

Introduction

Sex sells, so they say, and no one knows this better than Larry Mawby, the Michigan-based fizz-master *extraordinaire* (see Atlantic Northeast).

I've been tasting his wines for many years and the quality and consistency have improved dramatically. It used to be – how shall I put it? – enthusiastic at best. But the amazing thing about Larry, apart from being able to levitate, is that even his worst sparkling wines have sold out. Other winemakers in the state thought that if Larry can do it, they could too, and within no time at all, almost everyone was selling Michigan fizz. Well, actually they weren't: they were making it, but not selling it. After a few years of watching their stock sit there, a number of wineries asked Larry if he would take it off their hands. He was mulling this over one morning, when the official notification arrived in the post that he could sell wines under the Sex label. Larry nearly spilled coffee over himself because he had half-jokingly applied for permission, not really believing that it would be granted in what is, after all, America's fairly puritanical society. But it was and, all of a sudden, he knew exactly what he could sell as Sex. He took everyone's stock, opened up the bottles, added a dash of red wine to turn the fizz pink, relabelled it Sex, and it has been flying off the shelf as fast as he can stack it! The owners of the other wineries were relieved and grateful that Larry bought the stock from them, but when they saw how quickly it sold, they did not know whether to laugh or cry. As for Larry, he never even knew what the 'pink dollar' was until Sex came along...

New this year

There are two new reports this year: Luxembourg by Danny Kay-lookalike David Furer; and Belgium, Netherlands & Scandinavia by Fiona Morrison and Gert Crum. David Furer is a UK-based American who used to live in Germany, close to the border with Luxembourg, where he has a number of contacts. Fiona Morrison is a Belgium-based Master of Wine, whose husband, Jacques Thienpont, is the owner of Le Pin. It tickled me to think that someone used to drinking the world's most expensive wine would be reporting on the hobby wines of Belgium. I was also impressed that she would bother. After all, she hardly needs the money. Gert Crum is a Dutch wine writer I last saw on a small 12-seater plane in 1992, as we hedge-

hopped across Poland on our return from visiting wineries in Moldova. Gert was so struck by the experience that he wrote *The Moldovan Wine Adventure* (published by Immerc BV).

These two reports will appear in every edition, but do not expect contributions in the future to be as information-packed as they are this year. Fiona, Gert, and David have been asked to provide one-off overviews as introductions to these relatively unknown wine-producing countries. Future reports will be exclusively news-driven and will include, of course, Top 10s, Vintage Report, and Opinion.

Future editions

It is not just the world of wine that is moving fast – wine consumers are leading ever more hectic lives too, making it increasingly difficult for the twain to meet. The concept of *Wine Report* was so simple it is surprising that it did not already exist. The aim is to provide a one-stop update to what has happened in the world of wine over the previous 12 months. This makes it an ideal resource for the busy wine enthusiast who wants to keep up to speed but does not have the time. It has even caught on in the wine trade itself, which is not surprising since it encompasses many wine enthusiasts. Yet they are often far too busy to keep abreast of much else beyond the products they handle. If anything, the knowledge of most people in the wine trade is distinctly lopsided. They have a good general grounding and probably know a darn sight more about the wines they handle than most high-profile experts, but they also have huge gaping holes. Since the publication of *Wine Report 2004*, I have met many people in the wine trade who had not heard of the book, but not one who could put it down once he or she saw its contents. News is knowledge, and the wine trade is thirsting for it.

But *Wine Report* is ideal for all wine enthusiasts, not just those in the trade. I know of one very famous international businessman who keeps a copy of *Wine Report* in his briefcase, so that he can read the appropriate chapter when flying to different countries. When he dines out the first night, he is already up to speed. He told me that his local contacts raise an eyebrow when he orders one of the Most Exciting or Unusual Finds listed in the report, especially when he can tell them why it is so exciting or unusual. Just knowing the New Up-and-Coming Producers and some of the Grapevine news items that even his local contacts do not know gives him an enormous advantage.

Ideal maybe, but *Wine Report* is never likely to be perfect. There are plenty of gaps to plug. Not just countries such as Morocco and Algeria

(which are lined up for the next edition), but even more obscure wine-producing areas like Zimbabwe, Kenya, or the islands of Madagascar, Réunion, and Mauritius (which were supposed to have been covered in both the first and second editions, but proved to be tougher nuts to crack than expected, so the search continues). Or, indeed, minuscule-production countries of the ilk of Malta and Ireland. When they are reported on, readers will know that I am happy with the extent of geographical coverage. I also need a contributor whose remit will pick up on French wine news items that fall beyond that of the regional reports, such as the proposed super-AOCs. René Renou, the director of the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine, has been dubbed 'Superman' for proposing a two-tier appellation system, the upper division of which would be bestowed on wines of "demonstrably superior quality". The good news is the Burgundians are for it, the bad news is the *Bordelais* are not. Still, the good news is not all that good when we read why the Burgundians support the proposal. As Jean-François Delorme, president of the Bureau Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bourgogne, commented: "Of course, all of Burgundy's AOCs would be super-AOCs." ... Er, no. If they were, they would not be very super, would they? It would have been good to have a contributor follow this through and perhaps make it central to an Opinion piece, but it is not quite clear how such a report would be structured. Perhaps it should also have a broader brief to include matters of global importance, such as multinational wine companies.

As the reader can discern, there is a lot of tweaking to be done before *Wine Report* is even half-perfect but, as some of the topics covered in this edition illustrate, it should be interesting getting there.

- Wine made from vines grown north of Poland.
- Winery on Bali grows a crop every month.
- Viognier is a no-brainer in Idaho.
- Screwcap arrives in Canada.
- Teetotal Canadian restaurateur has 47,000-bottle wine cellar.
- Bioterrorism threatens Burgundy.
- Red-wine grapes grown in one-third of Germany's vineyards.
- Value of fake Italian wine in US exceeds \$541 million.
- 10,000 hectares of vines go missing in Slovenia.
- Wild vines have more sex.
- Black goo found in California nursery.
- Luxembourg wins nine out of 55 gold medals at the Riesling du Monde.