
NICKOLLS AND PERKS

Independent Wine Merchants

2017 Bordeaux Vintage Assessment and Tasting Notes



Back to the future...

The 2017 Bordeaux Vintage may ultimately be remembered as the year of the frost. Visiting the Pessac Leognan and St Emilion regions back in early May we saw the physical and mental damage first hand. Beyond those who were hit hardest there was a palpable communal grief, which came through in much of the written and spoken commentary during this year's Primeur visits.

Devastating as the events of 27th & 28th of April were, it was plain and heart-warming to see the joy and relief amongst many Bordeaux vigneron, as the onward growing season had been kind, and the results of their graft, determination and skill had provided a vintage probably way beyond their expectations back in the spring.

They say great vintages taste great throughout their lives and 2017 will be in this camp. But they also say great vintages are 'inheterogeneous' or consistent. This was a complex vintage analysis and eventually, I would not class 2017 as a 'great' vintage. It is more likely a very good one which offered many pleasant surprises but also disappointments. It may of course continue to put on weight but in general it lacks the proportion and concentration of the great vintages in recent years, 2005,2009,2010,2016. However, it does have supreme elegance and the charm it will bring may actually bring more personal pleasure than the power of the so called great vintages.

The style of the vintage

The first property we visited this year was Chateau L'Eglise Clinet in Pomerol. From the off with some of these 100% Merlot wines it was quite apparent that 'silk' was a word which would reverberate through this vintage. Another, perhaps even louder, would be 'freshness'.

Before long, as we toured the right bank there was a sense of remarkable, lifted aromatics, very commendable grip and length of classic Bordeaux flavour on the palate. Cheval Blanc (94-96/100), one of the early front runners, was just gorgeous. Beautifully perfumed with a superb sensual profile. Quinault L'Enclos (91-93/100) tasted just prior in this flight of three was similarly opulent and generous, and revealed in abundance this vintage's hallmark of early approachability.

In fact the tannin levels were generally lower than in the previous two vintages, but they were also ripe giving a dusty coating on the finish, which along with the considerable acidity levels helped craft an overall feeling of tension and precision, long and sleek, rather than broad and heavy.

Despite the forward drinking profile, many 2017's will be long-lived particularly those with natural extraction. Unfortunately there were estates which didn't avoid the trap of forcing extracting just a little too much resulting in harder coarser tannins. Additionally, in a negative sense, wines from poorer terroir were relatively unsuccessful in 2017 compared to others recent years. The inland cooler terroir in the Medoc such as Listrac and Moulis were disappointing. Undoubtedly it will be extra important this year to be selective with your purchases. We will of course be careful to avoid these wines in our offers.

I could not confidently grasp the order of merit in respect of the three grape varieties, merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. Though the early nature of the vintage possibly detracted, at certain estates, from the potential of the cabernet franc which needs pinpoint accuracy of ripeness to reveal its greatest potential. Certainly merlot on clay, as in the best Pomerol vineyards, and cabernet sauvignon on the best Haut Medoc plots with warmer soils, performed brilliantly.

Before we landed we had been mildly indoctrinated towards the greater potential of the Medoc (this is where the volumes are so I do not pay too much attention). Overall I would probably go along with this. There are a few wines in the northern Medoc which will challenge 2016, and several which will probably eclipse 2015, Cos D'Estournel, Latour, Mouton Rothschild, Ducru Beaucaillou & Leoville Barton to name a few.

On the Right Bank and in Pessac Leognan I didn't quite get the sense that 2017 would be a serious threat to these previous two successful vintages.

As always there will be some great value wines at lower levels. Here are just a few, Tour de By, Carbonnieux, La Croix du Gay, Rouget, Aromes de Pavie, Kirwan, Lalande Borie, Reserve de la Comtesse, Haut Bages Liberal.

For the white wines we spoke to many very happy vigneron. The freshness in the vintage, has given fantastic sauvignon blanc and semillon blends in Pessac Leognan and beyond. Domaine de Chevalier, Malartic Lagraviere and Pape Clement, as well as the white wines at Chateau Haut Brion are amongst the greatest ever. The sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac are also excellent and offer brilliant value for money these days.

Factors effecting to style of the vintage.

There seems to be an increasingly clear picture emerging which reflects a movement towards a more traditional style of Bordeaux Wine. In fact this broad shift may have been cooking for a while but the rhetoric was definitely bolder during this year's en primeur week. Dimitri Augenblick, the technical director at Cos D'Estournel jubilantly exclaimed 'Back to the Future' referencing the new style at Cos. The shift here is very noticeable from the extremes of 2009 (RP 100) to the subtleties of 2017 (WJG 94-96/100)

We are now well into the post Robert Parker era and it does on the face of it appear that his personal taste was more evident in shaping the style of the wines during the period of his media dominance, than I had personally acknowledged. This has however been an often and strongly declared view across the media and professional spectrum. The almost regardless pursuit of ripeness and proportion seems now to have diminished in favour of freshness, subtlety and terroir expression.

This may simply be a fantastical view, and more likely there is a broader shift in reflecting the 'Le gout a la mode' rather than a shift away from Parker's perceived values. For instance In Burgundy in March we experienced similar commentary from wine makers keen not to pick too late, so as to retain freshness and vigour.

Of course the same extreme applies in pursuit of freshness, there maybe be a compromise of fruit and charm. Chateau Canon succinctly familiarised the wine makers decision of when to pick, comparing it to the great chef's ability to cook a select cut of meat just right, not undercooked but not cooked too long so as to lose flavour and texture, they are both looking for 'A Point!'.

Ultimately wine makers can only paint a picture with the colours Mother Nature decides to present them with, and in 2017 she coincidentally provided the sort of circumstances which would support this notional trend, rewarding those who aim for a light touch extraction and fine-tuned balance of fruit and acidity.

As in 2016, alcohol levels are down at traditionally average levels, generally between thirteen and fourteen percent. Certainly there is a correlation here with higher acidity, supporting length and longevity in the wine and retaining the interest of the taster.

The skill level in Bordeaux is absolutely amazing, every year there is greater understanding of what is required to orchestrate and visualise the best out of the unique set of circumstances which each vintage brings.

