

Fertile Pairings: A Cultural History of the Early Commercial Mandate of the Société des alcools du Québec (1968–1978)

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Article abstract

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Abstract

This article sheds light on wine sales in Quebec after the creation of the Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) in 1971. Wine blended with the state's economic and nationalistic orientations and helped legitimize the profitability of the SAQ. Not only did it become the perfect vehicle to replace the temperance code of moral conduct based on respectability with a new hedonistic one projected onto the trope of middle-class modernity, but it also allowed for a reinvestment in Quebec's French genealogy in a context of national and linguistic affirmation. This is the story of how a consumer product, whose popularity is rather recent, carved out a place for itself in Quebec's modern identity. This place, which was neither inevitable nor self-evident, appears to be the result of cultural, economic, and political ambitions and opportunities.

Résumé

Cet article fait la lumière sur les ventes de vin au Québec après la création de la Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) en 1971. Le vin s'inscrit dans les orientations économiques et nationalistes de l'État et contribue à légitimer la rentabilité de la SAQ. Il devient non seulement le véhicule idéal pour remplacer la morale de la tempérance, fondée sur la respectabilité, par une nouvelle morale hédoniste, projetée sur le trope de la modernité de la classe moyenne, mais il permet aussi de réinvestir la généalogie française du Québec dans un contexte d'affirmation nationale et linguistique. C'est l'histoire d'un produit de consommation, dont la popularité est plutôt récente, qui s'est taillé une place dans la modernité identitaire québécoise. Cette place, qui n'était ni inévitable ni évidente, semble être le résultat d'ambitions et d'opportunités culturelles, économiques et politiques.

The year 2021 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ), which when combined with its predecessors — the Commission des liqueurs de Québec (1921–1961) and the Régie des alcools du Québec (1961–1971) — makes it the hundredth anniver-

sary of Quebec's public intervention in alcohol sales. "The history of the SAQ is also ours,"¹ stated then-president Catherine Dagenais; that is to say, it is that of Quebec's residents. This is a history that follows a narrative of progress toward better drinking habits and whose genesis goes back to the province's refusal to impose prohibition in 1921. In the words of Dagenais, Quebec was "the first place in North America to say loud and clear that it was *against* prohibition and *for* the responsible sale of alcohol."² But this "loud and clear" gesture is generally understood by historians as an intricate exercise in compromise between anti-alcohol movements, beverage industries, and governments intended to restrict access and curb consumption.³ Quebec was the first to implement province-wide government-run retail stores in the Confederation in the era of prohibition, and was later followed by its neighbours.⁴ The idea that it changed first has since reinforced the narrative of political vanguardism surrounding alcohol policies in Quebec.

Central to this official celebratory narrative is wine, a consumer object that has been used as a symbol of Quebec's "European" alignment, as evidenced in the SAQ's 2006 annual report: "[The] predominance of wine is a phenomenon . . . very particular to the Quebec consumer. Little attracted by spirits, Quebecers have made wine one of their eating habits, a behaviour more European than North American."⁵ Like elsewhere in Canada, Quebec's wine consumption followed the national trend and really took off in the 1970s.⁶ Yet it started to surpass the national average for growth in the aftermath of the creation of the Société des alcools du Québec in 1971.⁷ The third version of Quebec's public monopoly on the trade in alcoholic beverages, this new commercial corporation was created to solve the contradictory objectives of its former iterations, that is, to ensure the efficient sale of alcoholic beverages while promoting temperance through restrictive licensing and policing.

The rise in wine consumption in Canada from the 1960s onward is generally linked to greater overall affluence, overseas travelling, higher education levels, immigration from traditionally consuming countries and "fads."⁸ However, a change in consumer demand alone does not explain the entirety of the transformations observed in the first years of the SAQ. Rather, it appears that the conjunction of political and economic ambitions in Quebec in the 1970s also led to increased wine consumption as a culturally meaningful endeavour, despite the absence of commercial viticulture. I argue that wine has played a central role in the SAQ's legitimization processes; one that took shape in the first decade of its new commercial operations.

The creation of the SAQ coincides with the historical period known as the Quiet Revolution.⁹ The province of Quebec — rather than Canada as a whole — became the national space, thus recalibrating French Canadian nationalism.¹⁰ Furthermore, this renewed Quebec nationalism used the state as economic and cultural leverage for the French-speaking majority. Public corporations, such as the SAQ, became key economic and symbolic players. Economic nationalism, as an “imagined economy” feeding on and shaping national identity, is thus more complex than mere protectionism.¹¹ The SAQ can consequently be understood as an institution influenced by government pressure and macroeconomic interests, and simultaneously a producer of information, a shaper of knowledge, and a bearer of symbolic representations. In this light, wine sales can be analyzed from the vantage point of Quebec’s cultural history.

Although the SAQ has received attention from an array of researchers mainly in the political and social sciences,¹² few historians have studied it outside of commemorative exercises initiated by the SAQ itself.¹³ Hence, no independent research has been carried out on this public institution in any of its iterations.¹⁴ Limited access to internal documentation partly explains this lacuna in historical investigation.¹⁵ But as a public corporation, the SAQ has left numerous traces, mostly in the form of annual reports, official and promotional documents and employees’ journals. The commercial mandate of the SAQ has also been frequently debated among elected officials inside the Quebec National Assembly. Such sources bring into view the conflicting discourses and official narratives intended to legitimize the SAQ’s very existence and the state’s intervention in alcohol retailing. This idea of legitimization — or the reconciliation of the institution’s commercial and social missions — tends to coincide with the conclusions of most research carried out on the public monopoly. To borrow Daniel Surprenant’s words, the history of the SAQ can be understood as one of “institutionalized compromise.”¹⁶ Yet scholars have paid little attention to the legitimizing symbolism ascribed to wine by the SAQ in its commercialization of wine and corresponding practices. As such, although wine is ubiquitous in the SAQ’s historiography, it mainly plays the part of an alcoholic commodity. Therefore, wine — an object with its own historiography¹⁷ — appears to evolve in a vacuum, with the SAQ acting as a mere provider to quench Quebec’s thirst, with varying degrees of success depending on the vantage point of the research. Studying the histories of wine and of the SAQ together bet-

ter contextualizes Quebec's recent "love affair" with the beverage and, moreover, will allow scholars to move beyond the tautological reasoning that makes wine consumption a reflection of a homogeneous national preference and wine production a simple response to this demand. Consequently, problematizing the object of wine — "using it as a lens through which to study broad historical ... processes"¹⁸ — enables us to question the cultural significance projected onto this alcoholic product.¹⁹ But in using wine as a lens in this way requires taking into consideration the representations that come with this polysemic beverage. Wine is no neutral lens; rather, it is, and has been, intersected by a web of economic, social, and political dynamics that are often silenced, ignored, or simply left out of official narratives.²⁰

Wine's Difference

Wine occupied a favourable place in the eyes of the Commission des liqueurs de Québec (CLQ) after its establishment in 1921.²¹ Since domestic beer escaped government control and could be sold by grocers²² and cider was mired in a "legislative muddle,"²³ wine, because of its more moderate alcohol content in comparison to spirits, was presented as a flagship beverage for achieving the social objective stated in the CLQ's first annual report of "transform[ing] the habits of a people."²⁴ Until 1941, the sale of spirits was limited to one bottle per visit, while wine was not restricted. As stated by the secretary of the CLQ in 1922, "The Board is much more anxious to push the sale of beer and wine than of whisky and is importing French wines in large quantities and selling them at small profit to encourage their consumption."²⁵ In its first year, the CLQ opened a wine tasting office in Paris that also collected information "on the moral and commercial value"²⁶ of its suppliers.

