

**La Journée Vinicole**  
*Quotidien*

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# La Journée Vinicole

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 **France**

## Multi-regional blends of 'vins de pays' get major boost

One of France's major news stories in the wine industry last week was the decision to go ahead with the introduction of a new category of regional wines or 'vins de pays' after six years of discussions on the issue. 'Vins de Pays Vignobles de France' may well become an integral part of the French wine proposition as early as the 2007 vintage, according to the chairman of national intervention board Viniflor, Jérôme Despey. At a meeting last week of board members, the project was passed virtually unanimously ; only the Vins de Pays d'Oc leader Jacques Gravegeal voted against the project. Although the idea of allowing multi-regional blending of 'vins de pays' to allow shippers greater flexibility and provide them with access to larger volumes of wines has been in the pipeline for several years in France, only the seriousness of the current industry crisis has sped up the process. It is hoped that the new denomination will ultimately provide an outlet for some 2 million hectolitres of wines currently sold under a departmental or small area designation, most of which remain unknown to the consumer because of their vast number. Responding to fears aired by some members of the trade that the new category will end up as a dumping ground for wines otherwise unfit for sale, Jérôme Despey claimed that use of the word 'France' would make high quality standards a prerequisite. Although all of the technical details have yet to be finalised, the aim from the outset has been to make it compulsory for wines using the new designation to undergo two sets of approval procedures : they will first have to be approved under a departmental or small area designation before going on to become 'Vignobles de France'. The project now has to pass through all the official channels before becoming law but support shown by the Agriculture Minister Dominique Bussereau from the start would seem to indicate that any further hitches will not be of government making...

### According to new research

## Loire Valley wines delivering on quality, but must work harder in the marketplace

Strong competition is not only a feature of the wine industry per se but also of the myriad events organised around it. Like most of its major counterparts around the world, the Loire Valley Wine Show is committed to providing strategic input to changes being wrought in the region and thus commissioned the Opinion Way Institute to conduct a survey into the perception that wine buyers in five countries have of Loire Valley wines. The aim of the survey was to help the region's wine industry connect better with buyers in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States by gaining a better understanding of their needs. 165 trade buyers were interviewed between November 21st and January 3rd, online and by telephone. Overall results showed that whilst Loire Valley wines are recognised for their quality and the expertise of their growers, these assets do not necessarily translate to better sales potential. The reason for this would seem to lie in the fact that the wines are not considered 'modern' by buyers, nor are they seen as wines with the potential to attract younger consumers. A criticism often levelled at French wines in general – and Loire Valley wines are no exception – is that they suffer from a lack of marketing and media presence. Information for buyers would also seem to be lacking as only 6 of the 68 Loire appellations were sufficiently well-known by buyers for them to be quoted spontaneously, though knowledge of the various appellations does vary from one country to another. When questioned about their expectations regarding Loire Valley wines, buyers said they would like to see a clearer, more modern range of wines, greater innovation in packaging, more sales representatives out and about and increased point-of-sale presence. "We have taken on board many of these expectations as part of the Loire's new regional organisation" stressed Pierre Aguilas, chairman of the Loire Valley Winegrowers' Federation.

## Rugby sponsorship to promote Catalan wines

Wine group Vignerons Catalans, based near the Spanish border in Southern France, has decided to join forces with neighbouring rugby team Catalans Dragons, the only French rugby league team to compete in the British Super League championship. Over 1.7 million people attended Super League matches in 2006 and the tournament is broadcast worldwide via Sky Sport. Vignerons Catalans has similar global ambitions for its 'Fruité Catalan' range and has thus embarked upon a sponsorship campaign with the Dragons. The drive will be officially presented on January 25th, at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and wines will be served by Dominique Laporte, winner of France's Best Wine Waiter competition.

## Antonin Rodet adds Clos de Thorey to its portfolio

Clos de Thorey, a 3-hectare single ownership estate in Nuits-Saint-Georges 1<sup>er</sup> Cru has joined Domaines Antonin Rodet, namely the 30-hectare Château de Rully estate and the 48-hectare Château de Mercey. Antonin Rodet will start selling the wines in 2008 when it releases the 2006 vintage. In a recent press statement, cellarmaster Nadine Gublin, waxed lyrical about Clos de Thorey, praising its "magnificent hillside site, facing due East, in a perfectly well-aired location north of Nuits-Saint-Georges. In 2006, these elements combined to produce a wine displaying pure fruit, extremely delicate and refined"



