



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.

Many of us here in the Boston area were lucky to have been members of the Les Amis du Vin chapter directed by Myron Norman from the mid-'70s through most of the '80s. One of the wines I purchased from Myron in the late '70s was a Romanée-Conti 1972. It has resided in my wine cellar since that time and appears to be in pristine condition. While I would love to taste a wine of this quality, I would prefer to turn this bottle into cash and invest the proceeds in some good bottles that will be ready to drink soon. Do you have a suggestion of how I might sell this bottle?

—Robert A. Vogt, Needham, Mass.

This query and variations of it—"How can I sell this old bottle of wine and how much is it worth?"—is our second-most-asked question of all time.

Thanks to Internet resources, it's easier than ever to get a general sense of how much wines are selling for these days. You can look at sites like hdhwine.com, wine-searcher.com, wineaccess.com, 2020wines.com and many more. And more and more places now conduct wine auctions—not just Christie's, but large wine stores such as Scarsdale, N.Y.-based Zachy's and Web-based auction sites such as winebid.com. There's even an eBay-like site called winecommune.com where you can sell your wine directly to an individual or have the site sell it on your behalf. (Be sure to check laws in your area. Many states prohibit such sales.)

All that said, though, with some rare exceptions, the possibility of finding someone willing to buy a single bottle of wine—not an entire lot, not a cellar, but a single bottle—isn't great. Why? Ben Nelson, vice president of consignments at Chicago-based Hart Davis Hart, a wine auctioneer and merchant, told us that when his firm appraises a wine for sale, it bases the figure on a bottle in pristine condition that's usually part of a larger collection that has been perfectly cellared. "It is really storage conditions and provenance that are our biggest concerns because

we want to be sure that we are selling the best example of this wine," Mr. Nelson said. His usual advice when someone wants to sell a single bottle of wine—again, with some rare exceptions—is the same as ours: Prepare a special meal, open the bottle and have fun. As former Les Amis members ourselves, we know how much we owe to that organization, so we'd toast Myron Norman with that bottle, or, if you can't bear to open this special bottle on your own, remember that Open That Bottle Night 8 takes place on Saturday, Feb. 24.

I love red wines but often find that the headache that accompanies them the next day almost makes me avoid them completely. I have

found a few white wines that I enjoy, but not so much as reds. I have read that the sulfites and/or the tannins in red wine cause the headaches. If that is so, can you recommend any reds that may not contain either?

—Joanna Sammartino, New York



If you read the answer to the first question and wondered what is our most-asked question, this is it. Over the years we have

heard from thousands of people who wonder how to avoid headaches related to wine. Unfortunately, it's a lot more complicated than sulfites and tannins (in fact, while sulfites can cause severe allergic reactions in a small percentage of people, they don't cause headaches). Some people get headaches from whites but not reds, although reds are the usual culprits, while some get headaches from French wines but not German. It involves all sorts of reactions that are highly individual and, as a result, is a problem you need to discuss with your doctor. This is something that can usually be managed; a few minutes with your doctor is certainly worth the time so you don't have to miss a lifetime of enjoying wine. If you'd like to learn much more about wine and headaches, drop us a note at wine@wsj.com and we will send you our column on the subject.

—Melanie Grayce West contributed to this column.