

Fresh and fruity: French learn the Aussie for wine

By JEFF COLLERSON

IT might be like trying to sell refrigerators to Eskimos — but French wine expert Corinne Gaudron loves the challenge of promoting Australian vintages in her homeland.

Corinne, 25, is the sommeliere (wine expert) at the luxurious hotel-restaurant Chateau de Marcey at Chinon, in the Loire Valley.

She is responsible for selecting the 32,000 bottles in its cellar, preparing the wine list of 500 different labels and suggesting wine and food combinations for customers.

As one of only six women holding such a lofty position in a traditionally male-dominated vocation in France, Corinne has just won champagne maker Veuve Clicquot's inaugural "Woman In Wine" award.

Her prize was a five week tour of Australian and New Zealand vineyards — and she is using her trip to acquire more Aussie wines for her restaurant.

Chateau de Marcey, a four star hotel whose restaurant boasts a coveted Michelin star, has long featured wines from California, Portugal, Argentina, South Africa, Hungary, Romania, Spain, Italy . . . even England.

But it was devoid of Australasian vintages until Corinne read a magazine article praising wines from Cape Mentelle, WA, and Cloudy Bay, NZ.

On tasting them she was excited by their quality and value for money compared to French products.

Now the restaurant has six Australian and New Zealand wines and Corinne is keen to add more — especially liqueur muscats from north-east Victoria's

Rutherglen area.

"French people don't know much overcome that by offering them a glass," Corinne said today.

"I never tell them what it is. I just ask them to allow me to serve them something different.

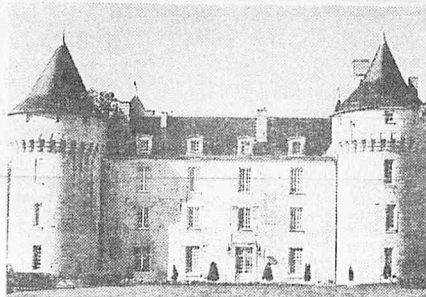
The reaction is usually very good and in this way I can expand their knowledge of Australian and New Zealand wines."

Corinne, about to leave on a tour of New Zealand's vineyards, has visited WA's Margaret River and Swan Valley districts, Victoria's Yarra Valley, Central Pyrenees and Mornington Peninsula vineyards, and spent four days last week in the Hunter Valley.

She tasted 34 wines there and was impressed by their fruity freshness and "good balance of acidity and alcohol".

Her only criticism is she believes some of our wines are too "woody".

"I felt some spend a few months too long in oak barrels," she said.



The five-star Chateau de Marcey in the Loire Valley

Down Under drop at roof of the world

HIMALAYAN trekkers will soon be able to slake their thirst on wines from Down Under.

Victoria's Taltarni winery has just announced Australia's first wine shipment to Nepal.

The King of Nepal's National Trading has bought 400 cases of Taltarni wines, which will be available in Kathmandu hotels, restaurants and duty free shops by the end of April.

The wine will be shipped later this week from Melbourne

Before accepting the wine, the Nepalese government insisted it pass a stringent chemical analysis.

Says Taltarni's Dominique Portet: "All the wine imports into Nepal have to be certified free of nuclear contamination."

A good balance . . . French wine expert Corinne Gaudron savors some Australian local vintages
Picture: GREGG PORTEOUS