

Wine Collector Cashes In

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Richard Bakal does not consider himself a purveyor of fine **wines** despite that fact that he is selling **wines** from his family collection that include the labels of the top 25 Bordeaux vineyards. "I am a private **collector**," Bakal said, "who is in the process of liquidating his private family collection."

Following the tradition of European family collections, Bakal has purchased only outstanding vintages, buying directly from the Bordeaux valley in France.

For the past 30 years, he has been acquiring and storing these **wines** undisturbed until they reach their "optimum" age. As he has started selling these **wines**, he has kept shipping to an absolute minimum under carefully controlled conditions.

The most expensive of his **wines**, 1970 Petrus, sells for \$15,000 a case. And while he is selling off his private stock, he takes pleasure in making these fine **wines** available to other connoisseurs.

"When it became clear that my family was not going to consume the collection, that they were not as enthusiastic as I was, I reluctantly concluded by the mid-1980s that it was time to look for a sensible way to dispose of the collection that I had been building since 1973," Bakal said from his Ridgefield office of The **Wine** Trust.

By the late 1980s, California had passed laws allowing private **collectors** to sell **wine** through auction and to sell to licensed **wine** distributors in that state. By 1993, Illinois and New York passed similar laws. Bakal sells to retailers and high end restaurants that are licensees in those states.

By the 21st century, fine **wines** of top vintages had become one of the most stable commodities that one could deal in. "Forbes" magazine's 2001 **Collector's** Guide listed fine **wine** as outperforming all other categories of collectibles in the S&P 500, according to sales figures gleaned from worldwide dealers and auction houses. Bakal's private collection is as good as gold.

One of the aspects of the world of **wine** that lends credence to Bakal's claim of offering **wines** of "top vintage" is these labels ratings by Robert Parker, "the most powerful **wine** writer or critic anyplace," Bakal said.

Parker's ratings make or break a **wine** label, Bakal explained. And Bakal is careful to make those **wines** from his collection available with chateau labels that have Parker ratings of 90 or higher.

"His influence is just enormous. To get a Parker rating of 90 or more assures that the **wine** is success. Prices go way up. Everybody is anxious to have them," Bakal explained. Among those highly Parker-rated **wine** labels are Mouton Rothschild Bordeaux 1985, 1986 and 1989. Bakal offers those, also La Mission Haut Brion 1986 through 1990. The list could go on.

"The **wine** trade is an inherently fascinating one," Bakal noted. "**Wine** is complicated and the people who are drawn to work in **wine** are most always dedicated to **wine**. They love the field. They love the product. An extra benefit of this is the quality of people that one deals with in this. The closer you get to the vineyard, the more interesting the people are."

Bakal would not reveal the exact size of his **wine** reserve, but did indicate that it is "very large."

As changes continue in the world of fine **wine**, he plans to embark on a new enterprise, which he calls **Wine** Trust II. That will be to build on his accomplishments over the last 30 years in collecting top Bordeaux and invite other investors to join him and include other great **wines** from around the world in the collection. He also plans to expand worldwide distribution.

For further information on The **Wine** Trust, Contact 888-946-3878 or visit the website www.thewinetrust.com.

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