



BATTLE OF THE BUBBLES

In 2013, prosecco outsold Champagne for the first time.

PROSECCO: 307 million bottles
CHAMPAGNE: 304 million bottles

Acquiring Taste

BUSINESS AND LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT WINE TO IMPRESS FUTURE CLIENTS—AND SLAY THE COMPETITION AT THE LEFT BANK BORDEAUX CUP.

FIFTY MEMBERS of Columbia Business School's Wine Society file into Room 311 of Warren Hall. Instead of learning about the finer points of finance over the next two hours, they're going to be sniffing and sipping at a lecture and tasting.

"This is about more than just socializing and drinking," says Matt Perlman, the society's vice president, who organizes the group's weekly tastings, winemaker visits and formal classes like this one. "Knowing about wine is an important skill to have for business," Perlman, 29, says. "It's like being able to play golf."

There are about 20 university wine appreciation groups in the U.S.; Europe boasts more than a dozen. With 400 members, Columbia Business School's, founded in 1997, is one of the largest. (Columbia Law School has a separate club called DeVinimus.) Harvard Business School's Wine & Cuisine Society is so popular that members are chosen by lottery. In Hong Kong, where auction prices for French wines are soaring, the first student society debuted in 2010 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the idea has since spread to seven other schools in the city.

Although clubs host tastings of all types of wines, the inspiration behind many societies was the Left Bank Bordeaux Cup, a wine team challenge sponsored by La Commanderie du Bontemps, a wine trade association keen to reach the taste buds of the future elite. Originally restricted to French business schools, the competition—which involves questions about and taste tests of Bordeaux wines produced west of the Gironde—went global in 2011. A year later, Yale Law School established



A student from the Chinese University of Hong Kong at the 2014 Left Bank Bordeaux Cup final

a wine club so it could field a squad. The top two teams from four regions (North America; Europe, including the U.K.; France; and Asia) battle it out in June in the cellars of Chateau Lafite Rothschild. Columbia Business's team, which includes Perlman, started training hard in September for the North American qualifying round slated to be held in January.

In Warren Hall, Philippe Newlin, who heads the New York office of Bordeaux *negociant* Duclot/La Vinicole, keeps his wine talk unstuffy by comparing appellations to the different actors who played James Bond. The evening's highlight, the 1999 vintage of first-growth Chateau Margaux, he says, "is a suave Pierce Brosnan."

ELIN MCCOY

CUP QUALIFIERS

To make it to the final round, students must field multiple-choice questions like these, which were among the 10 asked of U.S. teams in January.

1. Chateau Lafite Rothschild was bought in 1868 by

- a) Nathaniel de Rothschild
- b) James de Rothschild
- c) Eric de Rothschild

2. What is the similarity among Chateau d'Issan, Chateau Kirwan and Chateau Lango-Barton?

- a) Same appellation
- b) Same classification under the 1855 system
- c) Same owner

3. Chateau Haut-Brion is classified in

- a) white b) red c) both

4. How many classified second growths are there in the Saint-Julien appellation?

- a) 5 b) 6 c) 7

5. Which classified growth is in the commune of Macau?

- a) Chateau La Lagune
- b) Chateau Cantemerle
- c) Chateau de Malleret

Answers: 1. b, 2. b, 3. b, 4. a, 5. b