

The finest cellarage



THE VAULT

MAY 2018

FOR LOVERS OF
FINE WINE

XI



OCTAVIAN



WELCOME TO THE VAULT, AN OCTAVIAN PERIODICAL

Octavian is committed to providing world-class cellarage services for an ever growing customer base. Improvements – some visible, some less so – continue throughout the business, to ensure we are equipped to manage the increasing volumes of wines stored in our safe keeping. Over the past 12 months, we have handled more than 1 million cases with a market value in excess of £1.5 billion and undertaken a record number of transactions: 71,000 condition images, over 12,500 deliveries to unique locations and more than 3,700 reworks.

Attention to even the smallest of details ensures we provide superlative care for the finest of wines. We have recently invested in bespoke material handling equipment (MHE), designed specifically to eliminate vibration when collections are moved. The MHE also features sophisticated monitoring systems to help us drive safely and with best practice throughout our facility.

Underground, we have added sensors to our lighting, ensuring that cases are left in the dark whilst helping the environment and mitigating increasing energy costs. We are also currently upgrading our underground dehumidifiers. This large-scale project will see us temporarily run our existing humidifiers alongside the new, advanced equipment to ensure that there is no impact on humidity levels. The double run will cease only when we are satisfied that we can switch seamlessly to the modern humidifiers with no disruption to the wines. However, to ensure total security and resilience in our storage environment, we will not be removing our existing dehumidifiers from our cellars.

A greater number of interventions (repackaging, reconfiguration into different pack sizes, photography and so on) go hand-in-hand with higher stock levels. Octavian has recently expanded its team, and as true custodians of each collection, our staff meticulously oversee the condition of 'goods in' and 'goods out'. If there is any query on the condition of wines received, whether it be crushed cardboard packaging, damaged cases or cases with woodworm, we notify customers as early as possible. Whilst this may slow the receipt of cases into an account, we believe it is time well spent, offering the opportunity for you to seek possible redress with the seller.

Packaging, after all, has great impact on the overall value of a case. Replacing aged and second hand cartons, Octavian's own wooden wine cases have proved a great success, providing greater protection for the wines and a more aesthetically pleasing delivery case, especially for home cellars.

Those of you with an eye for design may have noticed a few subtle changes to our brand. In this issue, you can see the streamlined Octavian logo and simplified typography in use, read why we've made these changes and learn that we will soon be launching a new online feature offering better information to make it easier for you to manage your collection.

We are delighted to feature Ella Lister's market update again this year, and encourage you to use the tools on her analysis platform, wine-lister.com, to help with your buying decisions, especially during this year's *en primeur* campaign.

In 'Revolution in a Glass', Elin McCoy explores the original Champagne socialists' lifelong love of wine and how Marx's legacy still influences the way we view wines today.

For a birds-eye view of Octavian, don't miss Channel 4's 'Hidden Britain by Drone' which will be aired in June. The programme will give new perspectives on the underground 'Fort Knox' of fine wine and we're delighted to be able to share the passion that infuses all that we do here at Corsham with the greater public. We hope you enjoy watching it.

Vincent O'Brien
Octavian Managing Director

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT FROM OCTAVIAN

THE WORLD'S BEST WINE STORAGE WILL SOON OFFER UNBEATABLE ONLINE ACCESS TO YOUR COLLECTION

State-of-the-art collection management is being made available exclusively to private clients who store their wine with us. You will soon be able to login to explore, track and value your Octavian stored wines.

It is a wine management platform that gives you more: Better information, easier organisation, tracking tools and more insights. You will experience total wine management with a state of the art platform that's as easy to use on phones and tablets as it is on computers.

Organise a wine collection stored at Octavian and at home, and see a 360° view. You might even be surprised at how much wine you have and its current market value!

There is a wealth of must-have information to help evaluate and appreciate your wines including scores and drinking windows.

You will also be able to view current market pricing (based on best market prices) and price history; see how the value of your collection has changed over time and gain access to instant valuations for when you're thinking about reshaping your collection or realising some of your gains.

WHAT IT INCLUDES

- Standardised wine name
- Region of production information
- Purchase price, date and source of supply
- Current price, net gain/loss
- Price history charting of individual wines
- Drinking dates
- Average scores
- Producer profiles where available
- Personalised drinking dates
- Personal tasting notes
- View and download inspection photos
- Download in Excel
- Collection overview report in downloadable PDF

Octavian private clients will have the choice of premium access that includes advanced reporting and comparison tools, to help pinpoint best value wines of interest to buy as well as indicating those that you might want to sell.



MARKET UPDATE

BORDEAUX PRICES MAY NOT HAVE PICKED UP AT THE SAME PACE AS OTHER MAJOR WINE REGIONS, THOUGH BUYING *EN PRIMEUR* COULD PROVIDE GOOD OPPORTUNITIES IF CHOSEN CAREFULLY, EXPLAINS ELLA LISTER, FOUNDER AND CEO OF WINE LISTER

After a strong year for wine prices in 2016, 2017 was more sedate. The positive impact of the weak pound on the fine wine market has run its course. Furthermore, the first quarter of 2018 saw prices fall for three consecutive months (this common downward pattern had been averted in 2017).