Wine, furthermore, enjoyed favourable press because of the social standing of its drinkers. This was well summarized in 1916 by Dr. Joseph Gauvreau, a figure in the second temperance movement: "We do not want, practically speaking, to prevent the small number of drinkers from drinking their imported wines. We want to prevent the mass, the people who do not drink wine."²⁷ Four branches that focused exclusively on the sale of wine opened in the first decade of the CLQ, offering a privileged few the opportunity to sit down and taste wine in comfort. These "boutique" branches sharply contrasted with the more common and inhospitable bank-like branches. In 1926, the "K" rule was adopted, which recognized the hotel clientele's right to demand

an “adequate and constant supply of wine,”²⁸ thus safeguarding their access to this beverage at a time when restaurants modelled on French gastronomy were multiplying in the province.²⁹ Despite this desire to change the drinking habits of the province, spirits, mainly gin, and local beer remained popular until the 1970s, and wine was rarely consumed during meals.³⁰

The Thinel Commission

The creation of the commercially driven SAQ in 1971, only ten years after the restructuring of the CLQ into the Régie des alcools du Québec (RAQ),³¹ reactivated discourses on wine’s charmed status. If the sociopolitical environment the late 1950s and early 1960s called for broad societal reforms, this third iteration of the public monopoly was precipitated in 1968 by the discovery of a clandestine commercial network that had been operating despite a strike at the RAQ. The so-called Vanier Affair led to the swift creation of the Commission d’enquête sur le commerce des boissons alcooliques, commonly known as the Thinel Commission, named after its president, Judge Lucien Thinel.³² This exercise echoed similar public reviews of alcohol regulation held in other provinces.³³

The mandate of the commissioners was twofold: first, to investigate the alcohol trade since 1964, a year marked by RAQ’s first major strike, and second, and more importantly, to look for the “most efficient and economical means to ensure the supervision and trade of alcoholic products ... and to provide essential revenues for the development of Quebec, through taxation or otherwise.”³⁴ In the decade prior to the creation of the CLQ, moral arguments guided alcohol legislation, seen for instance in the statement that “a law of licenses cannot be a law of revenue, [but] can only be a law of public order and morality.”³⁵ In 1968, however, the economic objective of the public corporation was clearly stated. The main players in the industry — brewers, distillers, and the associations of food retailers, hoteliers and tourism — were thus invited to attend and submit briefs.

The commission’s final report, submitted in February 1971, stated that the governmental system was not only riddled with corruption and inefficiency but was out of sync with modern society, resulting in a legislative “malaise.”³⁶ The underlying question was, therefore, whether to deprive the majority in the name of an alcoholic minority unable to “control”³⁷ itself? Though aware of the socioeconomic problems of alco-

holism, the report resolutely adopted a liberal posture. The role of the government was not to restrict access, which was stated as ineffective, but to insist on education to bring the population to consider alcohol as an “ordinary” product and no longer “sinful.”³⁸ This absolution of alcohol made it possible to stage representations of wine in a particularly buoyant context of modernization and secularization. Contrary to the pessimistic theories of degeneration embedded in a “fear of the future”³⁹ narrative present in the creation of the CLQ, the commissioners resolutely took an optimistic look. Rather than being relegated to the margins of societal reform, youth culture appeared as a “gravity centre”⁴⁰ and was used as a metaphor for the necessary “rejuvenation”⁴¹ of alcohol legislation. The demographically imposing group associated with the first adult baby boomers⁴² pulled forward the concerns of the commissioners on behalf of the majority. Its consumer desires and habits became the megaphone of the social changes concurrently taking place. Two *a priori* antagonistic forces thus met: on the one hand, the appeal to free individual choice, and on the other, its justification by a collective referent, in this case, the image of a modern Quebec society.

Wine played a special role in the report’s liberalization discourse. Like all other alcohol products, wine sales increased in Quebec in the 1960s.⁴³ Yet it was described, more than any other category of alcohol, as representing the trends and configurations of Quebec society, which was more educated, urbanized, and affluent.⁴⁴ The projection of an increase in wine consumption was thus seen positively by the commissioners, who saw “no inconvenience”⁴⁵ in it and used it to signal positive socioeconomic trends such as a growth in personal disposable income. Wine was also described as a beverage suited to the enjoyment and preparation of meals, adjoining to it a distinctive function beyond inebriation. Although wine was not broadly consumed and constituted a luxury product,⁴⁶ it was positioned in the report as part of a food ritual and associated with daily life. Hence, the commissioners recommended extending the sale of wine to all food retailing spaces and stores. Grocery stores in the nineteenth century were popular spaces of alcohol consumption for women, which in return made them contested and targeted sites for temperance and prohibitionist movements.⁴⁷ In the Thinel report, food outlets remained affiliated with women’s consumption practices, but experts claimed wine facilitated the operations of the “housewife,”⁴⁸ consequently pairing the liberalization of wine retailing with greater sovereignty for women, while also reasserting their domestic role.

Moreover, despite wine consumption falling slightly below the Canadian average,⁴⁹ the commissioners referred to the Quebec consumer as “a fine wine connoisseur.”⁵⁰ If this observation was used to question the economic viability of RAQ’s broad selection, it also reflected the influence of hotel and tourism associations that had been promoting the French-speaking character of the province and its expected inclination toward French gastronomy as culturally distinct.⁵¹ Suggesting Quebec’s less puritanical view on alcohol, the hoteliers’ association’s call for greater liberalization was not calibrated to the legislation of neighbouring provinces but that of New York, California, and Florida.⁵² In the final report, the commissioners similarly referred to the “joie de vivre of our [French] ancestors”⁵³ who considered alcoholic beverages to be ordinary products, and as such, reinvested past practices with contemporary liberal ideology. Not only were they appealing to Quebec’s French-speaking population, but they also advocated relaxing regulation to be consistent with the province’s “tourism vocation.”⁵⁴ This discourse dovetailed perfectly with that of public tourism bodies, which, from the election of the Lesage government in 1960 onward, put forward the image of a French-speaking province that was no longer ancient, but resolutely modern, and where the “lifestyle and temperament” of its population was expressed by a “joie de vivre.”⁵⁵ In so doing, the province’s tourist appeal became one of the foundations on which the commissioners based their recommendations.

If the final report adopted a clear liberal rhetoric, proposing, among other things, extending the opening hours, multiplying the number of outlets and developing a network of “modern, attractive and efficient stores,”⁵⁶ it did not call for the privatization of the RAQ. Rather, it urged the government to separate the roles of surveillance and commerce to ensure their respective autonomy and better efficiency. Aside from quality control justifications, the report essentially put forward economic arguments based on the profitability of a public monopolistic model and the inability of the decentralized private sector to provide the best service to consumers.

