



by Elin McCoy June 23, 2015

Fireworks spread like giant golden fans across the night sky above Château Smith Haut Lafitte at the party kickoff for last week's VinExpo 2015, the world's largest wine and spirits trade fair.

The biannual gathering is a big deal. French President François Hollande gave a speech the next day at one of the vast exhibition spaces on a man-made lake just north of the city. VinExpo is the drink industry's biannual five-day schmoozefest, a place to do deals, trade gossip, party hard, and, of course, launch new products.

I spent my days hiking from one end of the half-mile-long hall to the other, hunting the highlights among the 2,350 exhibitors from 42 countries. One fast fact: It takes 50 people to keep the 120,000 glasses clean for sniffing and swirling by 48,000 buyers, who flew in from 151 countries. After France, China topped the list for number of visitors.

Trendy rosés were ubiquitous, but “taste the unexpected” was this year’s theme, and I found plenty of that, from Latvian bitters to Riedel glasses that show off espresso’s different flavors, to wines from war-torn Syria.

Here are my picks for some of the most exciting launches:



■ Photographer: Elin McCoy for Bloomberg

JCCB from the Boisset Collection (\$500)

Burgundy purists dote on subtle taste differences among the region’s vineyards, and they’ll be aghast at this tradition-busting experiment from playful Jean-Charles Boisset, whose wine businesses span California and France. The heavy,

square, clear bottle looks as if it should hold some ancient cognac. The red wine inside is a rich, lush blend from three famous grand cru Burgundy vineyards—Clos de Vougeot, Clos de la Roche, and Échezeaux—from three different vintages. It’s all highly refined cherry fruit and smooth, rich texture. There’s no terroir taste with this mélange, but it’s gorgeous in the glass and ready to drink now.