

BARK + O BOTTLE

ISSUE NO.9 MAY 2001
www.corkfacts.com



Academy takes on broader role

The Amorim Academy is taking steps to play a broader role in the global wine industry through a series of new initiatives.

Established in 1992, the Academy is best known for its annual awards, which acknowledge the efforts of an individual or team in undertaking significant research that contributes to the advancement of wine quality.

Funded by Amorim, the Academy also supports major scientific studies in oenology.

The Academy currently comprises 31 leaders from the global wine and scientific communities. While the Academy has a strong European influence, its membership also includes respected wine industry leaders from South America, Canada and Australia.

Amorim Academy president Robert Tinlot says it is time the organisation played a broader role in the wine industry.

A former head of the French Ministry of Agriculture's Wine Office and of the International Office of Vineyards and Wine (OIV), Mr Tinlot believes the pool of experience and knowledge within the Amorim Academy is a valuable resource that can be better utilised for the benefit of the wine industry worldwide.

"One of the main ways in which the Academy can pursue its objectives is by encouraging debate amongst industry leaders on major wine issues," Mr Tinlot said.

"Because of its composition and the diversity of its members, the Amorim Academy should be expressing its ideas and facilitating intellectual debate on major topics in the world of wine.

"The first such debate took place in March, at our last general meeting, and it explored the scientific aspects of research in oenology and the use of GMOs (genetically modified organisms) in oenology."

The Academy's next major debate will take place at VINEXPO in Bordeaux on 20 June on



Amorim Academy president Robert Tinlot (right), with the honorary president of the organisation, Jacques Puisais.

the topic 'Brand, vine and soil: responding to the crisis in viticulture'.

Harpers magazine editor Tim Atkin, will chair the debate, which will feature a number of leading representatives of the wine industry as well as members of the Amorim Academy.

"In the present context, with increasing global production, stagnating world consumption and declining consumption in the traditional wine-producing countries, various questions arise," Mr Tinlot said.

"Some of the questions we will discuss at these debates include:

- How can we increase consumption across brand/grape variety/soil type?
- Have plantings been based on prospects of increasing consumption?
- Is there a responsible policy of increasing

consumption among young people?

- Is there a policy of increasing consumption in emerging countries?
- Is the wine sector protected from a crisis of confidence (unsound oenological policies, lack of traceability, fraud, etc)?"

"The Academy's prime objective will always be to encourage research that enhances our understanding of wine and its environment.

"At the same time, we hope we can make a significant contribution to the industry by encouraging debate on major issues and helping to perfect wine."

Further information about the Amorim Academy's work and details of previous winners can be sourced from the recently upgraded website at www.academie-amorim.com. Papers presented at VINEXPO will also be available on the site.



Preventing contamination of wine

While an enormous research effort has been devoted to identifying and eliminating sources of cork-related taint in wine, most notably 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA), increasing attention is now being paid to other environmental sources of contamination.

One of the leaders of this research is Dr Pascal Chatonnet, director of the Excell Laboratory in France and a graduate of the University of Bordeaux.

Studies by Dr Chatonnet have identified two potential sources of environmental contamination of wine.

The first are pentachlorophenols, found in chemicals that were once applied to treat wood used in cellars and shipping containers. Dr Chatonnet has shown that these chlorophenols can be transformed into chloroanisoles and transmitted through cork to taint a wine.

These wood treatments have now been banned in most wine-producing countries and many contaminated cellars have been rebuilt.

Besides contamination of wineries in France, Dr Chatonnet knows of cases in Europe, Australia and America. He has formed a consultancy with world-renowned wine-consultant Michel Roland, called MR & PC Conseils, to advise wineries on the issue.

Dr Chatonnet has also developed special equipment to measure this form of airborne contamination.

A more recent study has shown how the yeast, *brettanomyces* (or its spore-producing form *dekkera*), can be transmitted during winemaking and barrel ageing.

The *brettanomyces/dekkera* micro-organism is ubiquitous in the fermentation industries. It can cause refermentation and other problems in sweet wines, but is more frequently responsible for 'phenolic' and 'animal' odours in red wines.

In research conducted for Seguin Moreau at Bordeaux Faculty of Oenology, Dr Chatonnet showed that this phenolic character is directly linked to the presence of excessive amounts of ethyl-phenols. These in turn can only be produced in red wines by *brettanomyces/dekkera*-type yeasts. This most commonly occurs after fermentation, while wines are ageing.

