

Location provides key to French wine quality

This is the fourth of a seven-part series on wine by Fine Arts staff member Larry Kubert.

by Larry Kubert

When one speaks of great wine-producing countries, although Germany has superb whites, and the United States is consistently making better wine, there is no doubt that France leads the world. In addition to yielding the world's greatest reds, France's whites and roses are not to be underestimated.

France lays claim to the Queen and King of red wines, Bordeaux and Burgundy respectively. Bordeaux tends to be light and slightly on the dry side. Burgundy is a stouter wine. You know when you have a mouthful of Burgundy.

Appellation controllee laws, which were put into effect by the French government in the 1930's, not only prevent the use of misleading labels, they also force each district to produce as good a wine as it can. Naturally, as a result, the wine drinker profits.

Bordeaux wine comes from the Bordeaux region and is generally made from the Cabernet Sauvignon grape. Inside this region there are 24 different districts, most producing average wine, however there are five of the districts whose wine is superb. Known for their reds are the districts of Medoc, Graves, St. Emilion and Pomerol. The remaining district is Sauternes, known for its white dessert wine.

The Medoc district is divided into two parts: the Haut-Medoc (High Medoc) and the Medoc. Both areas produce good wines, but the best comes from the Haut-Medoc. The Haut-Medoc is broken down into 28

smaller divisions called communes. Of these, four which yield extremely good wine are Margaux, Pauillac, St.-Estephe and St. Julien.

Thus the label of a Bordeaux may say Margaux, pin-pointing the commune where the wine came from. Further breakdown means finding which specific vineyard in Margaux the wine came from. This is done by using the word Chateaux and the name of the vineyard, such as Chateaux Rausan-Segla.

The vineyards are rated according to a master classification: *Premiers Cru Classe* (first growth) and in descending order, *Deuxiemes Crus*, *Troisiemes Crus*, *Quatriemes Crus* and *Cinquiemes Crus*. By knowing which vineyards are in which classes you will know how good of a wine you have. However, even if you have a *Cinquiemes Crus* or a fifth-growth Bordeaux, it is far, far indeed, from a poor wine.

Bordeaux coming from another one of the districts besides Medoc will definitely be distinguishable, but this does not mean that they are inferior to the Medoc Bordeaux. Graves produces excellent red and white wines. Pomerol, which is the smallest of the districts, can produce as good a wine as the Medoc. Pomerol wines tend to be expensive since they are rare and come from such a small district. St. Emilion produces more wine than the Medoc. The Chateaux Cheval-Blanc and Chateaux Ausone are two of its most famous chateaux.

The remaining district, Sauternes, produces the extremely sweet white dessert wine. Made from the Semillon grape which is permitted to reach the essential degree of overripeness—*pourriture noble* or "noble rot" (when rot truly forms on the grape),



the wine is rich and sweet, golden in color and should be served chilled and sipped at the end of a meal. A number of Sauternes are so rich that often one glass is all that can be drunk.

The King—Burgundy—is next. Made from the Pinot noir grape, Burgundy has a regal, powerful quality. Perhaps it's too heavy, many people find Burgundy undesirable and prefer the milder Bordeaux. However, although Bordeaux is very nice, I find Burgundy to be the pinnacle of wine enjoyment.

The Burgundy region is divided into two parts: Cote d'Or and southern Burgundy. There are two sections of the Cote d'Or; the Cote de Nuits which produces great red wines, and the Cote de Beaune, where superb white burgundys come from.

There are three categories of Cote

d'Or wines. *Village wines* where only the village names appears on the label; *premier crus* or "first growths," where both the village and vineyard names appear; and *grand crus* or "great growths," where only the vineyard name appears on the label.

Care needs to be taken so that one doesn't confuse a *village wine* name with a *grand crus* vineyard name. This can be done by generally familiarizing yourself with the *grand crus* vineyard names.

Southern Burgundy has three sections: the Chalonnais which produces a lesser-known, but good wine; the Maconnais which yields Pouilly-Fuisse, a pale golden wine which is very good with fish and white meat; and Beaujolais which uses the Gamay grape instead of the Pinot noir, but in this case, the conditions are correct to produce an excellent wine.

Although not located in the Burgundy region of France, the town of Chablis yields a wine which is considered a white burgundy.

Perhaps a note should be made here. Red wines do not get their color from the grape used in making the wine, rather it is obtained from the grape's skins. By removing the skins before pressing, a white wine such as white burgundy can be produced.

Made from the Chardonnay grape, Chablis is an extremely dry wine which is very good with fish or oysters. There are four categories: *grand cru* Chablis, *premier cru* Chablis, Chablis, and *petit* Chablis. Either of the first two categories should be a very good wine. The Chablis is a good wine. The *petit* Chablis is an enjoyable wine, however, the *petit* Chablis should be drunk within three years of its vintage because after this it will begin to lose its freshness.

The village of Travel is the home of France's and perhaps the world's, best rose. Although many times a rose is a blend of red and white wines, the Travel rose winemakers use red-wine grapes, press them, and then remove the skins of grapes from the juice as the desired pink color is reached.

RHA endorses Hansen

The UNL Residence Hall Association, a group of UNL dormitory representatives, has endorsed incumbent second district Board of Regents candidate Kermit Hansen.

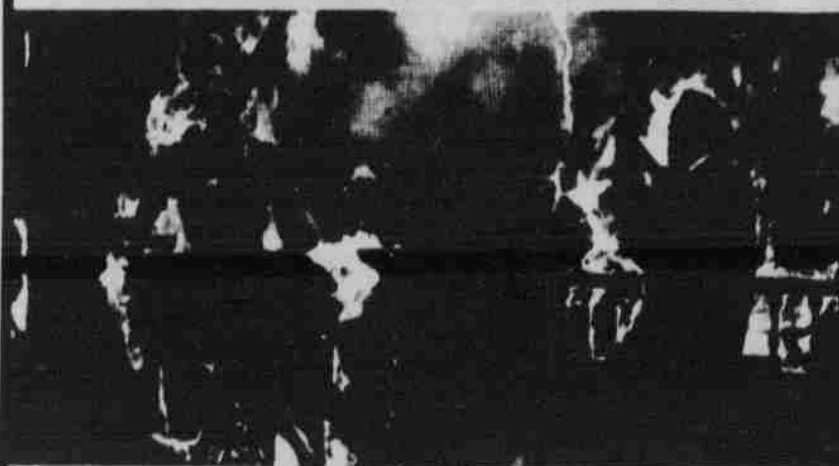
In a news release, RHA said it "knows Hansen will continue to do an excellent job of representing the students and administration of the University and the taxpayers of his district."

The release said RHA represents one-fourth of all UNL students.

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