Nonetheless, over the 12-month period to 30th April, all major wine regions have made at least some gains. The Wine Lister regional indices (figure 1) are composed of the five strongest wine brands in each region. Burgundy's top wines have risen most in price, closely followed by those of Piedmont, gaining 16% and 15% respectively. Next come Tuscany and California, with Bordeaux's top wines – the five first growths – trailing the pack, with annual growth of just 3%.

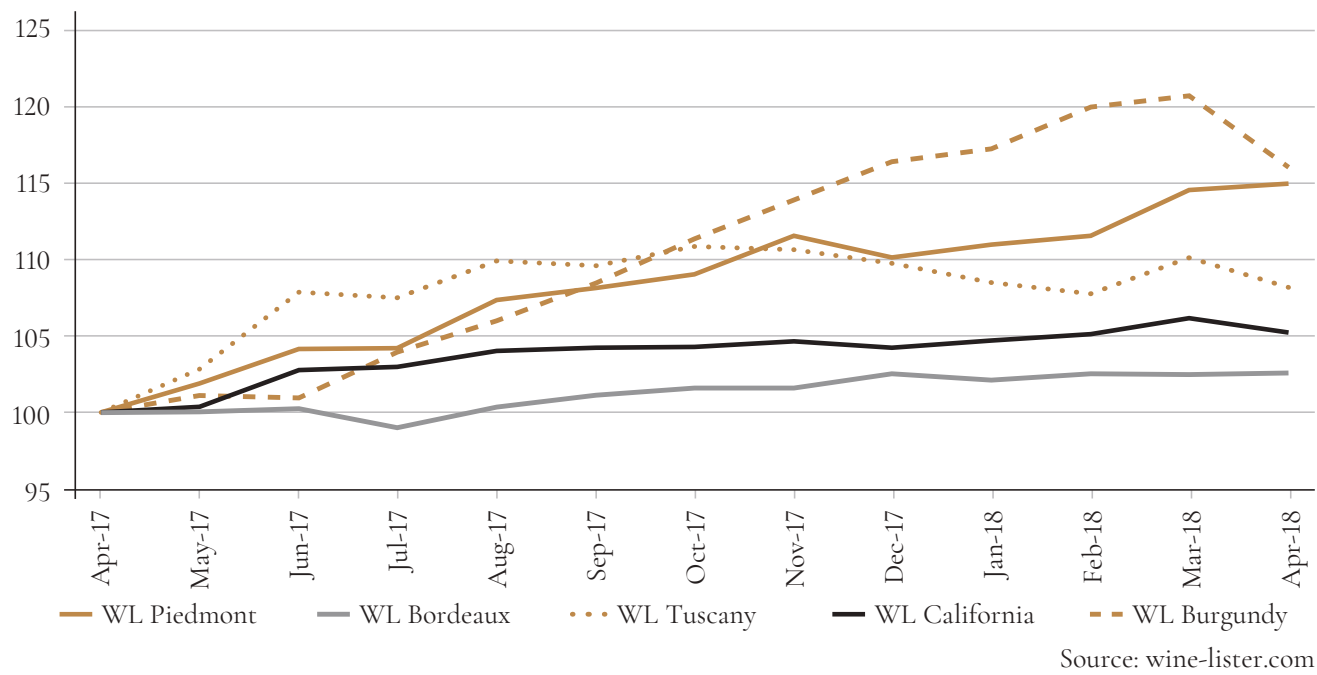
Bordeaux has not managed to pick up at the same pace as other regions since falling from its pedestal in the summer of 2011. However, its wines remain by far more popular and more liquid than those of other fine wine regions (its wines are the most searched-for online, and the most traded at wine auctions worldwide). Any considered wine investment portfolio would contain a good proportion of Bordeaux alongside more volatile but potentially more lucrative wines from other regions.

The good news is that for several years now – following the overpriced 2010 vintage – buying Bordeaux *en primeur* (futures, before the wine is bottled) has started to become worthwhile again for the consumer. The 2014 vintage, especially, has seen good returns. This year's *en primeur* campaign has already started, and will present some good opportunities for those who choose carefully.

The 2017 vintage boasts some very good wines at the top end of the spectrum, though is less consistent than the last two vintages. Even the Bordelais readily admit that 2017 is not a contender for vintage of the century, or even decade. The wines have less density than 2015 and 2016, but are fresh, delightful, balanced wines, which in many cases will give early pleasure while also lasting well.

