Landmark Chardonnay fans should act fast

24 Nov 2004 by JR

Most unfortunately, the Sonoma winery Landmark has acquired a new British importer and prices have gone zooming up.

- For Brits:

  In the good old days, Landmark's superb Chardonnays were sold in Britain through the Oddbins chain for next to nothing. When I recommended them as Wines of the week last July the blended Overlook bottling was £14.99 and the Damaris Reserve Chardonnay was £19.99. 'The Overlook was last seen at £16.99 for the 1999 (sold in the main estate). We have some of this left about the estate - about 40 cases but quite spread out.' On April 12, anyway, there were still 10 bottles of the Damaris 1998 available at £19.99 on www.oddbins.co.uk.

  I suggest that if you are at all interested in finely crafted California Chardonnay, it would be well worth seeking a few bottles of Overlook 1999 out at your local Oddbins, or grabbing a bottle or two of Damaris 1998 online. Not least because the new UK importers Laytons (who own the seven Jeroboams wine and cheese shops; details on 020 7259 6716) are proposing to charge £25.45 for the 2000 Overlook and £35.95 for the 1999 Damaris Reserve!

- For non-Brits:

  I wondered whether these huge price rises were in fact the result of Landmark management's waking up to the fact that they have, relative to many of their competitors, been undercharging us all these years. I seemed to remember the *Wine Spectator* covering Landmark with glory in its most recent California Chardonnay issue. So I checked US prices of the two most recent vintages of Overlook with WineSearcher and www.winealert.com and found that in fact if anything prices for the 2000 vintage are *lower* than for the 1999 - in fact WineAlert's best price for the 2000 is $22 and for the 1999 it's $26 (WineSearcher suggest $20 and $21 respectively - roughly £14 and £15). Cheese shops obviously carry very high overheads.

7 May - Just received a note from Mary Colhoun, owner of Landmark who says 'Frankly, I was shocked at the news,' she writes. 'We have not increased out prices in several years.' They switched importers to improve distribution in restaurants and so on, but had no idea that prices would be increased to such an extent. 'You will see over the next few months our prices return to where they should be', she says. Good news.