News roundup

8 Jun 2009 by Jancis Robinson

Online trading platforms accessible to all are proliferating in the wine market. London fine wine trader Bordeaux Index was the first off the blocks in the UK in a strategy long-planned by their financial trader founder Gary Boom (cited as 37th most powerful wino in *Decanter* magazine's recent Power List). Their platform sets buying and selling prices of the top bordeaux and is already a hit with investors. At almost exactly the same time as Bordeaux Index launched, West Coast cellar management applications Vinfolio and Cellartracker announced that they were to co-operate on a collector-to-collector online trading platform which will allow wine lovers to trade stocks between themselves (not unlike the Bid for Wine scheme for which purple pagers have a special deal). Yesterday Berry Bros (Simon Berry, 25th most powerful...) announced that they are getting in on the act and expect to have their online trading system up and running by the end of the year. The idea is that Berry Bros customers can trade the wines they keep with Berrys, with Berrys taking a 10% cut. And Fine & Rare Wines of London have launched a particularly user-friendly tool, an online cellar valuation, presumably hoping that this will inspire some of their customers to sell their wines through them. A good time for IT consultants to the fine wine trade...?

OIV has issued its latest stats on the **southern hemisphere** now that the 2009 harvest is over there. Although the area under vines has stabilised, OIV expects a 6.1% drop over 2008 in the volume of wine produced in the southern hemisphere in 2009. The decrease is most marked in Australia, where volumes are expected to be down by 11.5%, while total production in New Zealand was 13.7% more in 2009 than the record 2008 crop. Southern hemisphere vineyards represent 11.3% of world's total area under vine. Wine consumption decreased by 2.5% in the southern hemisphere with a relatively substantial drop in Brazil and Argentina according to OIV estimates.

Voyager Estate in Margaret River, Western Australia, is looking for a new senior winemaker now that Cliff Royle has announced his departure after 12 years working for teetotal Michael Wright, who has owned the Cape Dutch-inspired winery since 1991 and turned it into a thriving business and tourist destination. In the short term, Royle's assistant Travis Lemm will take over Royle's duties while Wright's daughter Alex continues as general manager.

Chaume is to become a discontinued line in the Loire appellations department. This is a response to those in Quarts de Chaume AC who have, obviously successfully, argued that only their enclave within Chaume deserves its own appellation for sweet Chenin Blanc. Also in the Loire, **St-Pourçain** has been promoted from VDQS to AOC.

Emma Rice has set up her own oenological & winemaking services company **Custom Crush UK** in West Sussex. The aim is to provide a winemaking consultancy and laboratory service to new and established wineries in England's burgeoning wine industry. I first met Emma when she was in editorial charge of Hugh Johnson's pocket book at publishers Mitchell Beazley. She then studied at Plumpton and worked her way around the world, including at Cuvaison in Napa Valley and in Tasmania. Her new lab in Chilgrove (very close to the White Horse and Barry Philips' Four Walls Wine Co) is already used by several well established English wineries. She is also acting as winemaker for the recently planted Hattingley Valley Vineyard in Hampshire. Ground for the new winery will be broken this summer, with the first harvest anticipated for 2010. Custom Crush UK Ltd, The Granary, Chilgrove Farm, West Sussex PO18 9HU t: 01243 519496 m: 07530 999592 e: info@customcrush.co.uk w: www.customcrush.co.uk