2017 started well with a very early bud break around 24th March. Unfortunately a catastrophic frost hit the Bordeaux region on 27th April, affecting many properties with disastrous results. Some estates lost a high proportion of their first generation fruit and the second generation fruit is almost always too inferior to include in the first wine. Saint Emilion, Pomerol and Pessac Leognan were particularly badly hit. Many of the best vineyards in the Northern Medoc, particularly those in close proximity to the Gironde were spared the pain.

The forward growing cycle continued unabated with a warm spring and early summer. One of the driest summers on record caused little vine stress only because of the considerable rain fall in June, well above the 20 year average. July and August were not however particularly hot, and the cool nights and warm days created the perfect conditions for slow steady ripening and elevated aromatics and freshness.

It soon became apparent that the harvest dates would be unusually early compared to recent trends, and most estates took advantage of mid-month clement weather to bring in all the harvest well before the end of September, though there were predictions of heavy rain ahead which may have had a bearing on the ultimate design.

Should you buy 2017 Primeurs?

Early indications suggest a reduction of 20% over the 2016 vintage prices, this is very welcome and for some wines will warrant serious consideration. Additionally if you are looking for classic Bordeaux which will drink within a few years and keep for many years too, then this could be useful addition to your cellar. Of course buying en primeur offers the ultimate provenance, the value of

buying direct from the chateau cannot be undervalued. If you are interested in specific formats, half bottles, magnums, double magnums, jeroboams, imperials, we can accommodate these and even bigger formats.

Nickolls & Perks are specialist en primeur dealers, with decades of experience amongst our team members. Our contacts and relationships with the elite Bordeaux negociants and chateaux are second to none. As we have done in recent years we are offering clients extended free storage of their 2017 Bordeaux Primeurs, so you will not have to pay anything for storage until April 2022. Unlike some merchants we do not charge shipping and insurance to London City Bond(Dinton) where the wines will arrive spring 2020. We will be pleased to tailor your requirements and welcome your call (0)1384 394518 or email: will@nickollsandperks.co.uk.

Will's Picks

Top 10 for Quality

Haut Brion Blanc	95-97/100
Latour	95-97/100
Mouton	95-97/100
Canon	94-96/100
Leoville Lascases	94-96/100
Cos d'Estournel	94-96/100
Margaux	94-96/100
Cheval Blanc	94-96/100
Ducru Beaucaillou	94-96/100
Lafite	94-96/100

Top 10 for Value

Leoville Barton	93-95/100
Talbot	91-93/100
La Petite Eglise	90-92/100
La Croix de Gay	90-92/100
Rouget	90-92/100
Kirwan	90-92/100
La Tour de By	89-91/100
Haut Bages Liberal	90-92/100

Carbonnieux 90-92/100

Callum's Picks

Top 10 for Value

Malescot St Exupery	92-94/100
Labegorce	91-93/100
Malartic Lagravieres	91-93/100
Ormes de Pez	91-93/100
Langoa Barton	91-93/100
Gloria	91-93/100
Cantemerle	90-92/100
Rouget Pomerol	90-92/100
Chateau Belgrave	90-92/100
Citran	90-92/100

Top 10 for Quality

Mouton	96-98/100
Latour	96-98/100
Canon	95-97/100
Leoville Lascases	95-97/100
Haut Brion	95-97/100
Cos d'Estournel	95-97/100
Pavie	95-97/100
Margaux	95-97/100
Palmer	94-96/100
Cheval Blanc	94-96/100

At Eglise Clinet

Saintaime

100% Merlot. This nose is attractive with plenty of freshness, nicely mature dusty tannins, this is quite plump, and charming, nice grip. 86-88/100.

La Chenade

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. Slightly stinky nose, red fruits certainly, this is quite structured in comparison, bit skinny on the finish. 85-87/100.

Cruzelles

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 40% new oak. More sweetness here, nice freshness and texture, again quite grippy, good lingering style. 87-89/100.

Montlandrie

75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% new oak. Inky nose, touch of oak, the shape here is good, in line, some fruit and plenty of dusty tannin, freshness, 88-90/100.

La Petite Eglise

100% Merlot. This has an extra definition on the nose, blue fruits, earthy notes, minerality, the texture and precision is positive, calm and assertive on the finish, shows very well for me. 90-92/100.

Eglise Clinet

90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. Good deep purple, tighter than the La Petite Eglise, certainly mineral, nice deft touch of oak, the palate is honed in too, all in line, precise and very long, supple and harmonious. Bags of finesse. 93-95/100

At Cheval Blanc

The last time there was a frost as devastating as in 2017 was 1991. This turned out to be a maligned vintage but in fact particularly from the Northern Medoc I have tasted some very successful wines. At Cheval Blanc every frozen vine was marked and pruned a second time. The second generation fruit was harvested separately perfectly ripe. In some cases there were upto 16 days between the two harvests in the same row of vines. This attention to detail together with favourable growing and harvest conditions has created a brilliant result and one which the Cheval team are very proud of.

Quinault L'Enclos

62% Merlot, 16% Cabernet Franc, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon. Medium full colour, nose is quite open and complex, with black peppercorns, perfumed, good silky palate, the palate has plenty of density, with a lovely shape through the wine, broad but long and sleek too, excellent length. This is an excellent wine for the vintage, and great value. 90-92/100



Le Petit Cheval

52% Merlot, 48% Cabernet Franc. Medium full plum, the nose is very overt with a lovely smoky dark fruit

profile, very nicely textured and calm, the tannins are very faint, covered with the dense fruit, good freshness, and again the length is key. 91-93/100



Cheval Blanc

56% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 14% Cabernet Sauvignon. Full plum, the nose is immediately concentrated, lots of fresh flowers, ripeness too, the texture is impressive, lovely complexity, gives a sense of plumpness, the Cabernet gives a lovely cedary character on the finish, very refreshing. Really quite lovely. Very long. Zinging palate. 94-96/100

At UGC Silent Tasting Bordeaux City Centre, Hanger 14

I am not sure why this is called the silent tasting as there is plenty of back ground hum drum discussion about the wines, but the format is excellent with all the individual commune tasting wines laid out in one room. It was a useful flying visit which gave us a snap shot of the very good St Juliens, some Haut Medoc Cru Bourgeois and Sauternes & Barsac.

