

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST

SITE INTERNET
(USA) OCTOBER 24, 2011

The Rothschilds and Antinori Launch New Wine Projects

Wines from two iconic families make a U.S. debut.

BY JOE CZERWINSKI



From left to right: Baron Eric de Rothschild, Monsieur Philippe Sereys de Rothschild, Baronne Philippine de Rothschild, Baronne Ariane de Rothschild, Baron Benjamin de Rothschild

Courtesy of Equinox Creation

It's been an open secret for several years now—the Rothschild family has embarked on a new venture in Champagne. Last week, Philippe Sereys de Rothschild, the chairman of the project, was in New York to launch Champagne Barons de Rothschild. The Champagne unites three different branches of the family: Benjamin, a Geneva banker who also owns Château Clarke; Eric, owner of Château Lafite Rothschild and several other estates; and Philippe, whose mother is Baroness Philippine de Rothschild, owner of Château Mouton Rothschild.

“For years, we had thought, ‘What could we do together? What could be fun?’” says de Rothschild. In 2005, the family toured the Côtes des Blancs and met *vignerons* they wanted to work with; then they tapped the technical expertise of Coopérative Vinicole de Vertus to make the wine.

The three current releases include a NV Brut, NV Blanc de Blancs and NV Rosé, which carry suggested retail prices of \$100, \$125 and \$125, respectively. All are well made, with the Blanc de Blancs a touch richer and creamier thanks to a bit more aging, but even the brut and rosé are aged four years prior to disgorging and then another nine months prior to release. “As soon as we decide to call it Champagne de Rothschild, there’s no discussion—we have to have the quality,” says **de Rothschild**.

The Champagne will be available at retail only through Sherry-Lehmann in New York, Calvert Woodley in Washington, D.C. and Wally’s in Los Angeles during the holiday season. A larger rollout is planned for spring 2012.

Meanwhile, the Antinori family of Tuscany had been quietly plotting the release of its newest wine, Matarocchio, which was unveiled at an event hosted by Christie’s in the company’s Rockefeller Center offices. Piero Antinori and his daughter Alessia presided, joined by longtime winemaker Renzo Cotarella, as attendees sipped through several older vintages of Cervaro della Sala, Guado al Tasso, Tignanello and Solaia.

Standouts included the 2001 and 2004 Tigs and the legendary 1997 Solaia, but they were all destined to set the stage for the 2007 Matarocchio, a 100% Cabernet Franc grown on a hillside of the family’s Guado al Tasso estate in Maremma. The wine is rich and creamy in texture, yet boasts Franc’s hallmark floral aromas. It’s powerful and long, and deserves at least 3–4 years of cellaring to do it justice, but shows great potential. Unfortunately, Alessia Antinori reminded the crowd, only 200–300 bottles of the 250-case production are earmarked for the U.S.