Bill 47

In July 1971, Robert Bourassa’s Liberal government sanctioned the *Loi de la Commission de contrôle des permis d’alcool* (Bill 44) and the *Loi de la Société des alcools du Québec* (Bill 48), thus creating two separate

and autonomous bodies: one, under the authority of the minister of public security, in charge of surveillance and licensing, and another, under the authority of the minister of finance, responsible for sales and distribution. The commissioners' justifications were repeated verbatim by Minister of Finance Raymond Garneau,⁵⁷ and in the National Assembly, there was a palpable consensus on the need to break with past patronage practices that had tarnished both liberal and conservative governments. The swift adoption of Bill 47 is a testimony to the political consensus characteristic of the Quiet Revolution, when most sociopolitical actors gathered around a societal project based on the state as "engine of development of the political community."⁵⁸

If the original mission of the CLQ was to "promote the moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages of duly verified quality, sold at a reasonable price,"⁵⁹ fifty years later, Minister Garneau took on the Thinel report's suggested mandate of "making available to the consumer good quality products at the lowest possible cost."⁶⁰ The SAQ thus had to behave like a private company whose profitability would become the yardstick for its proper functioning. In so doing, the state no longer intended solely to guarantee the protection of the population in terms of safety (*duly verified* quality at a reasonable price), but also in terms of consumer's satisfaction (of *good* quality at the lowest price).

Most of the commissioners' recommendations were taken on board by the Bourassa government, which, however, went astray in two areas regarding wine regulation. First, it rejected the recommendation to make wine available for sale in grocery stores, arguing that quality control would be better guaranteed through a centralized public entity. The sale of wine, understood as a complex beverage requiring knowledgeable retailers and proper storage and transportation, was thus not to be shared with the private sector. Second, in addition to its commercial objectives, the new entity was positioned as part of the state's industrial nationalist policy. For Minister Garneau, "the manufacture and trade of alcohol must be conceived as one of the elements of a valid economic policy."⁶¹ Bill 47 thus granted the SAQ a role consulting the minister of finance on the issuing and control of wine manufacturing permits. Therefore, the reformatting of Quebec's liquor board was tied to the resolutely economic contours of the political nationalism concurrently put forward by elected representatives.

The new Société des alcools du Québec

Despite the praise for the private sector as a model for the revitalization of the public corporation, the direction of the first strictly commercial mandate was not given to a businessman but instead to accountant Jacques Desmeules. Just thirty-six years old, Desmeules became the youngest CEO in the history of the crown corporation. With this appointment, the Bourassa government signalled the competence of Quebec's youth (like the premier himself) and its ability to modernize public services. As noted by Greg Marquis, "Much like modern highways, urban renewal, industrial parks, expanded higher education, access to improved health care and cheap electricity, changes in alcohol regulation were seen as part of a larger transformation"⁶² of society. If the amplified liberal rhetoric resembled the general loosening up of all Canadian liquor boards around the same time, the SAQ projected particularly loud signals of metamorphosis — rather than acting "cautiously" or "incrementally" like other provinces⁶³ — and thus partook in the effervescence of the "new times"⁶⁴ characteristic of this era.

Change was indeed the order of the day during Desmeules' mandate. The SAQ was presented as not a "mere change of name,"⁶⁵ and it aspired to transform the image of public intervention. Following the examples of British Columbia and Ontario,⁶⁶ the SAQ's retail network adopted the self-service formula of the supermarket. This put an end to the constraints of the original branches where purchases were made through a clerk at the counter. A logo — still in use today — was created, featuring the letter "Q" in the shape of a burgundy-coloured stem glass, hence intertwining the object of wine with the prevailing discourse of economic nationalism.

During the SAQ's first fiscal year, wine sales surpassed those of spirits.⁶⁷ In its 1972 strategic plan, wine sales were expected to grow the following year by 15.2 percent, while sales of spirits were projected to grow by just 6.7 percent.⁶⁸ Wine not only represented commercial opportunity; it also showcased the SAQ's pursuit and grasp of technological prowess, in tune with the ambient mantra of modernization. In operation since the early days of the CLQ, the quality control laboratory appeared in the first annual reports as a hotbed of brand-new expertise. Filled with images of chemists performing rigorous analysis in modern facilities equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the annual reports underlined the status of wine as a technological object and complex beverage requiring public control.

The modernization and expansion of the bottling facilities used for the conditioning of SAQ's house brands was similarly put on display to showcase local oenological expertise, which relied on technical and chemical control and the elimination of practices considered obsolete, such as the use of barrels. In its first action plan, the SAQ stated its desire to become a competitive producer, with the objective of "getting a share of the market held by Canadian brands, and more importantly the one held by imported brands, by introducing comparable products under new names, labels and containers."⁶⁹

This technological approach to wine correspondingly relied on the concurrent professionalization of the "art of tasting." Together with advances in oenology and the rise of sensory analysis, wine tasting became from the 1950s onward a "rational art."⁷⁰ It is precisely this rationality that both paved the way for wine education⁷¹ and fuelled its democratization through mass-market literature and press.⁷² In Quebec, wine columns first appeared in the 1970s,⁷³ and the magazine *La Barrique* ("The only French[-language] magazine serving the Canadian alcohol industry"⁷⁴) was launched in 1972. Rationalized wine education thus constituted a springboard for the SAQ's reinvented professionalization and pedagogical objectives.

Wine and Knowledge

The expression of *savoir-boire* — or "drink know-how" — came to characterize wine tasting as an acquired protocol that could be taught while promoting moderate consumption. Wine thus became the exemplary conduit to achieve the liquor board's mandate of simultaneously promoting "the art of living in moderation"⁷⁵ while justifying an increase in sales. The new direction not only advocated for a course on product knowledge and food and wine pairings but also one aimed at "changing the attitude of the staff":⁷⁶ "The art of smiling, kindness and the way to suggest the purchase of different products could [be taught] to sell more, and in a more pleasant way."⁷⁷ In 1974, two stores were established to specifically train model employees, one in Montreal and one in Quebec City, with the intent of creating "Connoisseurs" — a rank obtained after completion of the program.⁷⁸ Photographs from annual reports show that this new guard of connoisseurs was exclusively male; female store employees appeared only as clerks,⁷⁹ perpetuating the gendered contours of connoisseurship as rational masculine activity. However, women were solicited to become

well-informed wine consumers, yet their knowledge was aligned with household competence rather than aestheticized connoisseurship. This is revealed in a poster displayed in an SAQ store titled “For the balance of a good meal,” where we can see a woman standing behind a sumptuous feast with the subtitle “Versed in the art of pleasing.”⁸⁰

If wine knowledge appeared to serve different functions depending on gender, the object of wine was nevertheless inextricable from the very idea of awareness on which wine education thrived.⁸¹ Wine was thus presented as both an accessible consumer product and a complex commodity, legitimizing the SAQ’s educational role. In 1974, it broadcast a short TV show named *Les Boivin*, a play on words with *wine* and a common French-Canadian family name. The show was described as depicting a “modern Quebec couple” confronted with “the common problems of pairing wine and food.”⁸² That same year, the in-house guide *Les Vins et les Mets* was introduced as a tool for consumers “embarrassed”⁸³ by the diversity the new self-serve stores offered. The spread of knowledge consequently contributed to the idea that wine is a beverage that must be *known* to be fully appreciated.

