

## **2016 Bordeaux Vintage Assessment and Tasting Notes**



A Humming Vintage....

The mood in Bordeaux this week was nothing short of buzzing. The wines at many estates were shockingly good, and will probably be regarded as the new benchmark. I, for one, never expected to witness, so soon, a vintage that could broadly challenge 2010 for its class and elegance, and 2009 for its sheer voluptuousness. This truly could be a miracle vintage!

I say “could be” because one never knows how the maturation will develop. As Charles Chevalier of Chateau Lafite Rothschild reminded, as I was getting carried away after having just tasted his great range of wines, 'this is our new baby, we are all excited but we can't judge or predict too much at this stage'

No such restraint at Ducru Beaucaillou, proclaiming a vintage of Biblical proportions!

One of our favourite Bordeaux suppliers commented, “this is a great year...to be a negotiant!”

### **Vintage Characteristics**

At their best the red wines will be early drinking, but will also be extremely long lived. The tannin levels are very high, but they are often hidden under the beautifully textured satin-like palates. There is excellent, uplifting freshness contributing to the extraordinary length and finish. The result is elegant wines with extraordinarily classic, terroir-driven flavour profiles. Oh, and they are supple and seductive too!

It is often claimed that 2<sup>nd</sup> wines work well in very good vintages, this year that is clearly true and these wines will be relative bargains. In fact this is a year to buy everyday drinking wines, you will not have to wait too long to enjoy them, and the quality will be knock out. Wines such as the Chateau Lalande Borie from the Ducru Beaucaillou stable, on the western plateau of Saint Julien, or the well-

known Chateau Potensac in the northern extremity of the Haut Medoc, should be remarkable values.

All grape varieties performed well, though the sheer quality of the cabernet sauvignon may well ultimately define this vintage. The northern Medoc block of Saint Julien, Pauillac and Saint Estephe is undeniably great and could turn out to be their greatest vintage so far. There are many wines to commend, but for greatness, with an element of value, I must mention Leoville Poyferre, Pichon Lalande and Montrose, all probably the finest to date.

Heading further south on the left bank, the success is less pronounced and the quality differential favouring 2016 over 2015 is less convincing. Of course the 2015 wines from Margaux and Pessac Leognan were particularly fine and so this battle would be more even than further north. Chateau Margaux itself with 94% cabernet sauvignon was wonderful, Malescot Saint Exupery continues an excellent run, and Labegorce will be fantastic value choice. In Pessac Leognan, Haut Brion was so classic, reminding me of the 1998, a thought mirrored by Pascal Baratie, the vineyard manager, who compared the wines to those made in the late nineties.

The right bank will also be an interesting battleground for supremacy between these two fine adjacent vintages. Certainly 2016 has created some dazzling efforts, both Chateau Angelus and its 2<sup>nd</sup> wine, Le Carillon d'Angelus were the finest barrel samples I have ever tasted from this now first growth estate. In Saint Emilion I was also blown away by Canon la Gaffeliere and Troplong Mondot.

Pomerol also looks like a no brainer. The first wine I tasted at the Union des Grand Cru tasting at Chateau La Pointe markedly introduced a range that were more uniformly impressive than in 2015.

The dry whites were also attractive, but perhaps not quite at the very top levels. The dryer climate perhaps suits the sauvignon blanc variety over the semillon, Chateau Margaux's Pavillon Blanc which is 100% sauvignon blanc was particularly impressive.

### **Factors affecting the style of the vintage**

The combination of perfect sugar and phenolic ripeness is extremely rare in Bordeaux vintages. This is what stands out in 2016, giving that sense of mouth feel in the ripeness of the fruit, without excessive alcohol which often brings a heaviness.

The water reserves had been very well replenished with 50% more precipitation from January to mid-June than the 50 year average. This was a deflating start for the vignerons, with erratic growth and a slightly hampered flowering, after what had been an early bud break back at the end of March. However these reserves would prove a significant factor helping the vines on the best terroirs, with plenty of clay in their sub-soils, to deal with the drought conditions that followed. Almost no rainfall fell for three months. Significant rainfall did not arrive until the 13<sup>th</sup> September which gave very welcome relief, particularly to the younger vines. The second half of the growing cycle was the driest since the 2000 vintage.

Though dry, the heat was not overly excessive. The berries remained small but very plentiful, the potential sign of a great vintage. The sugar levels would remain lower than in the great years 2009, 2010 & 2015 with subsequently lower alcohol levels. This, along with unusually high diurnal temperatures, warm days and cool nights, would contribute to the freshness in the wines.

Other key factors include, the longest vegetative cycle on record and an open-ended Indian summer, in fact October was the driest since 1959!

The vignerons were allowed to pick ‘A La Carte’ as pronounced by the team at Chateau Angelus. Single plot vinification is a relatively new facility for the larger properties who have invested heavily in recent years. Weather permitting this allows much greater accuracy of ripeness across the vineyard than ever before. To quote Chateau Montrose as an example,

*“This year, even more precise selection of plots was carried out by an expanded team in the vineyard (90 pickers). In the cellar, each vat has its own identity and the custom vinifications allowed the extraction of the best potential from each of them. This ultra-precise work resulted in a large palette of 50 different lots for the blending.”*

There can be no doubt that the wealth in Bordeaux as you tour the vineyards is a reminder of the controversial pricing policies of the past, but equally you can see that much of this money has been re-invested and is pushing the boundaries of quality once again in Bordeaux.

### **Should we buy this vintage?**

There are many wines which I would like to buy for my own cellar, and like most of us, whether I do or not will depend on the release price.

There are many factors on which this is dependent. Will the Chateaux want to see such a potentially great vintage largely disappear into the market? One way to prevent this would be to increase the price. However this is a relatively large vintage so, if they are feeling generous, they may oblige with only a slight increase over 2015. Unfortunately the value of Sterling is significantly lower than for the 2015 primeurs, and so overall I suspect we could be looking at between 15-30% higher release prices than for the 2015's. Even at this sort of uplift many wines below the first growths will make good sense considering the market prices of bottled vintages.