Ageing in oak, poorly maintained used barrels, variable cellar temperatures and poor racking (including dirty barrels), provide favourable conditions for *brettanomyces* contamination of wine.

Proper cooperage and winery hygiene is the only protection available during cellaring, according to Dr Chatonnet. He suggests sulphuring of barrels and cleaning/reconditioned barrels with hot water at high-pressure.

Dr Chatonnet has also shown that grapes can be contaminated by airborne *brettanomyces/dekkera* originating in distilleries or outdoor treatment areas for winery waste. This can be prevented by proper



Dr Pascal Chatonnet, director of the Excell Laboratory in France.

sulphuring and disinfection of mechanical harvesting equipment.

Monitoring wines during ageing and efficient disinfection of wooden containers should ensure that this source of contamination is brought under control in the near future.



Proper cooperage and winery hygiene is essential to prevent brettanomyces contamination during cellaring.



Get the facts on cork

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New Amorim cork chairman

The recent annual general meeting of Corticeira Amorim, the holding company for the cork business of the Amorim Group, has elected António Rios de Amorim as its new chairman.

Mr Amorim replaces the man dubbed by Forbes magazine as ‘The King of Cork’, his uncle Américo Amorim, the visionary leader who built the company into the world’s biggest cork manufacturer.

Américo Amorim has decided to hand over executive responsibility for the cork business and will focus on his role as chairman of Amorim-Investimentos e Participações, the holding company of the Amorim Group.

The fourth generation of the Amorim family, 34-year-old António Amorim has, for the past few years, been the managing

director of Amorim & Irmãos, the natural cork unit of Corticeira Amorim, where he has instigated significant changes in all areas of the business.

“Amorim is undertaking an ambitious program to modernise and optimise its production processes to produce the highest quality cork products as consistently and cost effectively as possible,” António Amorim said.

“Under my leadership, no one should doubt Amorim’s commitment to bringing about change.”

António Amorim holds a degree in



António Amorim

commerce and social sciences from the University of Birmingham (UK) and completed the executive program in business administration at the Graduate School of Business at Columbia University (USA). He also has a diploma in oenology.

Harvest ‘down under’

Textbook descriptions of *Quercus suber* (the cork oak) have to be re-written and maps showing its global distribution re-drawn!

Current references say the cork oak “is circumscribed by the western Mediterranean region” and that “Sicily is the eastern geographical limit of the species, France the northern limit at the 44th parallel, and the southern limit is Morocco at the 33rd parallel.”

However, there is a cork oak plantation in the Southern Hemisphere, at a latitude of 35.31° — and it has just been harvested professionally for the first time.

Situated in Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), the Glenloch Cork Oak Plantation is small, containing approximately 9,000 trees on around 10 hectares (25 acres).

The only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, the 90-year-old plantation has the potential to produce between 600,000 and 750,000 corks every nine years.

Amorim sponsored a review of the plantation by Portuguese silviculturist, Francisco Lopes in May 2000.

As part of the management plan recommended by Mr Lopes, the forest was thinned and the first harvest took place in February as a joint initiative of ACT Forests and Amorim.

The harvest of the historic site was carried out by Portuguese ‘cork strippers’ Manuel Silva and Manuel Graça, who are based at

Amorim’s Ponte de Sôr production facility.

It is estimated that the cork from the trees will be mature enough for use in local wine in 15-20 years.

ACT Urban Services minister, Brendan Smyth described the Glenloch Cork Oak Plantation as a great resource that also held excellent educational value in terms of its capacity to teach the community about the environmental qualities of natural cork.



Manuel Graça (left) and Manuel Silva at work.

Technical board appointment

The newly elected chairman of Corticeira Amorim, António Amorim, has created a new position on the board of directors of Amorim & Irmãos, that of technical executive vice-president.

This is the first time that the technical function has been represented at board level, alongside existing representation for finance, production, commerce and marketing. It demonstrates Amorim’s continuing commitment to achieving excellence in all areas of its cork manufacturing.

The position will be filled by chemical engineer José Manuel Leal Ferreira, who has been responsible for developing and implementing some of Amorim’s most significant technical innovations in recent years — including the new primary processing facility at Ponte de Sôr, Amorim’s exclusive cork cleaning technologies, CONVEX and INOS II, and the use of ozone in cork processing.

