

THE BUYER

CONNECTING THE PREMIUM ON-TRADE

The Buyer's Case: Boisset FGV

Key buyers from across national and regional distributors, brewers and independent wine merchants assess a selection of wines from leading French wine producer Boisset.



What The Buyer's Case is all about

With hundreds if not thousands of wines all vying for the attention of leading wine buyers across the UK drinks trade what is it about a particular style of wine that catches their attention and has a chance of going on to one of their coveted wine lists?

That's what The Buyer's Case initiative is all about. An opportunity to go behind the scenes and really examine the decision making process that buyers go through when assessing new wines.

Over the last three years The Buyer has worked with a number of different major wine producers, agency and import businesses to help them not just put their wines in front of key buyers in their target channels of the industry, but, crucially, get their professional feedback on how well suited they think those wines are to the UK market.

The chance to understand the criteria by which leading buyers taste a prospective new wine. What they are looking for in terms of style, typicity, price point and suitability to their channel of the industry.

Yes, ultimately they hope the respective buyers might be interested in taking some of their wines on, but it is an exercise that goes beyond that and really digs down deep into what drives the decisions that leading wine buyers make.

It has proved to be practical and also commercial exercise in bringing drinks producers closer to the key decision makers and buyers across the premium on-trade and independent sectors.

It potentially gives the platform and opportunity for drinks producers, importers and distributors to better understand their role and vitally the needs of key drinks buyers to help them do their job more efficiently.

The Buyer's Case projects have also confirmed how complex the world of wine buying is with so many channels of the trade and criteria to match. What might be suitable for one buyer, won't be for another for a whole series of reasons, including style, price, volumes and availability.

To really understand the UK premium independent and on-trade sectors it is important to have a different strategy that is relevant to each of the specific channels and customer target groups.



The Boisset Opportunity

For our latest project The Buyer has teamed up with leading French producer, Boisset La Famille des Grands Vins, to showcase a spread of wines from across its portfolio.

Boisset FGV is a family-owned business that began in 1961 in Burgundy. Since then the business has grown to now represent a collection of unique wineries, each deeply rooted in its region with more than seventeen centuries of combined history.

With partner growers and wineries in most of the major French wine producing areas, Boisset is one of France's few wine companies that can truly claim to have wines to suit all tastes from each of its main wine producing regions: from French classics through to latest innovations and unique discovery wines.

The Boisset UK team are looking to build good distribution and long term relationships for their portfolio of wines across different channels of the trade. Boisset FGV are committed to ensuring sustainable business for all in the value chain by providing a high quality of wine experience for the wine drinker.

The Brief

The Buyer's brief was to determine which buyers in each of its target sectors would be best placed to offer the advice, support and guidance that Boisset is looking for. The key was to:

- work with buyers who not only worked for companies in the areas of the wine trade that Boisset wants to target, but were open to taking on new wines
- find buyers who were also willing to taste different styles, and then, importantly, share their insights and give their feedback.

Our thanks therefore go to our panel of buyers who gave up their time at a particularly busy period leading up to Christmas to go through a range of wines.



Buyers' Panel

Our panel of buyers all work for businesses that have a wide and diverse range of customers. They include:



James Davis MW, commercial and retail director, Adnams

Adnams has arguably developed like no other traditional, regional brewer. Starting out in its stronghold in Southwold, Suffolk as a brewer it has grown and moved into other areas of business, including creating its own craft spirits, running its own small chain of 10 wine and kitchenware gift shops, and becoming a significant wine importer in its own right. As its commercial and retail director, James Davis MW brings with him a wealth of experience having worked in both major on and off-trade businesses, including Greene King, Costco and Tesco where he was wine category buying manager. He joined Adnams in October 2017.



Matthew Hennings, managing director, Hennings Wine Merchants

Hennings Wine Merchants might be best known as one of the leading regional drinks distributors covering the south east, but in recent years it has expanded its reach to be able to cover all of the UK with a range that stretches to over 1,500 wines and a full support service with training and wine list development. It also runs its own small chain of four independent wine stores in Pulborough, Petworth, Goring-by-Sea and Chichester. Matthew Hennings has been part of the family business since 1994 and became managing director in 2005.