Wine Lister Quality scores for Bordeaux 2017 combine the ratings of the world's foremost wine critics

FIGURE 1: WINE REGION PRICES OVER 12 MONTHS



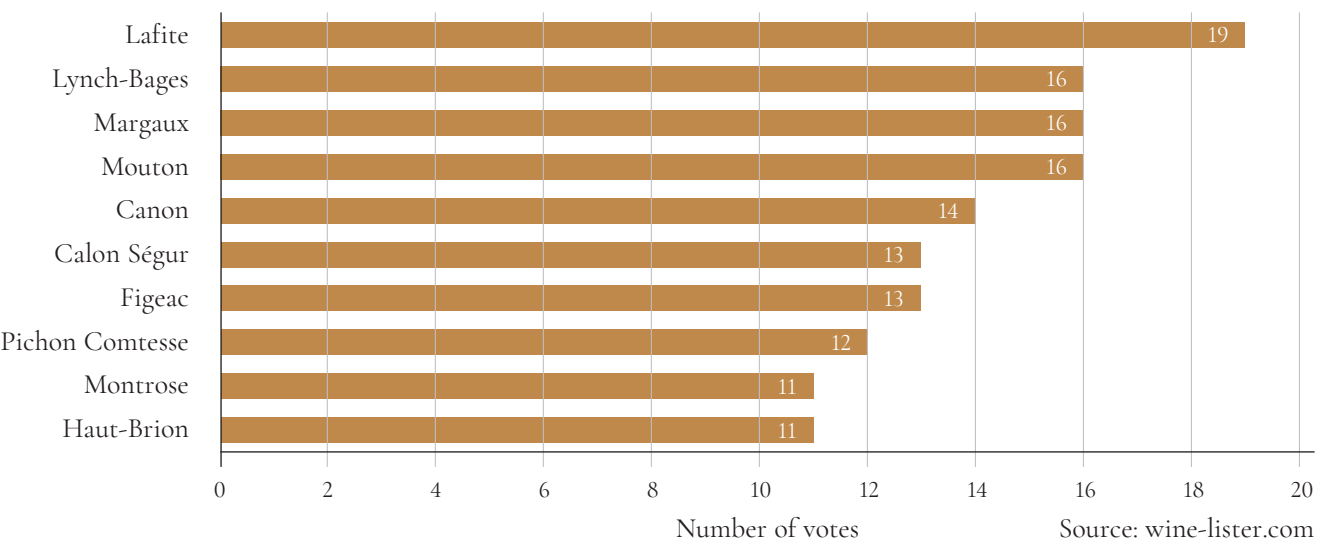
(Jancis Robinson, Neal Martin, Antonio Galloni, and Bettane+Desseauve) to identify the best wines of the vintage. Sweet whites from Sauternes and Barsac featured heavily among the critics' top picks in 2017, and offer exceptional value money. Dry whites should also not be overlooked for drinking pleasure, though perhaps less so for investing. As for red wines, the top Quality scores are achieved by Pomerol trio Château Lafleur, Petrus, and

Vieux Château Certan, all scoring above 970 on the Wine Lister 1,000-point scale.

A survey undertaken by Wine Lister asked its Founding Members (key members of the international fine wine trade) which were the most successful wines of the 2016 Bordeaux *en primeur* campaign. Apart from the first growths, properties experiencing the most demand last year included Châteaux Lynch-Bages, Canon, and Montrose (figure 2).

(continued on page 7)

FIGURE 2: 2016 *EN PRIMEUR* SUCCESS, AS VOTED BY WINE LISTER FOUNDING MEMBERS





REVOLUTION IN A GLASS: MARX, ENGELS AND WINE

FAR FROM SEEING WINE AS A LUXURY COMMODITY FOR THE ELITE, KARL MARX WAS A LIFELONG LOVER OF THE GRAPE, A PASSION HE SHARED WITH HIS COMRADE AND COLLABORATOR FRIEDRICH ENGELS. ELIN McCOY TRACES THE DRINKING LIVES OF THE ORIGINAL CHAMPAGNE SOCIALISTS AND FINDS THAT THEIR THINKING ON CAPITAL, LABOR AND ALIENATION STILL EXERTS A POWERFUL HOLD ON MANY WINE CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS TODAY

“Be careful of trusting a person who does not like wine.” So said Karl Marx, the great social philosopher and revolutionary whose theories dramatically changed the world. He turns out to have much closer ties to wine than you might suspect. Ditto his closest friend and lifelong collaborator Friedrich Engels.

Today, it may seem a contradiction—or at least surprising—that these revolutionaries embraced what we now regard as a luxury product. But neither of them saw their love of wine that way. Instead, both believed the pleasures of life should be open to all classes. (That’s certainly my concept of social justice.) From birth, Marx had a built-in personal relationship with wine that influenced him the rest of his life. He was born on May 5, 1818, in Trier, Germany, considered the cradle of the country’s wine culture. This ancient Roman capital on the scenic banks of the Mosel River now boasts a wine museum and one dedicated to Marx’s life (Karl-Marx-Haus), both on today’s tourist route.

As you drive into the city, you see steep, terraced, seemingly vertical vineyards overlooking the river, just as Marx did nearly two centuries ago. At the time, wine was

“the region’s most important single economic enterprise, both for the growers and the townspeople,” according to one Marx biographer, Saul Padover. It had been, and still is, classic Riesling territory.