Beychevelle

Full plum, inky cedar, creamy notes, nice cool ripe palate, fruit forward, the freshness is very apparent for the vintage, carries the fruit along nicely into the oak inflected finish. 91-93/100

Branaire Ducru

Full plum, slightly metallic nose, herbaceous, good cool palate, plump, quite loose, but plenty of generousness, good length. The nose leaves me undecided 89-91/100?

Gruaud Larose

Medium full plum, more steel here on the nose, this is again textured, the fruit profile is precise, everything follows, there is grip and freshness, excellent length. 91-93/100

Lagrange

Medium full plum, hint of tobacco, some dark fruit compote, clean and linear, plenty of stuffing here, hint of menthol, again there is freshness backing up the ample fruit, touch oak. It's a good Lagrange. 90-92/100

Langoa Barton

Full plum, the nose here is quite reticent, some metallic notes, needs coaxing, blackberry fruit coming through underneath, the palate is quite tight with good nervosity, streamlined, good concentration with a spicy length. Quite like this. 90-92/100

Leoville Barton

Good deep plum, the nose is subtle but powerful with cedary nuances, earthy and enticing, some grilled notes, the texture is very good and there is plenty extract here, plenty of freshness too. This has tension, the length is perfumed and regal. Toasty. This is a very good Barton will need plenty of time. 93-95/100

Leoville Poyferre

Again good deep plum. The nose is very pure, inky, some cream, this is cool, precise, composed, it is a big brooding Poyferre, the freshness carries it well. Excellent potential. 93-95/100

Talbot

Medium full plum. Touch of strawberry and almond, milk chocolate, this has a nice tension aligned to the sweetness, cafe, toasty, very impressive this year, exemplary balance. 91-93/100

Gloria

Good deep plum, perfumed, inky, grilled, violets, creamy, earthy fruit, oaky finish, lots of grip here. Positive and confident, good future. The balance is fine. 90-92/100

St Pierre

Deep plum, lovely blue fruited notes, a lifted nose. The palate is plump and cool, the tension on the finish is impressive, drifts along and keeps coming back with toasty waves. 91-93/100

La Tour de By

Deep plum, inky perfumed nose, good creamy palate. The initial and overall impression is very good, plump and generous. This seems to be aiming high this year. 89-91/100

La Tour Carnet

Deep plum, black fruits here, some spice, nice easy texture, with good balance of generous dense fruit. Good effort here but does tail off. 89-91/100

La Lagune

Full plum, the nose here is fresh fruit salad with touch of vine tomato, nice and vibrant, cool fruit and freshness to on the palate, this grips very well, stylish 89-91/100

Coufran

Slightly singed nose here, maybe dark chocolate, almost spicity, raisin, the palate is quite dry with tannin but overall there is reasonable balance. A bit flatter than some. 87-89/100

Citran

Nicely deep, attractive earthy dark chocolate nose, the palate here is quite plump and blue, the tannins are ripe and it all fits well, leaving a refreshing toast finish. A stylish Citran. 89-91/100

Cantemerle

Full plum, an elegant inky perfumed nose, quite subtle, no jam, cool and composed, chewy, the finish is complex and very Bordeaux. 90-92/100

Belgrave

This is slightly singed again, grilled, the texture is lovely, slight paint edge, like the style again the dark berry notes are enticing. 88-90/100

Poujeaux

Full plum, nose is quite tight but clean, calm entry, silky even, well framed with citrus, this looks nicely balanced and too not extracted. A very good result and good future. 90-92/100

Maucaillou

This is medium plum, very open fruity nose, bright and ripe too, the palate has very good plump style, juicy, it is a bit light but carries well enough with and attractive toasty finish. 87-89/100

Chasse Spleen

Medium full plum, there is a dark chocolate edge here, very plump, quite loose perhaps a tad dilute but attractive. 86-88/100

Fourcas Hostens

Quite pale compared to some the nose is a bit non descript, the palate is calm, and creamy, definitely lighter and easier here. 85-87/100

Fourcas Dupre

There is an underlying sweetness here, raisin, this has a tad more grip and intensity than the Hostens, touch of oak and decent length. Fresh again quite good. 86-88/100

De Pez

Medium full plum, the nose is open, very plump, there is juicy stylish fruit but it lacks the tension of some. 86-88/100

Cos Labory

This is very deep, fresh earthy notes, touch of raisin, this has a bit more tension aligned with plenty of fresh dark fruit, and minerality. I like the density and balance here. 89-91/100

Phelan Segur,

Dusty tannins chunky, quite powerful and tense. Good effort and promising. 88-90/100

Guiraud

Really intense, pineapple here, rich and very lovely mouthfeel, Long too. 92-94/100

La Tour Blanche

Intense, nose, the palate is very creamy, this has breadth and citrus length, balanced and exciting. 92-94/100

Lafaurie Peyraguey

Very fresh notes here, very creamy, narrow and really fine all round impression. Concentrated, piercing citrus lifts the sweetness of the honeyed fruit. 93-95/100

At Chateau Figeac

Frederic Faye MD of Chateau Figeac, was upbeat but pragmatic in his presentation, very happy with the final result which his team delivered but quite open to admit that this was not 2015 or 2016, in fact he commented that anyone who suggested that their 2017 was superior probably cocked up the previous years. The overall yield was over 50% down, 48000 bts compared to 100000 bts, with only 10% second generation fruit making the marque.

Figeac

Good deep colour, fresh fruit really lovely aromatics, black fruit rides along, the palate is quite powerful, Rich but firm, cool, intense, earthy, spicy tannins, well-constructed here, will be one of the best right bank wines. The length is good too. 92-94/100

At UGC Pomerol Tasting - Chateau Gazin

Whilst there was no blockbuster stand out wines, in general there was feeling of promise following this tasting, with purity and terroir expression. The best sites with Merlot on clay have been very successful.