We will of course be making our unbiased recommendations as the wines are released. Feel free to contact me for further thoughts and advice.

### **Will's Top 10 for Quality**

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Angelus	97-99/100
Lafite	97-99/100
Mouton Rothschild	97-99/100
Montrose	97-99/100
Leoville Poyferre	97-99/100
Pichon Lalande	97-99/100
Haut Brion	96-98/100
Leoville Lascases	96-98/100
Margaux	96-98/100
Pontet Canet	96-98/100

### **Will's Top 10 for Value**

Batailley	91-93/100
Grand Puy Ducasse	91-93/100
Talbot	92-94/100
Beauregard Pomerol	91-93/100
Branair Ducru	93-95/100
Reserve de La Comtesse	92-94/100
Carillon D'Angelus	92-94/100
Canon La Gaffeliere	95-97/100
Malescot Saint Exupery	93-95/100
Dame de Montrose	92-94/100

## **The Wines**

### **Carbonnieux Blanc**

Nice and open with freshness on the nose, white peach, ample texture on the palate, there is admirable acidity and tension too, I like this. Charismatic 90-92/100 *Drink 2019-2026*

### **Domaine de Chevalier Blanc**

A lovely rich tropical nose with banana, and a hint of 'cats pee' from the sauvignon blanc. There is saline in the mid-palate, nice balance with a mineral finish, long. 92-94/100 *Drink 2022-2030*

### **De Fieuzal Blanc**

Flecks of gold here, the nose is a touch vegetal with savoury asparagus, with fresh white pear, good texture, and an attractive tensile finish, citrus orange zest coming through. 90-92/100 *Drink 2020-2028*

### **Larrivet Haut Brion Blanc**

Ripe pear and peach with dried herbs on the nose, the palate is creamy with nice tension and grip, nice styling. Early drinker. 90-92/100 *Drink 2020-2028*

### **La Tour Martillac Blanc**

Tight nose, faint white peach with single cream on the nose. On the palate there is more tension and restraint than some at this stage, lacks a little breadth in the mid-palate, but finishes well. 89-91/100 *Drink 2020-2027*

### **Malartic La Gravieres Blanc**

Tight nose here, quite green, cool fruit on the palate, real saline tension here, lingers well nice salty finish, one to watch, palate is zinging. 91-93/100 *Drink 2022-2030*

### **Pape Clement Blanc**

There is a faint cloudiness to this sample, platinum hints too. The nose is tight with hints of acacia honey. The palate has fine texture but it is aligned with a pinpoint salinity in the mid-palate, tight but expressive with tropical hints on the finish, complex and quite lovely. 93-95/100 *Drink 2022 -2032*

**Pique Caillou Rouge**

Full plum colour, the initial palate has a slight menthol edge, mint too, lively silky fruit, generous, the oak is present here, toasty, good wine. Chocolate on the finish which holds well. *88-90/100 Drink 2022-2030*

**Pape Clement Rouge**

Nice deep purple depth, a lovely pure black fruit hit on the nose, minerally, earthy, cassis with a creamy flavour, solid mid-palate, this flows well, pin-point length, freshness too, elegant finish. Chocolate coming through on the back again. *94-96/100 Drink 2025-2040*

**Malartic Lagraviere Rouge**

Very deep colour here as per recent en primeurs. Aromas of black raspberries, gorgeous pure fruit, creamy, dense, the mid palate is calm and quite tight, dusty chocolate tannins lead you into a promising length. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2038*

**Larrivet Haut Brion Rouge**

Very deep plum. Concentrated elderberry on the nose, bramble too, impressive pure fruit style, very soft palate can hardly feel the tannins here but they are there teasing on the finish. Could be an excellent early drinker. *90-92/100 Drink 2022-2035*

**Haut Bergey Rouge**

Very deep colour, cassis and chocolate immediately oozing out, this has an open style, no holding back on the palate either, lots of fruit, quite light on the freshness, this is ripe and jammy, good value. *89-91/100 Drink 2022-2035*

**Latour Martillac Rouge**

Deep colour, more inky darker nose here, the palate is round and generous, the structure bursts through relatively quickly, more grip though extraction. I like the chalky styling, will live long. Toasty. *91-93/100 Drink 2024-2040*

**De Fieuzal Rouge**

Deep colour, black raspberry and menthol aromatics, pure fruit, nice creamy texture, quite fresh here too with a cool blue inky profile on the finish. Certainly composed and together with good length. *90-92/100 Drink 2023-2040*

**Domaine de Chevalier Rouge**

Very deep colour, open nose with impressively pure black fruit, confit concentration. This has great mouthfeel very composed and linear into the

structural attack which is substantial, but above all the ripeness is the defining component. Very long finish, excellent stuff. Could challenge the 2015. *93-95/100 Drink 2025-2045*

### **Carmes Haut Brion**

This has an impressively dark colour. Lovely ripe cassis, horse hair, inky too. Undeniable volume and great texture here, very ripe fruit, full blown style, less on the freshness and tension but long and very impressive. *92-94/100 Drink 2024-2040*

### **Carbonnieux Rouge**

Very deep colour, bright black fruit and earth on the nose, dark chocolate and inky notes too, this is fresh and supple, plenty of grip, open and exotic inky very composed, lots of oak here, charming. *90-92/100 Drink 2023-2040*

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### **At Chateau Angelus**

#### **Lanessan**

Fine deep colour, solid nose with plenty of open black fruits, nicely plump on the palate, the freshness comes through more than the tannin, good support. Bitter chocolate on the finish. *88-90/100 2024-2035*