Marx’s father Heinrich, a lawyer, was deeply influenced by French culture and owned two small vineyards, as did many local bourgeois families. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the French army, then Napoleon, occupied Trier, until the Congress of Vienna in 1815, when the Rhineland came under the control of the kingdom of Prussia. The Marx family vines along the Ruwer in Mertesdorf were not far from the Grünhaus—now the esteemed Maximin Grünhaus estate of Carl von Schubert.

Growing up, Marx was surrounded by wine and winemaking and would frequently have seen wagons loaded with grapes, barrels, and bottles rumbling through the city. Later, as a student in Bonn, he drank not just beer but plenty of Riesling and doubtless Spätburgunder, too. As Mary Gabriel bluntly puts it in her book *Love and Capital*, “Marx’s first year at university was drowned in alcohol.” He skipped lectures for his role as co-president of

the Trier Tavern Club, and two of his favourite activities at university in Bonn and, later, at university in Berlin, where he worked on his PhD, were philosophical debates and getting drunk. With philosopher and historian Bruno Bauer, he liked to ride donkeys through villages while inebriated.

Imbibing continued to be a key pleasure throughout his life. He drank wine whenever he could afford it or could get someone else—like his friend Engels—to pay for it.

· SYMPATHY WITH GROWERS PUSHES MARX TO SOCIALISM ·

Fast-forward to Marx’s return to Rhineland wine country after he left university, and his work as a fledgling journalist. He began writing for the new liberal Cologne newspaper *Rheinische Zeitung*, and after he became its editor-in-chief in the fall of 1842 at the age of 24, he turned it into a lively, scrappy, polemical publication. His early articles and political ideas were bound up with the geopolitical context in which he was raised, especially the wine business.



The Rhineland was deeply and adversely affected by Prussian rule. The desperate poverty and miserable conditions of the Mosel wine growers under it inspired two articles Marx wrote for the paper, part of his investigations into “practical questions.” He blamed Prussian policies of heavy taxation and a shift to free trade after a period of protectionism for their plight. According to Marx himself, this was one of the issues that led him from politics pure and simple to economic relationships, and so to socialism. Unfortunately for the local wine growers, the authorities banned the paper, and Marx headed for Paris.

ANY IMAGE YOU MIGHT HAVE OF
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REVOLUTIONARIES OBSESSED ONLY
WITH POLITICS AND CLASS STRUGGLE
VANISHES WHEN YOU READ THEIR
LETTERS TO ONE ANOTHER

· LIFE IN PARIS AND LONDON ·

Any image you might have of Marx and Engels as abstemious revolutionaries obsessed only with politics and class struggle vanishes when you read their letters to one another.

Their rich social lives and frequent partying when Marx was in exile in Paris and later settled in London were fuelled with wine, beer, and just about anything alcoholic that happened to be around. Detailed accounts of meetings include dozens of references to a love of boozing while arguing about the merits of revolution and the nature of society.

In Paris, Marx held discussions with poet Heinrich Heine and anarchist Mikhail Bakunin over wine and beer in cafés, in wine merchants' shops, and in wine cellars, and he first met Engels at the Café de la Régence, a bar that had once served Benjamin Franklin and Voltaire. The two spent ten beer-soaked days cementing their friendship, according to Tristram Hunt's biography of Engels, Marx's General: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels. This period is often regarded as the way The Communist Manifesto began.