The SAQ’s vocabulary throughout this period borrowed from French gastronomical discourses that were until then exclusive to confidential gourmet clubs and restaurants.⁸⁴ As depicted in Douglas Jackson’s 1976 documentary *The Art of Eating*, which focused on Montreal’s gastronomical club Prosper Montagné,⁸⁵ wine was key to the choreography of a French gastronomy. Displays of fine taste, performed by a masculine elite, stressed that connoisseurship has also “served historically to maintain hierarchies of class.”⁸⁶ As such, a new type of branch, the “Maison des vins,” dedicated to specialty wines was created in 1973 in Quebec City, which was replicated in Montreal in 1975 Hull (now Gatineau) in 1977. Reminiscent of CLQ’s early wine boutiques, these new lavish stores offered distinctive and ostentatious spaces for traditional connoisseurship.⁸⁷

The Maison des vins were not only described as “ambassadors of wine knowledge and consumption”⁸⁸ but also promoted as “unique in North America.”⁸⁹ In so doing, the SAQ positioned Quebec as vanguard and saw the sale of wine as a means to affirm cultural distinctiveness and gain political capital. Hence, the loud and proud display of gastronomical practices appeared to serve a function beyond class formation alone. Gastronomy, as a “hedonistic detour from the biological purposes of food,”⁹⁰ facilitated a similar detour for wine, for the oenophile is said to keep a distance from wine’s intoxicating

nature. The SAQ's loose borrowing and mass distribution of oenophilic norms, codes, and practices aimed to unite the growing, affluent middle-class around the idea of moderation, the cornerstone of its commercial legitimization. The SAQ could reconcile its signalling of a new freedom regarding access to alcohol and its attempts to curb the drinking habits of Quebec's population through the gastronomic discourse, which in return gained broader recognition: "The tone of much of the gastronomic discourse was idealist, but also pragmatic, clearly articulating the moral virtues of gastronomy. The discourse provided models, guidelines, rules, and standards that served to publicly legitimize the new field. The gastronomic connoisseur emerged as a champion of clear-sighted moderation."⁹¹ Hedonistic yet knowledgeable wine drinking came to represent the idealized collective behaviour that Quebecers should — and could — all adopt. When CEO Desmeules declared somewhat precociously in 1975 that wine consumption in Quebec was no longer the prerogative of a privileged group but has instead become "a consumer product accessible to all,"⁹² he was using the commodity of wine as a barometer of a larger societal project of economic catch-up.

Popularizing Wine

Despite the growth of wine sales, local beer remained the most consumed beverage in the province.⁹³ Since this was a market over which the SAQ did not have jurisdiction, the public enterprise felt the need to attract new wine consumers. To do so, it developed its house brands, which infused the gastronomic aura of wine with greater accessibility. As the first baby boomers reached drinking age,⁹⁴ young adults became an audience of choice for SAQ promotional material. In 1976, a television segment, "*Honni soit qui mal y boit*" (Loath who drinks poorly),⁹⁵ was broadcast to promote the SAQ's new house products. In the commercial, a young man brings home four bottles of wine, alarming a young woman concerned about their cost. Reassured to hear that SAQ house bottling made the wine affordable, she tells him: "There's no need to explain, you know all about wine, big guy." Knowledge here is not portrayed as traditional connoisseurship; there is no prescription for food pairings nor service tips. Rather, what the young man *knows* is the affordability of these bottles of wine, which garners him admiration from the woman. The overall tone is also of slight mockery of the pompous style of the archetypal wine connoisseur, revealing how

the SAQ wished to portray wine as a democratic beverage capable of infusing the drinker with knowledge — or at least the appearance of it.

Although wine knowledge was in this instance associated with youth and masculinity, the overall appeal to Québec's citizens was as owners of this economic agent. Facing the camera, the young man says in summary: "Quality wines, my dear, imported from France, but bottled by *our Société des alcools*."⁹⁶ Such rhetoric allowed for a shift between the consumer, the citizen, and the taxpayer, three hats that became interchangeable in the discourse of the SAQ and elected officials. This use of the first-person plural pronouns, moreover, testifies to the transformation of nationalism taking place in the province and the symbolic role played by public corporations encouraging customers to identify as enthusiastic shareholders. As such, "the company's 'we' ... is presented as the consumer's 'self.'"⁹⁷ The purchase of the SAQ's affordable house brands was thus presented in terms of economic solidarity, despite the foreign nature of the imported product.

House brands were also created and named in reference to Québec, such as *Québerac* and *Nuit-Saint-Jean*, a reminder of the province's patron associated with Burgundy's appellation Nuits-Saint-George. Regardless of whether such a pun was understood by customers, it nevertheless indicates how appeals to Franco-Quebecers' imaginary were used in wine marketing. The SAQ also launched *Cuvée des patriotes*, referring to its original headquarters in Au-Pied-de-Courant's former prison during the 1837–38 insurrection, which would become its greatest commercial success in subsequent years. It was promoted as part of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste festivities and Heritage Week in 1976 in an advertisement proclaiming, "Let the festivities begin."⁹⁸ This showed how the SAQ aspired to make wine a staple of not only a well-orchestrated meal but also festive occasions. This invitation to celebrate is furthermore indicative of the sociopolitical context of the 1970s, which saw a proliferation of festivals and popular celebrations "where the desire to celebrate met the desire to assert oneself in a national setting."⁹⁹ Thus, the SAQ participated in this effervescence to promote its products, bringing together the object of wine with representations of modern Québec identity.

Despite the trans-European origins of the *Cuvée des Patriotes*, it was nevertheless sold in the France section¹⁰⁰ and marketed as *the* wine for the Québec consumer. This could be seen in a televised commercial that claimed: "The Québecer is a hunter at heart. And since he is also a connoisseur, it is the *Cuvée des patriotes* rouge that he chooses to serve

with a piece of moose roasted to perfection.”¹⁰¹ The choice of moose meat for the suggested pairing — as well as French Canadian staples as roast beef, meat pie, and stew — also showed how the SAQ adapted French gastronomical norms to engage its audience with local products, a process that was gaining momentum in Quebec’s emerging gastronomical scene.¹⁰²

The use of the singular in the ads direct appeal to citizens of Quebec — the Quebecer, and not Quebecers — implied that the target audience was male. Calling out to traditional signs of masculinity (the hunter), the SAQ, however, used the novel identification of the “Quebecer.” In so doing, the ad appealed to the educated and modern figure incarnated by the renewed Quebecois nationalism, hence injecting the consumption of wine with signals of modernity and cultural empowerment. At the same time, the segment once again reminded the audience of the collective ownership of the SAQ and the low prices of its house wines. By closing the ad with the title “The Connoisseurs” framed between two fleur-de-lis, the SAQ fuelled the ambiguity of the appeal to potential Quebec wine drinkers and played on the idea that to be a Quebecer, is to be a wine connoisseur. If the theme of the “knowledgeable Quebecer” was commercially fertile during this period and was exploited by other alcohol brands,¹⁰³ the SAQ’s adoption of the theme boosted such discourse with greater collective symbolism. As summed up by François Ricard, “When the ‘State of Quebec’ embarked on vast undertakings ... these ‘policies of greatness,’ as they were then called, were great indeed, not in their content ... but in the meaning that the community gave them, interpreting them as actions that concerned itself as a whole and in which it felt it had a full part to play.”¹⁰⁴