Louisa Fitzpatrick, head of wine, St Austell Wines

The St Austell business might be more familiar to us for the beers it brews, as part of the St Austell Brewery, but it has developed into a significant wine importer and distributor of its own with St Austell Wines. It now supplies a wide range of wines to pubs, bars and restaurants across the south west of the country and also provides wine training, wine list design and a range of other support services. Louisa Fitzpatrick has been part of the business since 2005 and was promoted to wine buyer in 2015 and head of wine in 2018.



John Chapman, operations director, The Oxford Wine Company

As well as running its own retail shops, the Oxford Wine Company has diversified into becoming a major regional wholesaler supplying wine and spirits to customers across the south of the UK from the west to the east, including London. It also has on-trade outlets of its own with Oxford Wine Café and a Piano bar in the centre of Oxford and runs its own wine school. John Chapman has been pivotal to Oxford Wine's recent success helping to oversee the operations side of the business as well as taking on responsibility for much of the buying for both its wine portfolio, but also a spirits range that is so diverse it attracts mixologists from leading bars around the world.

Buyer's Case Questions

To help assess what each of our buyers' thought of the wines they were asked to taste they were invited to answer the following questions for each wine. The key here was not to determine whether any of the particular buyers wanted to buy a specific wine for their business, but to get their professional evaluation of each wine, explaining what they saw as its strength and weaknesses and whether it was the kind of wine that might be suitable for either their business or other outlets in the premium on-trade.

The questions for the Boisset Buyer's Case were:

What did you think of the wine in terms of

- quality
- style
- price
- value for money
- label /design/packaging
- any other comments

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying? (no obligation to do so)

Yes: If so why.

No: if so why.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for (on-trade/off-trade/online)?

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to you/ the UK market?

Can you describe the process by which you assess a new wine to list. What criteria are you looking for?

What is the best way for a producer/winemaker to contact you?

Do you buy wine all year round or only at specific times. If so when?





Buyers' Responses James Davis MW, Adnams

Can you describe the process by which you assess a new wine to list. What criteria are you looking for?

The key is to build a long term partnership with the winery in question. We are also looking for their ability to consolidate purchasing to mitigate freight costs.

What is the best way for a producer or winemaker to contact you?

On the phone at the start or end of the day once internal meetings are over. Having the initiative to send wines to the buyer is also a great way of contacting us.

Do you buy wine all year round or only at specific times?

We are always looking for new opportunities so we don't have any particular buying windows when we look to buy.

Here are James Davis' views on the wines he was sent to taste and assess.

Name of the Wine: Ropiteau - Bourgogne Blanc, 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

High quality, traditional style of wine for independent wine retailers. At £35 on-trade price, expensive versus New World (Chile etc.) competitors, but the wine will have many loyal followers.

What do you think of the label?

Classic label which is probably appropriate for the sort of consumer who is likely to enjoy this.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying? (no obligation to do so)

Yes. It's in line with our target market

What channel of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

Off-trade premium independents who can hand sell.



Name of the Wine: Ropiteau - Meursault, 2017

What did you think of the wine in terms of style and quality?

Very high quality, traditional style of wine. Youthful, powerful and expressive. Could do with some bottle age to allow all component parts to integrate further. Fair value for money but watch out for New World competitors who will offer better value for money.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying? (no obligation to do so)

Yes. Again, as per the Bourgogne Blanc, it's in line with our target market.

Which channels of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for (on-trade/off-trade/independent)?

This is a wine for the on-trade and for premium independents who can hand sell.

Name of the Wine: Sparkling - Charles de Fère, Crémant du Jura Brut

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

I loved this wine along with the other Jura wines I tasted. It's complex but still has an approachable style. We are seeing growth in serious Cremant styles of wine such as this, so it potentially offers a decent commercial opportunity.

What do you think of the design and packaging?

