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November 2, 2015

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New York wine guru Mark Oldman's billionaire wine tastings **A New York wine guru offers exclusive tastings of some of the** **world's finest tipples, writes Ellen Connolly.**

by **Ellen Connolly**

Ever wondered what a \$2000 bottle of wine tastes like?

Nab an invitation to wine guru and author Mark Oldman's ultra exclusive, wine-themed home in New York and you will find out. "It's a secret, luxe hideaway for drinking the world's most delicious and rare wines," Oldman says. "I created the space to be an escape from the velocity of life and give people the chance to taste wines they might never get to try."

Oldman hosts high-end Wine for Billionaires tastings for select groups, whisking them on a vinous tour of the world's finest bubbly and vinos in the luxurious surrounds of his large, loft-style apartment, in downtown Manhattan.

His home has received widespread publicity, including a feature in The Wall Street Journal, and is occasionally opened up for some of New York's most chic gatherings.

His Wine for Billionaires experience was created last year after he hosted events for audiences of 200-plus across the US, including at America's premier culinary event, the Aspen Food & Wine Classic.

As part of his seminar, titled "Wine for Billionaires – If Money Were No Object, What Should You Drink", the lucky guests were able to sample wines including 2006 Penfolds Grange, which retails for \$US750 (\$1020) a bottle.

"They were so popular that I decided to provide a similar experience at my Wine Sanctuary, but make it much more intimate," he says.

The events are for a maximum 12 guests, and so far have attracted an array of wine-curious business leaders, as well as celebrities, sports figures and art mavens. "I want to give people – whether wine-curious novices or full-out grape nuts – a once-in-a-lifetime experience to taste incredible wine in utterly unique and stylish surroundings," he says. "Drinking rare wine is singularly memorable – the anticipation, the heady dizziness at laying your lips on liquid few people ever get to taste."

Prices for the wine experience start from \$US2250 per person (minimum four people).



Wine expert and best-selling author Mark Oldman conducts exclusive Wine for Billionaires events in his luxury New York home.

As part of the package, guests begin the evening with a champagne reception, which is followed by a sit-down tasting of rare wine paired with food from New York's well-known Italian food and restaurant emporium, Eataly, including imported cheese and charcuterie.

Oldman also educates guests on topics such as "How to Drink Like a Pro", "Outsmarting the Sommelier" and "Secrets of Champagne".

Wines served at previous events have included selections from Oldman's personal cellar, including Joseph Phelps' Insignia, 50-year-old Dom Perignon, rare cuvees of Gaja Barbaresco and finely aged bordeaux.

The three-hour soiree ends with guests moving to an area which is designed in the style of an English gentleman's club, dubbed the Felony Room.

It features a cabinet filled with antiques and wine memorabilia, including bottles of wine from disgraced financier Bernard Madoff's collection bought for \$US1200 at auction. The FBI tag remains on one bottle.

There guests are served a special dessert wine from the 1800s. "Tasting wine that is more than 200 years old is something even many wine experts haven't done," Oldman says.

"In this age, where it's hard to switch off, my aim is to give guests an extraordinary transportive experience where they can forget for a while the mind-numbing banalities of life," says Oldman, whose parting gift to guests is a signed copy of his book, *Oldman's Brave New World of Wine*.