujolais Nouveau in 1982. The following year I began importing Duboeuf Beaujolais Villages, all 9 Cru (became 10 in later years) and the Mâconnais wines. The initial introduction included the now famous flower labels. In time the brand was built into the number one French brand in the U.S.

I became exposed to Pommery between 1975 and 1980 when I was Sr. VP Sales at Somerset Wines. I left Somerset in 1980 to start my own firm, and in 1997/1998, Pommery, then owned by LVMH, approached Deutsch and asked if we’d be interested in the representation. We took on the brand and have successfully built it to its current position in the U.S.

**Several of your brands have been chosen by Wines of France spokesperson Sheri Sauter, MW, as part of her “Top 45 French Wine Picks.” How has the Wines of France campaign helped those brands, and your French wines in general? How have you and your team been able to take advantage of this campaign?**

**BD:** The French campaign with Sheri Sauter, MW, has been a contributing factor to reversing the downward trend of French wines. In February 2003, France angered many Americans and French wines were badly affected. Time mends its ways and people like to forget. The current campaign has helped speed up the rebuilding process. The decision to advertise on radio during drive time was an important one.

**MS:** Both the Reserve St Martin and Nicolas Feuillatte brands share the qualities that make French wine unique: exceptional vineyard situations, great winemaking and long histories. In addition, both of these brands were undervalued in the market and so we had the opportunity to bring them to market, Reserve St Martin in 1990 and Nicolas Feuillatte in 1997. Today, the brands have evolved. Reserve St Martin is part of the Val d’Orbieu group and growth depends on vital work with the group’s key appellation, Corbières, and new packaging innovations for the varietal wines. Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte continues to innovate and to mine its special market position: the highest quality and the best value... the “up and comer” in the staid world of luxury Champagnes.

**MS:** The new campaign with Sheri Sauter, MW, is a winning campaign. Sheri’s disarming modesty, her deep knowledge of wine and her irresistible charm all add to the appeal of our brands and wines. We are flattered she selected our wines! We have tried to attend as many of her tastings as possible and to associate our brands with the campaign in order to build support among key retailers.

*Continued...*

# EVENTS 2006

Alsace and Côtes du Rhône  
Walk-around wine tasting  
Seattle MARCH 6

Alsace and Côtes du Rhône  
Walk-around wine tasting  
San Francisco MARCH 7

Alsace and Côtes du Rhône  
Walk-around wine tasting  
Los Angeles MARCH 9

French Cocktail Hour  
Launch Party, New York JUNE 1

Events are open to trade and press.

Please send an email to  
[eventsUSA@sopexa.com](mailto:eventsUSA@sopexa.com) to RSVP.

## PROMOTION NOTES

### "French Wine Thursdays" A weekly French wine & food rendezvous



As the array of fine restaurants increases in DC, and since French wines have always been crafted to complement a good meal, the French Wine Society (FWS) launched "French Wine Thursdays" in December 2005.

"French Wine Thursdays" are a weekly rendezvous for wine lovers – from newcomers to sophisticated drinkers – allowing guests to learn more about French wines as well as food and wine pairing. Hosted by a different DC restaurant every Thursday, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm, guests are served a selection of French wines presented by a knowledgeable supplier (importer, distributor or producer). The chef of the host restaurant prepares delicate hors d'oeuvres that match with the featured wines and explains his food pairing choices. "French Wine Thursdays" are a relaxing, intimate, and educating experience to share with other Washingtonian gourmets.

Tickets available at [www.frenchwinesociety.org](http://www.frenchwinesociety.org)

For more information, please contact:

Daphné Payan, FWS – Vice President & Treasurer

Cell: 202 725 6833

email: [dpayan@frenchwinesociety.org](mailto:dpayan@frenchwinesociety.org)

## FRENCH WINE IN AMERICA: ON THE RISE!

French Wine Exports to the U.S. By Region	Jan-Sept 2004	Jan-Sept 2005	Percentage Increase
Total Alsace	13,153.30	15,166.91	+15.3%
Total Beaujolais	41,244.42	41,943.55	+1.7%
Total Bordeaux	80,503.42	105,041.23	+30.5%
Total Bourgogne	65,798.30	69,162.39	+5.1%
Total Cotes de Provence	2,109.48	3,748.11	+77.7%
Total Languedoc-Roussillon	14,867.38	15,203.01	+2.3%
Total Loire Valley	31,641.71	37,163.94	+17.5%

## MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

### Burgundy Wines Head West!

From November 7th through 11th 2005, the wines from the Burgundy region of France made their presence felt all along the California coastline. This traveling "road show," hosted by the Burgundy Wine Council (BIVB), made pit stops in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco, inviting members of the wine industry and press to taste an extraordinary selection of Burgundies. Forty top importers and producers from this celebrated wine region took full advantage of a packed week of events, including three walk-around tastings, two seminars and an exclusive press dinner.