Quebec’s “Excellent Terrain”

France’s leadership in the “modern history of taste”¹⁰⁵ also infused wine with cultural significance in 1970s Quebec. Banners saying “French wines bottled by the Société des Alcools du Québec”¹⁰⁶ were used to market the SAQ’s house brands outside the province. The public corporation was signalling its oenological expertise while connecting the French-speaking province with France. With the first independent Parti Québécois (PQ) government that came to power in 1976, the Quebec state sought to boost economic exchange with France and strengthen the foundations of the cultural and economic cooperation

initiated in the 1960s.¹⁰⁷ In this context, wine, a cultural object linked to French civilization, a tradable commodity, and a vector of knowledge, became a vehicle for bilateral rapprochement between Quebec and this dominant wine player.

In a retrospective exercise in 1978, the SAQ underlined its position as one of France's major importers while positioning itself as a cultural beneficiary:

For France, it [the SAQ] is the largest single importer of wine. Its important purchasing power, combined with transactions without intermediaries with producers, and the fact that some products are bottled in Quebec, allows the SAQ to establish very attractive retail prices, which contributes to facilitating the mandate it has set for itself: to promote the art of drinking among Quebecers.¹⁰⁸

This excerpt shows how the importation of French wines, and their wide distribution thanks to low prices, seemed to transmit *de facto* the idea of *savoir-boire* to the population. In the summer of 1978, some twenty branch managers flew to Paris to complete internships with the wine merchant Maison Nicolas, at that time the largest retailer specializing in appellation and house brand wines in France.¹⁰⁹ That same year, the SAQ introduced six new house brands under French denominations of origin.

This cultural affiliation reflected not only Quebec's interest in France but also the latter's desire to expand its position as a leader in the global wine industry. The province was a favourable commercial site because of its French-speaking population and the absence of a well-established winemaking industry (both of which were untrue of Ontario and British Columbia). Already in 1954, the Comité Canadien des Vins de France was founded in Montreal, which forwarded the idea of a cultural link between France and Quebec through the consumption of wine.¹¹⁰ In 1974, the committee's secretary, Pierre Brassac, justified the importance of Quebec's market share of Canadian exports with reference to cultural arguments.¹¹¹ Two years later, he declared that the SAQ had "worked masterfully to promote wine consumption," recognizing that "the terrain was excellent."¹¹²

Acknowledging that the consumption of wine in Quebec remained occasional, Brassac nevertheless associated it with its French genealogy and, in so doing, inscribed the province in the continuation of French civilization. For the secretary, "the art of drinking [is a] subtle

art that Quebecers, by ancestral tradition, practice with happiness.”¹¹³ This reference to tradition naturalized popular drinking habits that were in themselves rather new.¹¹⁴ Thus, alongside gastronomy, French commercial agents participated in reinforcing a wine drinking tradition in the province through a discourse of cultural distinctiveness.¹¹⁵

Quebec-Made Wines

If the terrain appeared “excellent”¹¹⁶ for French representatives, the desire to popularize wine was also in line with the development of a local wine industry. Wine was not only a fruitful cultural symbol, but it also appeared to be a promising economic opportunity for a Quebec state engaged in nationalist policies. Referring to the success of the local spirits industry, in 1971, the Bourassa government wished to encourage the establishment of an industrial wine sector, despite the absence of commercial vineyards in the province.¹¹⁷ While Bill 47 maintained the SAQ’s privilege role as sole importer of finished wines, new industrial licenses were aimed at manufacturing wines from imported grapes and concentrated musts to supplant the lack of domestic supply.¹¹⁸ For the state, wine was a product of industrial rather than agricultural potential, mainly playing a macro-economic role in creating jobs, developing expertise, and using local dry materials. However, less than two years after the adoption of the SAQ’s constitutive law, a report presented to the minister of industry and commerce warned of Quebec wine manufacturers’ overcapacity.¹¹⁹

In the spring of 1978, the subject of wine came back to the forefront of political debates when then PQ minister of industry and commerce Rodrigue Tremblay presented Bill 21, which intended to allow the sale of certain wines in grocery and convenience stores. Taking up the arguments of the Thinel report, Tremblay added justifications that tied in with the major economic recovery themes of the late 1970s.¹²⁰ The legislation therefore departed from the original recommendation, which proposed the liberalization of all wines in all types of food stores and excluded non-independent grocers such as supermarkets. Moreover, wines sold outside the SAQ’s retail network could only be “Quebec wines,” which consisted then of all wines bottled in the province, including the SAQ’s house brands. The liberalization of wine retail sales was thus intended to provide new opportunities for the nascent manufacturing sector while supporting small independent businesses and assuring the SAQ’s profitability.

This was once again brought about politically as a logical continuation of the behaviour of modern Quebec society, in tune with “the normal evolution of humanity.”¹²¹

Bill 21 led to the resignation of the SAQ’s first president, Jacques Desmeules. Opposed to the new legislation,¹²² the former accountant was replaced by engineer Daniel Wermenlinger. Shortly after this nomination, the SAQ announced its intention to become “a growing source of revenue for the state.”¹²³ Moreover, Bill 21 led to greater accessibility for wine purchasers in terms of both proximity and longer store hours. In 1979, a strike at the SAQ lasting more than two months did not prevent Quebec’s population from buying wine. The new legislation also had a significant effect on the market shares of Canadian wines and imported bottled wines, which respectively decreased from a proportion of 10.8 percent to 1.9 percent and 57.3 percent to 33.5 percent from 1975 to 1980, at the benefit of Quebec’s manufactured wines and the SAQ’s house brands.¹²⁴ As such, the entry of wine into Quebec’s “cultural repertoire”¹²⁵ in the 1970s had much to do with the state’s economic and political orientations.

Conclusion

Between 1968 and 1978, the foundations for the commercial role that the SAQ was required to fulfill from 1971 onward were established. An official narrative of progress toward better collective drinking habits that came to be associated with Quebec’s wine consumption also emerged during this period. If the Thinel report’s recommendations did not call for the abandonment of state involvement in the alcohol trade, it did fuel a process of re-legitimization of public intervention. Curbing drinking habits remained central to the SAQ’s new mission, but the sale of alcohol no longer had to be severely restricted to prevent alcoholism; instead, the SAQ became a new profitable public service catering to and shaping a population able to make its own choices with regard to consumption. In this light, wine became the perfect vehicle, as evidenced by the early commercial activities of the SAQ and Quebec’s wine legislation. Wine was popularized as both a newly accessible consumer product and a hedonistic commodity, targeting a middle-class market that came to represent Quebec’s overall trajectory toward *savoir-boire*. By serving as an educational catalyst, it allowed the state-owned corporation to reconcile its dual goals of moderation and profitability. Drinking more wine in the 1970s there-

fore seemed to be inseparable from the idea of drinking better. This shift not only helped spread French gastronomic discourses and practices, but did so in a sociopolitical context marked by cultural and linguistic revindications, by injecting the object of wine with cultural and economic symbolism.