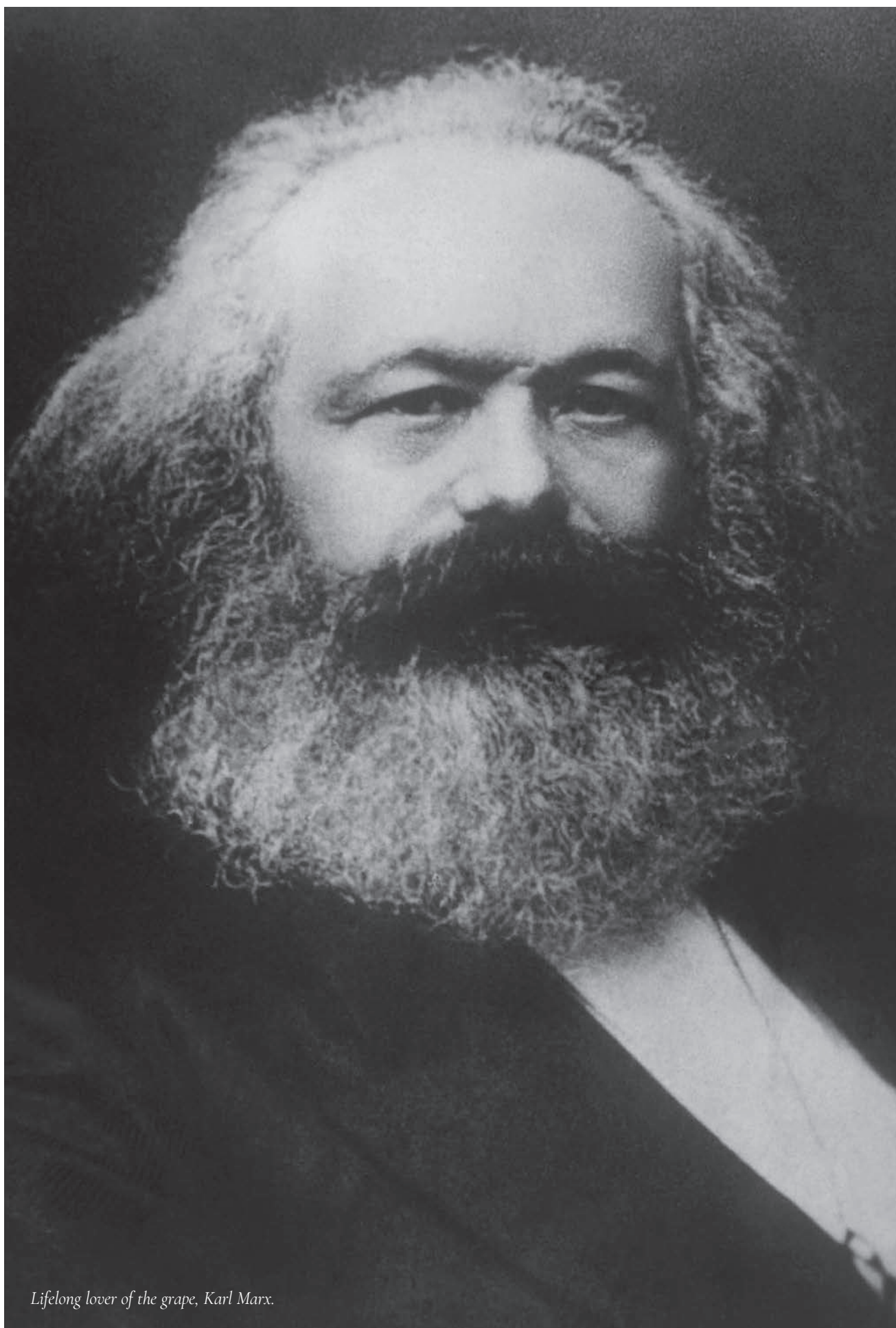
Engels, an exuberant bon vivant despite his Calvinist upbringing, had more money to spend than Marx and was a dedicated wine connoisseur. Hunt points out that his political ideology was “an almost Rabelaisian belief in the capacity of socialism to fulfil human pleasure.” While still a teenager, Engels had published romantic odes to wine, with lines like:

*New wine shall fill your glasses to the brim,
Pure Freedom wine's intoxicating brew*

Marx's and Engels's drinking was hardly unusual, however. During the mid-19th century, wine and beer were ubiquitous. As Rod Phillips's book *French Wine: A History* makes clear, “wine was part of the daily diet of the mass of French workers, both urban and rural.” And the burgeoning middle class in France and elsewhere was beginning to appreciate high quality wines, especially those from Champagne and Bordeaux, as a mark of sophistication. Wine quality was improving, and the rise of restaurants exposed drinkers to new wines.

At the same time, wine production was on the increase. “Rivers of inexpensive wine” flowed from the Languedoc-Roussillon to the cities of northern France, according to Phillips. Bordeaux was in a golden age, sending casks of red wine to England and soon to rank the best wines in the 1855 Classification.

Meanwhile, the dozens of workers' revolts and riots all over Europe—the chaotic backdrop of Marx's writing—culminated in the revolutions of 1848, not long after The



Lifelong lover of the grape, Karl Marx.

Communist Manifesto was published. Marx had already been thrown out of Paris and Brussels and had moved on to Cologne. Engels, forced to flee, embarked on a walking tour through Burgundy and the Loire, taking a break from revolution.

He chronicled his observations on wine (“With a bottle of Champagne one can again drift into the merriest carnival mood in the world!”) and the quality of the 1848 harvest (“better than '46, perhaps even better than '34”) in a journal titled *From Paris to Berne*, which reads a bit like a tour brochure.

After Marx moved to London in 1849, visits from comrades were an excuse for drinking sprees to accompany noisy all-night discussions. One famous tale, recounted by German socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht in his *Karl Marx: Biographical Memoirs*, was of a drunken evening in London, when he and Marx and Edgar Bauer went on a pub crawl, taking a drink “in every saloon between Oxford Street and Hampstead Road.” They ended up smashing several street lamps and barely escaped the police. At the time, Marx was in his 40s.

Engels, on the other hand, went to work in his father's factory in Manchester in order to support Marx's writing and philosophizing—and drinking. He regularly shipped cases of claret to the Marxes along with significant dollops of cash, as the family was in a constant state of financial free fall.

· WINE-FUELLED DISCUSSIONS AND FAMILY LIFE ·

What were they pouring? Most of the bottles Engels sent Marx were Bordeaux, Rhine wine, Champagne, or Port, but we know only a few specific names of those wines. In 1857, the year of a European financial crisis, one of them was Château Cos d'Estournel.

