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Finest and Rarest Wines Auction at Christie's

Merely mentioning the names of **Château Pétrus**, **Château Latour**, **Romanée-Conti**, and **Château Cheval-Blanc** will bring a reverent sigh among collectors, and when these status wines come up for auction at **Christie's New York**, it is controlled pandemonium as to who gets to own these legendary wines

On March 2, 2006, **Christie's New York** held The Evening Sale: Finest and Rarest Wines, for their inaugural wine evening sale. As would be fitting for some of the best wines in the world, the evening began with a presale reception featuring Champagne Delamotte, founded in 1760, Blanc de Blancs 1997, accompanied by lavish caviar-accented canapés.



Richard Brierley, Christie's Head of North American Wine Sales, began the 119-lot high-energy auction by offering the first wines of the evening, Bordeaux Vintage 1982 wines, all of which sold over the pre-sale high estimates. A dozen bottles of Château Pétrus ‐ Vintage 1982 sold for \$41,125, well over the estimated \$22,000 - \$30,000. Pétrus is considered to be one of the world's rarest and most expensive wines.

Of particular interest to bidders were the vertical selections from Napa Valley, including Screaming Eagle, Araujo Estate ‐ Eisle Vineyard, Dominus and the Napanook Vineyard, and Harlan Estate, which all sold over their estimates. The small vineyard Screaming Eagle in Napa Valley, California, offered 3 bottles of each of their Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon Vintages 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2002. This 21-bottle Vintage collection opened with a bid of \$18,000 and sold for \$52,875, again well over the high estimate of \$32,000. Araujo Estate ‐ Eisle Vineyard offered a 9 double-magnum vertical of Araujo Estate, Eisle Vineyard, Cabernet Sauvignon Vintages 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002, which sold for \$17,625. Four double-magnums of Dominus in Vintages 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997 sold for \$5,640, and 11 magnums from Harlan Estate in Vintages 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 sold for \$25,850.

Also of interest were Michael Broadbent's eight 'five-star' wines from the 2000 Vintage to begin or enhance a cellar for collectors. The 96-bottle collection, which included Château Lafite-Rothschild, Château Latour, Château Mouton-Rothschild, Margaux, Château Haut-Brion, Château Pétrus, Château Cheval Blanc and Château Ausone, broke the \$100,000 mark and sold for \$105,750.

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However, the atmosphere in the salesroom really started to heat up when a dozen bottles of Romanée-Conti-Vintage 1934, Côte de Nuits, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, from the collection of Doris Duke, which were purchased in 1936 and remained cellared at her estate, Duke Farms in New Jersey from 1936-2004, and thereafter with Christie's, sold in a telephone bidding war for \$105,750. A jeroboam of one of Michael Broadbent's 'six star' wines, La Tâche – Vintage 1962, Côte de Nuits, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, sold for \$88,125.

When the 6-magnums of Château Latour – Vintage 1961, Pauillac, 1er cru classé, came up for bidding, I felt like I was watching a tennis match, as the telephone bids were volleyed by Christie's Specialists located on both sides of the room. Opening with a bid of \$22,000, the bids kept increasing, with the numbers on the auction board listed in US Dollars, Euro, British Pound, Swiss Franc, Hong Kong Dollar and Japanese Yen, barely keeping up with the frenetic pace until they were finally sold for \$94,000.

One jeroboam of Château Pétrus – Vintage 1961, Pomerol, cru exceptionnel sold for \$123,375. Château Pétrus – Vintage 1982, Pomerol, cru exceptionnel, in its original wooden case with lightly wrinkled labels, also set hearts on fire with 6-magnums that sold for \$88,125 in a telephone bid. One magnum of Le Pin – Vintage 1982, Pomerol sold for \$23,500, also in a telephone bid; and a double-magnum of Château Cheval-Blanc – Vintage 1947, Saint Emilion, 1er grand cru classé (A) sold for \$135,125.



The 'shining star' of the evening though, was the amazing 6-magnum offering of Romanée-Conti – Vintage 1985, Côte de Nuits, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, from Burgundy, France, in its original wooden case in pristine condition, that set a new world record for a case of wine at auction, and sold for an astonishing \$170,375 (the equivalent of \$14,200 per bottle). My head literally spun watching the telephone bidding as bidders clamored to own these legendary wines.

(It should be noted that the world record for a bottle of wine sold at auction was in 1985 at Christie's London for a bottle of 1787 Château Lafite, which sold for \$157,500.)

Christie's inaugural evening wine auction was tremendously successful, with all 119 lots sold totaling \$2,600,000, which was \$1 million over the pre-sale high estimate. For the complete list of all wines offered and their selling prices, as well as the details of their next auction, please contact [Christie's New York](#).

All prices listed in the article include the buyer's premium and are rounded to the nearest dollar. In order to provide a better understanding of the wines that were auctioned; included is some wine terminology that perhaps you may not be familiar with, magnum = two bottles, double-magnum = four bottles, jeroboam (for Burgundy, Champagne) = four bottles, and jeroboam (Bordeaux) = six bottles or 5 litres.

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