#### **Clos Madeleine Grand Cru Saint Emilion**

The colour is impressive. Very deep chocolate, ink, perfume, impressive concentration too. Creamy mouthfeel but this is together and focussed, freshness, good spicy oak, flows well, this is the best since the excellent 2010. *90-92/100 2023-2026*

#### **La Bernadotte Haut Medoc**

Deep purple, the nose is full with good concentration, hint of damp cardboard with ripe plummy fruit. The palate is silky with powdery tannins, its nicely in proportion. There is an element of jamminess but overall a good effort. *88-90/100 2022-2030*

#### **De Pressac Grand Cru St Emilion**

Again the colour is deep, this shows good intensity, ample, round with powdery tannins. The fruit is at the front, ripe, the mid-palate is a tad hollow but this is a solid effort. *87-89/100 2023-2030*

### **Carillon de L'Angelus**

Very dark colour, the nose has impressive pure black fruit, lovely complexity, toast, tar and cedar. The palate has a tenderness, calm, ripe, very polished, I like the feel and weight. Good freshness, sits well, focussed, delicious balance. Long spicy finish. A wonderful second wine. *92-94/100 2023-2040*



### **Angelus**

Very dark purple, toasty oak, pretty much a solid block on the nose with formidable concentration. Inky black cassis underneath. The palate is impressive, this is supple, so ripe and gentle in the structure just coats the palate with creaminess, cool fruit, decadent liqueur-like, but so calm. The finish is laser-like, so well knit. This must be the finest barrel sample of Chateau Angelus I have ever tasted, and this could be the wine of the vintage. *97-99/100 2028-2050*

### **At Chateau Canon**

We were treated to the final blend but from different barrels, which revealed how the oak influences the profile of the wine. The Taransaud barrels gave much more sappy spice, the Saint Martin barrel was much more on the pure intensity of the fruit.

## **Canon**

74% Merlot 26% Cabernet Franc. Full plum, but not as deep as some, the nose is perfumed with a kirsch-like edge. Toasty oak. The palate is fresh with a coolness and ease to the fruit, very ripe with richness, a creamy polished palate, elegant with super length, oak again on the finish. The structure is almost completely covered up here. Tempered extraction, a fine and elegant example. 94-96/100 2025-2040



## **At Chateau Couspaude.**

An impressive array at the St Emilion UGC tasting at Chateau Couspaude. Drawing back on the memory of last year, this was a mixed bag of success with several wines leap-frogging, others didn't seem to show the fine-tuning of 2015.

## **Dassault**

Very deep colour as always. A ripe damson nose, with a blue inky slant, good intensity. The palate again is very ripe, very tasty long and delicious. There is backbone too, a solid start. 89-91/100 2024-2026

**La Dominique**

Good deep plum, this is lovely on the nose perfume, sweet black fruits, nice hint of spice this has stuffing and precision too. Very well balanced into the finish, with freshness and grip. New oak coming through. Dominique makes excellent modern wines. *91-93/100 Drink 2024-2036*

**Clos Fourtet**

Very deep colour, this is a bit tighter on the nose, red fruits, the texture is impressive with good grip, nice freshness, there is plenty of spicy structure, good styling. A long fine, if not knockout, Clos Fourtet. *93-95/100 drink 2026-2040*

**Franc Mayne**

Very deep colour. Lovely peachy freshness on the nose, and again the freshness comes through on the palate, the texture is generous, ripe medium extraction. This is showing well. *90-92/100 Drink 2023-2035*

**Grand Mayne**

Deep plum this is concentrated on the nose with a hint of bacon fat. A cool textured palate here, oaky with damson on the finish. It is showing extraction on the finish as always at Grand Mayne, needs a plenty of bottle age compared to some. Oaky. *90-92/100 Drink 2026-2040*

**Troplong Mondot**

Wow this is deep in colour! The nose is inky, tight and minty, dark chocolate, the fruit is dark but it is restrained. This is very creamy on the palate packed with ripe chunky, crunchy fruit, a sensuous calm but massive wine. The dimensions here are enormous. This is always heavy and extracted, but there is elegance here too in this vintage which works well for the bigger wines with the sensual side to the vintage. This style will not suit everyone, but I love it! Seamless, fabulous. Possibly the best ever for me. *96-98/100 Drink 2030-2050*

**Canon La Gaffeliere**

Very full colour. Lovely purity on the nose here, with elderberry, cassis and redcurrant. The palate has excellent cool fruit, great texture and precision. A really lovely effort here better than 2015. Shows how good this vintage can be in St Emilion. Very long. Amongst the finest I have tasted from this estate. *95-97/100 Drink 2025-2045*

## **At Chateau Beauregard**

A fine range at the UGC Pomerol tasting. There wasn't one wine which I wouldn't buy. These are unobtrusive gentle wines which will give huge pleasure and drink early.

### **Beauregard**

Nicely deep, savoury inky, sweet fruit too, nice freshness, very sweet fruit on the palate, nice cool entry and fans out well too. Quite delicious. 91-93/100 Drink 2024-2036

### **Bon Pasteur**

80% Merlot 20% Cabernet Franc. Very deep colour, peachy freshness on the nose fresh fruit pavlova, quite delicious. A refined palate, long and sleek, some heat and spice, fine volume. There is ace balance here, quite exceptional. 93-95/100 Drink 2024-2038

### **Clinet**

Very dark cassis and cream, smoky concentration. Lovely pure freshness to accompany the ripe dense palate, very oaky here too, it is a very good Clinet. There is volume and proportion with good grip and length. Certainly the best since 2010. 94-96/100 Drink 2025-2045

### **Croix de Gay**

Lovely deep plum, impressive concentration on the nose, sponge cake. Blueberry jam, a pure nose. The palate has cream and succulence, excellent cool freshness too, it keeps going and giving, super balance and just a great Croix du Gay. Oaky on the finish. Could be the best ever. 92-94/100 Drink 2024-2040

