

S W E E T  
D R E A M S

reserved for the rich and powerful for quiet some time. It wasn't until the beginning of the 20th century that sugar became a cheap food product for the masses.

As described by Sydney W. Mintz in her book "Sweetness and Power", eating habits are very much related to social factors rather than biological factors. This means that people's diet is characteristic of the socio-cultural environment in which they are brought up or wish to belong to. The status of the foods and drinks in this complex socio-cultural environment is in constant move and very much influenced by trends and fashions in today's quickly changing society.

Top trend foods and drinks have been frowned upon after having become cheap mass produced products. Yet these crazes are reversible and the contrary has also been the case.

Let us take a look at the history of sweet wines for example. In the beginning very much appreciated by the kings and the nobles, the nectar-like luscious sweet wines have had a rather difficult time lately. They've been considered as "wines for women", in contrast to red and dry white wines, which were considered "real wines".

Yet right after World War II, sweet wines and rich foods in general became very popular. This trend towards rich food and high sugar content in foods had the negative side effect. Many wine producers unable to produce the traditional noble sweet wines would artificially increase the sugar contents of their wines, regardless of the quality in order to satisfy an increasing demand.

Of course this trend couldn't last, because the large majority of these new wines lacked the quality upon which sweet wine fame was founded. Chaptalization was very a current practice and the low quality and uninteresting taste of the final product had a very souring effect on the image of sweet wines in general. Thus in the following decades wine lovers showed more interest in dry whites and reds.

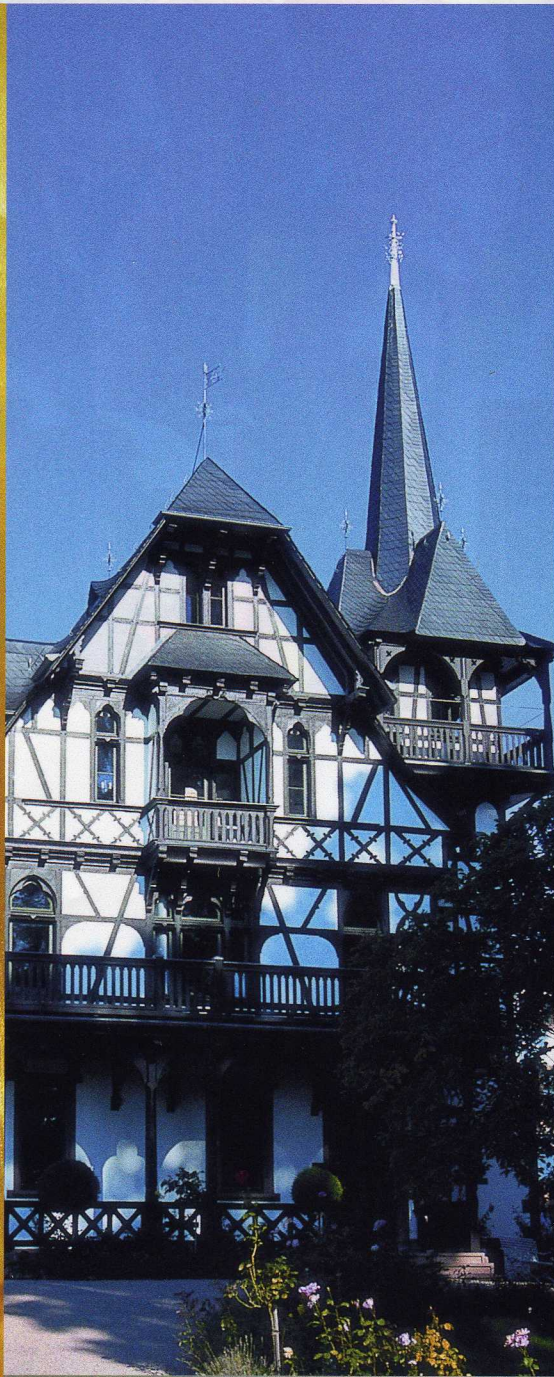
The reaction of the industry took some time and played on two fronts, on the one hand the production of red and dry white wines increased to satisfy an ever-increasing demand. On the other hand the producers of authentic traditional noble sweet wines, made enormous efforts to seduce the trendsetters of tomorrow with outstanding and sumptuous quality products. Today the world's greatest sweet wines are once again recognized for their outstanding quality and are also some of the most expensive in the world.

