

LAROCHE JOINS THE LIBERTY PORTFOLIO

Liberty Wines is delighted to announce its appointment as the exclusive importer for the UK market of wines from three Laroche estates: **Domaine Laroche** (Chablis), **Mas La Chevalière** (Languedoc) and **Viña Punto Alto** (Casablanca Valley, Chile).

Liberty's managing director, David Gleave, comments: "Domaine Laroche epitomises Chablis and the quality of the range, from Petit Chablis through to Grand Cru, is impeccable. Their emphasis on premium wines - whether in Chablis, the south of France or Chile - makes them a natural fit with the Liberty portfolio. Over 85% of our sales are in the premium on-trade and independent off-trade sectors, to which we feel that the Laroche wines are perfectly suited."

The Laroche group of estates merged with the family-owned southern French producer Jeanjean in January of this year. Michel Laroche, the driving force behind the company since 1967, remains as a shareholder and is actively involved in the company. He comments on their move to Liberty: "Over the past 30 years, the Laroche brand has grown in the UK with the support of our successive distribution partners. In the current challenging market conditions, we feel a renewed focus is required to take the brand to the next level, and are convinced that Liberty is the right partner to achieve this ambition with us."

Gleave agrees. "Following the success we've had with Jaboulet since taking over their distribution in May 2007, and the work we've done adding a number of new domaines to our list, France is now second to Italy in our portfolio. I enjoy investing in France, and seeing our sales grow while the market for French wines is shrinking. My feeling is that this is due to the premium nature of our portfolio. The quality of the wines from Laroche, and their innovation, will further strengthen our French range, while the wines from Chile will dovetail perfectly with our current offering from Chocalan."

Domaine Laroche owns 100 hectares of vines, including 30ha of Premier Cru and 6ha of Grand Cru vineyards. Winemaker Denis de la Bourdonnaye's ethos of quality, which he has instilled at Laroche over the past decade through a meticulous approach to viticulture and winemaking, continues to shine through in the wines.

The **Mas La Chevalière** wines, from an estate situated outside Béziers, are impressive, while the wines from **Viña Punto Alto** represent Casablanca at its best. "All three properties produce 'wines of origin', wines that are true both to their variety and their region. This is one of the things that excited us most about Laroche when we first started talking with them," says Pippa Askham, Liberty's marketing manager. "The way in which they have allied a respect for the estate with an innovative approach in the vineyard and the cellar is exciting for Liberty, and we will be working hard to get this message out to our customers."

All the wines are sealed under stelvin.

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