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The 2022 Burgundy Vintage: exceptional wines in a transforming market

Burgundy 2022 Vintage Review

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Poully-fume wine production region in Burgundy, France on the Loire River near Poully-sur-Loire

The Burgundy region, renowned for its prestigious wines, has once again demonstrated its exceptional viticultural capabilities with the release of its 2022 vintage. This year's offerings, encompassing both reds and whites, have shown remarkable balance,

freshness, and typicity, firmly establishing Burgundy's preeminent position in the global wine arena.

The climatic conditions of 2022 played a significant role in shaping the vintage's character. A notably hot, dry, and sunny year, it was marked by minimal spring frost damage and an absence of extreme heat spikes. However, a remarkable storm in June, particularly in Gevrey, brought intense hail and rain, causing substantial damage to vineyards and cellars. Despite these challenges, the weather stabilized, resulting in a vintage of high quality, albeit with reduced yields.

The 2022 vintage is characterized by optimal harvesting conditions, with most grapes picked at the ideal time. The whites, with alcohol levels around 12.5-13.5%, exhibit a classic Burgundian stony minerality, while the reds, slightly higher in alcohol content at about 13-14%, display a balance of acidity and freshness. Notable appellations such as Volnay, Pommard, and Santenay have produced particularly impressive wines. In adaptation to changing climatic conditions, winemakers are employing techniques like whole-cluster fermentation more judiciously and reducing the use of new oak to preserve the wine's fruit and freshness.

The 2022 vintage arrives amid a complex pricing scenario. While there was a general expectation of stable prices, an increase in grape costs (about 15%) has impacted the market. This rise has led some merchants to reduce their margins to maintain price levels. The demand for top-tier premiers crus and grands crus remains robust, fueled by varying market dynamics, including the reduced participation of Asian buyers, particularly from China.

The market for Burgundy wines is witnessing a shift, with a growing interest in mid-market wines and a potential decrease in the collector's market for top-end wines. This trend is complemented by the increasing preference of producers to sell to restaurants, ensuring their wines are consumed rather than stored. This shift might lead to a future where top-end Burgundy wines are predominantly seen in auctions or exclusive venues.

The escalating prices of vineyards in Burgundy are leading to a more corporate structure in winemaking, overshadowing the traditional family-owned estates. Grand cru vineyards are now commanding prices that challenge the economic viability of wine

production, leading some producers to explore opportunities in regions like Rully and Mercurey.

The 2022 Burgundy vintage, while delightful in its youth, also promises excellent aging potential. The top reds, with their tight structure, and the whites, with their robust build, are poised for long-term maturation. However, the immediate appeal of the lesser wines raises a compelling question about the modern consumer's preference for wines that are ready to drink sooner rather than later.

The 2022 Burgundy vintage is a testament to the region's enduring viticultural excellence, showcasing wines of exceptional quality that reflect both the challenges and triumphs of the year. While the market dynamics present a complex picture, the intrinsic value and appeal of Burgundy wines remain undiminished, catering to a diverse range of wine enthusiasts and collectors.