



Septembre 2004



**100 FANTASTIC FRENCH BUYS**

France may be losing sales to the easy-to-understand New World wines, writes ROSEMARY GEORGE MW, but, as she and the Decanter team discovered at the Great French Decanter Fine Wine Encounter, the country's producers are fighting back with some fabulous wines

**T**HERE IS A growing feeling that France is losing its way; that the country which has set indisputable standards of excellence, creating the benchmarks of quality to which the rest of the world aspires, is floundering in the face of competition from the New World. Confidence has been knocked by the popularity of varietal wines that are easy to understand and by the more approachable flavours of Australia. While France's finest wines remain unassailable,

there is unease in the middle ranks; numerous Bordeaux châteaux are suffering economic adversity, and wines from all over the country are difficult to sell, with an underlying feeling that the appellation laws may be stifling creativity and no longer guarantee a level of quality. But that all seemed far away at the Great French Decanter Fine Wine Encounter, which was buzzing with enthusiasm and energy. And the wines that were folded by the producers who

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■ **Maison Alex Gambal, Chardonnay, Bourgogne 2001**

Youthful oak on the nose. An elegant palate, with well-integrated oak and firm acidity.

£11.50; May