Moreover, the PQ's Bill 21 built on Bourassa's Liberal government's initiative of creating a local wine manufacturing industry and further placed wine within Quebec's economic agenda. At a time when most traditional wine-producing regions were increasingly orienting the sector toward quality wines, that is, of a claimed designated origin,¹²⁶ Quebec favoured the industrial production of table wine. Thus, the absence of commercial vineyards did not extinguish the desire to develop a wine industry in Quebec during this period, since wine not only appeared to be an economically viable endeavour but also tied in with a modern Quebec identity. Finally, by being constantly brought about as testimony to the province's vanguardism, wine liberalization fed the politically resonating narrative of Quebec's leading position with regard to alcohol policies. Interestingly, the recent legalization of cannabis in Canada, and its particularly restrictive regulation in Quebec compared to other provinces,¹²⁷ has shown that not all commodities can be as fertile in nationalist discourse as wine came to be in the early years of the SAQ.

MARIE-JOËLLE DUCHESNE travaille dans le milieu du vin depuis 2010. En 2022, elle complète une maîtrise en histoire à l'Université du Québec à Montréal portant sur l'évolution du mandat commercial de la Société des alcools du Québec, de 1971 à 1994. Elle s'intéresse plus particulièrement à la place qu'occupe le vin dans les discours de légitimation du monopole d'État et aux représentations identitaires rattachées à cette boisson.

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Endnotes

- 1 Catherine Dagenais, “Une histoire riche et un avenir prometteur,” 100 — *Le goût de partager*, special edition 1921–2021 (2021): 5.
- 2 Mylène Tremblay, “Le goût de partager depuis 100 ans [interview with Catherine Dagenais],” 100 — *Le goût de partager*, 75.
- 3 Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), 269; Marcel Martel, *Une brève histoire du vice au Canada depuis 1500* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2015), 142.
- 4 British Columbia followed only a few days later, while the Yukon introduced government-run liquor stores later that same year. Manitoba was next in 1923, then Alberta in 1924. Most other provinces followed during the second half of the decade, though Prince Edward Island was last in 1948. Heron, *Booze*, 270.
- 5 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 2006* (SAQ, 2006), 19.
- 6 Björn Trolldal, “The Privatization of Wine Sales in Quebec in 1978 and 1983 to 1984,” *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 29, no. 3 (2005): 413.
- 7 Quebec’s per capita consumption went from 5.91 litres in 1976 to 8.8 in 1980, a 49 percent increase, while Canada’s went from 5.73 litres to 8.03, a 40 percent increase. SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1980-81* (SAQ, 1981), 15.
- 8 Sharon A. Jaeger, “From Control to Customer Service: Government Control of Liquor in Ontario, 1927–1972” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2000), 384.
- 9 Though there is some disagreement over its start and end dates, this period of rapid change is generally associated with the election of the liberal government of Jean Lesage in 1960 and the subsequent consolidation of Quebec’s welfare state in the early 1980s. See Martin Pâquet and Stéphane Savard, *Brève histoire de la Révolution tranquille* (Montréal: Boréal, 2021), 16.
- 10 Pâquet and Savard, *Brève histoire*, 92.
- 11 Hubert Rioux Ouimet, “Entre réingénierie et continuité: réforme libérale des sociétés d’État québécoises et nationalisme économique (2003-2012),” *Revue Interventions économiques. Papers in Political Economy*, no. 44 (2012): 5.
- 12 For research focusing on its state-owned nature or role within the economic and political history of Quebec, see Michel G. Bédard, *Contexte de propriété et culture d’entreprise: le cas de la SAQ* (Boucherville: Gaëtan Morin, 1991); Pierre Godin, *La révolte des traîneux de pieds: histoire du syndicat des employé(e)s de magasins et de bureaux de la SAQ* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992); Daniel Surprenant, “Une institution Québécoise : La Société des alcools du Québec,” *Canadian Studies* 35 (1993): 27–52; Claude Boulay, “Les

politiques et pratiques commerciales québécoises en matière de boissons alcooliques dans le contexte du droit commercial international” (Master’s thesis, Université de Montréal, 2004); and Simon Tremblay-Pépin and Bertrand Shepper-Valiquette, *Du vin et des jeux. Le virage commercial de la SAQ et de Loto-Québec* (Montréal: Lux, 2019). For critical analysis of the SAQ’s commercial practices from a public health perspective, see Géraldine T. Quesnel et al., *L’évolution des pratiques commerciales de la Société des alcools du Québec* (Montréal: Institut national de santé publique, 2003); Andrée Demers and Madelyn Fournier, “The Proposed Privatization of the Québec Liquor Corporation: The Never-Ending Story,” in *Sober Reflections: Commerce, Public Health, and the Evolution of Alcohol Policy in Canada, 1980–2000*, ed. Norman Giesbrecht et al. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014): 129–49; and Annabelle Podlasiewicz, “Approche sociale versus approche clientéliste: analyse des campagnes publicitaires télévisées en matière d’alcool du Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux (MSSS), Éduc’alcool et la Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) entre 2012 et 2017” (Master’s thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2019).

- 13 Such as the previously cited magazine *100 — Le goût de partager*. For its sixty-fifth anniversary, a more substantial exercise was commissioned; see Robert Prévost, Suzanne Gagné, and Michel Phaneuf, *L’histoire de l’alcool au Québec* (Montréal: Stanké, Société des alcools du Québec, 1986).
- 14 Although Simon Tremblay-Pépin and Bertrand Shepper-Valiquette’s *Du vin et des jeux* covers the long history of the SAQ, the authors relied mainly on secondary sources for their historical investigation.
- 15 The SAQ’s retention schedule is restricted to a ten-year period and requests are frequently denied on the basis of “commercial secrecy.”
- 16 Surprenant, “Une institution Québécoise,” 37.
- 17 For an overview of this growing field, see Marie-Joëlle Duchesne, “‘Nous ne vendons pas des petits pois!’: Évolution du mandat commercial de la Société des alcools du Québec (1971-1994)” (Master’s thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2022), 21–33.
- 18 Mark Hailwood and Deborah Toner, *Biographies of Drink: A Case Study Approach to Our Historical Relationship with Alcohol* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 2.
- 19 Lionel Obadia, “Le ‘boire’,” *Socio-anthropologie*, no. 15 (2004): 42.
- 20 For a discussion of the pitfalls of writing about wine, see Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre, *Imperial Wine: How the British Empire Made Wine’s New World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), 18–22.
- 21 This distinction is not in itself specific to Quebec. In Ontario, wine production escaped prohibitionist agendas, leading to the growth of the wine industry. Andrea Laura Della Valle, “The Taste of Globalization:

