

Ce que les étrangers pensent des vins français

Le site de la Sopexa Frenchwinesbulletin a interrogé ses correspondants à travers le monde pour connaître leur point de vue sur les vins français. Le résultat que voici en intégralité permet de connaître la perception des étrangers sur nos vins. Très instructif !

What's in store for French wines ?

We asked our Brand Ambassadors for their thoughts on their specific market, looking at current trends and what's in store for French wines. Here's what they think:

BELGIUM - Kris Van de Sompel

Most producers consider Belgium as an established and static market of wine aficionados. This attitude has as a result made wine fans turn towards discovery, particularly for the increasing segment of younger wine drinkers.

Personality:

In Belgium there is a trend towards wines which have a real identity, which reflect the personality of the wine maker and the production methods. There has been a significant increase in sales of organic wines; a growing demand for wines with a pronounced flavour profile; and a willingness to pay just a little bit more for quality.

The story behind the label:

Whilst seeking wines with pronounced flavours, the Belgian consumer still prefers well known French grape varieties, albeit with a growing preference for the smaller denominations. They are interested in the origin and history of the wines they drink, and

seek real information rather than the usual marketing blurb.



Focus on flavour:

A new generation of Belgian restaurateurs is on the lookout for wines which go well with the style of cuisine they offer. They opt for wines where the identity of the wine maker is clear, and are not afraid of extending the innovative practices of their culinary offer to their wine lists.

The new wine consumer is no longer tied to tradition, but is ready to try everything, as long as it is good. They are less attached to a particular wine or denomination, their choices more allied to taste. That's the new challenge for the French wine producer...

DENMARK - Malene Smidt hetrz

The prospects for French wine are positive in Denmark. French wine is regaining ground. This is due primarily to a reaction to some of the mega-trends to which Danish consumers are exposed.

Simplicity:

Wine is an integral part of the household budget in Denmark, and shoppers want a simple and understandable way to find wine that suits their taste. French wine, through the campaign Wines with Style, has taken

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the first steps to simplify and democratise the act of purchasing wine. Permitting the grape variety to appear on the label also answers the consumer's need for simple information.

Responsibility:

The general trend for accountability, both socially and environmentally, influences wine drinkers. Many Danish wine bars focus on sustainability (organic, bio dynamic, eco-friendly and natural wines) not only for the taste, but also for Nature's sake. Their customers are educated wine drinkers who are concerned about production methods when they choose a wine. French wine producers are leaders in the transformation of production methods towards sustainability.

Health:

Alcohol consumption in the EU has fallen by 13% in the period 1990-2013. The same trend is visible in Denmark. While the consumption of spirits and beer is declining, wine remains popular. There is a burgeoning sector of wine consumers who seek lower alcohol wines. The reason for this is that they seek lower calorie and alcohol intakes; are tired of heavy and «sweet» wines; and are looking for lighter alternatives. Natural wine is leading the way and the consumption of white and sparkling wines is much higher than the consumption of red wine for this consumer category. This is in sharp contrast to the average Danish consumption of 75% red and 25% white wine.

Authenticity:

Diversity and tailor-made products are paramount. The Danes reject mass production unless they are only looking for low prices. This is a real opportunity for French wines which are often perceived as authentic wines with tradition and origin. The terroir concept is becoming more widely understood by consumers who actively seek information about the origin of wines and appreciate its diversity. France's 13 unique wine regions make French wines a great match for all kinds of gastronomy. Food tourism in Denmark is growing and this places French wine in a nice position: all leading restaurants have French wines on their wine lists.



GERMANY: Hendrik Thoma

Nowadays consumers have more and more ways of gaining information quickly, and from across the world, notably via the internet. Consumers interested in wine use the internet as a source of information. They can research different French regions, and learn about more niche developments such as the natural wine movement, organic production, or vinification in amphorae.

The offer in France has never been as diverse as it is today, and Germans have never been so open to new trends. In this way the wine offer here is no longer just guided by a few wine gurus, but also by the sharing of personal experience between friends and acquaintances, for example via social media.

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Novelty:

One particular section of wine consumers has become more audacious in their search for novelty. They are now more likely to change their taste habits. This is a real chance for the smaller appellations, and indigenous grape varieties - and there are many of these in France. Naturally, as this is still a niche trend, it doesn't appeal to all consumers. For the majority of them, wine selection is still often down to price, packaging and what they already know. But in this small and growing segment of more wine-aware consumers, the future belongs to the independent producers.

Innovation:

Even the concept of luxury has changed. Many Germans don't just see luxury as a sign of prestige, but as a way of benefitting from «true» values such as authenticity and quality. This is what characterises the big wines such as Bourgogne for example, which are seeing a growing success. For my part, I find France particularly interesting because of its young wine makers. They consider themselves as the guardians of tradition, but are also not limited in their ideas for the future. There is a kind of «independent movement» which is bringing the power of innovation to this future generation. In all regions of France I have seen evidence of this, and it is really refreshing.

