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Drinks

Whiskey From Tibet and Organic Champagne Among Best New Booze

With 2,800 exhibitors from 20 countries, a lot of ideas flowed during the three-day VinExpo trade fair in Paris. Here's what has our critic thirsting for more.



Everyone loves Paris—even in February, when the City of Light is cold and gray, right?

That was the thinking behind holding this year's VinExpo wine and spirits trade fair in Paris for the first time. Since 1981, the fair's biannual home has been Bordeaux, but despite lavish chateau parties with fireworks, that version was losing market share to the no-nonsense annual German trade show, ProWein.

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“Our goal in Paris,” says new Vinexpo chief executive Rodolphe Lameyse, “is to be the game changer—and the No. 1 wine and spirits marketplace in the world.”

This year’s three-day schmoozefest blended VinExpo with Wine Paris, another international exhibition, and last week drew some 30,000 international buyers to do deals, discover the latest trends, explore what’s new from 2,800 exhibitors from 20 countries, and delve into the topic of sustainability and climate change at Moët Hennessy’s three-day forum (more on that in a future column).

Hanging over all of this, though, were the specters of Brexit, the continuing U.S. tariffs, and China’s slowdown, which prompted French Minister of Agriculture Didier Guillaume to open the fair by stating that France has to find new markets in other countries.

I spent my days tracking down the newest of the new in three huge halls at the Paris-Versailles Exhibition Centre. Products ranged from the sublime to the silly, including such items as the world’s first wine vinified underwater.

Here are my six most exciting VinExpo/WineParis discoveries:

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Best New Luxury Wine Accessory



Baccarat Passion Champagne decanter, \$960

On L'Avenue, a posh-looking area designed as a Parisian street of luxury shops, Jean-Charles Boisset, a flamboyant impresario of California and French wines, was launching a lot of new items, but my eye was on the pricy new Passion Collection Champagne decanter he created, produced by Baccarat. You may be asking yourself why you need to decant Champagne. The idea—according to Boisset—is to add smoothness, release the wine's aromas, and leave you with only the most elegant, tiny bubbles. At the very least, it's a beautifully designed object to display in your home.