It has nice traditional packaging which is probably appropriate for what it is as a proposition.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

Yes. As with other Jura's we could really champion and hand sell a wine like this. Multiple retailers are likely to ignore this style which is helpful to a smaller business such as ours.

Which channel of the wine trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

Off-trade premium independents who can hand sell.

Name of the Wine: Fortant - La Capitainerie-Organic Languedoc Red 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

Serious style with some minerality. Grenache is under-rated so I would play up the qualities of this grape variety. It offers good value for money overall.

What do you think of the design and packaging?

It has a nicely designed label for what is a serious and credible wine, but I think it will be difficult for it to compete as it is hard to tell the story to consumers.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

It requires more of a hand sell.

Which channel of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

Off-trade premium independents who can hand sell.



Name of the Wine: Domaine Maire, Grand Mineral, Côtes du Jura Chardonnay 2018 & Domaine Maire, Grand Mineral, Côtes du Jura -Pinot Noir 2018

What did you think of the wines in terms of style, quality and price?

I really loved both these wines. They are differentiated and exciting. They are also both good value for money versus some of the more classic appellations. The Pinot Noir is an approachable style for this variety.

What do you think of the design and packaging?

I am not so sure about the classic label for the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Why not go for a more modernistic and contemporary look for these wines? Otherwise they end up competing with other French appellations that people know better. It's a nice physical bottle though.

Are these the kind of wines you would consider buying?

Yes. We could really champion and hand sell wines like these. Multiple retailers are likely to ignore this Jura style for Chardonnay and Pinot

Noir which is good news for independent players like ourselves.

What channel of the trade do you think these wines are suitable for?

Off-trade premium independents who can hand sell.



Fortant Marinière - IGP Pays d'Oc Grenache Gris, Rosé, 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

This is a great, interesting style of wine. It also offers good competition to Provence rosé. This wine is appropriate for lots of different channels given the growth in premium rosé.

What do you think of the design and packaging?

I really like the packaging. I would actually consider a bespoke (perfume style) bottle for this style of wine.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

I would see it as being relatively easy to sell given the on-going growth in rosé.

Which channel of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

I could see this working well across both multiple channels as well as premium independents. For on-trade it would struggle a bit as pubs and most mainstream restaurants will opt (currently) for Provence rosé, Pinot rosé and Zinfandel Blush.



Buyers' Responses Louisa Fitzpatrick, St Austell Brewery

Can you describe the process by which you assess a new wine to list. What criteria are you looking for?

The first thing we consider is there a customer need or requirement for a particular wine? Is there a business need? We would also ask for exclusivity in the UK, or at least in the south of the UK.

Other key criteria include: quality, price, packaging, logistical preferences – taking into account MOQs. We would ideally source from existing suppliers but it's not essential.

Supply chain efficiency including effective responsive communication and a true understanding of our business are important factors to a good working relationship.

Wines produced with environmental sustainability at the fore and those that are vegan certified are important to us and our customers.

Once samples are sourced it is 'do the sales team like it, could they sell it, where would they sell it?' By involving the sales team in the process it gives an idea to how and where it might sell and gets their buy-in too in order to generate healthy sales from the off.

What is the best way for a producer to contact you?

Via our online procurement platform on the main company website.

Do you buy wine all year round or only at specific times. If so when?

Buying wine is an ongoing process so we look all year round. Having said that we do our main review tasting in the summer, make final decisions and set up product forms in September, arrange deliveries ready for the start of the new year when our sales team start creating new wine lists for the upcoming season. That kicks off with the Easter holidays. Our annual price lists go live from April 1 and then from May and June we start looking at what we need to be reviewing.

Any other comments?

We appreciate suppliers who really get to know and understand our business and the fact we are an independent regional brewer incorporating a 169 year old wine business. We're also a large composite wholesaler, and by the seasonality of our business - summer is our Christmas! But we can offer a wide customer base, skilled sales people, loyalty, honesty and financial stability.



Name of the Wine: Ropiteau - Bourgogne Chardonnay 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style and quality and price?

