



## **BRITISH WINE WRITER WINS NOVAL AWARD FOR BEST MW DISSERTATION**

Winchester-based wine writer Susie Barrie MW has won the 2009 Noval Award for the best Master of Wine Dissertation of the year, given a Distinction by the examiners, *her prize-winning paper* covered the topic “UK market attitudes towards brut nature Champagne”.

The award is sponsored by AXA Millésimes (owners of Quinta do Noval and Principal Supporters of the Institute of Masters of Wine). It comprises a cheque for £1000, a trip to Quinta do Noval in Portugal, and a mixed case of Noval ports, including the legendary Nacional Vintage.

Christian Seely, Managing Director of AXA Millésimes, presented the Award to Susie at the Institute’s Annual Awards Ceremony at Vintners’ Hall this week. He said, “We are delighted to recognise a truly exceptional dissertation in this way. Communication about wine is essential in the modern world; Susie’s ability to convey complex issues in understandable and engaging language shines through.”

Siobhan Turner, Executive Director of the Institute of Masters of Wine, said, “This award supports the ideals of the Institute and of the Masters of Wine, who not only have deep and broad knowledge of wine, but also a demonstrated ability to communicate that knowledge and enthusiasm. We are grateful for AXA Millésimes continued support of the Institute and its goals. I congratulate Susie on her significant achievement in winning this award, and I am certain she will enjoy her trip to Noval immensely.”

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

The Institute of Masters of Wine (IMW) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting excellence in the wine trade. Founded in 1955, the Institute has 279 members (MWs), based in 22 countries.

The IMW's education programme encourages a cross-disciplinary approach to understanding wine and communicating that knowledge at the highest level. The IMW holds annual study seminars in Napa Valley, USA; Adelaide, Australia; and Rust, Austria. The annual examinations take place in London, Napa and Sydney, over a four-day period. There are three practical papers, each with 12 wines. Candidates are required to blind taste and identify wines of varying quality levels and origins. In four theory papers, candidates need to demonstrate, through essays, a knowledge of a wide range of subjects, including winemaking, grape growing, business and social issues. Students also write a 10,000-word dissertation on a subject of their choice.

### **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.

MORE acquisitions in Bordeaux then FOLLOWED: Château Petit-Village in Pomerol (1989) and Château Suduiraut in Sauternes (1992). The same year as the latter, AFTER the fall of communism in the eastern *bloc*, 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 ALSO BECAME 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, THEREBY 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.