



## New “AXA Millésimes” Scholarship

*London, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2009:*

The Institute of Masters of Wine and AXA Millésimes, a long-standing Principal Supporter of the Institute, are proud to announce a major new scholarship for the 2009 education programme.

The AXA Millésimes Scholarship will be awarded annually to up to three MW students, worldwide, at any stage of their studies (including Dissertation). It will include:

- Two to three days at AXA Millésimes' Bordeaux properties: with – according to the season – tours of the Chateaux estates, work in the vineyards and cellars, tastings and blending with the individual winemakers
- Two days at either Mas Belles Eaux in Languedoc or Domaine de l'Arlot in Burgundy.
- A visit to either Quinta do Noval in the Douro or Disznókő in Tokaj.

The prize may be taken in October or November 2009 (dates to suit all parties). The prize will include accommodation, meals and transport between the properties within France. All winners will undertake the trip as a single group.

Selection will be by essay, written in or translated into English, to a maximum of 1000 words, on the topic:

*“Is the notion of terroir a necessary ingredient for greatness in a wine?”*

All entries should be submitted by Monday, **8<sup>th</sup> April 2009** to Peter Csizmadia-Honigh at the Institute.

**Christian Seely**, MD of AXA Millésimes, explains, “The idea behind the scholarship is to give the winners some practical experience of daily life in a vineyard. We hope that the question will stimulate some lively essays. It is a matter of record that I am pretty keen on the notion of terroir, but there is no right or wrong answer: we are looking for original insight, passionate argument and coherence of thought”.

**Clive Barlow MW**, Acting Executive Director of the Institute, said, “We are delighted to be able to offer our students this exciting new scholarship, which will enable the successful candidates to gain a deeper understanding of some of the most open-minded and quality-focused properties in Bordeaux, and the rest of Europe. Our relationship with AXA Millésimes is very precious to us, and we are delighted to benefit from their continued support and commitment to wine education.”

*For further information contact:*

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*Note to Editors*

## **About the Institute of Masters of Wine**

The Institute of Masters of Wine was established in London, England, in 1953, since when over 2000 candidates have sat its rigorous examination in the art and science of wine. In 1991, the examination was held on the same days in the UK, Australia and the USA, a pattern that continues today.

There are currently 277 members of the Institute, from 22 different countries. Although membership was opened up to non-UK members for the first time only in 1987, 92 members now come from outside the UK. The vast majority of the students are now non-British, and the Education programme is run annually in Napa Valley, California; Melbourne, Australia; Rust, Austria; and Bordeaux, France.

The Master of Wine qualification is achieved by passing three parts of the examination:

- Theory, comprising four three-hour question papers on viticulture, winemaking, the business of wine and contemporary issues
- Practical, comprising three 12-wine blind tastings of a range of international wines which are assessed for variety, origin, quality and style
- a 10,000 word Dissertation on a subject selected by the candidate, relevant to the international wine industry

Candidates come from all areas of the wine industry. The majority are active in a commercial capacity, as wholesalers, importers or retailers, from major multi-nationals to independent merchants. A growing number are involved directly with winemaking, while other occupations include journalism, public relations, the hospitality industry and wine education.

## **About AXA Millésimes**

AXA Millésimes, subsidiary of AXA, the French insurance group, was established in the mid-eighties when Claude Bébéar, President of AXA at the time, and a great lover of fine wines, wished to create the 'wine arm' of the company. The aim was to invest in wine properties which had a potential for making great wines. The first purchase, in 1987, consisted of two properties in Pauillac, Château Pichon-Longueville and Château Pibran as well as one property in Burgundy, Domaine de l'Arlet. Important investments both in the vineyard and in the cellars, were carried out in the years following these purchases.

Then succeeded a string of other acquisitions in Bordeaux: Château Petit-Village in Pomerol (1989) and Château Suduiraut in Sauternes (1992). The same year as the latter, following the fall of communism in the eastern block, AXA Millésimes was able to acquire the historic vineyard of Disznókő in Tokaj.

In 1993, Quinta do Noval was purchased and Christian Seely was appointed Managing Director. At the end of 2000 Christian Seely was appointed Managing Director of AXA Millésimes in Bordeaux, thus leaving Portugal but not his management functions at Quinta do Noval. In 2001, AXA Millésimes purchased Château Tour Pibran, the neighbouring property of Château Pibran, thus enlarging the surface of the property from 10 to 17 hectares. Finally, in December 2002, a brand new acquisition, Mas Belles Eaux in the Languedoc area, was completed by Christian Seely and his technical team.