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**Spain**

## Chardonnay and sauvignon blanc amongst several new varietals in Rioja wines

Six new white varietals, three of them foreign, have been authorised for making Rioja wines following a Council ruling recently. Chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and verdejo can now be used to make DOC Rioja, alongside other newly-admitted varietals maturanana and tempranillo and turruntés. Native red varietals maturanana and monastel have also been allowed to join the existing range of varietals allowed to enter blends of DOC Rioja. The aim is to make Rioja wines more competitive by adapting them to suit current market demand. For the chairman of the Rioja Wine Council, Victor Pascual, who stressed that the decision had been reached with the support of all of the region's trade organisations, "this is a great step forward for the future development of the DOC". The new varietals will boost the seven grapes that growers can currently use for making Rioja wines : tempranillo, garnacha, graciano and mazuelo for the reds, and viura, garnacha blanca and malvasia for the whites. This is the first time since the Denomination was established in 1925 that new varietals have been introduced and they can only be planted when existing vines are uprooted so as not to increase current acreage. Another stipulation of the Ruling is that the 'foreign' varietals – chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and verdejo – must remain minor components of the final blend so that if varietals are mentioned on the label, traditional Rioja grapes still hold pride of place. The decision still has to be ratified by the authorities. The Council has also decided to ask the Spanish Agriculture Ministry to exclude Rioja wines from the EC Ruling making use of oak chips a legal winemaking practice.



**Australia**

## \$9.5m sought for \$29m research facility in Adelaide

Australia's wine industry has begun a campaign to secure a \$9.5million (5.7 million euros) grant in the 2007 federal budget to secure the development of a \$29 million world class research facility in Adelaide. Peak national wine industry body the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) has made the grant request a key component of its annual pre-budget submission, lodged at the end of last year with the Federal Government, and committed to lobby for the grant up until the 2007 federal budget. WFA chief executive Stephen Strachan said the funds sought would secure the development of the Wine Innovation Cluster in the grounds of the Waite campus of the University of Adelaide. The proposed Cluster would co-locate a group of research partners including the Australian Wine Research Institute and the research arms of the University of Adelaide and SARDI. Also co-located on the site will be a research winery and expanded facilities for the CSIRO the Provisor research company. Matching funding of \$9.5 million each from the South Australian Government and the University of Adelaide has already been committed. The remaining \$9.5 million contribution from the federal government will be required to ensure the \$29 million development will proceed. "With threats such as those posed by water shortages and opportunities available in areas such as the development of low alcohol wines a strong commitment to innovation is clearly critical for the future success of Australia's wine industry" said WFA chief executive Stephen Strachan.



**Canada**

## 'Bag it back' changes the way Ontario recycles

A public education campaign explaining the new Deposit Return Program for recycling wine, beer and spirit containers in Ontario started last week. The campaign describes how, starting February 5, Ontario consumers will pay a deposit ranging from 10 to 20 cents when they purchase alcohol. They are then encouraged to 'Bag it back', and return empty alcohol containers to The Beer Store (TBS) for a refund of their deposit. By bagging empties back, consumers will be helping to recycle the 80 million containers per year that are currently not recycled. The LCBO, TBS, Vincor Canada (operator of The Wine Rack), Andrew Peller Ltd. (Vineyards Estate Wines), and other beverage alcohol retailers in Ontario are all taking part in the programme. 'Bag it back' bags will be available beginning February 5, 2007 to make bagging it back even more convenient for consumers. "This public education campaign is an investment in the future," said LCBO President and COO Bob Peter. "It provides consumers with the information they need to take part in this important new program that will significantly increase recycling."



**United States**

## Winning a medal does boost the price of a wine

Each year California wineries spend thousands of dollars entering tasting competitions. Are they getting their money's worth? An article published by Tony Lima of California State University in the Journal of Wine Economics, examines the results of nine tasting competitions from 1995. His statistical analysis shows that wines winning a medal at the San Francisco competition have prices \$3.65 per bottle higher than those winning medals at other competitions. Winning a medal at the California State Fair (Sacramento) and the Orange County fair also led to significantly higher prices. Lima argues that consumers value the information produced by these tasting events. One way they learn about a wine's medals is shelf tags in wine shops. These results generally hold for four of the five major wine varietals including cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, merlot and zinfandel, claims Lima. However pinot noir was unusual because the three tastings that were valued most highly were from San Francisco, the California State Fair and the Dallas (Texas) Morning News competition. For example, in one case Lima estimates that winning a medal in Dallas raised the average price of a bottle of pinot noir by \$3.46.



**United Kingdom**

## French trade event slated for Manchester

The United Kingdom's third-largest city, Manchester, has been selected as the venue for a French wine day by the commercial section of the French Embassy. The event, scheduled to take place on February 8th, is just one of a host of activities aimed at putting France back in the top spot as a supplier of wine to the UK. Manchester is strategically the regional capital of the North West of England and its population of 2.5 million includes many high wage earners. The Commercial section intends to provide French exporters with an opportunity of canvassing large regional markets that are often neglected by trade shows and other commercial events. The French wine day will allow exporters to meet wholesalers, importers and agents working in the North and Mid North of Great Britain, specialising in restaurant channels, specialist retailers and sales to private customers.