Beauregard

Medium-full plum, quite a timid nose, the palate is quite creamy with that freshness, there is plenty of plummy flavour on the front of the palate with that earthy spicy finish. I think it is nicely balanced. 90-92/100

Bon Pasteur

Full plum, not too much on the nose but calm and clean black fruit with a hint of dark chocolate, palate has good volume, there is ample but not forced tannin and plenty of freshness. Glides among with a nice spicy finish. 90-92/100

La Cabanne

Medium-full plum, an attractive nose, with a nuance of oak, medium weight, there is spicy tannin and pleasing tangerine freshness. A good La Cabanne. 88-99/100

Croix du Gay

93% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc. Medium-full plum. Blackcurrant compote on the nose, quite rich. The texture on the palate here is promising, sits well and lingers, good freshness. Quite impressive overall. I think this stands out for value. 90-92/100

Clinet

Lovely aromatics, freshness black berries, calm and elegant, again the texture is silky with a rounding tannic edge, cool tight and pure, plenty of energy. This is a very good Clinet and one to watch. Finesse. 92-94/100

Gazin

This has a little more sweetness, more towards red fruit, creamy too, really like the aromatics. This is very easy going for Gazin, very ripe tannins, a little surprising how the extraction does not at all impose on the wine. It is very enjoyable if maybe a little on the lighter side for this estate. 90-92/100

Petit Village

Medium-full plum, sweet red fruit, bright and clean, this is silky, calm and stylish. It is a good wine, but always a little underwhelming. 89-91/100

Rouget

This is very deep, the nose is very rich in black berry, very creamy here too, almost a seamless palate, this is very generous perhaps at the expense of tension but certainly one to watch. 90-92/100

At Chateau Pavie

It is always a treat to visit Chateau Pavie, and this was the first time in the first floor tasting room which is airy and beautifully light with wonderful views over the vineyards. In all honesty these wines paled against the amazing 2016's, but the Aromes de Pavie was a real hit with the team.

Monbousquet Blanc

60% Sauvignon Blanc 30% Sauvignon Gris, 5% Semillon, 5% Muscadelle. Quite exotic, mango, grassy, elegant gentle expression. Slight honeyed notes on the finish. Promising. 89-91/100

Monbousquet

60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Full Plum nice purity on the nose, sweet, perfumed, this is pleasantly creamy and fresh, there is a bit of tension here and energy, quite impressive. 89-91/100

Clos Lunelles

Certainly colour extraction here, the palate is certainly, full and prickly with good freshness on the back but it does fall off a little sharply. Quite an oaky finish. 88-90/100

Pavie Decesse

90% Merlot 10% Cabernet Franc. Very full colour, plenty of intensity of black fruit on the nose, this is immediately sexy, a nicely polished and plush wine with substantial attack at the back, it is nicely balanced but perhaps lacks a bit of density in the mid palate for greatness. 91-93/100

Bellevue Mondotte

90% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Almost black, very extracted appearance, excellent concentration, very low yields as always. The palate is nicely silky, it certainly has the stuffing, and zinging spice on the finish. Again this is promising if not great compared to 2016. 91-93/100

Aromes de Pavie

60% Merlot, 18% Cabernet Franc, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon. Lovely perfume here, this is gorgeously silky on the palate, gradually feeding in the tannins which are dry but ripe. Balanced and elegant. This will drink quite soon but will keep a good few years too. A very good second wine. 90-92/100

Pavie

60% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon. This is calmer than expected. A very pure but reticent nose, complex though, red and black fruit. There is real concentration here. There is richness here but this is not light like some, there is a lot of structure. 93-95/100

At Chateau Canon

Another impromptu visit to Chateau Canon, gave the team the opportunity to taste separate samples from new wood casks, as well as the final blend. The difference between the three being surprisingly obvious. The style here has been one of restrained elegance since the new regime commenced its work in 2015 for the 2014 vintage. Brilliant once again.

**Canon**

77% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Franc. Lovely pure aromatics, plummy ripe notes too, this is so well integrated the tannins are very gentle, reminds me of Cheval Blanc in its gentle approach. A winner again in 2017 the length is superb. 55% new oak. 94-96/100

**Canon - Single Barrel sample**

100% new Sylvain oak early harvest here, The nose is fresh with a sweetness red fruits, medium-full the palate is very cool and harmonious, with a touch Sichuan..

Canon - Single Barrel sample

100% new Taransaud oak, quite different aromatics more wood marked, this is very round in the mouth, full and delicate, this sample seems richer with more energy.

At UGC St Emilion Tasting – Chateau Couspaude**Canon La Gaffeliere**

Medium-full plum, this has pure and fresh aromatics, vibrant, sophisticated and complex. A natural unforced palate, this has the cool texture I look for. It rides well, a promising Canon La Gaffeliere with early approachability. It may merit a higher score if it fills out after bottling. 91-93/100

Clos Fourtet

Full plum, very bright colour. The nose here is hiding a little though pure and clean. A very cool palate, there is tension here too, polished, spicy tannins revealed on the finish, though it doesn't quite fan out like previous vintages. 91-93/100

Franc Mayne

90% Merlot 10% Cabernet Franc. Full plum, hint of orange and fresh fruit on the nose, a gentle palate, nice start with plenty of structure at the rear. 89-91/100

La Gaffeliere

Medium-full plum, a hint of marine here, there is ample fruit with plenty of tannin leaves the palate a bit ruffled, but maybe just needs a short time to come together. 88-90/100

Grand Mayne

Medium-full plum, this is bright, nicely intense and charming on the nose, there is good fruit and texture here too, it tenses up nicely towards the finish, ripe tannins here, very promising. 90-92/100

Pavie Macquin

Full plum, good concentrated nose, quite rich, towards red fruits over black, very cool here and composed, this is nicely layered, the tannins are there but under wraps, zinging finish, I like this. 91-93/100

Larcis Ducasse

Full plum, more the blue fruits on the nose, fresh fruit, more restrained than the Pavie Macquin, the palate is lovely and cool, it is polished and gentle, the tannins creep in. 90-92/100

Troplong Mondot

Full plum, The nose is a little restrained, there is good balance here with tension and silk, for sure holds well and quite long, not as blockbuster like usual, there is a definite step change going on at Troplong. 90-92/100

Valandraud

Very full plum, the nose is uplifted, with lots of dark fruit and a savoury edge, promising much, the palate is powerfully endowed here, concentration and grip, it is nicely harmonious. Quite extracted but seems in line. One of the best at the UGC tasting. 91-93/100

At Chateau Angelus

The slimmed down affair at Chateau Angelus, which included only the family estates rather than these plus the properties which are under consultation, was a much more instructive visit. Attended by the enigmatic wine maker Emmanuelle Fulchi we were given a tailored view of the vintage which included invaluable and insightful snippets. 2017 has a nod towards 2001 in its elegant make up, with an element of the freshness if not the proportion of 2010.