### **Gazin**

Full plum colour with red and black fruit concentration on the nose, sweet edge too white chocolate. The plate gives plenty of freshness along with a plump mid-palate, as always there is grip here too, rarely a light-weight. Settles in, dogged and fine. 93-95/100 Drink 2027-2045

### **Petit Village**

Inky nose oaky, concentrated. The palate is sensual and juicy, well framed with good volume in the mouth. Very good but just drops off a touch quicker than the finest in this range. 91-93/100 Drink 2025-2038

**La Pointe**

Good dark plum. Calm pure fresh nose with a soapy perfumed edge. The palate is cool and generous, with plenty of spice and ripe dusty tannins. Good depth and lots of grip. A good keeper. *90-92/100 Drink 2026-2040*

**At Ducru Beaucaillou**

Optimism is never is short supply at this most picturesque of properties, and this year was no exception. The style is glossy and extrovert, similar to the management. We tasted a couple of other lesser estates wines from the Borie range, Fourcas Borie and Ducluzeau, both from the Listrac commune, both very fresh and bursting with Bordeaux character.

**Lalande-Borie Saint Julien**

55% Merlot, 45% Cabernet. Nice deep colour, more merlot offers a ripe opulent entree, solid nose inky perfumed, horse hair, cool fruit, nice balance, nice shape, dusty spicy finish, really good Bordeaux character, and a relative bargain. *90-92/100 Drink 2022-2030*

**La Croix Ducru Beaucaillou**

Beautiful colour, lovely perfume, ink, lovely freshness here, great chocolate and vanilla flavour alongside the cassis, open but structured too quite delicious. Toasty finish. This just oozes quality for a second wine. *92-94/100 Drink 2024-2040*

**Ducru Beaucaillou**

85% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot. Very deep colour. The nose is again inky and perfumed, lots of cassis and dark chocolate. Refined and elegant, cedar, you

can sense the new oak, great freshness, lots of wood spice. The yields are quite low at 36/37 hl/ha, lots of tannin on the finish, 100% new oak. The component parts fit together so well, this is an exuberant wine, balance is extraordinary. This is being proclaimed by the Chateau as a truly great vintage, the pinnacle of a very good trio. Is it as good as the 2010? Only time will tell. *96-98/100 Drink 2030-2050*

### **At Chateau Leoville Lascases**

Lascases is in the northern extremity of Saint Julien and trends towards a darker more masculine character. Certainly the more opulent vintage style adds an extra detailing to this estate which has performed brilliantly.

#### **Potensac**

Very deep purple, the nose shows blueberry notes with oak and vanillin aromas. Rich and smoky too. The palate is seductive and sexy with an oaky spice laden mid-palate, this really sits well and unfurls into an exciting prospect for value seekers. *90-92/100 Drink 2025-2035*

#### **La Petite Marquise de Clos du Marquis.**

Deep purple. The nose offers a rich dark chocolate backdrop against the lovely bright blackcurrant fruit, on the palate as well as the nose. Fresh and vibrant. *89-91/100 Drink 2022-2030*

#### **Clos du Marquis**

Very deep lovely, cakey blueberry richness here on the nose, impressive intensity and depth. Equally impressive on the palate with lots of spicy cedar, plump generous fruit, it all draws into a tight but charming finish, a really excellent Clos du Marquis this year. *92-94/100 Drink 2024-2040*

#### **Le Petit Lion du Marquis de Las Cases**

Fine dark ruby red colour, the vibrancy of the terroir comes through here, very bright with confit de blackcurrant, so fresh with lots of generosity nice effort. Quite long. *91-93/100 2021-2036*

#### **Leoville Lascases**

Very dark robe, elegant perfume, pinpoint, nuanced, some smoke, great precision of liqueur-like black cassis There is a fineness to the tannins, the acidity keeps it going long into the finish, rounded and ample, this is very individual, the term 'iron fist in a velvet glove comes to mind'. A splendid Lascases, reminds me of the 1985. *96-98/100 Drink 2030-2060*

## **At Chateau Palmer**

Now 100% bio-dynamic, the roller-coaster growing season, brought considerable challenges to the Palmer estate. They unfortunately lost 20% of the crop to mildew and it could have been a lot worse.

### **Alter Ego de Chateau Palmer**

Very dark colour. The nose is very concentrated, grilled bacon and lots of black cherry. It is a little cold partially due to the cool temperature in the cellar at 9am, my glass had condensation. The palate still showed a lovely rich flavour of black fruits, with plentiful dusty tannin on the finish, long fresh and polished. Really good wine, very pure and precise. *92-94/100 Drink 2023-2034*

### **Palmer**

Almost black here. Very deep, perfumed nose with hints of Turkish Delight. Smoky reticence, restrained elegant nose, the texture is very impressive, this is always seductive and sexy, this year it was literally drinkable, great charm, long and very fine. Peppery tannins. *94-96/100 Drink 2026-2045*

## **At Chateau Latour**

Chateau Latour does not participate in the en primeur process these days but we are still encouraged (thankfully) to taste the new wines, along with their latest releases.

### **Les Forts de Latour**

Super deep colour, a full enticing powerful nose with mint and perfume, very pure, this has freshness with plenty of body, lots of spice from the oak, tense and mineral. Lovely texture already, fine 'matiere'. A superb potential. *94-96/100 Drink 2028-2045*

### **Latour**

Very deep, almost black, this has a lovely richness of the sweet cedar and violets, perfumed, elegant, the texture again is the defining element with the spicy powdery tannins, so soft and delicate and round but serious, the length is striking. This isn't going to stray too far, always on line and so well integrated. *96-98/100 Drink 2030-2050+*

## At Chateau Pichon Lalande



The view from the tasting room at Chateau Pichon Lalande must be the best in Bordeaux, looking out towards the river across the vineyards of Chateau Latour. Maybe this boosted my taste buds as the wines showed magnificently!