These high tickets are not due to financially gluttonous

**G**enerally speaking mammals, human beings included, are very sensitive to sweetness. This is most probably due to the fact that as babies our first nourishment is milk. And when thinking in terms of sweet, sour, bitter, and salty one could say that milk has a rather sweet taste. Children prefer sweet tastes to bitter our sour tastes, which is probably one of the reasons why they like sugar and candy so much.

Historically however sugar was nearly absent from most Europeans' everyday diet until the 15th century. Relatively high levels of food sweetness were exclusive to the nourishment of the elite classes. Its members could afford expensive sweet foods. Honey was one such luxury.

With the discovery of the Americas and the beginnings of colonisation, Europeans imported sugar cane. However sugar remained a luxury good



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winegrowers. Rather the original producer price is largely influenced by necessarily laborious production and extremely low yields. For the finest sweet wines we may hear : For a fine dry wine a vine will produce one bottle of wine and for a sweet wine only one glass. When it comes to Icewines or Eisweine we may even hear professionals talking in terms of drops per grape bunch.

The high prices also have the positive side effect of naturally classing traditional sweet wines like German or Austrian Trockenbeeren Auslesen, Eisweine, Canadian Icewines, French Sauternes and Hungarian Tokaj in the upscale segment of the wine market. This inevitable positioning had a particularly positive effect on new markets such as China, Hong-Kong, and Russia, where the expensive luscious sweet wines are highly sought after.

Another important factor for the recent trend towards sweet wines is the ongoing and improving research in the field of wine and food pairings. Many of the trendy, fashionable, and spicy or sweet Asian dishes pair extremely well with sweet wines, which allow sommeliers to include them more frequently on their wine lists.

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I interviewed several renowned sommeliers about sweet wines. Most of the time I asked the same questions so that you the reader may see how each one feels about some of sweet wines' central topics. Here is what I asked and what they had to say :

## HERVE PENNEQUIN

(3rd Best Sommelier of the World 2004)

### *How do you evaluate the image and situation of "sweet wines" today ?*

Sweet wines definitely deserve their place on wine lists and during the course of a meal. They may be enjoyed as aperitifs, with certain dishes and with many desserts.

Sadly enough I have the impression that due to the new "Don't drink and drive" restriction, and very strict legal ramifications of doing so in most countries, the first glass consumers omitted was the sweet wine before or after a meal.

I feel that the communication for sweet wines today is not really too well followed up on. The sweet wine syndicates and associations should team up to better market these wines. Even if the regular diner who needs drive after dinner restricts his or her consumption of sweet wines, these organizations as well as producers themselves and importers should concentrate their efforts on marketing other occasions for sweet wine drinking such as corporate dinners and private meals enjoyed at home to give two examples. I believe that there is really something to do since sweet wines are excellent partners for food - just have a look at my wine pairings in this issue !

### *How would you evaluate their development in terms of sales and demand in the context of emerging markets such as China, India and Russia ?*

The market I personally know best is the US, and there I believe everything can evolve at any time. It's all a question of good marketing and the right communication strategy. I have a feeling that the same holds true for the emerging markets you spoke of.

In the US we have a very sweet tooth. Some 50 years ago, the best selling wines here were all at least slightly sweet. The bone-dry style is a rather a recent consumer trend in the US.

The consumer here has been "educated" away from sweet wines through a certain marketing strategy employed by various importers and distributors. This "taste-education" is very important in emerging markets and has great potential in nearly any market.

The important thing is the right approach of the potential consumer. Taste-education happens through informative tastings. It is for this reason that it is important to support the staff on the point of sale, like sommeliers and servers in restaurants and salespeople in wine shops. They are the

one's who get the message across to the end consumer.

*In your personal point of view, do you like sweet wines and if so which are your favourites ?*

My favourite sweet wines... just have a look at the wine pairing section !

More generally speaking, I like well-balanced and elegant wines with a certain freshness, and full body.