In addition to the exceptional gathering of the highly coveted *premier* and *grand crus*, the BIVB proudly highlighted the jury-selected "Sweet Sixteen" Burgundy Best Buys throughout the week-long wine extravaganza. Retailing for between \$15 and \$35, these affordable gems were selected by a panel of California-based journalists and sommeliers because they offered outstanding quality and value for the California consumer. Perhaps it was the offering of both rare and affordable Burgundies, or perhaps it was



Winemaker Anne Parent and Alexander Payne

Americans' craving for good Pinot Noir and Chardonnay; either way, it was clear from the unprecedented turnout and packed rooms for all six events that the wines of *Bourgogne* are very much in-demand!

Another highlight of this incredible week was the intimate press dinner held at acclaimed Fifth Floor restaurant in San Francisco. In addition to the delectable cuisine and perfectly paired wines in a delightful setting, Alexander Payne, director of the award-winning motion picture *Sideways*, came from Los Angeles to join top California journalists in celebrating the original birthplace of Pinot Noir (and Chardonnay!). Payne stated: "I am just glad to have contributed to the rise of my favorite grape, Pinot Noir, and am happy to be here to taste the best the world has to offer!" At the end of the week, it was clear that all of the tastings afforded guests a rare opportunity to sample a collection of outstanding wines from over 40 wineries – the next best thing to visiting Burgundy itself!

## SPOTLIGHT

### Versatile Alsace, Luscious Rhônes: endless food and wine pairings!

If you are looking for original and elegant food and wine combinations, Alsace and Rhône Valley wines may well be your best bet!

Offering exceptional value and quality, Alsace wines indeed feel gastronomically at home with any kind of cuisine. *Riesling*, a deliciously crisp wine, is versatile enough to be an equally perfect accompaniment for goat cheese, sashimi or tapas. As for *Gewürztraminer*, one of the star appellations of the region, it is not only a perfect match for foie gras, but also will work wonders with a spicy Indian curry or a Moroccan tajine. For dessert, don't miss out on an opportunity to try *Vendanges Tardives* (late harvest) wines or *Sélection de Grains Nobles* (a special harvesting process in which only the very best grapes are hand-picked) with some pudding or fruit pie!

Along with the eponymous *Côtes du Rhône*, the Rhône Valley is full of food-friendly wines going by names like *Tavel*, *Vacqueyras* or *Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise*. And the 2004 Rhône Valley vintage has been unanimously deemed to be of exceptional quality! A dry rosé with a beautiful rich pink color, *Tavel* can be enjoyed throughout an entire meal, but its fresh fruit flavors will show at their best matched with Indian cuisine or barbecue. Full-bodied and spicy red *Vacqueyras* is an ideal match for a loin of lamb or a rib steak. To end on a sweeter note, try a luscious *Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise* paired with blue cheese, crème brûlée or chocolate soufflé.

To illustrate the endless pairing possibilities, the Alsace and Rhône Wine Councils will head for the West Coast in March 2006 for a series of press and trade tastings. (See Events Calendar above.)



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**How are your French wine sales doing right now? What are the challenges and opportunities you see for French wines in 2006 and beyond?**

**BD:** French wines are making a comeback. Some appellations are doing better than others. We have seen first-hand growing increases with:

- Bordeaux wines from André Lurton and Anthony Barton (Ch Leoville & Ch Langoa Barton).
- Loire Valley wines from Jean Sauvion.
- Alsace wines from Pierre Sparr.
- Rhône wines from J. Vidal Fleury.
- Beaujolais Villages from Georges Duboeuf.

We have witnessed a slowdown in French varieties, French table wines and moderately priced wines from Burgundy. Many parts of France were blessed with a wonderful 2005 vintage. We expect healthy growth with this vintage in 2006. Mother Nature was extremely cooperative and French wines will sustain new growth in 2006. Château des Capitans in Julienas, jointly owned by the Duboeuf and Deutsch families, we think might be the best vintage in 50 years!

During my 45 short years in the wine business, I've witnessed many changes in the wine business. French wines will always be a part of me. In reviewing my memoir I can safely say that I have assisted in the importation and sale of more than 15 million cases of wine from France. In the years ahead, Peter Deutsch will add to the above total.

**MS:** French wines face enormous challenges in the market today. The sales of all of our French wines are healthy but the market has shrunk around these sales...at the same time it has grown around New World wines, especially those from Australia. My recommendation to our French suppliers: decide whether you are serving the fine wine market or the beverage market. If you are a fine wine producer (Bordeaux château, Burgundy or Rhône domaine, Champagne house) your job is simply to make the best wine in the world. Don't pander to the beverage market with "cute" packaging or other so-called market-driven promotions. If you service the beverage market, however, and intend to compete with Australia and Chile and California, innovate! Explore new packaging including screw caps, bags-in-boxes, canisters, milk-carton-type wine packaging. The consumer today is ready for high quality, high convenience wine drinking. France can lead in servicing this market if it abandons a "one-size-fits-all" approach to wine and stops trying to tell the consumer that its beverage wines are, in fact, "fine" wines... and vice-versa.