A surprising number of letters from Engels to Marx and his wife Jenny mention wine shipments; theirs to him contain thanks and requests for more. In July 1857, for example, Jenny Marx wrote, “The wine has just arrived. The children's exultation knew no end. The girls examined the bottles very closely and found the Sherry settled in green and the Port in pale lilac. The Bordeaux cheers us with its red smile.”

In December 1859, her note read, “The Champagne will be a tremendous help in tiding us over the otherwise gloomy holiday and will ensure a merry Christmas Eve. The sparkling bubbles of the Champagne will make the dear children forget the lack of a little Christmas tree this year.”

Engels frequently alluded to an upcoming wine shipment in long political letters to Marx. In 1862, while commenting on the American elections, he included this: “I am sending you a hamper of wine per Chaplin and Horne, containing about one dozen claret and 2 bottles of old 1846 hock for little Jenny [Marx's ailing daughter], the rest being made up of 1857 hock, 24 bottles in all.”



In another missive, he specified he was sending bottles of 1846 Hochheimer and 1857 Rudesheimer.

Marx personally sent his thanks, often for both books and wine, as well as continuing requests for more of the latter, mostly “rhenish,” claret, and Champagne, to replenish his “wine cellar.” He noted in one 1861 letter that his children “seem to have inherited their father’s fondness for the bottle.”

He clearly viewed himself as a knowledgeable wine lover in an 1866 letter to François Lafargue, a Bordeaux merchant who became his daughter’s father-in-law. At the time, Marx was in London, hard at work on *Das Kapital*. “My sincere thanks for the wine. Being myself from a wine-growing region and former owner of a vineyard, I know a good wine when I come across one. I even incline somewhat to old Luther’s view that a man who does not love wine will never be good for anything. (There are exceptions to every rule.) But one cannot, for example, deny that the political movement in England has been spurred on by the commercial treaty with France and the import of French wines.”

The Marxes saw drinking wine as important not just for pleasure but also for curing their (and their children’s) frequent bouts of ill health. When Marx suffered from boils and carbuncles, his daily diet included three to four glasses of Port, as well as half a bottle of Bordeaux, according to Gabriel.

In 1870, Engels finally retired and moved to London, where he saw Marx every day and opened up his own house to socialists and anarchists for regular Sunday parties filled with wine-fueled discussions and German folk songs. “The house specialty,” writes Hunt, “was a springtime bowl of Maitrank, a May wine flavoured with woodruff.”

Marx spent the last 15 months of his life traveling and taking various “cures” for his many serious ailments. While he was in Switzerland, Engels sent wine advice, recommending Ivorne, a red Neufchatel, and Valtellina, which is, he wrote, “the best wine in Switzerland.” Marx died in 1883.

Engels lived another 12 years. On his first trip to the United States in 1888, he bought bottles of Ohio wine and a California Riesling that he drank “with gusto,” and he celebrated his 70th birthday in 1890 at a party with 16 bottles of Champagne and dozens of oysters.

When he died in 1895, his estate, worth £20,378, included a wine cellar worth £227, the equivalent of about £27,240 today. Twigg and Brett, his Dublin wine merchants, had 142 cases of his wines in their cellars.

It included 77 cases of claret, 48 of Port, and 13 of Champagne. He left money to the Communist Party, urging them to enjoy a glass of wine on him.

What was his idea of happiness? The question was part of the highly popular Victorian parlour game “Confessions.” Engels’s answer, which he wrote in an album belonging to Marx’s daughter Jenny, was Château Margaux 1848.

· THE LEGACY OF MARXISM IN THE WINE WORLD ·

While the pleasures of wine clearly enhanced Marx’s and Engels’s personal lives, their theories still offer us insights into the wine world today. Luxury wines have become contemporary commodities and markers of social status that are sold and traded for sometimes staggeringly large sums. Many artisanal winemakers have fought against that image, nowhere more so than in Italy, where some of the 20th century’s greatest winemakers have identified themselves wholeheartedly as Marxists. The late Barolo traditionalists Bartolo Mascarello and Teobaldo Cappelano were avowed communists who saw their wines as ideological and ethical expressions of their regions, an indispensable part of their rural culture—not as “luxury products for the ruling classes.” The founder of the Slow Food and Slow Wine movements, Carlo Petrini, began as a communist political activist.

LUXURY WINES HAVE BECOME CONTEMPORARY COMMODITIES AND MARKERS OF SOCIAL STATUS THAT ARE SOLD AND TRADED FOR SOMETIMES STAGGERINGLY LARGE SUMS

But the part of Marx’s thought that most seems to apply to today’s wine world is his theory of alienation and “estranged labor,” which he wrote about in Paris in 1844 in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

One of its ideas, very much simplified, is that under capitalism in the industrialized world, workers become alienated from the products they make because they’re not in control of their own labor and how these items are made. Consumers, on the other hand, are alienated from a product because, although people’s labor has created all

of the commodities in our lives—food, our cars, and so on—we have no idea who actually made them and have no direct contact with their origins. The “labor” has essentially vanished into the product. So, all these things become mere objects with no real human connection.