I can drink sweet wines at any time of the day. I like the lighter ones like Monbazillac and young Sauternes for example as an aperitif and the fuller bodied ones during a meal, paired with food. Some sweet wines, like Ports for instance, pair beautifully with desserts. I also like them after a meal as a digestif.

## ANDREAS LARSSON

(Best Sommelier of the World 2007)

*How do you as a sommelier evaluate the image consumers have of sweet wines today ?*

I have the impression that consumers are not fully informed about sweet wines and don't drink them often enough. I believe that there is plenty of work to do to inform consumers about the wonderful sweet wines out there.

*Do you think that the new emerging markets such as China, India or Russia offer good opportunities for sweet wines ?*

Definitely. New markets are filled with open-minded consumers ready to try new things. I think of wine and food pairings with Chinese food on the Chinese market, for instance.

*How do you like sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

I love sweet wines.

By the way sweet wines were the first high quality wines I started to buy. I still remember with great pleasure the first Austrian TBA or Tokaji Aszú I bought.

I love to pair sweet wines with food and not only with desserts. I'm very interested in pairing them with duck-liver, cheese or spicy food, for instance. Another favourite of mine is enjoying them while relaxing with a cigar on a terrace. I believe that sweet wines are often much better suited to enjoy with a cigar than most spirits. The high degree of alcohol in many spirits may easily give you a headache while smoking a cigar. Sweet wines fit perfectly well in this situation.

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## MARK SLATER

(Sommelier at Michel Richard Citronelle, James Beard outstanding Wine Service Award 2007)

*How do you as a sommelier perceive the image consumers have of sweet wines ?*

In Washington DC where I work, diners seem very interested in discovering new sweet wines for dessert and cheese courses at the end of dinner, but not so much to accompany the whole meal.

*What's your personal opinion on sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

Personally, I love sweet wines as much as any other wine. Mosel Riesling and spicy Thai food is a favourite combination. There is no better match than a mature vintage of Château d'Yquem and a ripe pear. A hot summer day and a cold glass of Vouvray Demi-Sec is another favourite of mine.

## CHRISTY CANTERBURY

(Corporate Beverage Director for Culinary Concepts by Jean-Georges)

*How do you as a sommelier perceive the image consumers have of sweet wines ?*

In New York, I find guests to be fairly open. They tend to understand that sweet wines have balance through zippy acidity. In Atlanta, for example, people want sweet wines. I have servers who make many a guest happy pairing fried crab with Moscato d'Asti ! While the Riesling by the glass at Spice Market NYC is dry, it is off-dry in Atlanta. Some markets are unabashed in asking what they want.

How refreshing !

However, in other markets, guests profess utter horror toward sweet wines because of their identification of sweet wines with the unsophisticated. Lucky those happy guests know this is absolutely not the case with the world's finest sweet wines !

I believe the dining experience does much to set a consumer's orientation toward sweet wines in one way or another. The same sweet wine might be available in a high-end, white table cloth restaurant and in a casual neighbourhood "regulars" type of place and the same consumer would be happily blown away in the first scenario and simply refuse to try the wine in the second.

*How do you evaluate the opportunities offered by emerging markets such as China, Russia, and India for this style of wine ?*

Sweeter styles of wine pair well with many of the foods of China and India. Their affinity to fruit juices can contribute to the success of sweet wines (whether truly sweet or off-dry) in these countries. Russia has long been a fan of Tokaji and other great sweet wines of the world, and many countries of the former Soviet block are well respected for their high quality sweet wine production. Finally, much lower quality semi-sweet to sweet wine has long been shipped to Russia from Georgia and Moldavia (until recent import bans due to alleged issues with agro-chemicals).

*What's your personal opinion on sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

I thoroughly enjoy sweet wines, particularly their ability to last and last in my refrigerator ! I usually have 4-5 bottles open at any given time for moments to indulge in a nightcap and a good book.

The TBA's of Germany and Austria, Madeira, Colheita Port and Canadian and New York Ice Wines are at the very top of my list. Also, I enjoy crafting sparkling wine cocktails with tawny and ruby style Ports – pretty colours, hints of sweetness and festive bubbles are a sure hit to start off a dinner party !

