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Unfiltered: The Rolling Stones "make" ice wine

Plus, a Pomerol winemaker looks out for your family pet, a change of the guard in Bordeaux and large-format wines for charity

Posted: Wednesday, April 09, 2008

• What do **Keith Richards** and a bottle of ice wine have in common? They both have the unnerving ability to last for decades: ice wine because of its high acidity and Keith Richards because... well, not everything in nature can be explained. So, it came as no surprise that the irrepressible **Rolling Stones** have added an ice wine to the existing line of wines marketed under the band's name. Called "Sympathy for the Devil," the Pinot Noir-based ice wine is being launched by Ex Nihilo Vineyards, a new winery based in Canada's Okanagan Valley. Winery owner Jeff Harder came up with the idea for the wine nearly three years ago when he tried and enjoyed a Rolling Stones Cabernet Sauvignon at a VIP dinner hosted by the band and began talking with Martin Erlichman of Celebrity Cellars in California, the company that creates and names wines for **Madonna, KISS, Barbara Streisand** and the Stones. Harder recently met the band at the New York premiere of *Shine a Light*, the Rolling Stones documentary produced by **Martin Scorsese** (himself no stranger to the cross-promotion of wine and popular entertainment). The inaugural 2004 vintage of "Sympathy for the Devil" will hit the market later this spring, but is only slated for release in Canada, with plans reportedly pending for a U.S. release. We haven't tasted the wine yet, but if it allows us to do splits and high jumps, get dates with international supermodels or persevere as multimillionaire rock stars well into our senior years, we'll give it a try.



No "Brown Sugar" added.

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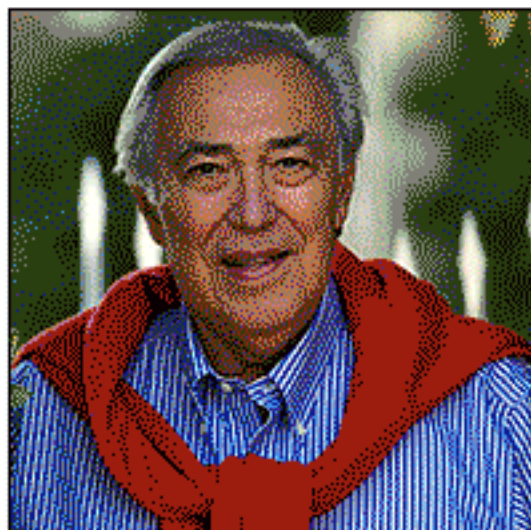


Also: no felines were harmed during the making of this Bordeaux.

• Look no further than the back of a wine bottle for Bordeaux's sense of humor. Pomerol Vintner François Estager has dreamt up an eye-catching way of protesting the French government's mandatory labelling policy, instituted last October, to warn pregnant women against drinking alcohol. The back labels of his 2005 wines sold within Europe are currently being marketed with health logos of a cat and a tennis racquet, alongside that of a pregnant woman. "I feel that if we have to warn pregnant women about not getting drunk on our Pomerol wines, then we may as well warn people about the risks of giving wine to their cat, or of drinking during a tennis match," said Estager. He added that the use of multiple logos was also a warm-up for the future, as a string of other mandatory health

warnings are in the works, such as the use of egg-white fining or the risk of giving alcohol to children. Undaunted, Estager has decided to roll out a warning logo of a fish and one of a skier for his 2006 vintage. While the label art could become a bit of a collector's item, we don't think **Mouton** has much to worry about.

• Speaking of Bordeaux, there was a generational changing of the guard there last month, as **Jean-Michel Cazes** stepped down as grand master of the Commanderie du Bontemps de Médoc, Graves, Sauternes and Barsac. A fraternal organization made up of chateau owners, négociants and other Bordeaux industry members (plus plenty of honorary inductees), the Commanderie has been promoting Médoc wines and dressing up in silly costumes since its founding in 1949. (But who are we to judge? Unfiltered wears a velvet bathrobe and flip-flops to work whenever possible.) Cazes, 72, the winner of *Wine Spectator's* 2007 Distinguished Service Award, handed over control of **Château Lynch-Bages** to his son Jean-Charles in November. At last month's Commanderie meeting, he said it was time to let a younger generation take over the organization, too. The group elected **Emmanuel Cruse**, 40, co-owner of **Château d'Issan** in Margaux as the new grand master. Unfiltered, who was Most Worthy Keeper of the Exchequer in a college fraternity, applauds the move.



Deepix Studio

Jean-Michel Cazes, pictured here in everyday attire.

• Sure, wine can make you feel good, but one wine can help others feel good, too. Napa's **Portfolio** winery—founded by **Robert Mondavi Winery's** director of winemaking, **Genevieve Janssens**, and her husband, **Luc**—recently announced their humanitarian efforts in Laos, which are funded in part by their wine's sales. In February, Luc (who is also president of the Lao Rehabilitation Foundation) organized a volunteer trip to conduct almost 100 free emergency surgeries on severely burned adults and children and those in need of cleft lip and palate procedures. About \$25,000 of profits from large-format bottles of Portfolio helped cover the costs.

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