### **Reserve de La Comtesse**

Great depth of colour again, lovely perfumed cabernet nose, gentle but elegant, very lush here, the fruit is sweet and calm, nice and toasty with a spicy finish long and impressive with continued sweetness. You will not have to wait to long to enjoy this beauty. *92-94/100 Drink 2023-2035*

### **Pichon Lalande**

Very impressive colour, this is a lovely, complex, fruit dominated nose, layered and sexy, minty with a delicate feminine style, the palate sings too very charming and rounded, seamless with an excellent freshness in the core of the fruit, gently rising into the toasty finish, this isn't big and burly at all. It is well endowed certainly but above all it is polished and it is very fine. I didn't taste the 1982 from cask but I have had it a couple of times from bottle, and somehow that is the vintage which it reminds me of. Cool fruit lots of gentle cedar, vibrant lovely balance, really classic Bordeaux flavour. I will buy a case of this for sure! *97-99 Drink 2028-2055*

## At Chateau Talbot

The generic Saint Julien tasting is always one to look forward to, somehow it defines the strength of the vintage in the Medoc. These wines are dead centre, not too flashy, not too austere. The 2016 line up showed brilliantly. There wasn't one disappointment in this room.

**Talbot**

Deep colour, quite a tight toasty nose with a hint of tapenade. Nice tension on the palate, there is a lovely balance with composed fruit and well integrated tannins, a peachy freshness too on the solid finish. This is a very fine Talbot. *92-94/100 Drink 2023-2042*

**Gloria**

Deep purple, tight and closed, clean, perfumed spicy oak, nice and dense on the palate, tight into the linear finish this is quite controlled with sure-footed finesse. Will need time to unravel and live long. *91-93/100 2027-2045*

**Beychevelle**

Deep core, but not as deep as its neighbours. Open nose, lots of fresh blueberry, perfumed sweet oak, impressive concentration, nice tight grain, broad, complex fruit, this has strength and verve. Cool fruit, textured, the tannins are ripe. Long and poised. A fine Beychevelle for sure. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2038*

**Lagrange**

Nice deep colour, an almost port-like violet infused nose, blackcurrant confit too. Lovely cool fruit on the palate there is shape and size here it carries well just a tad disintegrated at this stage compared to the best in the commune. *91-93/100 Drink 2025-2040*

**Langoa Barton**

Bright deep colour, blue fruits, elegant clean nose, this is quite tight and saline, lots of new oak coming through at the moment cappuccino, toasty. There is a little less generosity and stuffing than some at the moment but the gap could close with a little more time. Long on the finish *90-92/100 Drink 2026-2040*

**Branaire Ducru**

Very deep here, the nose is composed, sweet berry on the red side, ripe even raisin, with a fresh peachy edge, lovely silk, very ripe tannins, polished this is tight pure and precise very long finish a really good Branaire this year. *93-95/100 Drink 2027-2045*

**Gruaud Larose**

Good deep colour, gorgeous open nose, perfumed great purity and richness, lots of fine 'matiere', plump sexy and above all fresh this is less extracted than in recent years, very attractive. *93-95/100 Drink 2025-2045*

**Saint Pierre**

Lovely deep plum, touch of cafe cream, perfumed, quite tight, cool fruit, tight, salty fine-grained tannins on the impressive dusty finish. Long and oaky. Very good future. *91-93/100 Drink 2027-2045*

**Leoville Barton**

Nice depth as expected. The nose is elegant and powerful with an undercurrent of complex layered red and black fruits. Hints of Turkish Delight again, the palate is very sexy and polished, the tannins don't appear in the frame for a couple of seconds fixing you into a long, fine-grained spice-filled finish. Super stuff, big longevity as always but this very charming too. *95-97/100 Drink 2028-2050*

**Leoville Poyferre**

Wow the colour is awesome, this is tight on the nose with a touch of wood sap, baked bread, dark chocolate, this more on the dark side, grilled, the texture is ridiculous, so concentrated yet so soft, the tannins are incredibly polished, the fruit is pinpoint, finishes with a long toasty nonchalant finish, reminds me of the 2010 but more sex appeal. *97-99/100 Drink 2025-2050*

**At Chateau Batailley**

Pauillac is where potentially cabernet sauvignon reaches its apogee. Another extremely consistent range.

**Batailley**

85% cabernet sauvignon 12% merlot 3% petit verdot. Classic Bordeaux aromas here, cedary, earth edged, a very cool polished palate with nice tension and freshness and toast on the finish. The flavour is excellent. *91-93/100 Drink 2024-2035*

**Grand Puy Ducasse**

Nice and deep, inky perfume, nice texture and salty minerality, this is always powerfully endowed could be a winner this year, with the silk-edged palate. Long and impressive. A keeper. *91-93/100 Drink 2026-2040*

**Grand Puy Lacoste**

Nice full plum, the bright kirsch-edged fruit comes through on the nose pure strawberry as well, cool sweet edged, polished with an admirable light delicate touch. Sits nicely, cigar box on the finish. A well-constructed, concentrated Grand Puy Lacoste, balanced and mineral laden. *93-95/100 Drink 2025-2040*

### **Haut Bages Liberal**

Lovely bright strawberry fruit with a cool vibrancy, generous with excellent citrus freshness which lifts the palate, again a light touch. The oak comes through and the salty mineralogy is noticeable, a long and fine Liberal. *91-93/100 Drink 2024-2035*

### **Lynch Moussas**

A bright high toned nose, fresh fruit salad, raisin, lovely concentration and purity. The texture and oak are prominent, this is lively with subtle extraction. An easy going Lynch Moussas that will make many friends. *90-92/100 Drink 2024-2035*