## ANTON PANASENKO

(Best Sommelier of Russia 2003)

*How do you as a sommelier perceive the image consumers have of sweet wines ?*

Many consumers have no idea how great a sweet wine could be, by itself or with food. It is a job of sommelier or "caviste" to open their eyes on the subject. Many customers are very grateful after that.

*How do you evaluate the opportunities offered by emerging markets such as China, Russia, and India for this style of wine ?*

The consumption of this type (and all the other types) of wine will definitely grow.

*What's your personal opinion on sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

It depends on the type of sweet wine. Many of less

sweet wines (up to 70-80 grams of residual sugar per litre) are great with spicy Asian food, I try to do my best to convince people to drink with this food not beer or plum wine, but Kabinett or Spätlese wines. And, of course, for me a sweet wine is a great dessert and a much better digestive than hard liquor.

## MARKUS DEL MONEGO

(Best Sommelier of the World 1998)

*Mr. Del Monego, how do you as a sommelier evaluate the consumer demand for sweet wines in general from TBA's to Port? Do you think this demand is increasing, stable or decreasing? How do you explain that?*

At this moment the demand for noble sweet wines is slightly on the rise. This is particularly true for Riesling. Also the 2005 and 2007 vintages in Sauternes showed great quality. The same goes for Portugal. Thus one can conclude that noble sweet wines are once again getting more attractive.

I believe that this trend also illustrates consumer self-confidence. Some 20 years ago sweet wines were looked down upon and it was not fashionable to drink them. Since consumers had a very bad image of sweet wines and automatically related sweet taste with cheap wines.

Today consumers are much more open-minded and real wine lovers know what they want. In the meantime the style of cuisine has also evolved, thus sweet wines pair very well with many dishes in today's menus. Asian and Indian influences in the cuisine played an important role here.

*Do you believe that new markets such as China and India are an opportunity for this style of wine, if yes, why?*

I believe that these markets are certainly an opportunity. Yet these markets still depend pretty much on international trends. What is important is the self-confident consumer, who has faith in his own taste.

Especially with their style of cuisine these markets offer a great pairing potential for this type of wine, I'm thinking of China and India for instance and fruity and elegant Kabinett, to Spätlese-Auslese, TBA, and also Sauternes and Tokaji.

One can already observe certain trends and if noble sweet wines continue to conquer these markets they will also very soon be able to earn again the money necessary for their cost-intensive production.

It makes me always very thoughtful when I see that for

# CHATEAU DOISY-VEDRINES

*L'excellence*



THE WINE  
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example in Bordeaux, a First Growth (Premier Grand Cru Classé) from the Sauternes appellation makes only a fifth or a tenth of the profit per hectare as a red dry wine rated First Growth (Premier Grand Cru Classé) in Bordeaux's Médoc sub-region.

*Do you personally like to drink sweet wines, if yes, any favourites and favourite moments to drink them ?*

I'm a great fan of sweet wines. I'm passionate about noble sweet Rieslings, Sauternes, Tokaji and selected Ports. I tend to bring a bottle of sweet wines from all over the world back home from my travels and trips. There are many opportunities to drink them, from the wine for meditative pleasure drinking to the menu, there are no limits to fantasy and imagination.

#### ISA BAL

(Best Sommelier of Europe 2008, Head Sommelier at The Fat Duck)

*How do you as a sommelier perceive the image consumers have of sweet wines ?*

At some point about 5 years back we were struggling here to sell sweet wine. It seems however the trend is on the up swing and more and more people are having sweet wines with their desserts.

The classic denominations like Sauternes, Icewines, and some sweet German wine do well and have the recognition.

Fortified sweet wines, mainly Port, is also much loved in the UK market.

*How do you evaluate the opportunities offered by emerging markets such as China, Russia, and India or your own market the UK for this style of wine ?*

I think of all these markets the UK is probably the most receptive to the idea of having sweet wine. Most Russians and Chinese that I get to serve tend to drink drier wines. However due to size of these market and the relative improvements in their economies, I believe sweet wines would and should enjoy some of that prosperity.

