vinetur

Rare Château d’Yquem 1811 Bottle Heads to Auction

The famed Bordeaux white wine, once the world’s most expensive, is expected to fetch at least €60,000 in southern France.

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Château d'Yquem
Lur-Saluces
1811

A bottle of Château d’Yquem 1811, one of the most famous old vintages in wine history and once the world’s most expensive white wine, will be auctioned on May 31 near Montpellier, in southern France, by Farran Enchères.

The bottle comes from a vintage long known among collectors as the “comet year,” a reference to the bright comet visible in the sky that season. The 1811 harvest has been described for generations as one of the greatest ever made in Bordeaux, helped by favorable weather and grapes that reached unusual concentration. For sweet wines such as Yquem, those conditions created bottles with extraordinary longevity and a reputation that still draws attention more than two centuries later.

Château d’Yquem, the only white wine from Bordeaux classified as a Premier Grand Cru in the 1855 ranking, has long occupied a special place in the market for rare wine. Experts say only about a dozen authenticated bottles from the 1811 vintage are believed to survive today. The last documented tasting of one was in 1998, when the British critic Michael Broadbent described it as showing notes of raspberry and cream, with notable depth and an unexpectedly dry finish.

The bottle going under the hammer has its own documented history. It was inspected at the château and certified as authentic, including in the presence of Yquem’s cellar master at the time. It comes from the collection of Christian Vanneque, a well-known sommelier who worked at La Tour d’Argent in Paris. He bought it in 2011 from The Antique Wine Company for $117,000, setting what was then a Guinness World Records mark for the most expensive bottle of white wine sold.

At the time of its purchase, the bottle became a symbol of how far rare wine can travel beyond drinking into collecting and investment. It is now being offered with an estimate starting at €60,000. The bottle shows its age: a low fill level, a label worn by time and a replaced capsule. Even so, it remains one of the few surviving physical links to a vintage that has shaped the mythology of Bordeaux wine.

The sale is expected to draw collectors, private buyers and serious wine enthusiasts, many of whom are attracted by bottles that carry both historical value and the possibility of being opened for a once-in-a-lifetime tasting.