

BURGUNDY TAKES MANHATTAN

Instead of flying journalists to Burgundy, the Burgundy Wine Board decided to bring their region to the journalists. Marisa D'Vari reports on a novel promotion to show influencers how Burgundian wines could fit with New York's lifestyle.

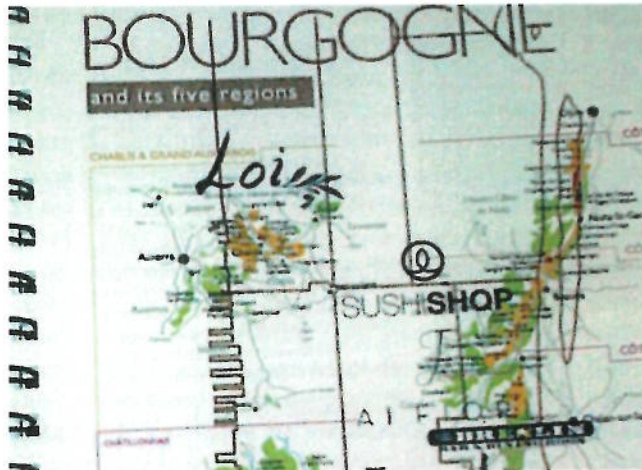
Burgundy is such a small appellation it's quite possible to visit all five of the key regions - the Côte Chalonnaise, the Côte de Nuits, the Côte de Beaune, the Maconnais and Chablis - in a single day. In April 2013, 20 journalists were able to visit all these regions in a single day - without leaving the island of Manhattan.

Novel promotion

This was the idea behind 'Bourgogne Takes New York', a creative promotional event created by Sopexa to meet the objectives of the Burgundy Wine Board (BIVB).

"We wanted to create a dynamic and very intimate event for just 20 thought-leading journalists," says Nelly Blau Picard, who is in charge of the Communication for Burgundy wines in the export markets for the BIVB. "We wanted to talk to journalists about the diversity of our vineyards, which is expressed through our appellations, and a specific focus on food and wine pairing." She said it was important to communicate the idea that wine from Burgundy can pair with many different types of food, "and also that Bourgogne wines can be found in different price ranges to suit the moment, from Japanese takeout food to upscale Greek cuisine."

Sopexa executives Marie Christina Batich and Alice Loubaton took the BIVB's objectives to heart, and created a day-long event in which five chauffeured cars each took four journalists to five of Manhattan's most dynamic and diverse restaurants. To showcase the diversity of Burgundy wine and how it can pair with different cuisine, at a Greek, Italian, Japanese, Indian, and 'gastropub' style restaurant along the length of Manhattan. As the five key regions also span the length of Burgundy, the restaurant's location defined the Burgundy region it was to represent. Throughout the day, the groups took turns visiting each restaurant, where



A map of Burgundy was overlaid on the map of Manhattan.

the wines of that specific region were paired with several small courses chosen by the particular chef or sommelier.

With the introduction of each wine, a BIVB executive, BIVB spokesperson, or the restaurant's sommelier would speak about the region and its terroir. Afterward the journalists would discuss among themselves why the pairing worked. Adding to the excitement was a quiz following each visit, in which the journalists won tokens that could be used to bid on Burgundy wine at the event that was to follow in the evening. Journalists could also receive extra tokens for each tweet on Twitter.

After a day of rather intensive learning about the diversity of the terroir of Burgundy, members of the BIVB and the journalists celebrated together at the City Hall restaurant, where a mock Hospices de Beaune auction was held. The festive evening ended with journalists using their tokens to bid on the lots of wine.

Aftermath

Given the small number of journalists, was the campaign effective? According to Nelly Blau Picard, the BIVB's objective had been achieved. "Articles can't be expected to come out for six months to a year, yet we've

already had tweets, blog posts, and even a story on pairing wine from Burgundy with a Cinco de Mayo [5th of May] party where normally Mexican beverages are served. The journalists appear to be very excited about our region."

In addition to engaging the journalists, one positive outcome was how the event energised the chefs and sommeliers about the region. Though each of the five restaurants already had Burgundy wine on their list, all of the excitement of the wine and food pairings, the talk of the terroir, and the fun quizzes that had journalists reaching for

their buzzers ignited the interest of the sommeliers and chefs as well. According to Blau Picard, they have become ambassadors as well, with a few of the restaurants creating Burgundy-inspired dinners soon afterward.

"The BIVB is doing a good job of getting the journalists on board," says Maria Loi, a television personality and owner of the Greek restaurant Loi, one of those participating. "And the event piqued the interest of my sommelier Marco Divine. If we choose to expand our list, Burgundy wines will certainly be among our first selections."

Emille Perrier, sommelier at the celebrated Ai Fiori restaurant in Manhattan's luxurious Setai, said that the tasting allowed her to use value-driven wines to pair with their upscale cuisine, thus balancing their wine and food costs. When pressed, Perrier admitted she feels Burgundy is still seen as a special occasion wine, though she does have ranges on her list starting at \$68.00.

For Picard, the key outcome was the ability to create a relationship with key journalists, also instilling a fascination for Burgundy shared by the restaurant teams. Pleased by the awareness generated by the campaign, Picard is considering creating a similar event on the West Coast in the future. ■