

Bordeaux Index & Liv-ex launch real-time indices

London merchant Bordeaux Index has launched the first fine wine price index to monitor the movement of fine wine prices on a daily rather than monthly basis. Eponymously titled, 'The Bordeaux Index', it will track the live changes in the prices of 80–100 of the most liquidly traded wines on its LiveTrade market making screen, launched in May last year.

In the past, accurate, independent data has been difficult to come by. For the last decade investors and collectors have relied heavily on monthly pricing from the Liv-ex 100 Index and other indices produced by Liv-ex, the global online trading platform.

'Our technology facilitates dynamic, daily updates and will allow users to monitor the market at their convenience,' says Gary Boom, managing director of Bordeaux Index. 'It's the most transparent, accurate and simple way of gauging the

market performance of Bordeaux.' Users will also be able to view individual price graphs for all wines traded, with data going back to 1 January 2008.

In response, Liv-ex has launched its own price-weighted daily index, 'The Liv-ex Fine Wine 50' with data going back to February 2010. It will track the daily movements of the 10 most recent, physical vintages of all the Bordeaux first growths (1998 to 2007) which are traded among 300 international merchants. Says Liv-ex's James Miles: 'We believe that makes this the best and most accurate and independent daily snapshot of where the market is on any given date.'

It remains to be seen which index becomes the benchmark. But the impact of this kind of competition and more transparent and accurate data can only be good news for those looking to make more informed purchasing decisions.



Bordeaux 2009: Provenance news

US technology company eProvenance has confirmed it is to offer an 'Asset Protection' service for physical delivery of Bordeaux's 2009 vintage to customers next year.

Using RFID (radio-frequency identification) sensors within cases, eProvenance will monitor the temperature of wines as they are shipped to certify that each case has been kept at proper temperatures during transit and storage. A Certificate of Provenance will be issued for each case meeting required standards, with a view to enhancing resale value. The service is being marketed to importers rather than private customers.

eProvenance is not the only company concerned with the condition, storage and provenance of the ultra-expensive 2009s. Several French négociants, including Joanne, are recommending that trade customers store the 2009s in bond in Bordeaux, rather than ship them all around the world. This is now possible following a change in French law.

A number of UK merchants are looking at both these ideas closely, including Berry Bros & Rudd. 'It's clear that there should be a premium for wines which can demonstrate impeccable provenance,' says Berry's Alun Griffiths MW. 'However, it could be prohibitively expensive to put eProvenance sensors in every case of wine shipped. One option might be to set a threshold of something like £1,000 per case.'

Griffiths also thinks keeping some wine in Bordeaux could make sense, particularly if the wine is ultimately bound for Asia. 'At this stage, we have made no decision, but it is something we would consider, providing the storage is of the highest standards.'

Good value in back vintages

Though Bordeaux 2009 was very much flavour of the month in June, some savvy buyers have been eschewing the eye-watering prices to pick up relative bargains from back vintages.

One big seller has been the 98-point Cos d'Estournel 2005, priced at around half the price of its 2009 at £1,400–1,500 per case. One merchant shifted 125 cases in a matter of days, after the stock had sat there for months.

Other good value picks include the 99-point Margaux 1996 at £6,500 (compared to £9,500 for the 2009). Wilkinson Vintners' Paul Bowker had many enquiries from people trying to buy La Mission Haut Brion from 1995, 2000, 2003 and 2005. 'I suspect prices will continue to fluctuate before finding their level again,' he says. 'For the 2009s, that could take a year or two until the vintage becomes physical.'

Parker: 2000 revisited

Robert Parker has released revised scores and tasting notes for Bordeaux's 2000 vintage, with the biggest winner the boutique label 'Fleur de Bouard Le Plus' which climbed from 95 to 99 points. Other winners included Malescot St Exupery, Clos Fourtet and Pontet-Canet (all up by 3 points), while Gazin, Léoville-Poyferre and L'Evangile jumped by two points.

The principal losers in the Bordeaux premier league were Châteaux Lafite, Cheval Blanc and Ausone – they all lost their perfect 100 point score, and are now rated 98+, 99 and 98+ respectively. But hardest hit was Figeac, which plummeted from 93 to 85.

Lafite's slight fall may temporarily halt the upward trajectory of its case price, which now stands at over £18,000. 'But probably not for too long,' argues Farr Vintners' Stephen Browett, 'because there's very little available stock and 99% of Lafite 2000 is being bought by Asia, which doesn't really care what Parker thinks.'

