Fighting fake wines

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Buy Wines on Account Here

I'm a big fan of Jancis Robinson's Wine Detective TV series, in which she does a job highlighting characters who encourage investment in wildly overpriced or non-existent drinks, including wines of course. You can follow his activities at www.investdrinks.org.

Now there is a new site designed to help stamp out fine wine fakes at www.wineauthentication.com. It's the brainchild of Russell Frye, a well heeled American wine collector who, along with the much more strident William Koch, has been one of the prime movers in investigating the Hardy Rodenstock/Jefferson bottles. The aim is clearly to establish a bank of information on suspect bottles as well as to exchange information on practices that will help stamp out wine fraud.

At the moment the site is in its infancy and could do with a bit of support, so do take a look if you feel it is relevant to your wine collection. (I don't think they are interested in Tesco own labels, for example.) The site may have its base in the US but this is one area, wine fraud, where activity is truly international and the more information is shared, the better off we will all be.

Russell Frye writes:

The War on Wine Counterfeiting Starts Here

www.wineauthentication.com exists because wine counterfeiting has become a greater and greater problem for buyers and sellers of wine. Individual collectors such as myself have discovered that some rare bottles purchased from supposedly trustworthy vendors are not what they seem. I'm sure that most of you have seen the large number of articles that have appeared this past year regarding the subject. Up until now, there was no easily accessible resource available to help people determine the authenticity of these bottles. wineauthentication.com is the very first website to offer help, advice and a community to share experiences and ideas with.

In order to avoid misuse of the site, we are requiring a token membership fee for those that simply wish to participate in the community of knowledge that the site makes available. For those that need specific advice on specific bottles, we will charge enough to cover some of our costs, but the majority of the costs will be covered by sponsors and large corporate members that wish to support this important effort. As we see how the financial model develops, we may change the fee structure to ensure the ongoing survival and growth of the site or to make it more accessible.

When I purchased my counterfeits I was not aware of any resources to authenticate them. Now, wineauthentication.com will be available to anyone that needs to keep up with news and information regarding the subject. In addition, by submitting bottle photos and provenance information to us we will be able to provide preliminary authenticity assessments that could be very valuable.

Just to clarify, those that pay nothing will get to see discussions and read articles and editorials on the site.

Those that pay a small fee will be able to leave comments in the forum and read more material including the latest reports. The justification for charging, in addition to helping to defray some costs, is because we would like to know who might be leaving which comments on the site just in case we find inappropriate material there. The more we know about our subscribers, the less likely it will be that someone will use the site to help with counterfeit production or sale.

The very high membership fee is intended for those that want our personal authentication services. We realize that there may only be hundreds of people that really care enough to authenticate bottles, but hopefully we can help them quite a bit.

I should also mention that it is our intention to offer training classes for wine businesses that want their personnel to be better able to evaluate the bottles they see.

It is our intention to provide information to wine producers on the techniques and technologies that are coming available to fight counterfeiting, so we hope to get support from them as well. We have started discussing the possibility of a conference on the subject, probably in France, and probably associated with another major trade event. However this is very preliminary.