- Quality: very good.
- Style: A richly flavoured Bourgogne Chardonnay. Appealing aroma, balanced body, alcohol and intensity of flavour with typical Chardonnay character for this region and long satisfying finish.
- Price: Reasonable for this style.
- Value for money: White Burgundy is becoming more and more difficult to sell because of the rising price points and varying quality. I think once people tasted this they would realise its quality and value.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It's classic, elegant French styling.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

If we had demand for a Bourgogne Chardonnay I would certainly consider this as I think it delivers on quality and typicity. But we currently don't see that demand from our customers. Macon covers the more affordable white Burgundy option and otherwise people know what they like and will pay for the bigger named villages.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

It is good quality and representative of a classic region so I think it could work in any channel.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

A stelvin closure would give extra freshness and a more modern appearance.

Name of the Wine: Ropiteau - Meursault 2017

What did you think of the wine in terms of quality, style and price?

* Quality: Fine.

* Style: Intense aroma of coconut, gorse flower and tropical fruit. Green note on palate and prickle of acidity. It might be too young to drink? It made me appreciate the Bourgogne Chardonnay more.

Price: Expected for the region but high in comparison to other wines of this style available from other regions and countries.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It also has classic, elegant French styling.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

The price for white burgundy has rocketed and once the outlet has added their mark up this wine becomes unattainable for most consumers.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Retail where the price point would be in line with other Burgundies on the shelf, whereas for an on-trade wine list there may be only one wine at this price point.



Name of the Wine: Domaine Maire, Cotes du Jura Chardonnay 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

- Quality: Very good.
- Style: Soft, mineral fresh white with good length.
- Price: Reasonable and fair.
- Value for money: It's good for wine enthusiasts looking for something a bit different but within the safety of recognisable Chardonnay grape. It's a well made wine.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It's interesting and different. Perhaps a little busy with many different fonts and sizes, but good quality paper and print effect. It definitely does what it says on the tin in terms of the minerality aspect.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying? (no obligation to do so)

For wine interest and variety in our range I would consider this as we don't stock any Jura wines and the wine is good quality for the price. That said we don't have a lot of demand and not been asked for a Jura wine – except by WSET students.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Independent merchants or good restaurants or wine bars where the wine can be hand sold.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

Some generic Jura region marketing to raise awareness of the region and the wine styles available.



Name of the Wine: Coteaux Varois en Provence 2018 – Fortant Mariniere

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

- Quality: This is a good quality wine.
- Style: Typical pale salmon colour with attractive strawberry cream nose, soft mouthfeel and crisp finish.
- Price: A reasonable and fair price.
- Value for money: It has the word Provence in it so it's going to work at this price point until there is more understanding of the different regions. Overall it is a nice wine in attractive packaging for a style that is very popular currently.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

Spot on. Modern, nautical themed for sense of place, branded capsule, screw top.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

Yes. We are experiencing 30% growth in sales of Provence and Southern French lookalike rosés so we would be able to sell this in good volumes.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

I think this could work in all channels.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

Whilst Provence style rosé is on trend producers could capitalise on the growth and build in some marketing support to help promote the wine further.



Name of the Wine: Domaine Maire, Grand Mineral, Cotes de Jura Pinot Noir 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

- Quality: Fine.
- Style: Delicate aroma with notes of black pepper and red berry fruit. Mid weight with fine tannins, raspberry and cranberry fruit character and fresh acidity on the finish.
- Price: Fair, but could do with being a bit cheaper as its quite a straight forward wine from a lesser known region.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It has a similar look and feel as the Cotes du Jura Chardonnay. It's certainly interesting and different and tells the story about the wine.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

It is hard to know where it would sit in our wine list and then on customers' lists. It has quite a deep ruby colour, but then is reasonably light bodied wine with tangy red fruit character and evident tannins. It just didn't come together for me.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Fine dining restaurants where the wine could be paired with food to bring out its best features.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

As with the whites, some generic Jura region marketing to raise awareness of the region and the wine styles available.