Daugay

This is quite restrained on the nose, and the palate, with nice singularity. Good classic Cabernet Franc flavours with spicy dusty tannins. Long and satisfying. 89-91/100

La Fleur de Bouard

Full plum. The oak shows here covering the fruit a little, the palate is ripe, and chocolatey, certainly fine with a spicy edge to the finish. 89-91/100

Angelus

70% Merlot 30% Cabernet Franc. Full plum, toasty nose, cafe, perfumed, this is very refined, the perfume carries onto the palate, lovely ripe polished tannins, plentiful. Cedary finish. Svelte like. 93-95/100

At Chateau Margaux

Phillippe Bascaules MD of Chateau Margaux exclaimed 2017 as ‘a very classic vintage’ ‘a mixture of freshness and ripeness’ ‘Very bordeaux, great acidity, black and red fruits, floral’. All three wines showed very well. Phillippe also explained that the estate is much more committed to the signature of Cabernet Sauvignon than Merlot, hence the ever increasing percentage in the final blend.

Pavilion Rouge

Medium-full plum, ripeness and freshness with plenty of fresh fruit salad, the palate is plump, 13.5% alcohol, harmonious structure and fruit, it feels well balanced, unforced, really pleasing dusty finish 90-92/100

Margaux

Medium-full plum, elegant perfume, floral, spicy, this is very restrained, will be an early drinking Margaux. This is polished but there is an underlying power coming through, touch of oak on the finish. Great finesse. 94-96/100

Pavillon Blanc

100% Sauvignon Blanc, 14% alc, 3.1 Ph very low this year. The intensity here is immediately obvious on the nose, complex salty, the mouth is full bodied with admirable minerality, and the tension is testing. Excellent precision and length. Lots of energy, not too acidic even though it is very high. This will keep for a very long time. 93-95/100

At the UGC Margaux Tasting - Chateau Siran

There were some delightful wines on show at Chateau Siran, the elegant style of the vintage lends itself very well to Margaux wines, they will reward a few years cellaring but in general they will give early drinking pleasure, with classic complex flavours.

Brane Cantenac

Medium-full plum, toasty, nice pure red fruits, supple palate, gentle, sits long, fresh light extraction, lingers well. Quite like this. 91-93/100

Desmirail

Medium-full plum, slightly more grilled on the nose, cafe, supple, some power and dimension, chocolatey finish, dusty and toasty. Good showing. 90-92/100

Cantenac Brown

Medium-full plum, fresh fruited nose, creamy palate, and locks together well, very little aggression, light extraction is the name of the game it seems. A pretty and early drinker with promising depth. 91-93/100

Du Tertre

Medium-full plum, there is an intensity here, whiff of co2, very creamy, toasty, not so sure here a bit disjointed this sample. ?

Giscours

Medium-full plum, lifted nose here, very pure, typical Giscours, blueberry, there is power here aligned to the opulent fruit, there is wood influence too. This is a notch up so far. Very Margaux. 91-93/100

Kirwan

Medium-full plum, intense and rich here, there is a lovely zip to the freshness of the fruit, nice balancing tannin too, I am liking this in 2017, could be one of the values to watch. 90-92/100

Malescot St Exupery

Full plum, very impressive purity here, very clean and bright, cool palate, silky. The structure and stuffing coming through gradually, feminine gentle and charismatic. 92-94/100

Lascombes

Full plum, this is more obviously perfumed than the Malescot, some black fruit, cool supple again, there is a tension here comes back at you so to speak, more extracted. Finishes well. Keeper. 90-92/100

Prirure Lichine

Medium-full plum, fresh fruits on the nose, quite mute, the palate is nicely together good texture, plenty of dusty tannins, maybe a little hollow to contain the structure but good, and with the tendency to show better in bottle it will be interesting to see how it evolves. 89-91/100

At Chateau Palmer

The amiable export director Chris Myers talked us through the Palmer wines where the bio-dynamic influence and higher proportion of Merlot than most Margaux estates gives them an extra luxurious feel. Unscathed by the frost they are particularly happy with the result of the fortunate conditions which followed and the meticulous care taken. A Palmer which is “precise without excess. The velvety tannins and aromatic depth are promises of splendid aging potential.

Alter Ego,

53% Merlot, 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot. This is plainly with rich and opulent, always so forward and expressive. Fruit-dominated. Plenty of zip and length too, a real pleasure here. 90-92/100

Palmer

54% Merlot, 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Petit Verdot. Very deep, very intense, lots of purity here, there is an extra dimension here, very generous, here the bio dynamic fruit is apparent, very fresh, sits very well here, long and impressive for the vintage. 93-95/100

At Chateau Ducru Beaucaillou

Rene Lusseau, cellar master at Ducru for many years, is always upbeat and positive about the wines at this beautiful estate. The wines I guess do reflect this warm open arms approach, as he points out the wines are to be drunk not admired. Lalande de Borie must be one of the best value wines in the world let alone Bordeaux. Ducru Beaucaillou is another triumph.

Lalande de Borie

64% Merlot, 34% cabernet sauvignon. Good texture good silk plenty of flavour here, cedar nice oak too, balanced, good length this is stylish for level. Good value as always. 88-90/100

Croix de Beaucaillou

58% Merlot, 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot. Very deep here some extraction spicy, fresh and substantial, this lingers well I like the spicy finish. 90-92/100

Ducru Beaucaillou

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot. Very deep, the nose is nicely perfumed, delicate floral nuances, open fresh nose, lovely plump and tense palate, lots of proportion, and the finish long and linear. Lovely finesse, cool and precise. Earth and cedar on the finish. This is not far off the finest vintages. 94-96/100.

At Chateau Leoville Lascases

Export Manager Antoine Gimbert described the 2017 "as elegant, discreet, with a lot to say". Certainly the frost had little bearing on the result here which was top drawer as usual.