### **Lynch Bages**

Very deep colour. The nose is impressively deep in colour with dark chocolate and dark berry but there is a fresh lift too ripe concentrated and very enticing. The palate follows. There is a formidable minerality and spice to the silky blacked edged fruit, this is sophisticated and powerful but seductive too could be one of the vintages highlights. *96-98/100 Drink 2030-2050*

### **Pichon Baron**

Higher-toned than Lynch Bages, not quite as full coloured either, though still extremely dark. Floral, perfumed, nice elderberry. Hint of mocha, above all fresh on the nose, lovely texture again this has a great mid-palate too. Layered some savoury with cedar, cigars and toast of the exceptionally fine finish. More elegant than Lynch, not as powerful. It would be splitting hairs to say which is better. *95-97/100 Drink 2028-2050*

### **Pichon Lalande**

Tasted for the second time, first time at the Chateau. More aligned to Baron than Lynch, all tasted side by side. On the nose again incredibly sensual and mineral here doesn't stray. Long fine and already very impressive. This has another gear. *97-99/100 Drink 2028-2060.*

### **Orme's de Pez**

42% Cabernet Sauvignon 52% Merlot 5% Cabernet Franc 1% Petit Verdot. Great colour in Saint Estephe this year. The nose is packed with supple, fresh fragrant fruit. Black raspberries, the volume is very round the structure well behind. Impressive stuff. *90-92/100 Drink 2013-2034*

## At Chateau Pontet Canet



A unique visit, and one which is often mentioned not just because of the exhilarating wines. The lunch is second to none on offer on the tour, and the cheese table is unbelievable. Unfortunately we were short of time and so could not fully appreciate it. We also failed to spot the vintage on the Pontet Canet served blind with lunch. Suffice it to say that the 2007 was showing rather well, I am sure it foxed a few others too.

This estate, after more than a decade of bio dynamism, has a naturally low yield without the usual green harvest carried out by most properties. 34hl this year. The wines appear to have taken on a serene power.

### **Pontet Canet**

Very full colour, seductive nose, vibrant freshness. Lots of cassis liqueur, white chocolate, blackcurrant confit. A powerful, dense, rich palate, it zings on the finish with hints of menthol. The blackcurrant sweetness is very impressive. The palate is very dusty. Great minerality. There is perhaps more concentration here than many wines in Pauillac, could be the low yield. This will certainly be up there vying for top spot in the commune. Alfred Tesseron's 40<sup>th</sup> vintage, it is unbelievable what has been achieved at this property, and with the new facilities due for completion soon, it is difficult not to see the quality of the wines at first growth level, now and going forward. *96-98/100 2027-2055*

## **Pym Rae 2016, Napa Valley**

This is a new property recently bought by the Tesson's, a little brother for Pontet Canet. Super cassis, the palate is calm and lovely with a toasty finish, impressive stuff nice texture certainly tannins are prevalent on the finish coating the palate. Plenty of concentration and elegance.

## **At Mouton Rothschild**

### **D'Armailhac**

The nose is perfumed and a little sappy with sweet wood and a hint of mint. The palate is immediately juicy and fresh, with silky red-toned fruit and spicy tannin. Elegant with good tension on the finish quite long. A fine D'Armailhac. *91-93/100 Drink 2025-2040*

### **Clerc Milon**

This is dark in colour. Lovely fruit salad here, richer than the D'Armailhac, really delicious kirsch-like nose. On the palate there is volume, a solid mid-palate with a salty concentration. The texture is impressive, there is great power and minerality. Really excellent this year. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2040*

### **Petit Mouton**

Good deep colour, fresh fruit, Turkish Delight keeps popping up. Wood smoke, sweet fruit on the nose, elderberry. There is strength and grip on the palate with silk too, substantial proportion and super length. Dusty, spicy. Certainly a fine Petit Mouton. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2050*

### **Mouton Rothschild**

Lovely depth, glycerine on the glass, cedar, wood smoke, strawberry jelly, relatively tight on the nose, nothing out of place. The palate is silky and velvety with awesome power in the tension. Leaves it slightly four square compared to some, which is often the case en primeur. The minerality is impressive. Tightly wound with an exceptional toasty length. Not a hair out of place, very polished and accomplished. The finest since 2010. We will have to wait 5 or six years to see if it can stand up to it from bottle. *97-99/100 Drink 2030-2060*

### **Aile D'Argent**

Lemon meringue mineral, asparagus, hint of cats pee, great refresher on the lemon curd tinged fruit, calm and persistent. Attractive forward style. *91-93/100 Drink 2022-2030*

## **At Chateau Cos D'Estournel**

The tasting room along with all the facilities at Cos is outstanding, it is a real treat to visit this property.

### **Goulee**

Bright fruity nose, good rich jammy palate with plenty of density and ripe tannins good length. A really good Bordeaux for everyday drinking. *88-90/100 Drink 2023-2030*

### **Pagodas de Cos**

Full colour. The nose is perfumed with dry earth and wood smoke over raspberry, this is lovely and creamy open with spicy nuances, it does drop off a little, but certainly a calm and pure Saint Estephe. *90-92/100 Drink 2024-2032*

### **Cos D'Estournel**

Nice and deep, sweet oak, open and vibrant, perfumed, lovely and cool, seems a little less tightly knit than some on the mid-palate, but moves towards restraint on the finish. Certainly no lack of the vintages texture and fresh too. The tannins are very spicy ripe and plentiful. Polished. Will need plenty of cellar time. *93-95/100 Drink 2027-2050*

### **Cos D'Estournel Blanc**

Quite pale, the nose is opulent with plenty of mango and lime, the palate is round and mellow then grips with saline tension. Long and pure. Delicious. *91-93/100 Drink 2022-2030*

## At Chateau Calon Segur



Another property in the midst of development, with building work well underway. The new cellars have been in operation since the 2016 harvest. With more than double the number of vats now available, made to measure wine-making is now underway, and the property is proud to pronounce one step forward in terms of quality as a result. The wine speaks for itself.