Name of the Wine: Fortant La Capitainerie 2018 – Organic Languedoc

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

- Quality: This is a very good wine.
- Style: Deep purple velvet in colour and texture, really fine chalky tannins. Mulberry, damson, garrigue.
- Price: Good.
- Value for money: To have an organic wine with this depth of flavour at this price point makes the wine appear very good value for money

What did you think of the design and packaging?

Classy, eye catching and considered. Modern font. Impressive.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

It's a good value, good quality, organic French red.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Again I can see this working in all channels.



Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

For volume the wine needs to be offered by the glass and operators tend to prefer screw top closures for ease of service. But not a deal breaker and it is interesting that the cork is origine végétale.

Name of the Wine: Charles Bailly Rosé Tradition

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

- Quality: Average.
- Style: Light, dry, summer fruits character but unbalanced bitter note on the mid palate and short finish.
- Price: Fair
- Value for money: I think I'd rather spend more for a Cremant Rosé or English rosé, or pay less for an Italian Rosé along the Prosecco style.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It has a traditional label, which risks being overlooked for not standing out.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

This style of wine doesn't really have a space on our list or is interesting enough in terms of quality, packaging or price.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Online with loyal clientele who would purchase it on the buyer's recommendation. For example; Aveyrs, Laithwaites, Wine Society.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

On-trade wine lists only have so much space for sparkling rosé. The go-to's are Italian rosé (Prosecco' rosé), English rosé or rosé Champagne. The wine needs to have more of a point of difference to get on the list.





Buyers' Responses Matthew Hennings, Hennings Wine

Can you describe the process by which you assess a new wine to list. What criteria are you looking for?

Further to requesting samples to taste at our headquarters, there is a team of four or five tasters who generally work in different areas of the business that we use to try to gauge the wines. We are overall looking at the quality of the wine and what value for money it offers. We then have to assess its suitability for either the on-trade or retail sectors of our business. Quite often we will open some of our own existing range to compare and benchmark and sometimes do taste blind.

The criteria is always based on:

1. Quality
2. Value and pricing stability.
3. Suitability within our business.
4. Is the wine in the market, if so where and what if any channels does it exist in.
5. Exclusivity and support going forward.
6. Do the logistics make sense.

What is the best way for a producer/winemaker to contact you?

To be honest, we get so many unsolicited calls and emails it is really hard to answer and deal with most of them, there is a fair amount of filtration. Via email is best, but they need to have done their homework on us as a business.

Do you buy wine all year round or only at specific times. If so when?

There is never a bad time to find a great wine! However, our on-trade trade listings are generally crystallised between January and February whereas our retail listings are more fluid and seasonal.

Any other comments on what you are looking for?

We are not looking for lots of new suppliers as we have plenty, but we don't want to rest on our laurels. For whilst we ship a lot of wine, and enjoy good relationships with a few UK agencies, we have been more active building direct relationships with a few small producers which is working really well for us.

Name of the Wine: Domaine Maire - Grand Heritage, Côtes du Jura-Savagnin

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

Great, we really liked this. It had great balance and minerality with an oxidative character from some coming from under flor to add depth and flavour. We all really liked the style with 30% coming from under flor to give it a Baby Vin Jaune character. There was also a real nuttiness and spice with great line of acidity running through it.

How about the pricing at £17.99?

This is good value when compared to others with this style and character.

What did you think about the design and packaging?

It has a good label with classic elements but is also contemporary. Overall a good presentation.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying? (no obligation to do so)

We all really liked this and felt it offered good value for money. It is well made with good presentation. Most wines of this style are generally above £20 so therefore this is a great opportunity for somebody to try this wine at a good price.

What channel of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

This would work well in the off-trade but I see no reason why it could not work as a premium offering by the glass in the right on-trade account.



Name of the Wine: Rodet - Rully Domaine Bressande 2016

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

There was not a lot of acidity which was a surprise as '16' white Burgundies generally had exceptional balanced acidity. There were though nice mineral flavours on the palate, but it needed the acidity to lift it.

What about the pricing?

A price tag of £27.50 is too high. It would probably need to be in and around £25.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

The label was ok. It's fairly classic.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

We currently have a couple at these price points or less that we are happy with.

