

Check list for avoiding a Fake Wines

Fake Wines – taken from Australian Wine Guide – 5th Edition due out in 2011

Buyers of investment wines have to be aware of fakes, and with the rise in popularity of internet shopping the opportunities for fraud is increasing.

Some figures put the amount of counterfeit wine as high as 5% of the market and it is only going to get worse. You have only got to look at other consumer goods such as handbags or sunglasses to realise that wine is going to be targeted. In some people's eyes all wines taste the same so why not forge the label and put an inexpensive wine in the bottle.

Police have uncovered counterfeit bottles of Grange, especially the 1990 and 1991 vintage, and other poorly re-corked bottles of Grange, containing a lesser wine, have been discovered at the Penfolds re-corking clinics. There are many stories about counterfeit wines from across the globe. In 2008 a catalogue at an auction in New York listed the sale of Domaine Ponsot Clos Saint Denis 1945, which was a very rare find indeed, considering that the Domaine did not produce that particular appellation until 1982!

The problem with counterfeit wine is not only restricted to premium brands. On a larger scale fake bottles of Rioja, a premium wine region in Spain, were discovered for sale on P&O ferries in Europe, as well as through an English supermarket. Spanish police estimate that one million bottles of a La Mancha wine (a more inferior region) were re-labelled as Rioja and sold at a higher price. In 2010 a Tesco customer questioned the taste of his Pouilly Fuissé and then noticed how the label looked more akin to a photocopy than the real thing.

Check-list for detecting avoiding a fake:

- Check the fill level – be suspicious if the fill level is high on an old bottle – it simply shouldn't be.
- Labels should look slightly aged, off-white rather than pristine, unless it has been preserved in pristine cellar conditions.
- Examine the bottle – has a cheaper glass been used?
- Scrutinise the label for spelling mistakes. Often the wine label is hard to replicate.
- Look at the cork – normally it would be a long, good quality (not conglomerate) cork with the vineyard, chateau, domaine name stamped on it. The year might also be displayed. It should also be wine saturated/stained if it is an old red.
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