HOLLAND - Harold Hamersma



Dutch wine consumers are beginning to tire of confected Chardonnays and generic Cabernet Sauvignons. They have had enough of wine which could come from just anywhere. Now that wine has become an integral part of the weekly shopping basket, the Dutch are experimenting more and more. They are on the lookout for products which are more exciting, new grape varieties, unusual wine regions and lesser known producers. And of all the wine producing countries, France responds best to this demand.

Affordable quality:

Take for example the South of France. Looking at the region today, we see a new generation of wine makers who respect the grape, the terroir and Nature itself. And at their parents' and grandparents' domaines they are producing excellent wines at affordable prices. Supermarkets and off-licences here list many of these wines, because the demand is there.

Freshness:

Sauvignon blanc is the new darling of the Dutch consumer, thanks to the Loire which has done a lot to further its career. The Dutch are favouring fresh whites more and more - oaked wines are definitely out. I foresee a small renaissance in Muscadet on the cards. And because freshness is in, and the Dutch enjoy drinking chilled wines, I think that now

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is the right time for Beaujolais, particularly the Crus, because there is also an awakening interest in quality here. As for Champagne and Cremants, they are consumed more and more often, whether or not it is a special occasion.

Exploration and organic:

I am also picking up an increasing interest in lesser known regions, like Jura and Savoie. These are the new destinations for those pilgrims in search of biodynamic and organic viticulture. I believe that these smaller regions will develop in the next few years, and there is no other wine producing country in the world where the naturalisation of wine production is developing faster, than in France.

RUSSIA: Yuliana Grigorieva

In Russia wine consumers can be divided into two main categories, even though for both of these groups we are looking at urban dwelling Russians.

Lesser known regions:

The first category (and the minority) are those with more disposable income. They know about wine, have their own preferences, travel abroad, regularly eat out at restaurants and often attend wine tasting events. They enjoy French wines, not because they are familiar with the history, the grape varieties and the production methods, but because they seek prestigious wines which are seen as luxury

products. However, in many restaurants and off-licences sommeliers and merchants are seeing a fall in sales of «grand cru» wines, due in part to increased prices and a better understanding of value for money from the consumer. These Russians now want to experiment and thus are seeking out other, less well-known wines, often after a trip to a specific wine region. They arrive with a list of new and different wines they have tasted abroad, and now want to drink at home - areas like Languedoc-Roussillon, Cahors, Loire, Beaujolais and Cotes de Bordeaux for example.

Accessibility:

The second group, and the majority of wine drinkers in Russia, have less disposable income, they travel less often and rarely eat out. They purchase wines in supermarkets. Today the percentage of Russians interested in wine is growing, and it is not unusual to see three bottles of wine in the supermarket trolley of a couple doing their weekend shop. Wine buyers in supermarkets note that their wine preference is often towards countries other than France, for a number of reasons, but principally price. Today the average Russian is not a wine aficionado, they fix a price they are willing to spend on a bottle of wine at between 300 and 600 roubles. And in this price category there is a lot of competition, with wines from outside of France often sporting less complicated labels, and offering wines with more intuitive taste profiles and less complex aromas.



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The challenge for France is that certain regions and denominations are not well known. It is therefore harder for Russians to identify French wines which offer a good quality/price ratio (such as Bergerac, Cotes Chalonnaises for example) as there are few imported into the country. Consumers are therefore opting to turn towards other countries.

Keep it simple:

This is why the Wines with Style campaign has been so successful. Over the course of the last three years, over 400 Russians have attended tastings, where we have introduced them to the «other France»: wines which are less well-known and which offer something new to the consumer. Feedback has been very positive, and we know that there is a real interest here. We need to continue to show consumers that French wines are accessible by training sommeliers and buyers and introducing them too to the range of great value and quality French wines so that France can maintain its market share in the years to come.

UK - Gerard Bassett MW, MS, OBE

Discovery:

There are plenty of opportunities in the near future for French wines in the UK. In view of the success enjoyed recently by Picpoul de Pinet, it is clear that Brits are getting more curious, ready to go off the beaten track and

willing to discover wines from lesser known grape varieties. In a similar way, I could easily envisage that wines made from Gros Manseng, Romorantin, Rolle, on the white side and Négrette, Nielluccio or Sciaccarello for the red side for example becoming the new stars. In fact Gros Manseng is almost there already.



Flexible production rules:

Vin de France (sans indication géographique) is an exciting category, and whilst at the moment it is still a work in progress, the flexibility that it allows winemakers will encourage more talented producers to play with it and I can see potential for some really superb wines here. I genuinely think that it is a category which has a great future.

Classic renaissance:

I also believe that regions which have before been very popular once, but which for all sorts of reasons have had a tougher time recently, will come back strongly. In particular, I am thinking of Muscadet and Beaujolais. I can feel a renewed interest for these two regions and some truly delicious examples coming from them. The renewal is starting to be felt. In addition, both areas produce what are fairly significant amounts of the style of wine which today's consumer is looking for - i.e. delicate or fruity wines, which are not too alcoholic.

Source(s): Thanks to our Brand Ambassadors in the 6 markets

