Not-so-rare Mouton 2000 jeros

30 Nov 2004 by JR

This week's Sotheby's wine auction in London the day before yesterday trumpeted the chance to buy a handsome, gold-embossed jeroboam of Mouton 2000. There was a photograph it on the cover of the sale catalogue and a further full-page colour photograph of a jeroboam inside. In both photographs the image, perhaps rather surprisingly, was cut off at the bottom of the jeroboam (below where it reads Appellation Controlée).

The text in the catalogue stated that the first six jeroboams to be sold had been auctioned at a charity dinner and that the five offered in the catalogue were the only others to have been released by the Château. The text reads "No further jeroboams have been put on the market, so this is a special event" and strongly suggests that this is a unique opportunity to buy Mouton 2000 in jeroboam.

Thanks to all this hype, the first two lots went for £3,000, plus the usual 15 per cent buyer's premium, so £3,450 or the equivalent of £6,210 per case of 12 bottles. Mouton 2000 is currently widely available in the trade at around £2,400 per case.

Within minutes of the jeroboams' selling at the auction, at 2pm on Wednesday, the Château announced that they had in fact produced 5,000 jeroboams of which 1,000 they were immediately releasing to Bordeaux negociants at a huge premium over the regular price but with the justification that they had sold at a high price in Sotheby's. By 5pm I was being emailed offers of these jeros at around £2,000 each from the UK fine wine traders.

It now seems rather clearer exactly why those photographs were cut off where there were. If the whole bottle had been shown, we could have read that that particular jeroboam was number xxxx of 5000 which of course seriously reduces the rarity and would have seriously reduced the price.

This morning the following breathless account of the auction, Sotheby's most successful so far this season, reaches me: "A fabulous selection of Mouton Rothschild 2000 - direct from the Chateau - caused great excitement, with each of the 29 lots offered selling far in excess of their pre-sale estimates." Yet more evidence that this was very much a two-pronged attack on the wine market.

In fact, at a recent tasting of Mouton, I was decidedly underwhelmed by how Mouton 2000 was tasting and thought the 2001 was showing just as well. See tasting notes for the full story.