What channel of the trade do you think the wine is suitable for?

It could work in both the on-trade or with independent merchants as the presentation is good. The style and price point, though, need work to be more characteristic of the vintage.

Name of the Wine: Louis Bouillot - Crémant de Bourgogne, Perle de Vigne

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

Quality: The wine lacked depth and bearing in mind it has 12 months lees ageing, we didn't feel that the palate expressed evidence of this.

Style: Light and lacks a little complexity compared to others we have tried or stock.

Price: Pricing of around £17.99 would be too much for this style of wine.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

Sadly, unless a lot of money is invested in them, gloss and shiny labels more often give off the opposite image. It didn't stand out to us.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

It's not the style, quality or value we are looking for.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Probably retail, but also potentially by the glass in the on-trade.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to you or the UK market?

More evidence of lees ageing with complexity and depth and work on the label. It's currently too thin on the mid palate to our tastes.



Name of the Wine: Fortant- Altitude - IGP Pays d'Oc, Chardonnay

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

Quality and style: There was a lack of acidity on the palate which upsets what could be a nice Chardonnay. Too round and underwhelming definition. It needs more freshness and vibrancy.

Pricing: £10.99 not bad for presentation, but it would be significantly better for the on and off-trade at under £10.

What did you think of the packaging and design?

The label design is good, and we really liked the labels. However, if you are using "altitude" as part of your message on front and back label, it is important to have the freshness and acidity that this should bring to the style of the wine.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

We currently have a couple at these price points or less that we are very happy with.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

It could work with both on and off trade as the presentation is good, however style and price point needs work.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to you/ the UK market?

Either needs to be leaner and fresher with good acidity and minerality or would benefit from some lees or oak to add a different dimension. In either case, more acidity for definition and balance.



Name of the Wine: Rodet - Santenay Château Mercey 2016

What did you think of the wine in terms of style and quality?

This is a reasonable wine and is not overly complex. It's soft, approachable, with a medium body. It's nice, but could do with a little more character.

And the pricing at £25?

It's fairly good value for £25 although lacks a little complexity.

What do you think of the design and packaging?

It has a fine look and feel. Fairly classical.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

It's a nice wine but we do have others at this price point that offer better value.

What channel of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

Probably more retail focused, but well priced for the on-trade also.

Name of the Wine: Domaine Maire - Grandes Parcelles, Arbois Pinot Noir, 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style and quality?

It's a little under ripe in style, and lacks fruit and depth on the mid palate.

And the pricing at £16.50?

This is potentially good value for money. It just needs a slightly more ripe character as it's very dry.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It has a good label with classic elements but is also contemporary - a good presentation, as with the Savagnin.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying? (no obligation to do so)

We feel that potentially a Trousseau might be a better offering alongside the Savagnin, something a little more unique and more approachable. Customers might not expect this style of Pinot Noir.

What channel of the trade do you think this wine is suitable for?

It would potentially work in the off-trade, but we cannot see this working in the on-trade.



Name of the Wine: Fortant - Altitude - IGP Pays d'Oc, Malbec 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style and quality?

It's rich and dark, but lacks a little ripeness and softness and is dry. But it's big, bold with strong concentration of dark, dry fruits, but potentially lacks approachability at this price point.

And the pricing at £9.99?

It's a great price but needs to be more approachable with jammy fruit. Not an easy drinking style which it should be at this price point.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

It has great packaging and a love bottle shape. Looks approachable and contemporary and of good quality.

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

As with the Chardonnay, we really wanted to like these wines as they have a great presentation and are at a sensible price point. Needs to be more approachable with softer, jammy fruit at this price point. Again, we have other French Malbec's at a similar or cheaper price that deliver the style we need.





Buyers' Responses

John Chapman, Oxford Wine Company

Can you describe the process by which you assess a new wine to list. What criteria are you looking for?

We isolate the need in terms of parameters on style, price, buying mechanic needs, exclusivity and margin requirement. Then on assessment of potential candidates we blind taste first with no information known to give a fully accurate assessment. Then by introducing the specifics of price / label / circulation etc, we then reassess.

