

Newsletter Blog

'Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours'

If Robin Hood drank... it would have been wine

Historians out there will be ready in reply with corrections that mead, weak ale, honeyed water and fresh milk would have been the more common drinks in medieval England, but I would like to think that Robin Hood would have drunk wine - if not at least preferred to drink it... or stolen it to give to others. His amiable companion, Friar Tuck, would have been the go to man for all beverages and my guess is that he also had a jovial penchant for wine as well.

Why does it matter what Robin Hood would have drunk? It's not exactly the top concern for a Sommelier. The reason I bring it up is actually because of the Robin Hood-like gesture taken by both the British and French governments in auctioning off a large majority of their wine cellars in a move to publically show their dedication to economic austerity. With Britain still deep in the water and France having recently declared themselves in recession, both governments planned to give money back to the state and fund a cheaper wine cellar to help with the down turn. It does have a slight "rob from the rich and give to the poor" ring about it.

And, with France in particular, it is a sacrifice not to be taken lightly. With bottles of unimaginable quality and mystique, the Élysée Presidential Palace cellar has not only catered for major historical occasions but continues to pride itself as the elite wine cellar for governmental dinners across the globe. The wine stored there since 1947 has unrivalled provenance.

So, the 300+ page catalogue contains some big names from great vintages. Included are 1985 Krug Clos de Mensil, 1961 Latour, 1961 Lafite, 1990 Pétrus, magnums of 1990 Yquem, white Haut-Brion and the very rare 1985 La Romanée. But, in another refreshing act of humility and inclusiveness, the cellar also holds wines which would not raise an eyebrow due to their inexpensive and humble names. Like the cellar itself, this is a working environment and not a museum, proving that taste in wine ranges from the legendary to the comparatively unheard of. So, as the auction is open to the public, it could be very possible that a 2,200 euro Petrus may end up in the hands of a collector as well as a 15 euro bottle from the South West ending up in the hands of an enthusiast.

I doubt Hollande and the French government will take austerity too seriously, at least not as seriously as "the world's poorest president" of Uruguay who donated 90% of his salary to the people. But it seems that wine is capable of inspiring a level of generosity from table-side sharing of a bottle amongst strangers to a rare glimpse in contradiction to the French's stereotypically 'snooty' and egotistic coveting of their own wine. In fact, this transformative auction goes some way in dispelling wine's very own 'pompous' image with the realization that even heads of state like their tastes to change and evolve with new talent in wine-making worthy of note. The snobbishness of wine, then, begins to become less tangible as if it was robbed from the rich...

Tips: The auction takes place on the 30th May. View the full catalogue of wines at <http://www.kapandji-morhange.com/flash/index.jsp?id=16494&idCp=22&lng=fr>

For more information about wine join our wine classes at That Little Wine Bar, 54 Chow Thye Road, George Town, Penang

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