*What's your personal opinion on sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

I am a big fan of Sweet wines based on the Riesling grape be it German or Alsatian. I love the balance of sweetness



and the acidity as well as the minerality they tend to have.

This is not to say I don't like anything else. Sauternes and Tokaji from Hungary are lovely and give enormous drinking pleasure. Where and when to drink them ? Well pretty much everywhere and anytime but always in good company !

## GERARD BASSET

(Master Sommelier and Master of Wine)

*How do you as a sommelier perceive the image consumers have of sweet wines ?*

In the UK they have a positive image but they are only really used for special occasions at the end of a meal. They are principally sold by the glass or in half bottles.

*How do you evaluate the opportunities offered by emerging markets such as China, Russia and India for this style of wine and your own market the UK ?*

I don't really know what they drink in China, Russia, and India. I would imagine that the people who have the money and want to experience the Western approach would be happy to drink top end dessert wines (d'Yquem, Egon Müller, Szepsy, etc...). In the UK the opportunities exist such as perhaps working with great chefs like Heston Blumenthal of the Fat Duck with a more quirky type of cuisine, which might suit dessert wines better.

*What's your personal opinion on sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

I love them.

The great ones are some of the best wines I have ever drunk. Egon Müller springs to mind but also a bottle of Château Guiraud 1990, which was to die for.

All my 11 bedrooms here at *Hotel Terra Vina* are named after sweet wines or fortified wines. At the moment I quite like drinking some Samos Grand Cru it is beautiful and such a good value !

On the winemaker side Olivier Dauga, Denis Dubourdieu and Michel Rolland answered my questions on the sweet wine topic.

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## OLIVIER DAUGA

(Winemaker / Bordeaux)

### *How do you perceive the image of sweet wines ?*

I feel that unfortunately sweet wines are not sufficiently known today. The press does not talk enough about sweet wines, yet I believe they are fantastic and that there is a real magic in their making.

We should all make great efforts to allow young people to discover these wines, since they are generally very attracted to sweet tastes. Sweet wines are ideal to ignite one's wine passion.

### *How do you evaluate the opportunities offered by emerging markets such as China, Russia, and India for this style of wine ?*

I believe that these new markets are a fantastic opportunity for sweet wines, first of all because many consumers are very fond of sweet tastes, which are easy to appreciate. Thus sweet wines are the ideal opening to the wine world for people not used to drinking wines. Furthermore the cuisine in these countries, often spicy and exotic, pairs wonderfully well with sweet wines. I think of spicy Indian and Chinese dishes or Ukrainian cuisine for instance.

### *What's your personal opinion on sweet wines, any favourites or favourite moments to drink them ?*

I love all sweet wines, particularly the German wines from the Mosel, but of course also Sauternes. As a winemaker I'm very much fascinated by the making of sweet wines and how the Botrytis affected grapes can be transformed into luscious and sumptuous wines of this inimitable golden colour.

## MICHEL ROLLAND

(Winemaker)

### *How do you evaluate the image of noble sweet wines at the moment ?*

These "sweet wines", (moelleux or liquoreux) have always had a very good image, because there are many very great wines.

The consumption of these wines has been pretty high until the 1950's and has decreased, I believe, only because of consumer's tastes. Since even though these wines remain very attractive for those who know about wine, they are ra-

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ther difficult to understand for those who don't, and don't know which ones to chose.

On the top of that, sweet wines are rather difficult to include in a meal, so consumers tend to hesitate in choosing a sweet wine. However as soon as one is familiar with their richness and diversity, one cannot help but to think that it is a pity that there is not more communication about these wines.

*Do you think that emerging markets such as China, India, and Russia are an opportunity for this type of wine ?*

For new consumers "sweet" wines are always very attractive. They are easy to approach in a tasting and they are very seductive. We know that after this first approach consumers often tend to go towards wines with more acidity and eventually more tannins.

All new markets are interesting, yet I would say they are as interesting as all the other wine consuming countries. Once again, I believe that one needs to "explain" these wines, few people know. Since it's always easier for the marchants to sell wines that are widely renowned.