But with artisanal, non-industrial wines, hand-made by a particular individual from a specific piece of land, the origin and labor are obvious. Part of the mark of what we call “authentic wine” today is this kind of link between the land and the maker and the drinker.

Jonathan Nossiter’s controversial 2004 documentary film *Mondovino* critiqued globalization in the wine business by contrasting “corporate” wine with the wine from small, independent producers. As one critic wrote in the *Miami Herald*, it was an “attempt to rescue winemaking from the hands of profit-mongering capitalists.”

In many ways, Robert Parker’s idea of focusing only on the taste of what is in the glass and giving it a “quality” number turns any wine, no matter how much a hand-made product, into a tradable commodity. The numbers sell wine but ignore the cultural meaning and suck out its humanity. (The outspoken Cappelano went so far as to banish journalists from his cellar in 1983 unless they agreed to review his wines without scores.)

Recently, I was discussing these themes with Jeremy Parzen, a food and wine historian who writes the fascinating blog *DoBianchi.com* and is an adjunct professor in the Master in Italian Wine Culture program at Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche in Piemonte. “Think of the movie *Sideways*,” he said, “and the scene where the character Maya gives her monologue on why she loves wine. She says, ‘I like to think about what was going on the year the grapes were growing; how the sun was shining; if it rained. I like to think about all the people who tended and picked the grapes. And if it’s an old wine, how many of them must be dead by now.’” We are so enchanted by wine, Parzen suggests, because it comes from the earth, is made by an identifiable person, and drinking it takes us “to the hands of the people.” He sees wine —especially “natural” wine—as the last product that “negates alienation” and lets us look beyond consumerism.

But alas, even the idea of authenticity in wine has often become just another marketing tool of corporate wine. Marx and Engels remain relevant.

This article first appeared in The World of Fine Wine www.worldoffinewine.com

A REFRESHED LOGO FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

AS WE CONTINUE TO GROW AND EVOLVE AS A BUSINESS,
OCTAVIAN RECOGNISES THAT THE TIME HAS COME
TO REFRESH ITS LOGO AND CREST, BRINGING MORE
CLARITY TO OUR BRAND AND PRODUCT RANGE, AND
ESTABLISHING A SOLID BASE FOR THE FUTURE

This year, working with Carter Wong design, Octavian will be introducing a cleaner, refreshed logo which sees the word ‘Vaults’ removed from the brand mark.

This move was instigated by the need to clarify Octavian as the voice of the company and have a clearer communication that ‘The Vaults Service’ is our product offering. We will still

provide the same excellent level of service that being part of our Vaults offering delivers, but now we will communicate with you as Octavian not Octavian Vaults.

It coincides with improvements across the business and a new look which will soon be rolled out on the Octavian website.



Whilst retaining our main colourways of blue and copper, the Octavian crest has been re-crafted for a new era. The crest has been redrawn to more strongly reflect the vines and grapes that are key components in the business of wine, and the eagle and portcullis representing the strength and security of our brand.

The introduction of our refreshed logo symbolises our continuing efforts to constantly update all aspects of our business to ensure we remain the world’s pre-eminent fine wine storage provider.



TAKING STOCK

“INFORMATION GATHERED FROM THE DATA HELPS TO STEER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS.” CLAIRE TURNER, OCTAVIAN STOCK CONTROL MANAGER IS PASSIONATE ABOUT PROCESS

Overseeing stock integrity within a large, standardised warehouse environment is one thing, but factor in an underground storage environment where perfect cellarage conditions must be meticulously maintained; an inventory that includes tens of thousands of locations and hundreds of thousands of unique items; not least a ‘product’ that may be delicate, high in value, equally rich in sentimental value and in some cases, irreplaceable and the task takes on new levels of complexity.

Recognising the need to drive quality and have the most rigorous stock management processes possible, Octavian took the strategic decision to invest heavily in the development of its stock control function. Claire Turner stepped into the helm as Stock Control Manager in November 2015 and over the past two and a half years, has strived for continuous improvement, greater

transparency and seen her dedicated team of people focused on measuring and auditing, which provides the business with the data to drive improving the processes.

“We’re quite unusual in that most of the stock we care for is owned by customers rather than by the business. Every collection has a story. Some wines have very personal meaning to their owners. Some may even be the only remaining bottles of particular type of wine in the world. It’s fascinating to me that some of these collections have resided here for 20 years or more. That’s almost unheard of in warehousing where the focus is so often on the swift and efficient transit of stock,” Claire explains.

“But irrespective of value, whether they’re laid down to mature, or lower value drinking wines that may change hands more frequently, every bottle at Octavian is treated with the same level of care, as if it were our own property. Everything we do is geared around ensuring ‘finer, safer, more valuable wine’ – it’s a commitment that underpins the whole business.”

With a team of operatives ‘on the shop floor’ who focus on picking inventory and completing orders, it is Claire’s team’s role to analyse the stock control processes themselves. “We work independently as a second pair of eyes, looking closely at availability, analysing data and identifying ways to drive stock accuracies and constantly improve the way we do things.