The very engaging general manager Laurent Duffau explained that there is a real drive going on at Calon. A program of replanting to a higher vine density and to generally reduce the merlot production across the vineyard would be key factors. Laurent explained that Eric Boissenot, the ultra-famous consultant winemaker had proclaimed that he had never previously witnessed such a potential in the young wines of Saint Estephe, the sheer balance was extraordinary.

### Capbern

52 cabernet sauvignon, 46% merlot, 2% petit verdot. Lovely open fragrance, touch animal, plenty of fruit on the nose. The palate is equally endowed, with generosity and a lovely fresh spicy uplifted finish, long. *90-92/100 Drink 2023-2040*

**Le Marquis de Calon Segur**

55% merlot 45% cabernet sauvignon. Lovely deep cassis coming through, lovely gentle expression of merlot over cabernet. The palate is a little less knit than some but very ripe and dusty. *90-92/100 Drink 2023-2032*

**Calon Segur**

60% cabernet sauvignon, 18% cabernet franc, 20% merlot, 2% petit verdot. Deep colour, the nose is perfumed with a savoury edge, dry grass, and leather, still quite restrained. This is lovely and plump on the palate, fat again, the supporting acidity just sits underneath, allows it to be held in the mouth for ages, really fine result. Great balance. The quality of the cabernet franc crop was deemed of such high quality that 100% went into the first wine this year. *95-97/100 Drink 2028-2045.*

**At Chateau Montrose****Tronquoy Lalande**

Very dark. I really like the perfume and the texture. Quite loose-knit but it gives a big personality for its classification, certainly worth a thought in this vintage. *89-91/100 2022-2032*

**Dame de Montrose**

Nicely deep, lifted earthy nose with leathery notes, boot polish even, the perfume coming through, lots of expression here, the fruit is very ripe, with a beautiful freshness, the finish initially gentle then fans out with dusty length. This is excellent this year. *92-94/100 Drink 2023-2035*

**Montrose**

Very deep, there is a savoury edge here, dry grass, bacon, with undeniable black fruit in there too, the boot polish hints less pronounced than on the Dame, but still noticeable. This is exceptionally complex on the nose, the palate has salted chocolate, and this is just profound, the minerality is so apparent giving it an enormous length. There is a liqueur-like polished component. This is all so well tied in too. Just phenomenal, probably as good as the 2010. It soars. Wow! *97-99/100 Drink 2026-2055*

## At Chateau Lafite



An impressive range here, there were quite a few votes for Lafite potentially being wine of the vintage. Duhart will certainly be a good value especially as prices have been curbed back in recent vintages.

### **Duhart Milon**

Great deep colour, soy, irony inky-edged nose, lovely perfume, touch of earth and black cherry, the initial impact is salty minerality, this quite tight knit with plenty of fine grained spicy tannins, the oak is apparent too, white pepper, this is a big traditional style seems to lack a little of the plumpness of some, quite linear with plenty of muscle and power. That is Duhart... *93-95/100 Drink 2030-2045*

### **Carruades de Lafite**

Great colour again, maybe not quite as deep as Duhart alongside. This has a higher-toned nose with more fresh fruit. The palate is very sensual, the attack is substantial but in good time, leaving a lovely lick of toasty oak and black pepper spices. Certainly the finest Carruades since 2010. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2035*

### **Lafite Rothschild**

This is almost black, calm on the nose, restrained elegance, the fruit underneath is really pure and static, pure and regal. The palate has tremendous proportion so well endowed with positive fruit bulging at the seams, the polished dusty tannins come crashing through on the finish, leaving the palate buzzing, the feel is brilliant classic cabernet reminds me of the 1996, will need some time. *97-99/100 Drink 2035-2055*

## At Chateau Margaux



*“All through the summer, with every passing day, we felt a little more excited at the thought of a great new vintage taking shape...”*

Commentary at Chateau Margaux was very positive but there was a feeling that it would be difficult to live up to the quality of 2015.

I guess traditionally second wines *raison d’être* was to help re-enforce the quality of the first wine, but the recent introduction of the third wine (for the 2010 vintage) has now revealed the Chateau’s intention to give Pavillon de Margaux more of a semblance of the style of the first wine. To that end there is a lot less Merlot in the blend than there perhaps would have been a few years ago. Only 13% this year in the Pavillon and only 2% in Chateau Margaux. This is a great cabernet vintage and so I guess it is not surprising to see high proportions, but there is intent to reduce the significance of merlot at Chateau Margaux.

Interestingly Monsieur informed us that despite people's assumptions that the merlot in the blend gives the supple charm for which Chateau Margaux is noted, in fact, this has always come from the quality cabernet plots.

### **Pavillon Rouge du Chateau Margaux**

Only 26% of production. The nose has a lovely delicate touch so deliciously perfumed, that Turkish incense coming through again. Some meaty notes possibly bacon fat, the freshness comes through immediately almost green apple, succulent, quite powerful and tensile into the finish. Good silk, really like the linear style classic with good structure. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2036*

### **Chateau Margaux**

Deep plum bit less than most, the nose is rocking, open with mint and sweet cedar, vanillin, red fruits just there, again the acidity is prominent, juicy plump, this is 1996 like in its purity, very long and sleek. The tannins are quite hidden, very fine grained. The length is very impressive. It is so tight and together, so tightly wound, so much intrigue. Wonderful. *96-98/100 Drink 2028-2050*

### **Pavillon Blanc du Chateau Margaux**

Not giving a lot on the nose, no 'cats pee', touch of honey, this has great freshness with a superb minerality. This will be age-worthy for sure. Salty margarita on the finish which lingers for several seconds. A very fine Pavillon Blanc. *92-94/100 drink 2023-2035*

### **At Chateau Kirwan**

A flying visit to Chateau Kirwan revealed a good range without the highlights of 2015. Certainly this is a good vintage for the appellation and very consistent too.

