vinetur

Chinese Merchants Report a Squeeze in Supplies of Top Burgundy Wines

Importers cite smaller harvests and tighter allocations for Romanée-Conti and Leflaive, though some say falling prices signal weak demand

Monday, November 23, 2026



Chinese importers and merchants are reporting a selective squeeze in the supply of some of Burgundy’s most prized wines, though they disagree on how broad the problem is and what it says about demand in China’s luxury wine market.

According to interviews published on Monday by Vino Joy News, several traders said bottles from estates such as Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Leroy, Leflaive and Domaine Gros Frère et Sœur have become harder to secure as smaller harvests and stricter allocations limit what reaches China. Others said the market is not facing a general shortage and argued that weaker prices point to soft consumption rather than a rush of buying.

Li Yajun, chief executive of Shanghai-based Merveille Business, told the publication that supplies of several top Burgundy labels tightened this year. He said the change began in July, when demand first outpaced supply for some lower-priced vintages before spreading to other vintages as well.

A China representative for a Burgundy winery group, who asked not to be named, said similar constraints had appeared at the beginning of the year and were affecting multiple markets, not only China. The representative said Burgundy inventories were unusually thin across the board, a condition the person described as unprecedented.

Wu Xianghua, chief executive of Fine West, said the tighter supply he was seeing was narrower than some others suggested. He told Vino Joy News that the clearest pressure was in Leflaive’s entry-level white wines, especially lower-priced regional bottlings and vintages that had already sold out.

The differing views come as China’s broader wine market remains under pressure and as merchants try to separate supply problems from signs of genuine demand. Li said top Burgundy estates still hold their appeal among wealthy Chinese buyers and collectors, which helps keep demand for high-end wines relatively stable even while the wider market struggles. In that setting, he said, small production volumes make shortages easier to trigger.

The unnamed Burgundy winery group representative made a similar case, saying Burgundy's exports to China were rising in value and that leading estates continued to attract both drinkers and buyers treating wine as an investment. The representative compared the standing of DRC, Leroy, Leflaive and Domaine Gros Frère et Sœur among Chinese consumers to that of Bordeaux's classified growths.

Wu, however, said it would be wrong to read lower availability as proof that Chinese consumers are drinking more Burgundy. In his account, the key shift was on the supply side. He said Leflaive produced less in 2024 and 2025 and also tightened control over how wine was distributed through sales channels, reducing allocations to China. That, he said, created the impression of brisk sales even though underlying consumption had not increased.

That distinction matters beyond Burgundy. For drinks importers and distributors, a market with fewer bottles, weaker pricing and uneven demand requires more precise buying decisions, especially in the high-end segment where scarcity can be mistaken for strength and where provenance becomes more important as supply tightens.

Li pointed to another recent case in France's fine-wine trade. He compared the Burgundy situation with the shortage earlier this year of Carruades de Lafite, the second wine of Château Lafite Rothschild. In that case, Vino Joy News reported that weak demand had caused importers to cut purchases, leaving fewer bottles of the relatively affordable 2023 vintage in circulation. By the middle of the year, merchants were again speaking of shortages, even though the reduced availability did not reflect stronger consumption.

Some Burgundy specialists said the recent claims of scarcity do not fit other market signals. Wu said supplies of DRC, Leroy and Domaine Gros Frère et Sœur appeared relatively stable from his vantage point. Lin Jianbing, general manager of Shanghai Boyun Trading Co., told Vino Joy News that the supply of leading Burgundy wines remained broadly steady overall.

Lin said there had been times a few years ago when demand clearly exceeded supply, but he argued that China's economic conditions over the past two years no longer support that pattern. If demand were truly overwhelming supply, he said, prices would

have held firm or moved higher. Instead, he said, prices for many of these wines have fallen sharply over the past two years, with only a small number managing to keep their value.

To support that view, Lin pointed to the drop in prices for Moutai, which he described as a useful gauge for the wider drinks market in China. In his view, the weakness in Moutai prices signals pressure across categories, including fine wine.

The disagreement suggests the market cannot be described in simple terms. Availability appears to depend on the producer, the wine, the vintage and the channel through which bottles are bought. A merchant with access to one network may see stable supply, while another working through a different route may face tight allocations and higher sourcing costs.

Concerns are also extending beyond price and volume to the question of where bottles are coming from. He Shengxi, chairman of Guangzhou Bacchus Fazhuang Trading Co., a Burgundy specialist, told Vino Joy News that tight supply can create openings for wines of uncertain origin to enter the market. He said the shortages are real and said they should make buyers more careful.

He said Burgundy has dealt with reduced production for nearly a decade and that whatever buffer stocks once existed have largely been exhausted. At the same time, he said, the region’s top estates have longstanding partners around the world who receive priority when bottles are available, leaving less for newer customers.

He said his own experience buying directly from a Burgundy estate showed how limited those allocations can be. In one case, he said, he received only 49 bottles across 12 wines for an entire year, with some individual wines available in quantities of just two or three bottles. Buying through an estate’s partners, he added, often yields even smaller allocations.

He also said the structure of distribution adds to the uncertainty around DRC in mainland China. According to He, the estate does not have a direct mainland China agent. Its Hong Kong agent, Watson’s Wine, receives only a limited allocation and controls its own sales channels, making it difficult to know how much wine ultimately

reaches the mainland market.

He said the pressure on supply can also encourage questionable claims. He recalled a counterfeit case involving a bottle from a leading Burgundy estate whose stated bottling date did not match the harvest date printed on the label. He also dismissed market talk that several thousand bottles of DRC are consumed in China each year, saying such figures are not plausible given the estate’s tiny production.

Public production estimates underline that point. Domaine de la Romanée-Conti is generally understood to produce around 6,000 to 8,000 cases a year, while its Romanée-Conti grand cru is often said to total only about 5,000 to 6,000 bottles annually.

He said he discussed some of those issues with the president of Burgundy’s wine trade body during a visit to his company on Nov. 7.