Berrys launch plea for 70% price cuts, and 'podcasks'

28 Mar 2007 by JR

We have been discussing likely pricing levels for 2006 bordeaux on members' forum and now Berry Bros wades in, with the following statement from our old friend sales director Simon Staples who seems to be singing a very different song this year from last.

Staples, we are told, has major concerns about the price of bordeaux 2006 and has called for a price drop of up to 70% on some wines compared to 2005.

Simon, who [like your humble website host] is tasting in Bordeaux later this week (from April 1), says: "2006 has to offer exceptional value no matter if it turns out to be a great year or merely good. The first growths need to be sold by Berrys for no more than £100 per bottle and super seconds to a maximum of £40."

These prices represent almost a 70% drop in some instances. The first growths from the 2005 vintage sold for between £300 and £475 per bottle and the seconds £50 to £140.

Staples has said Berrys will not buy any wines that are grossly overpriced and therefore suspects there will be very few châteaux worth buying. However, he has emphasised their fine wine team is best placed to help find the few gems that will undoubtedly exist.

"We have no qualms about walking away from even the most illustrious châteaux if they don't offer good value comparative to quality. However we are hopeful the Bordelais will do the right thing because they are aware how important the UK market is and will not want to alienate them," says Simon, who adds: "I imagine consumers will only take a few cases so I totally believe that the secret for a successful campaign will be releasing the prices early and with a guide price of between the initial release price of the 2004s and 2002s. We were all scared by 1997 [a vintage of overpriced wines that took many years to sell through] and we won't let that happen again!"

2005 was hailed as the greatest vintage in living memory. Berrys' customers apparently bought more Bordeaux 2005 en primeur than the total of the last 10 vintages put together. The 2005 also put buying en primeur on the map and opened up wine investment to a much wider audience and as a result has dramatically increased demand for these illustrious wines. The question for Bordeaux 2006 will be whether the Bordelais will get the pricing right to try and take advantage of this.

Berrys statement continues: "For the inside track on Bordeaux 2006, including the latest news, best wines and best advice stay logged on to www.bbr.com. Bordeaux 2006 sees the launch of Berrys' first podcasks.
Visit http://www.bbr.com/podcask to hear the first one from Chairman Simon Berry. This will be followed by a series of podcasks featuring interviews with top producers. In addition there will be a daily blog written by our team in Bordeaux and up to the minute tasting notes. To sign up for regular alerts visit www.bbr.com/2006."

You've got to hand it to them for innovation. (See today's earlier article on Spain invades St James's.)