

## Highlights from VinExpo: Part 1 - International Business at Its Best

by Collin Williams

We have been talking about Bordeaux and its wines for 8 weeks now. Hopefully, through the mix of interesting tid-bits of information combined with input from our Spec's team members in our neighborhood stores you have found a new insight into the wines from this region of France and feel a little more connected to our Spec's family.

In the spirit of this momentum, I feel we needed to "keep the ball rolling". During the next couple of articles, I will attempt to recap our latest trip to Bordeaux.

Our decision-making in relation to new wines for the chain is a collaborative-group effort. With so many stores and over 11,000 skus of wine, it is important that we come to a consensus on many of the new and existing brands that are carried at Spec's. Thus, every other year we travel to VinExpo (the largest wine exposition in the world) which is held in Bordeaux.

### International Business at It's Best:

Let me try to put the grandeur of this show in perspective: imagine the area of 5 football fields with over 2400 exhibitors from 44 countries showcasing wine and spirits. During this 5 day massive event, over 50,000 industry professionals from around the world come together to construct new business, solidify existing relationships, and share ideas. While VinExpo is still very new to me as a young professional in the industry, Spec's has been invited to attend this show as a representative from the United States since its inception: 1981!

Those of you that have been to an industry show or an expo may be asking: why travel all the way to Bordeaux to attend a wine show? VinExpo is more than your everyday industry expo. Here, meetings are more precise; i.e. talk business, analyze potential new products, discuss pricing. VinExpo is not open to the general consumer and decorum demands an aura of strictly business settings.

It is at VinExpo that we talk to our Negotiants (companies that represent multiple properties in Bordeaux ) and other partners in order to put together container orders (1200 cases) to bring into the United States. At rough estimate, this type of buying practice accounts for nearly 90% of the wines you see in our French Bordeaux sections within your neighborhood Spec's store.

This type of international business has become trickier in the last couple of years due to the Euro conversion versus the US Dollar. Just FYI: this is why you may see price increases in certain categories. It is in these situations that we try to negotiate correctly and efficiently to bring you the best wines at the best prices. However, in certain instances the pricing will not be advantageous and some wines may lose representation for a short period of time.

While at the show, we strive to get our money's worth for our time. We arrive early (8:30am) and close the show (6pm) only stopping briefly to eat lunch – which usually turns into a meeting/lunch with a supplier. Over the span of the five days, we will probably walk 15 miles while constantly perusing each aisle and each booth in search for new products or anything that may catch our attention. Often, we'll see something that is truly unique and not represented in Texas. It is during these moments that we develop a plan to bring this new project to our markets to offer our customers something they cannot get anywhere else.

Finally, through the endless meetings, constant wine talk, and tireless pursuit of new and interesting products, we will leave the VinExpo fulfilled that we have completed our duty: being the voice of you (our customers) in the world of wine trading and supply management.

**Stay Tuned next week for Highlights from VinExpo Part 2: The Chateau Visits, Parties, and the Wine Journeyman's Pursuit** ☞



Please email me at [collinwilliams@specsonline.com](mailto:collinwilliams@specsonline.com) with feedback.

Outside of VinExpo: Tents set up for lunch



Interesting artwork that lines the perimeter of the main building



Sitting down to negotiate prices and analyze wine with a Negotiant

