



WINE NOTES

By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

IN THE YEARS we have been writing our *Tastings* column, which appears on Fridays, we have received thousands of questions about wine from readers. In this column, we answer some questions that touch on common themes. We have edited the questions for space. If you have a question, drop us a note at wine@wsj.com. Be sure to include your full name, city and state.

IS RECORKING WORTH IT?

I have a bottle of 1949 Mouton Rothschild I've kept in my basement for 20-plus years and I recently had a look at it and it's down about a half-inch below the neck. It doesn't appear to be leaking and it has been on its side mostly undisturbed all these years (except for a look at the label from time to time). I've heard it's possible to have it refilled and recorked. Do you know if this is possible and how to go about it?

—Randy Weigner,
Boston

We've heard about traveling squads of recorkers sent from certain châteaux to major cities to evaluate, refill and recork precious bottles (the idea is that corks decay over time and this helps protect the wine by providing a new cork). Penfolds travels around the globe to conduct recorking clinics for its bottles that are at least 15 years old, and plans to host a clinic in New York City in October 2007. We asked

Michael Aaron, chairman of New York's Sherry-Lehmann wine shop, if he had any ideas about how to get this bottle recorked. "I don't know of anybody that is doing any recorking anymore," Mr. Aaron said. So we contacted Mouton Rothschild, where Hervé Berland, the general manager, told us: "Our policy is not to recork any old bottle of wine" because the process causes more harm than good. "We recorked, very occasionally, some bottles at the château in the '80s," he said, "but we stopped doing it in the late '90s." Mr. Berland's suggestion, which is the same as ours, is to prepare a special meal and open the bottle. "The 1949 Mouton is absolutely at its peak

now and must be enjoyed in the coming five years," he said.

DISCOVERING WINE AT MIDLIFE

I am in my 50s and I don't like wine. At least I never thought I liked wine. Recently I was dining at a steakhouse in Baton Rouge, La., with a friend. He ordered a red wine and I allowed the waiter to pour me a glass, which I expected to last the entire meal. Then something very different happened. The wine was good—no, not good, fantastic. I couldn't tell if the wine was making the steak come alive or the steak was making the wine come alive, but there was a taste explosion like I have never experienced before. Is this the way it is supposed to be? If so, how can I make it happen again?

—Ken Johnson,
Alpharetta, Ga.

Gee, just reading this made our glasses steamy. Many wine lovers recall similar eureka moments that forever changed their view of wine or of a particular kind of wine (we recall, by the sip, the German wine that forever changed our mind about Riesling, and

that was in 1976). Now, while the memory is still fresh and delicious, find a good wine merchant and try to build on this. It's helpful if your friend remembers what he ordered, but in any event, talk to a merchant about what the wine tasted like and why you liked it. A good merchant should be able to help you find something similar. And believe us: There are good merchants almost everywhere. We happen to know an outstanding store right in Alpharetta. If lightning doesn't immediately strike again, don't give up. Now that you know how exciting wine can be, it's worth giving this a little time.

Melanie Grayce West contributed to this column.