Potensac

Medium-full plum, nice classic notes, the palate is medium full, this is a touch rustic, on the finish, and substantial structure will need time. 88-90/100

La Petite Marquise

Medium-full plum, the sweetness of the Merlot comes through, this has a nice line and texture, really quite impressive and long for its level. 88-90/100

Clos du Marquis

Full plum, this is a bit more closed up, good density, medium full, again this is quite serious, very good tension on the finish and certainly long. 90-92/100

Le Petit Lion

52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc. Medium-full plum, quite a bright blue fruited nose, a touch of savoury, this is quite voluptuous good result here for sure. Tobacco on the finish. 90-92/100

Leoville Lascases

This is quite deep as you would expect, this is complex on the nose with violet and a touch of savoury, freshness too. The entry is very pure, it is supple, but it quickly tightens up into the cedary, spicy finish, reminds me of Chateau Margaux a little in its strict tenderness. Very polished, and a tensile structure. The term iron fist in a velvet glove come to mind. 94-96/100

At Chateau Pichon Lalande

As in 1991 the frost did not trouble Pichon Lalande's key plots which are in close proximity to the river. They did lose some vines several hectares in land. Nicolas Glumineau points out the strength of his cabernet vines were the foundation, the soul of the 2017 vintage.



Reserve de la Comtesse

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, 2% PV. Very full plum. The nose is very perfumed, and florally, and an earthy minerality, impressive intro, the palate is quite decadent, it is textured but not dense with a light on its feet trail into an earthy spice laden finish. Very attractive and good future. Very good for a second wine, and decent value. 90-92/100

Pichon Lalande

70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, 1% PV. Again Full plum colour, the nose is elevated and forthcoming with lots of cedary notes, with an underlying spicy, and violet tinged perfume, there is sweetness here, the palate

is textured and controlled, gently un-layering, flattering but cool edged freshness and loaded with tannins. Coconut. Powdery length. 93-95/100

At Chateau Latour



Pauillac de Latour 2013

Full plum, quite an exotic nose, bright red fruit even jammy, the palate is a little attenuated more than fresh, some style for sure but drops off. 87/100

Les Forts de Latour 2012

Full plum, nice figgy fruit on the nose, sweetness, touch of Menthol, and the palate is medium weight, with plenty of youthful fruit and dusty balancing structure, round and proportioned, it is evolving nicely, gentle attack leaves a long flavoured finish. I like the style and the potential. 91/100

Latour 1986

Good deep purple, starting to turn orange but still quite slight evolution, the nose has a sweet vanilla edge, buscuity, with a slight touch of bouillabaisse, almond flakes, the palate is quite steely and fresh, solid weight and quite grippy, this is still quite youthful, with good power and vigour, menthol, this is enjoyable now and will evolved for many years to come. Long and fine. 94-96/100

Les Forts de Latour 2017

65.2% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 0.8% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot. Very full plum, lots of cool blue fruits, good perfume, impressive, this is packed full of lush textured fruit, very long irony finish. Oak. Impressive stuff. 92-94/100

Latour 2017

92.1% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7.8% Merlot, 0.1% Petit Verdot. Very deep colour, the nose is exciting, nicely open and charismatic, earthy, complex, very voluminous palate, calm and velvety but instantly uplifted by freshness and dusty tannins, it is very pure and linear, poised. The freshness is exciting. This is not shy or introverted. Elegant but bold stuff. Polished but steely. A keeper for sure. Salivating. Great Latour and great for the vintage. 95-97/100

At Chateau Pontet Canet



The precision and dedication in the vineyard at Pontet Canet is now matched with a brand new vat room. This further investment helps in the journey of the grapes to wine be as resistant free and tranquil as possible.



Pontet Canet

Good deep colour, the nose is very expressive, dark fruit, enticing, menthols, smoky, embers, blackberry, the palate is cool and calm, not at all forced here, the mid palate is slightly leaner than 2015 perhaps,? Creamy nose and palate, there is plenty of sex appeal but it does have restraint. A very good Pontet Canet. 93-95/100

At Chateau Lafite

The succession in 2017 of Eric de Rothschild's daughter, Saskia de Rothschild, to chairmanship and Bruno Prats, famed for his 14 years at of Cos D'Estournel and 5 years at LVMH, to CEO brings the fascination of a new generation to the helm of Domaines Barons de Rothschild. Duhart Milon lost 5 hectares to frost

damage, Lafite itself was unscathed. The commentary picks up on the cooler nature of the growing season, which shows in the classic style here.

Duhart Milon

76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot. Very deep, excellent perfume, the palate is plump and round, cool fruit, moves slowly through the gears in terms of structure leaving a toasty light spiced finished. It is quite a generous Duhart may be lacking the tension of the great years but certainly will offer early promise, then we will see how it evolves. 90-92/100

Carruades de Lafite

60% cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc. Full Plum, this is a little more closed, with floral notes underneath, the nose is a bit of a mystery, needs plenty of coaxing, the palate is cool again, with plenty of fresh tones, chunky volume, cedar here, the length is very good, for me this shows good balance and is a notch up on recent Carruades. 91-93/100

Lafite

96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3.5% Merlot, 0.5% Petit Verdot. Very full plum, the nose is reticent, mysterious here too, subtle notes of floral content, very pure, the palate again very cool, tight and poised, this is layered for sure, there is lots of nuance here all very faint but the multiples ripple on the finish, it hums tension, really fine for the vintage. Tightly wound and honed. Very fine tannins. 94-96/100

At Chateau Mouton Rothschild

D'Armailhac

68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 3% PV. Medium full plum, maybe a slight co2, beyond this there are bright blue fruits, and a warm hit of balsa wood,



the palate is cool, and there is a piercing acidity. Nice persistent grip though gentle. Really like the femininity and elegance here. 90-92/100

Clerc Milon

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot, 1% Carmenere. Medium-full plum, the nose is darker, more reserved than the D'Armailhac, it is pure and clean, the palate is nicely linear, quite strong structure, and the fruit is omnipresent, though this is tight. There is freshness here, absorbing finish, and intriguing, very long. 91-93/100

Petit Mouton

81% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16 % Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc. This is quite full in colour, and is very amenable, with open red fruits, raspberry, cream, very pure fresh aromatics. The palate is very creamy with excellent citrus framing, the finish is refreshing, a dusting of very fine tannins. This is attractive and accessible and should have a promising evolution. 92-94/100

Mouton Rothschild

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot. Good full colour similar to the Petit Mouton, a pure nose but not giving too much away today, sweet edged, the palate is like silk, wow this is a concentrated version of the Petit Mouton, the finish is very light but very long, tantalising, the texture coming back aligned with the acidity and fine tannins is mesmeric. Building up to toasty spicy finish. Really fine for me. Very concentrated. Up there with Latour this year. 95-97/100

Aile d'Argent

53% Sauvignon Blanc, 46% Semillon, 1% Muscadelle. The colour, is quite full, rich with lots of lime and mango, serious, catspee, mint, herbal, the palate is cool, texture, real intensity but this is charming too. 91-93/100

At Chateau Cos D'Estournel

A gentle withdrawal in recent years from the pursuit of power and opulence has revealed a Cos D'Estournel with more complexity and subtlety. This year it was particularly noticeable, an almost mesmeric result and one of the vintages high points.

