vinetur

Climate Change Threatens Burgundy's Iconic Wines, Warns Expert Jasper Morris

Climate and Economic Pressures May Alter Traditional Characteristics

Friday, October 25, 2024



At a recent Chardonnay conference in New Zealand, Burgundy expert and wine writer Jasper Morris MW warned that the iconic wines of Burgundy may become unrecognizable in the near future due to the dual threats of climate change and

economic pressures. Speaking at the Aotearoa Chardonnay Symposium in Hawke's Bay, Morris outlined how climate change, in particular, is impacting the region's vineyards, especially in areas like Chablis and Puligny-Montrachet, which are experiencing noticeable alterations in wine characteristics as a result of environmental changes.

Morris emphasized that while climate skepticism persists in some areas, there is little doubt about its effects in Burgundy, where winemakers are grappling with rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns. The Côte d'Or, for example, has recently faced what Morris described as a period of "meltdowns and deep depressions" driven by climatic shifts, and despite best efforts to adapt, the changes are challenging traditional wine characteristics. In Chablis, the increase in sunlight exposure due to wider row-spacing and lighter soil color has started to shift the style of the wines. Meanwhile, Puligny-Montrachet wines are reportedly losing some of their characteristic floral notes due to a lowered water table brought on by prolonged droughts.

Morris also noted that even with adjustments in viticulture and winemaking, a reversal of these trends could take 25 years to materialize, assuming they can be reversed at all. The expert, who has relocated to France since Brexit, underscored the potential future implications of extreme climate conditions for Burgundy's renowned Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. He pointed out that if the climate continues to intensify, the region might have to look beyond its traditional grapes and methods to adapt.

Some positive outcomes have also emerged from these climatic shifts. Peripheral areas within Burgundy, such as Tonnerre, are seeing renewed potential. According to Morris, Tonnerre—a town east of Chablis and the origin of the Chablis Montée de Tonnerre Premier Cru vineyard name—could be poised to achieve standalone appellation status. Meanwhile, the southern Mâconnais region appears to be less affected by these climatic pressures, offering some hope that all parts of Burgundy are not equally vulnerable.

In addition to climate issues, Morris expressed strong opinions on the rising costs in the secondary wine market. He advised Burgundy enthusiasts to avoid paying more than the recommended retail prices, suggesting that the secondary market's inflated pricing hurts genuine wine lovers. This message aligns with his philosophy of promoting

accessibility in Burgundy wines.

Besides his advocacy for the region's accessibility, Morris maintains a deep commitment to his work as the founder of the Jasper Morris Inside Burgundy website, where he publishes around 6,000 tasting notes each year. Despite the workload, Morris finds it rewarding to stay connected with Burgundy's winemakers and continues to refine his expertise. He recently acquired the publishing rights to his book, Inside Burgundy, and has been managing the reprints personally, with the second edition now in its fourth reprint.