

The Fine Art of Fine Wine Labels

A Blend of Vintage and Modern Art Adds Mystique and Intrigue to Bottles

By Ron Romanik

A table wine for today

The San Francisco design firm PBD International saw a demographic opportunity in the wine category. They believed that there was plenty of room for a quality everyday wine that was modestly priced if the marketing message and package design were constructed carefully. Seizing the moment, the firm decided to invent a new brand from the ground up that would be a lifestyle brand based on wine.

David Becker, partner at PBD, explains that the firm had to admit that France had the product history and natural advantage in consumer appeal, but it decided to use that to its advantage. A consumer survey they performed showed the perception was that French wine was still best, but the brand names were intimidating and the labels confusing.

The object was to convey a certain French lifestyle, accentuating the positive associations with that lifestyle while eliminating the negative connotations. The aesthetic became one of simple, country living. "We reverse-engineered the wine to meet the needs and the wants of the demographic we were targeting," says Becker.

One of the messages of the Tableaux brand is, as Becker explains: "When you mix and match, you come up with something that's greater than the sum of its parts." The bottle features a die-cut, self-adhesive label that creates the profile of a dinner scene. "We need to make a statement—the cut-out scene is the brand." The word Tableaux itself means "scene" or "painting."

The tone of the text on the back of the wine bottle is a little more declarative than traditional wine bottles, with paragraphs beginning with "We believe..." Icons on the back label also help distill the essential information on Blend, Place (origin), Taste, and Pairing. The initial success of the icon system convinced PBD to increase their size on the next edition of labels.

The entire brand message is summed up by Becker, saying, "At the end of the day, we believe that wine shouldn't be complicated." Or, as it says on the label: "We believe you shouldn't need a PhD in French Existentialist philosophy to pick a wine for your next get-together. " ■