The technical executive vice president will oversee Amorim’s research and development program, its laboratories throughout the world, production plants, equipment, environmental standards and the provision of technical support to clients.



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In brief

New facilities for Germany

Amorim Cork Deutschland officially opened its new facilities at a special ceremony late last year.

Director general of Amorim Cork Deutschland, Bernard Meyer, welcomed the Mayor of Bingen and clients from the Rhein-Hessen region to the special event.

With a total area of 2500 square metres, the modern facilities centralise the company's warehousing, production, laboratory and administration, enhancing the high level of service Amorim provides in one of the world's largest wine producing countries.

Amorim puts seal on century

Amorim corks have been selected to seal 40,000 magnums of red wine bottled to mark the 100th anniversary of Australian Federation.



Australian Prime Minister, John Howard (right) with Len Evans (left) and National Wine Centre chairman Rick Allert at the launch of the Centenary of Federation Wine.

The managing director of Amorim Cork Australia, Noel Heyes, said his company was honoured by the opportunity to donate the corks for the Centenary of Federation wine.

Launched by Australian Prime Minister John Howard, the commemorative red is a blend of wines from all of Australia's 61 wine-producing regions.

It will be sold as a collector's item to raise money for the National Wine Foundation, a body set up to combat social problems leading to alcohol abuse.

"This will become one of the most sought-after limited-edition wines ever produced in this country and I'm immensely proud that every one of these magnums has an Amorim cork," Mr Heyes said.

900 years at sea

Italian scientists have recovered a 900-year-old wine amphora from a shipwreck in the Tyrrhenian Sea with the cork still providing an effective seal.

According to IAS, the diving institute

searching the wreck, the cork seems to have sealed the three-quart terracotta jar, leaving its contents apparently intact.

Scientists believe the wine was an African or Sicilian red wine and will conduct a series of tests on the amphora's contents.

Cork on curriculum

Amorim Cork South Africa, in partnership with the Elsenburg College of Agriculture, has developed a subject covering cork closures and practical aspects of their use as part of the College's 'Technology in Wineries' course.

Director of the Oenology Department, Peter de Wet, said he tries to train his students in all aspects relating to the oenology process.

"South Africa is still a small wine producer, but we are growing rapidly and I believe that new generations of winemakers need to learn about cork and bottling. It is as important as knowing how to plant the best vines or wine fermentation," he said.

"As the Amorim Group is an old friend of the South African wine industry we sought their support and knowledge to establish this new subject in our curriculum."

A group of students from the College have already visited Amorim's cork processing facilities in Portugal, including the state-of-the-art Ponte de Sôr and Amorim & Irmãos plants. They also toured cork oak forests in Alentejo in southern Portugal.

Amorim at WA2000

Amorim was a major sponsor of Australia's biggest wine expo, the biennial Wine Australia 2000 late last year.

The Amorim stand told the cork story and focused on Amorim's state-of-the-art production techniques. Another display area looked at cork and the environment, while a colourful 'cork troupe' entertained the large



Amorim's colourful 'cork troupe' entertained patrons at Wine Australia 2000 with a humorous short play.

crowds on the expo's four public days.

In addition, Amorim staged seminars on the two trade days titled 'Advances in Cork' (the seminar papers are available on www.corkfacts.com/docs/WAtranscript.doc). The keynote speaker was the head of Amorim's research and development department, Professor Miguel Cabral.

Law protects cork oaks

A meeting of Portugal's Cabinet on March 21 approved new laws that re-enforce the protection of cork oak trees.

For centuries every aspect of cork oak forest management has been regulated in Portugal, however the new law was necessary to prevent the illegal felling of trees by unscrupulous property developers.

Highlighting the economic, social and environmental importance of cork to Portugal, the law increases significantly the penalties for illegally felling cork oaks, including the inability to change the use of the land for 25 years. Previously, the penalty was a fine of up to \$US110,000.



A new law in Portugal protects the cork oak.

Cork-sealed riesling the best

The title of the 'Best Riesling 2000' in Australia has been awarded to a cork-sealed McWilliam's wine.

The Eden Valley Riesling beat more than 120 entries from 70 wineries throughout Australia at the inaugural National Riesling Challenge.

Noel Heyes, managing director of Amorim Cork Australia, said he was delighted by the success of the Amorim cork sealed wine and congratulated McWilliams and its winemakers for the honour given to the 1996 McWilliam's Regional Collection Eden Valley Riesling.

Drop us a line

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