Goulee

72% Merlot, 24% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc. Open fresh notes, nice calm palate, lots of easy soft Merlot. Pleasant and stylish entry level. 87-89/100

Cos D'Estournel

66% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot. Very dark, the nose is quite open, pure Turkish delight, the palate is quite salty can detect the oak, there is graphite and cedar, it is powerful but not aggressive. Going back to the nose is very mineral, with menthol. I can taste the ground, dark chocolate. This is classic Cos, and right at the top in quality for the vintage. 94-96/100

At Chateau Montrose

The team here expressed their pleasure with the quality of the Cabernet Sauvignon crop which accounts for 76% of the first wine. A very classic style, and one which will need plenty of cellarage.

Trobquoy Lalande

Quite intense perfume, this is sleek and tense with plenty of stuffing, with a minty finish 89-91/100

Dame de Montrose

49% Merlot, 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot. The nose is a little forced, plenty of fruit, soapy perfume, and the density is impressive, and perfume tinged palate too. On the finish, particularly, this has an impressive profile and could be very good indeed. Always a great value second wine. 90-92/100

Montrose

76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot Very full plum, this is restrained elegance, flirting with violet and peony, with an edge of freshly baked crusty bread, iron filings, black fruits, an awesome nose. On the palate the fruit is secondary to savoury notes, earthy, grilled tones, tapenade, slate, there is substantial tannin here it will require patience. It is balanced, less fruit dominated than the great vintages in 2009 & 10, this is more on the tension and minerality of the soil. A very good Montrose. Very fresh acidity. I just give the nod to Cos at this stage. 93-95/100

At Chateau Lafon Rochet

The generic Pauillac showed a very promising result, with lots of early promise and early drinking, luxurious textures, but elegance too. Overall Pauillac doesn't

have the concentration and magnificence of 2016, but I think it will challenge 2015 and may even eclipse it.

Batailley

Medium-full plum, this is quite supple as expected, rich and pure Cabernet, nice cedar. Promising length. Medium weight, this will drink early but keep well too. 90-92/100

Grand Puy Ducasse

The nose is quiet, this has plump palate and plenty of structure as usual. A wine to keep and enjoy with full flavoured sauces, dry tannins but overall a good result in 2017. 90-92/100

Grand Puy Lacoste

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot. Full plum, there is as usual ripeness on the nose here, a fresh fruited nose. This has the balance, the signature of the vintage, all in proportion. It is quite big with savoury notes on the finish. New oak. Salivation. A good GPL. 92-94/100

Haut Bages Liberal

72% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot. Full plum, this has a lovely light red fruited style to the nose, calm and pure. This is nicely done, not too much tannin, I think this is an excellent result, one of the best in recent years and definitely one to look our value wise. 90-92/100

Lynch Moussas

Full plum, this has a ripe note, a touch of kirsch, the fruit is nicely proportioned here, a delicate extraction, lashings of new wood, looks to be an early drinking plump Pauillac excellent stuff at the right money. 89-91/100

Pichon Baron

Very full plum, the nose is holding back, more deep seated very pure and enticing, the palate is finely layered and quite restrained compared to some of the lesser estates. I find this more honed in, with spicy nuances unravelling on a long finish. Certainly the texture is here and there is size too. The finish suggests it will come together very well. An excellent Pichon Baron. Lots of cedar. 93-95/100

Lynch Bages

A tad more Merlot this year. Very dark as usual, this has a subtle grilled savoury edge, quite complex, the palate is cool and calm then the attack builds but it

doesn't take over, cool this is well armed as usual but it is poised and suave will be an excellent Lynch Bages. Needs 10 years + . 93-95/100

Pichon Lalande

Very deep purple, the freshness comes through aligned with purity here, very creamy and more open with mocha, dusty tannins, certainly creamy and up front more charm but perhaps less tension than Baron. 93-95/100

At Chateau Haut Bailly

Le Parde de Haut Bailly

65% Merlot 35% Cabernet Sauvignon. Bright raspberry fruit on the nose, this is quite silky on the palate, gentle extraction, good mouthfeel, fresh. Elegant rather than decadent. 88-90/100

Haut Bailly

Medium-full plum, dark chocolate nose, sweet vanilla, the palate is creamy with a firm freshness, feels a little mean and closed in towards the back. Needs time 90-92/100

At the UGC Pessac Leognan Tasting - Chateau Malartic Lagraviere



The frost was destructive and made its marque in Pessac Leognan. Better than usual whites lifted what would have been merely a good showing.

Reds

Chantgrive Blanc

Nice green apple and acacia on the nose, quite sweet with plenty of citrus, melts away, apple on the finish. Promising. 88-90/100

Ferrande Blanc

Pale gold, nice sweet acacia and grapefruit with a tropical edge, quite silky and tight, this finishes long. 89-91/100

Bousquet Blanc

33% Semillon 68% Sauvignon Blanc. This is smoky, the palate is calm, in balance if a little underwhelming. 87-89/100

Carbonnieux Blanc

45% Semillon 55% Sauvignon Blanc, this is quite mineral with limey notes, quite tight here the acidity is quite dominant, very fresh, clean, linear, quite long. Looks like a good value. 90-92/100

Domaine de Chevalier Blanc

55% Sauvignon Blanc, 45% Semillon. The nose is reserved, very clean, lime, this starts off slow then reveals layers of minerality, the palate is almost impenetrable but it doesn't leave you for quite a while this is a vintage to hold for a few years. A really exciting prospect. 94-96/100