### **Angludet**

Quite deep, the nose is quite reserved, with some earth and tapenade. The palate is soft and generous with a plump mid-palate. An easy, calm finish with toasty notes. *89-91/100 Drink 2024-2034*

### **Labegorce**

Quite deep, full black fruit, lots of sweetness and spice with it plenty structure good future here a medium full extraction, the mellow fruit still fronts. Always good value, no exception this year. *89-91/100 Drink 2022-2030*

**Lascombes**

Very deep colour, the sweetness of bacon fat with essence of black cherry. This is very concentrated, very silky, with lots of stuffing, and plenty of grip. A very good future. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2040*

**Malescot Saint Exupery**

Very deep again, Black Forest Gateau on the nose, more on the fruit here, lovely concentration, excellent freshness, very polished and ripe, this is a fine Malescot. The length is full of dusty spicy tannins, but gentle extraction. This is a great chateau, the roll continues. *93-95/100 Drink 2025-2045*

**Rauzan Segla**

Very deep colour, bright fruit salad on the nose, nicely pure. The palate is soft and reasonably endowed, plenty in the mid-palate. There is a big structure here, which protrudes a little more than Malescot for instance. Finishes long. *92-94/100 Drink 2030-2045*

**Prieure Lichine**

Nice depth, solid black fruit on the nose, not yielding very much, touch of black pepper, round with a medium full texture, the tannins are quite full, this is more obviously structured, medium full extraction. Certainly powerful, could be excellent, time will tell. *90-92/100 Drink 2026-2042*

**Marquis de Terme**

Deep purple, this is nicely composed not too open but pure fruit. Slight strawberry jam hint, this has the texture, round and plump with a good spicy finish and minty remnants. Good this year. This performed very well in London for the re-visit to the 2014 wines. An exceptional value these days. *91-93/100 Drink 2024-2040*

**Brane Cantenac**

Full colour. Solid pure nose good concentration of black fruit. This is very silky, with lots of bramble-edged fruit. Less obvious extraction a very good success from a noted property. *92-94/100 Drink 2026-2040*

**Kirwan**

Good depth, calm on the nose not overly expressive, but clean and focussed. Good silk and precision lovely mid palate, tension in the finish. I like this. *91-93/100 Drink 2025-2038*

## **Giscours**

Very deep colour, the nose is tight again, linear dark fruit profile. It sits well on the palate with plenty of silk, and balancing cassis tinged structure. All in line here. Certainly a very good Giscours, very rarely off the pace these days. 92-94/100 *Drink 2027-2042*

## **Du Tertre**

This is always a slightly lighter in colour, on two of the highest gravel plots in Margaux. Calm nose this has a nice plump palate, bramble, creamy, certainly good toasty finish. 90-92/100 *Drink 2024-2032*

## **At Chateau Haut Brion**

We always seem to end up here or start here, I guess that is because of its proximity to Merignac airport. It is always a masterclass, now even more so with the recent introduction of the Quintus wines, which are continuing to improve.

## **Dragon de Quintus**

90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. Good full plum, nice wood smoke and floral notes, touch of fig, lovely cool fruit here spicy, quite open but there are lots of dusty tannin too on the finish, peppery very good. 90-92/100 *Drink 2022-2030*

## **Quintus**

70% merlot, 30% cabernet franc. Very deep again, nicely open nose, spicy nose, fresh fruit, the texture is lovely so satiny, there is lovely merlot minerality, lively spice on the edges really enjoyed this. 93-95/100 *Drink 2025-2040*

## **La Chapelle de la Mission Haut Brion**

35.5% merlot, 22.5% cabernet franc, 42% cabernet sauvignon. Very deep colour, impressive concentration and freshness on the nose, minty, deep black fruit, this is very well endowed with beautiful lime edged freshness supporting the dense ample palate, there is a big block in the middle which will take some time to unravel, very attractive. The minerality here is vivid too. Toasty. 92-94/100 *Drink 2025-2036*

## **Le Clarence de Haut Brion**

51.3% merlot, 13.1% cabernet franc, 33% cabernet sauvignon, 2.6% petit verdot. Very deep here bit of dark tar on the perfume nose, this again is quite tight and seamless, the freshness uplifts again, dusty ripe, peachy, mint, quite foursquare compared to the Chapelle. Tightly wound. 91-93/100 *Drink 2025-2040*

**La Mission Haut Brion**

57.5% merlot, 42.5% cabernet sauvignon.

Great depth, impressively open perfumed rose petal nose, with mint and wood smoke, excellent density and volume the palate it is seamless again and rides on the acidity, into the toasty mineral tannic finish. Very long and very fine. 95-97/100 *Drink 2030-2050*

**Haut Brion**

56% merlot, 6.5% cabernet franc, 37.5% cabernet sauvignon. Almost black. Tighter on the nose than La Mission Haut Brion, the palate is so well knit, almost impenetrable but there are flecks and nuances here, powerful wine, solid core, the texture is undeniable. Maybe a bit forced but the tannins are ripe, it can take it the wood will integrate, Szechuan pepper at the sides of the mouth. Wow reminds me of the 1998 vintage, monolithic. 96-98/100 *Drink 2030-2060*

**La Mission Haut Brion Blanc**

Salty nose limes, this is big with great lines housed in, long on the finish less tropical than the Clarte. Great minerality. 93-95/100 *Drink 2024-2035*

**Haut Brion Blanc**

Tad sweeter on the nose than the La Mission Blanc, there is a bit more cool fruit on the palate here and some tropical flavours, sleek and wound, long on the finish very good this year. 94-96/100 *Drink 2026-2040*

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Best Regards

Will Gardener

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