*Do you like sweet wines such as TBA, Sauternes, Port, ...and which ones are your favourites ?*

I'm a great fan of sweet wines of all sorts, from Chenin de Vouvray to Tokay, and thanks to my origins I started to like Sauternes very early. I've also been a fan of Vintage Port for a very long time, now.

#### **DENIS DUBOURDIEU**

(Winemaker, Professor at Bordeaux University)

I met Denis Dubourdieu this summer for an interview about Sauternes and his researches in the field of Botrytis on Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon grapes. Mr. Dubourdieu is one of the most famous and renowned winemakers in Bordeaux. He is particularly renowned for his knowledge of the Sauvignon Blanc grape variety and his particular style of Sauternes wines of which he speaks to us below.

He is also a professor at Bordeaux University where he does his research and where he is very much involved in the DUAD studies.

Mr. Dubourdieu's family has been in the wine business for several generations now. They own several Châteaux in Barsac, and the Graves, where they produce of course noble sweet wines but also red wines and dry white wines.

*How did you start to become involved with Sauternes ?*

I was born in the "Sauternais", more precisely in the appellation of Barsac. It was my grandfather Georges Dubourdieu who had the opportunity to buy Doisy-Daëne. He was very happy about the acquisition since this cru was really one that made him dream. His dream was about doing a great wine.

This passion for wine, winemaking and perfectionism has been passed from one generation to the next. I'm personally a great aesthete and perfectionist in my conception of winemaking. I'm passionate about Sauternes and I believe that this passion for Sauternes is really something I have grown up with. It's been formed by the history of my family.

In the 1960's and 1970's we had a very hard time here in Sauternes. The wine had been very much in vogue just before, and yet as always is the case with trendsetters, they are copied and thus the market became stuffed with bad copies of sweet wines of poor quality.

Yet the markets always long for authentic products and that was and still is what we produce. The mass production of these bad copies of sweet wines during the 1960's had had a very bad influence and had partly destroyed the good image and reputation of sweet wines in general.

It was very hard to build up the image of our noble sweet wines again thereafter. I feel that this same phenomenon is something that risks to happen as well with red wines, since at the moment they are very fashionable and there are many cheap mass produced wines out there, which risk in the long term to have a bad influence on the image of these wines.

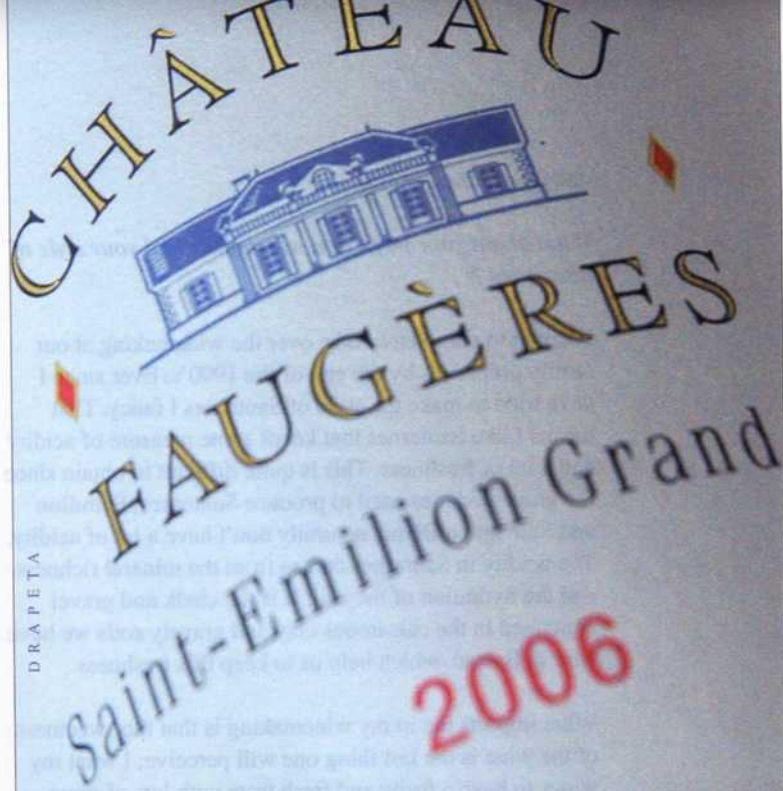
More generally speaking, cheap mass products kill the image of a wine style, which explains why fashions are constantly shifting and changing.