- The Wine Industry of Ontario” (Master’s thesis, University of Windsor, 1996).
- 22 Demers and Fournier, “Proposed Privatization,” 129–30.
- 23 Although included in the legal definition of *wine*, which was then the “alcoholic beverages obtained by the fermentation of the sugary elements that fruits (grapes, apples, etc.), or other agricultural products (honey, milk, etc.) contain in their natural state,” cider does not appear in the 1921 *Loi concernant les liqueurs alcooliques* which leads to confusion in the following years as well as fines for Quebec cider producers. However, as Anaïs Détolle points out, it is not its production that was prohibited, but its sale and distribution outside the aegis of the CLQ and subsequently of the RAQ. Anaïs Détolle, “Vive le Québec cidre ! Le paysage social cidricole québécois: Une ethnographie alcoologique” (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2018), 102.
- 24 CLQ, *Premier rapport annuel de la Commission des liqueurs de Québec* (CLQ, 1922), 1.
- 25 Quoted in English in Heron, *Booze*, 278.
- 26 CLQ, *Premier rapport*, 7.
- 27 Quoted in Caroline Robert, “À qui la faute ? : Le second mouvement de tempérance et l’État au Québec” (Master’s thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2019), 77.
- 28 This “adequate and constant supply” included one bottle of Sherry, two white Bordeaux, two red Bordeaux and one Burgundy (no colour specified). CLQ, *Rapport annuel 1926*, 7.
- 29 Priscilla Plamondon Lalancette, “Histoire de la gastronomie québécoise: l’émergence d’une identité culinaire” (Master’s thesis, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 2020), 36.
- 30 Heron, *Booze*, 317. Wine sales mainly comprised fortified wines, which represented 81 percent of total wine sales in 1926. Prévost, Gagné, and Phaneuf, *L’histoire de l’alcool*, 202–9.
- 31 On April 13, 1961, the Liberal government of Jean Lesage sanctioned *La loi de la Régie des alcools du Québec*. The objective of temperance remained intrinsic to this second version, which rather intended to improve the dual nature of the public corporation in charge of commerce and surveillance. This reform also led to the opening of a new “semi-self-serve” branch in downtown Montreal (Place Ville-Marie), where shelves now faced customers even while remaining behind a counter. Prévost, Gagné, and Phaneuf, *L’histoire de l’alcool*, 126–37.
- 32 Lucien Thinel was assisted by accountant Marcel Bélanger and economist Otto Thur. Pierre-L O’Neill, “Une recommandation du rapport Thinel – La RAQ scindée en deux organismes,” *Le Devoir*, May 19, 1971, 1.
- 33 These included Manitoba’s Bracken Commission in 1955, Nova Scotia’s Rowe and New Brunswick’s Bridges Commissions in 1960, and Brit-

- ish Columbia's Morrow Commission in 1969. Jaeger, "From Control to Customer Service," 413; Greg Marquis, "A Reluctant Concession to Modernity': Alcohol and Modernization in the Maritimes, 1945–1980," *Acadiensis* 32, no. 2 (2003): 41, 45.
- 34 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcooliques*, 18.
- 35 Quote from Judge Lafontaine, president of an anti-alcohol association, during the 1912 Commission des licences de la province de Québec in Robert, " 'À qui la faute ?,'" 93.
- 36 This "malaise," appearing in the first subtitle of the report, also originated from the fact that despite the five-month strike, the population did not suffer from any major shortage of wine, owing to the clandestine network, which "everyone knew [about] it, or at least suspected." Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 16.
- 37 Québec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 38.
- 38 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 34.
- 39 Robert, " 'À qui la faute ?,'" 61.
- 40 François Ricard, *La génération lyrique: Essai sur la vie et l'œuvre des premiers nés du baby-boom* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992), 174.
- 41 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 34.
- 42 Doug Owram, *Born At The Right Time: A History Of The Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 309.
- 43 Between 1960 and 1970, the consumption of spirits increased by 43.8 percent, beer by 39.4 percent, and wine by 87 percent, while the population increased by 17.6 percent and personal disposable income by 98.5 percent. Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 151.
- 44 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 150.
- 45 Québec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d'enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 171.
- 46 Jean-Philippe Laperrière notes that recipes given to *Châtelaine* magazine's readers in the 1960s that required costly ingredients such as wine were met with criticism. One reader wrote to the editors in 1965: "You give us recipes with wine or calling for lots of whipped cream and other rich ingredients. Don't you think that the people who can afford these recipes usually have the money, the means and the knowledge to obtain them? But we, who can barely get out, can't use it." Jean-Philippe Laperrière, "Les normes alimentaires et la société québécoise: enquête

- sur le magazine féminin *Châtelaine*, 1960 à 2009” (PhD diss., Université du Québec à Montréal, 2021), 256.
- 47 Robert, “À qui la faute,” 91.
- 48 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 196.
- 49 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 150.
- 50 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 223.
- 51 Jocelyne Delage, *Gérard Delage, prince de l’humour et de la gastronomie* (Montréal: Graphéin, 1998), 287.
- 52 Association des hôteliers de la province de Québec, *Recommandations de l’Association des hôteliers de la province de Québec auprès de la Commission d’enquête sur le commerce des boissons alcooliques*. (Montréal: L’Association, 1969), 4.
- 53 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcooliques*, 58.
- 54 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcoolique*, 150.
- 55 Nicole Neatby, *From Old Quebec to La Belle Province: Tourism Promotion, Travel Writing, and National Identities, 1920–1967* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018), 176.
- 56 They also recommended to open two branches, one in Montreal and one in Quebec City, that would stay open at night and on public holidays, modelled on British Columbia’s initiative. Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcooliques*, 233.
- 57 Débat de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec [hereafter DANQ], *Deuxième session, 29^e législature* 11, no. 71 (July 18, 1971): 3332–33.
- 58 Pâquet and Savard, *Brève histoire*, 16.
- 59 Prévost, Gagné, and Phaneuf, *L’histoire de l’alcool*, 74.
- 60 Quebec (Province), *Rapport de la Commission d’enquête des boissons alcooliques*, 188–9. Repeated by Minister Garneau in DANQ, *Deuxième session, 29^e législature* 11, no. 71 (July 8, 1971), 3327.
- 61 DANQ, *Deuxième session, 29^e législature* 11, no. 71 (July 8, 1971), 3327.
- 62 Marquis, “Reluctant Concession to Modernity,” 31
- 63 Jaeger’s and Marquis’s studies stress, respectively, the incremental political culture in Ontario and the Maritimes’ cautiousness with regard to alcohol liberalization in the 1960s and 1970s. Jaeger, “From Control to Customer Service”; Marquis, “Reluctant Concession to Modernity.” In British Columbia, Dave Barret’s short-lived New Democrat government opted for significant and rapid reforms between 1972 and 1975, yet recommendations from the Morrow Report were not followed entirely. See Robert A. Campbell, “‘Profit Was Just a Circumstance’: The Evolu-