What is the best way for a producer/winemaker to contact you?

Via email. I tour the major shows to keep abreast of new companies, sectors and possibilities.

Do you buy wine all year round or only at specific times. If so when?

Yes, all year with the main wholesale lines firmed up in the first quarter.

Any other comments?

Buying is a testing job and life would be so much easier if suppliers knew what they wanted for their wines in respect of circulation, price and consumer. So many suppliers are not focused on what they want to achieve in the UK market.



Name of the wine: Louis Bouillot Perle de Vigne – Crémant de Bourgogne

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

This wine showed excellent length good complexity and great notes of brioche and development. There is clearly well crafted and careful winemaking throughout. It also has a lovely mousse. Pricewise for the quality I thought this offered great promise and would sit well on any shelf at the price stated of RSP £17.99 even though it was NV.

- Quality: 9
- Style: 9
- Price: 9.5
- Value for money: 9.5

What did you think of the design and packaging?

The presentation was mixed as the label was deemed a little old fashioned by some but being a little older I quite liked the classic design. 8.5 out of 10

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

Yes. It's clean well made and characterful with a good presentation.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Both the on-trade and independents, but better for the on-trade.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable for the UK market?

Maybe remove some gold from label for the millennial market.



Name of the wine: Rodet-Santenay Château de Mercey 2016

What did you think of the wine in terms style, quality and price?

I felt the winemaking let this wine down as the original fruit content seemed of good quality, however the amount of synthetic notes from oak or additions left the Pinot Noir character resulting in a minor part of the end result. It's trying too hard at the £25.69 level.

What did you think of the design and packaging?

With such a great label this wine would have been stunning if there was

less winery involvement. 9 out of 10

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

Not for us. It's too over worked for the style of wine we want.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

It could work in all channels.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable for the UK market?

Less manufactured.



Name of the wine: Rodet-Rully Domaine de la Bressande 2016

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

An abundance of rich expensive oak coupled with rich complex fruit. A real mouthful and at the price of £24.20 I think this wine really delivers. I felt the oak was too dominant for my own taste but the whole package would appeal to a traditional consumer who wanted a full powerful white burgundy at the mid-twenties price bracket. Couldn't fault the wine – just not to my palate.

- Quality: 7
- Style: 8
- Price: 9
- Value for money: 8.5
- Label /design/packaging: 9

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

Yes, but it would need more purity.

What channel of the wine industry do you think this wine is suitable for?

Again this can work in all channels.

Any suggestions on how the wine could be adapted to be more suitable to the UK market?

A more nuanced approach to the winemaking.



Name of the wine: Domaine Maire Grandes Parcelles-Etoile Chardonnay 2018

What did you think of the wine in terms of style, quality and price?

Clean fresh and very crisp. Very typical of the region and exuding good winemaking with a light touch. Development of fruit on the palate was evident and varietal character distinguishable but subtle. For the price of £17.79 as stated I felt this was a little toppy for the wine even though you do have to pay a premium for Jura Chardonnay.

- Quality: 7
- Style: 7.5
- Price: 4
- Value for money: 4

What did you think of the design and packaging?

Presentation in traditional Jura bottle was good, label is fair for the price tag but I would like to see it better positioned for the independent market. 6 out of 10

Is this the kind of wine you would consider buying?

Not for us at the moment.



Name of the wine: Fortant - Altitude IGP Oc Viognier 2018

What did you think of the style, quality and price?

I am aware of this winery and have good memories of some clean well made simple wines from years gone by. However, this pair seemed to try for the stars and run out of fuel at the first sign of clouds! The Viognier was very rich and round with some varietal peachy character but mainly manufactured softness and not enough acidity.

- Quality: 6
- Style: 5
- Price: 7
- Value for money: 5.5
- Label /design/packaging: 3.

THE BUYER

CONNECTING THE PREMIUM ON-TRADE

Thanks to Boisset La Famille des Grands Vins, and in particular its UK team of Michael Troy and Clarisse Martin and the four participating buyers for making this project possible.

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