***What about your research? How did you start; and which are your main topics?***

At the beginning of my career as a researcher, I was particularly interested in the clarification processes of noble sweet wines and the particularities caused by the Botrytis cinerea mushroom in these processes.

Another main topic of my research focused on the wine-making of dry white wines and the different grape varieties with which we make them. I was much fascinated by the aromas and my research focused on the olfactive and tasting defaults of these wines.

Currently I'm focusing on the influences the Botrytis cinerea mushroom has on the aromatic development of the wines and on which aromas belong to the grape and which ones belong to the fermentation processes of the Botrytis



CHATEAU  
FAUGÈRES

SAINT-EMILION GRAND CRU  
CÔTES DE CASTILLON

cinerea affected grapes.

***What about your work as a winemaker and your style of Sauternes ?***

I started to completely take over the winemaking at our family properties by the end of the 1990's. Ever since I have tried to make the style of Sauternes I fancy. That means I like Sauternes that keeps some measure of acidity and a lot of freshness. This is quite difficult to obtain since the grape varieties used to produce Sauternes, Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc, naturally don't have a lot of acidity. The acidity in Sauternes comes from the mineral richness and the hydration of the soil. It is the chalk and gravel contained in the calcareous clay and gravelly soils we have here in Barsac, which help us to keep this freshness.

What imports me in my winemaking is that the sweetness of the wine is the last thing one will perceive; I want my wines to have a fruity and fresh taste with lots of minerality. To obtain this freshness, the moment of picking is very important. The grapes need to be at the perfect stage of ripeness and Botrytis affection.

The fruit needs to be fresh to give the style of wine I particularly like. The wines produced this way will show aromas of white peaches, cedar, lemon, passion fruit, fresh apricots and they will be very fresh. I personally try to avoid jammy aromas of any sort in my wines. Jammy and honey notes are characteristic for another style of Sauternes.

I have focused on the studies of the molecules of the aromas of the fresh Sauternes style I like and I continue doing so. In all of my wines my basic rules are precision and purity of the condition "sine qua non" is avoiding defaults of any sort.

Yet I know that there are other people who like another style of Sauternes, I feel that both styles have their right to exist, yet I have chosen my favourite.

And last but not least, I asked the winegrowers associations and syndicates of the different sweet wine producing regions what their experiences with sweet wine image and sales were.

**DEUTSCHES WEININSTITUT**

(Ernst Büscher, Pressesprecher)

*How do you evaluate the current market situation of Ger-*

Germany's Noble Sweet wines like Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, and Eiswein have a great reputation especially in the United States, one of our biggest export markets. The wines we produce are very unique and since Germany is one of the northernmost wine producing countries, we have an enormous climatic advantage, which allows us to produce sweet wines with a wonderful balance between sweetness and acidity and extremely low alcohol contents. Some German sweet wines have alcohol levels of only 7 or 8 ° per volume. All this makes German noble sweet wines a very special and unique product. German noble sweet wines are also wonderful partners for desserts.

The only difficulty we have to face is the changing climate. Global warming is a threat for us all, our wines included, since the warmer the weather conditions get, the less we have the possibility to produce Eiswein, for instance. In 06 we had nearly no Eiswein at all and in 07 there was only one single day that showed the required conditions for Eiswein harvesting.

***Do you think that the new emerging markets such as China, India and Russia offer a great potential for the sale of German noble sweet wines ?***

I believe that China is for sure a very important market for our wines. Recently a Chinese restaurant owner told me that if he could, he would buy out all German white wines, since the market potential for them was enormous in China. German noble sweet wines have a wonderful reputation and since the Chinese generally love things that are rare and prestigious, the demand for German noble Sweet wines is high and the market potential enormous.

Yet on average we only produce some 18,000 hectolitres of noble sweet wines, thus our supply is quiet limited. German Noble sweet wines really have to be seen as a rare and prestigious good. This is also the reason for the rather elevated prices of German noble sweet wines.