- tion of Government Liquor Control in British Columbia, 1920–1988,” in *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, ed. Cheryl Lynn Krasnick Warsh (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1993), 187.
- 64 Pâquet and Savard, *Brève histoire*, 28.
- 65 SAQ, “Rapport du président,” *Premier rapport annuel* (SAQ, 1972), 6.
- 66 Jaeger, “From Control to Customer Service,” 365.
- 67 Wine sales then included fortified wines such as Port, Sherry and Vermouth. The “Canadian Sherries” category held the biggest market share with 18.05 percent of total sales in 1972. SAQ, “Plan d’action pour l’année 1972” (SAQ, 1972), 3.
- 68 SAQ, “Plan d’action pour l’année 1972,” 2.
- 69 SAQ, “Plan d’action pour l’année 1972,” 13.
- 70 Jean-Luc Fernandez, *La critique vinicole en France: pouvoir de prescription et construction de la confiance* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 224.
- 71 Steven Shapin, “A Taste of Science: Making the Subjective Objective in the California Wine World,” *Social Studies of Science* 46, no. 3 (2016): 436–60.
- 72 Olivier Jacquet and Jocelyne Pérard, “Le développement inédit de l’œnologie au XX^e siècle,” *Territoires du vin*, no. 12 (2021), <http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/territoiresduvin/index.php?id=1939>.
- 73 These early columns were not devoted solely to wine but rather the broader subject of gastronomy. Wine columns would not appear until the early 1980s. Jacques Benoit, *Le vin... est une drogue!: mémoires d’un dégustateur passionné* (Montréal: Éditions La Presse, 2018).
- 74 *La Barrique*, April 1972.
- 75 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1977* (SAQ, 1977), 16–7.
- 76 SAQ, “Plan d’action pour l’année 1972,” 22.
- 77 SAQ, “Plan d’action pour l’année 1972,” 23.
- 78 Bédard, *Contexte de propriété*, 142.
- 79 For photographs taken inside two classrooms where the “Connoisseurs” were trained, see SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1975* (SAQ, 1975), 30. A similar snapshot displayed in the 1987–88 annual report shows a ratio of three women to three men (including the teacher). SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1987–88* (SAQ, 1988), 13.
- 80 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1987–88* (SAQ, 1988), 20.
- 81 As summarized by Jean-Luc Fernandez “one must drink well, but also not drink in ignorance of what one’s drinking.” Fernandez, *La critique vinicole en France*, 237.
- 82 “Les Boivin,” in *Encyclopédie artistique TV Hebdo 75* (Ville d’Anjou: Publications Eclair, 1975), 92.
- 83 “La Société des alcools du Québec, ses activités, ses nouvelles,” *La Barrique*, January 1974, 4.
- 84 Plamondon Lalancette, “Histoire de la gastronomie québécoise,” 39.

- 85 Douglas Jackson, *The Art of Eating* (1976), Office national du film du Canada, accessed October 2, 2021, https://www.onf.ca/film/art_of_eating/.
- 86 Roger Haden, “Lionizing Taste: Toward an Ecology of Contemporary Connoisseurship,” in *Educated Tastes: Food, Drink, and Connoisseur Culture*, ed. Jeremy Strong (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 240.
- 87 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1978* (SAQ, 1978), 17.
- 88 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1974* (SAQ, 1974), 17.
- 89 SAQ, “Jacques Desmeules, l’homme des concrétisations,” *L’Équipe* 5, no 1 (1978): 2.
- 90 Jean-Pierre Poulain, *Sociologies de l’alimentation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013), 201.
- 91 Haden, “Lionizing Taste,” 248.
- 92 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1975* (SAQ, 1975), 3.
- 93 Ministère de l’Industrie et du Commerce, “L’industrie du vin et du cidre au Québec,” Rafic Nammour (Quebec [Province], 1973), 78. In 1979, Quebec’s beer consumption was of 93.61 liters per capita, while the Canadian average was 83.43. SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1980-81* (SAQ, 1981), 15.
- 94 The legal drinking age was also lowered to eighteen years following the adoption of Bill 47. *La presse canadienne*, “L’âge d’être jeune n’est pas le même dans toutes les provinces,” *La Presse*, July 16, 1971, D15.
- 95 “La Société des alcools du Québec Honni soit qui mal y boit. (Publicité Québec) [ca. 1977],” hifichete, uploaded September 4, 2016, YouTube video, 00:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyheT2VG5nY>.
- 96 The italics indicate the change of accent of the actor who starts off with a slightly sarcastic French accent and then switches to a Quebec one. “La Société des alcools du Québec Honni soit qui mal y boit.”
- 97 Dominique Perron, “‘On est Hydro-Québécois.’ Consommateur, producteur ou citoyen? Analyse de la nationalisation symbolique d’Hydro-Québec,” *Globe : revue internationale d’études québécoises* 6, no. 2 (2003): 95.
- 98 SAQ, “Cuvée des patriotes,” *L’Équipe* 3, no. 4 (1976): 5.
- 99 Pâquet and Savard, *Brève histoire*, 150.
- 100 This brand was formally known as the generic “Bourgogne” one. It subsequently became a blend assembled in Marseilles of mostly Spanish, Italian and North African wines. Secor, *Pour une redéfinition du rôle de la Société des alcools du Québec: un rapport Secor préparé pour l’Association de l’industrie manufacturière des boissons alcooliques du Québec* (Montréal: Secor, 1982), 117–8.
- 101 “Société des alcools du Québec Cuvée des Patriotes (Publicité Québec) [ca. 1975],” hifichete, uploaded May 29, 2012, YouTube video, 00:29, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZKC5jATAFo>.

- 102 The gastronomical discourse emerging in the 1970s updated traditional Quebec cuisine according to the precepts of French “Nouvelle Cuisine” by lightening it up, refining its ingredients, and showcasing local produce. It is a discourse still relevant today. Plamondon Lalancette, “Histoire de la gastronomie québécoise,” 52.
- 103 Such as Labatt’s “He knows all about it” 1968 beer campaign featuring comedian Olivier Guimond, and Seagram’s 1974 whiskey ad “Quebecers know their whiskey.” See “Labatt 50 Lui, y connait ça! (Publicité Québec),” hifichete, uploaded October 2, 2011, YouTube video, 00:59, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxrzouZhn2o>; and *La Barrique*, January 1974, 28.
- 104 Ricard, *La génération lyrique*, 224.
- 105 Haden, “Lionizing Taste,” 248.
- 106 SAQ, “Relations commerciales,” *L’Équipe* 2, no. 3 (1975): 7.
- 107 Frédéric Bastien, *Relations particulières: la France face au Québec après de Gaulle* (Montréal: Boréal, 1999), 137.
- 108 SAQ, *Rapport annuel 1978* (SAQ, 1978), 16.
- 109 Leo A. Loubère, *The Wine Revolution in France: The Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 181.
- 110 Pierre Brassac, “Le marché des vins français au Canada,” *Revue de la chambre de commerce française au Canada*, no. 636 (June 1974): 7
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- 114 Catherine Ferland’s research on New France’s drinking practices shows that the high cost of wine made it a common beverage associated primarily with the upper classes, with popular wine consumption reserved for festive occasions and celebrations. Catherine Ferland, *Bacchus en Canada: boissons, buveurs, et ivresses en Nouvelle-France* (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 2010), 308.
- 115 For a thorough review of the influence of French chefs and gastronomes on Quebec’s gastronomical culture, see Plamondon Lalancette, “Histoire de la gastronomie Québécoise.”
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