



Bill Zacharkiw: Why Burgundy is so expensive (and some alternatives)



BILL ZACHARKIW, SPECIAL TO MONTREAL GAZETTE

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If you want to learn more about Burgundy, where should you start?

As a first stop, I would suggest the bank.

Burgundy has always been an expensive proposition, but prices have sky-rocketed over the last decade. One reason is demand, which has never been higher. Producers told me during my visit to the region last year there is increased interest by foreign investors, especially the Chinese, who traditionally were Bordeaux buyers. According to The Drink Business, which tracks wine prices of the world's top estates, Burgundy is beginning to outpace Bordeaux with respect to return on investment.

While demand has increased, however, yield has been far below average in recent years, thanks to frost or hail or both. As I reported at the beginning of the summer, the 2016 vintage has been a disaster in much of the region. This will probably have an effect on the 2017 production, too, as the vines recover.

A jump in demand coupled with a string of low-yielding vintages has left many winemakers with empty cellars. If scarcity is a reason for raising prices, then Burgundy's producers have ample cause to charge as much as they can.

Too bad for the rest of us.

I checked the prices of wines that I like to drink to see how they have moved over the years, and found one category that has remained constant — the regional appellations, such as Bourgogne, Bourgogne Aligoté, Côteaux Bourguignons and Crémant de Bourgogne.

The prices of two of my favourites have been remarkably stable. [The 2014 Bourgogne, Ursulines from Jean-Claude Boisset](#) costs \$23.70. In 2009, the 2006 vintage was \$23.80. Another is [René Bouvier's Bourgogne, Le Chapitre](#). In 2011, the 2009 would have set you back \$22, while today you can purchase a 2013 for \$24.95.