Pique Caillou Blanc

70% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Semillon. Some tropical here, and aromatic, sweetness, this is calm on the palate, this will drink quite early, salty intensity. Good effort here, touch of oak. 90-92/100

La Tour Martillac Blanc

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon. 25% new oak. This is fresh on the nose with an attractive richness at the tip, honey, lime, the palate is silky and salty, lots of tension here on the back of the palate, lots of citrus. Shows well. 91-93/100

La Louviere Blanc

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Nose here is fresh but non-descript the palate has lots of energy, really tight, grips, mineral finish. Shows well. 90-92/100

Malartic Lagraviere Blanc

80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Semillon. The nose is very clean but very reticent, greengage, very salty here, like a strong margarita, this is tightly wound, long here, crystalline. The high %age of Sauvignon always give it an extra fresh layer, which I find delicious. 92-94/100

Olivier Blanc

75% Sauvignon Blanc, 23% Semillon, 2% Muscadelle. This is a bit more forthcoming, cool, with a nice minerally edge, orange peel, nice effort. 89-91/100

Pape Clement Blanc

55% Sauvignon Blanc, 45% Semillon. The nose is tight, glints of lime and acacia, creamy here, and keeps tight, lots of lime and orange peel on the finish, extract, more open and juicy than Domaine De Chevalier. 93-95/100

Reds**Bouscaut**

Full plum, the nose is quite broad, attractive touch of balsamic, the palate is initially charming, the structure builds quite quickly though. 88-90/100

Carbonnieux

Full plum, the nose is quite pure and classy here, juicy, nice balance, the extraction is adept, the tannins are long and fine, touch of oak. Like this in red and white. 91-93/100

Les Carmes Haut Brion

Very deep plum. The nose here is very rich compared to some, ripe blackberry, impressive, lots of silk here, generous but framed throughout with a dusty dark chocolate tannin. The tannins are plentiful but not obstructive. This is very promising. 92-94/100

Domaine de Chevalier

This is quite deep, the nose is positive, with a reticent blackcurrant confit, nicely pure, there is a cool fruit entry, the supporting acidity carries it long, it doesn't lose its delicacy and lacy fruit throughout, this is well done, goes long and fine. 92-94/100

Larrivet Haut Brion

Deep colour, nice richness here, this has lots of sweet fruit, very gentle, seems composed and balanced the extract is light but the flavour is concentrated with a nice spicy finish. Surprisingly good considering the devastation the frost caused, all but wiping out the entire white crop. 90-92/100

La Tour Martillac

Very deep here, the nose is slightly grilled, this is dense and a bit heavy compared to some but it does have admirable proportion, seems extracted but time will tell. Toasty finish. 88-90/100

Olivier

Full plum, fairly neutral aromatics, this is gentle and cool on the attack, promising but a bit short. 87-89/100

La Louviere

Very full plum, nice freshness here on the nose, pure black fruits, clean and attractive, the fruit is plump. Gentle and charming, the structure does build up significantly but I think there is balance here, a keeper. 90-92/100

Malartic Lagraviere

Very deep here, a promising compote of black fruit on the nose, very pure, this is cool on the palate, and creamy, this is quite complete, not as fresh as some with more extraction but there is dimension here, looks like a winner. Needs time. 92-94/100

Pape Clement

Good full colour for the vintage, the nose is pure, bright and concentrated, this is nicely poised with lashings of cool fruit, very nice acidity, this shows well in the company, long and fine tannins. Excellent. 92-94/100

Pique Caillou

Full plum, nice blue fruits, nice cool edge to the palate too, well proportioned. More new oak, I think this shows well at this level. 89-91/100

At Chateau Haut Brion

Jean Philippe Demas explained that the slightly warmer soils at the Haut Brion estate may have helped the properties almost completely avoid the devastating frost. The Clarence is more concentrated he agreed and compared Haut Brion to a more modern version of the excellent 1988.



La Chapelle de La Mission Haut Brion

49.2% Merlot, 8.9% Cabernet Franc, 41.0% Cabernet Sauvignon. Full plum, inky fresh nose, perfumed. Punchy and enticing, the palate is nicely plump, and cool, round, the attack is quite timid, gently coating the palate with faint dust. The finish again is blue fruit. Will drink quite early. 91-93/100

Le Clarence de Haut Brion

55% Merlot, 5.3% Cabernet Franc, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1.7% Petit Verdot. This is quite full purple, spicy black fruit with bouillabaisse, clean fruit, very fresh



notes, heady, slight menthol, there is good sweetness, ripeness of fruit on the nose, hint of violet, the palate is very cool, with a lovely, refresher acidity framing the fruit, it is quite bold and very perfumed. The oak is evident, touch of Sichuan. Really impressive complexity. 92-94/100

La Mission Haut Brion

56% Merlot, 4.4% Cabernet Franc, 39.6% Cabernet Sauvignon. Very full plum, this is tighter on the nose than the second wines which is normal, it is serious and elegant, with deep black fruits, and dried flowers, comes out very complex with coaxing. The palate weight is impressive, there is density and proportion, it is wrapped up a bit, the merlot is expressive but holding back, there is strength to go with the flattery. The freshness and balance is impressive. Very spicy. 93-95/100

Haut Brion

53% Merlot, 6.3% Cabernet Franc, 40.7% Cabernet Sauvignon. Very full plum, the nose here is a bit more expressive today than the La Mission, creamy black cherry, violet, a beautiful aromatic profile, the palate is big and dense, the tannins are powerful here, lots of spice and cigar on the finish, classic Cabernet. There is considerable weight, juicy acidity. This will need time. This is a very good Haut Brion but I am not sure it has the polish and fruit density for greatness of recent vintages, we have been spoiled. Oak shows on the finish. 93-95/100.

La Mission Haut Brion Blanc

23.5% Sauvignon, 76.2% Semillon. The nose is a little wrapped up, there is a lovely rich intensity to the palate, salty and mineral, the balance is profound. Great potential. The richness of the higher proportion of Semillon is evident. 93-95/100

Haut Brion Blanc

56.2% Sauvignon, 43.8% Semillon Very pale lemon, not revealing too much on the nose, subtle lemon, sits wonderfully on the palate, very cool, textured, great grip and length. Tensile here. The minerality shines through, this will be very long-lived. 95-97/100

Will Gardener

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