***What sort of marketing efforts do you undertake to promote Germany's noble sweet wines ?***

Actually we don't do anything to market these wines, their reputation is already very good. Their image is brilliant. On the contrary the wonderful image of our noble sweet wines is very helpful to promote our dry white wines. Yet the supply and demand for all wines still depends pretty much on vintages, and it is impossible to say anything general about them.

***How do you evaluate the current market situation for Sauternes wines ?***

To evaluate the market we need to talk about two completely different segments of the market; the First Great Growth on the one hand, which represents roughly 45 to 50 % of the Sauternes wines and on the other hand all the other Sauternes. We need to split the latter into two separate groups again, those mainly sold directly and those sold to Bordeaux merchants and traders or "négociants".

For the First Great Growths everything works brilliantly, prices are high and the wines sell very well. The producers who sell their wines directly also have few difficulties to sell them.

The group that is having more difficulty are the producers who sell their Sauternes through the Bordeaux merchants. The reason is first of all that the merchants tend to push the sales of red wines and the second reason is that the prices for the lesser-known Sauternes, especially sold in bulk, depend very much on the supply and the demand, which are very unstable and show a lot of fluctuations.

***Do you think that the new markets such as China, Russia or India are a great opportunity to boost the sales of Sweet wines ?***

I feel that the Russian market particularly offers some great opportunities, since the Russians have the wine culture. For the moment we are not very much involved in the Indian market. China is a huge and interesting, yet a very difficult market.

My impression is that when the Chinese think about Bordeaux they tend to think red wine rather than noble sweet wines. I believe however that since Sauternes and Chinese food pair extremely well, the Chinese market will develop. It is very important to communicate about this perfect pairing.

***What's your current marketing strategy for your appellation ?***

Unfortunately we don't really have a common approach for the moment, every one here in Sauternes acts on his behalf or lets the Bordeaux wine traders ("négociants") do their work. The First Great Growths, which are much better organized, have some common marketing approaches.

I'm convinced that if in the future we start communicating all together as an appellation we will have much better chances and opportunities especially in markets such as China and India.

## AUSTRIAN WINE MARKETING BOARD

*How do you situate Austrian noble sweet wines at the moment, what is their image and what are their biggest markets ?*

The image of Austrian noble sweet wines is very good. Our biggest markets at the moment are Switzerland and France for Europe, the United States also is a very good market and of course Asia. The image the final consumer and the professional have of Austrian noble sweet wines is becoming more and more similar now.

The image in professional circles is particularly positive. We have very good critiques in professional tastings. And yet strangely enough it is sometimes still a little difficult to sell noble sweet wines to the end consumer.

*How do you see the new emerging markets such as India, China, and Russia ? Are they a good opportunity to market Austria's noble sweet wines ?*

Funny coincidence, I just spoke with some of my colleagues who are in charge of Russia and they told me that the latest tasting session of noble sweet wines we organized there was an enormous success ! The interest of consumers in Russia was very high and attendance was outstanding.

I have a feeling that Russians love sweet noble wines and that this trend in consumer behaviour dates back to the era of the tsars, when noble sweet wines were synonymous for luxury. I feel that this association is still very true on the Russian market. Russians like luxury and being able to afford high-priced noble sweet wines can be considered as a status symbol in Russia.

*How do you market Austria's noble sweet wines ?*

Our strategies are very individually tuned according to the different core-markets. Generally they consist of wine presentations by the winemakers themselves, numerous tasting sessions, participations in professional meetings and competitions and communication with the media and press.

In the USA we work very closely with our importers, we organize tasting workshops, we work with the sommeliers and restaurants, and with all the other sectors of the trade. The Austrian Wine marketing board tries to create a basis for the communication on Austrian wines. After that it's up to the producers themselves to meet their customers and to benefit from our contacts and networking.

I'M CONVINCED  
THAT IF IN THE  
FUTURE WE START  
COMMUNICATING  
ALL TOGETHER AS  
AN APPELLATION  
WE WILL HAVE  
MUCH BETTER  
CHANCES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES  
ESPECIALLY IN  
MARKETS SUCH AS  
CHINA AND INDIA.

Catherine Péré-Vergé, la collectionneuse de goûts.



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