“Processes are consistent; repeatable; measurable and highly traceable. Having good processes in place means you can assess them and seek ways of enhancing them.”

Having established traceability across all steps of the stock management process, from the receipt of wines through

to making cases being available for picking, to physical stocktaking, Claire runs a tight and data-driven ship.

“The provenance of wines stored at Octavian is all-important and information gathered from the data helps to steer business improvements. For example, by looking at data generated from stock checks, we can be sure that stock is in the right place at the right time and this helps to avoid any delay or interruption in service.

“We also have rigorous processes in place to get to the root cause of anomalies, no matter how small. Wine labels and packaging were never designed for stock management, so subtle discrepancies over the vintage or the chateaux are inevitable. Accuracy is vital and each case is treated with the same importance,” she explains.

“Octavian really cares about its reputation and delivering the best possible service. Say you lose your wedding ring – you may be able to replace it, but it’s never quite the same. Our processes are extremely thorough and that mitigates risk. Such strong inventory management and record keeping means we have been able to secure exceptionally high insurance cover – an important layer of assurance for our customers. With full compensation available and team members focussed on minimising the claims aspect, customers can be confident that their assets are protected physically and financially.”

Claire, by her own admission, ‘lives and breathes’ stock integrity. “I’m a ‘process’ person, known for being a stickler for accuracy and for things being just right, but that’s a shared passion that unites the whole Octavian team. It’s so rewarding to see the Company’s investment in people and processes reap real benefits.”



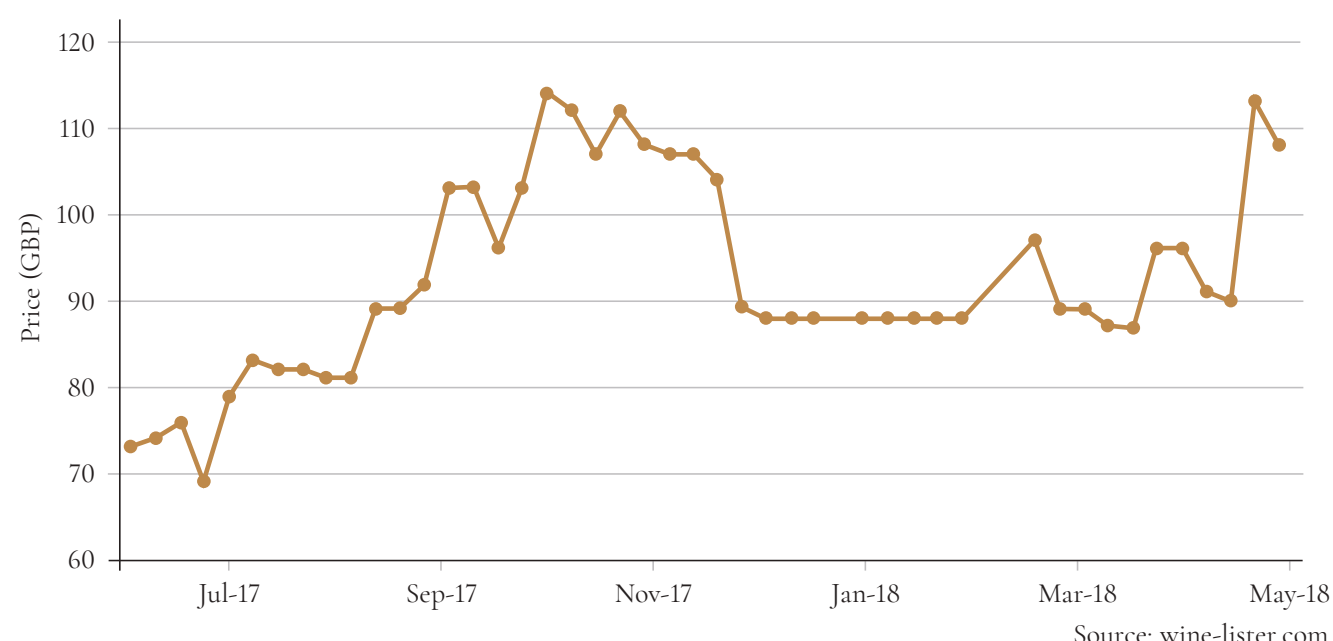
Claire Turner, Octavian Stock Control Manager.

MARKET UPDATE

CONTINUED

Canon 2016, for example, has risen 48% in price since its release in June last year (figure 3). Calon Ségur, Figeac, and Pichon Comtesse also featured high up the list of 2016 success stories. Each château made a wonderful wine in 2017, and is likely to sell well again this year. They should be worth trying to get your hands on, price-permitting of course.

FIGURE 3: CHÂTEAU CANON PREMIER GRAND CRU CLASSÉ B 2016



*Quality scores for all Bordeaux 2017 wines can be found on www.wine-lister.com, along with price history charts and

an en primeur price checker tool to help you identify which wines are worth buying as they are released.



OCTAVIAN

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