

Bordeaux Wine Locators 2015 Bordeaux En Primeur Report

With much excitement, our team, from four different companies spanning the globe--England, Hong Kong, USA & France--assembled on Saturday April 2nd, here on the Right Bank at our own Chateau Carignan, to embark on the annual ritual of the Bordeaux Futures barrel sample tastings. This being my 31st vintage of tasting barrel samples, I have learned to take the rhetoric that emanates from Bordeaux on this occasion with the proverbial "pinch of salt." Therefore, herein, my own reliable emanations!

We hit the ground running on Sunday, visiting two friends and suppliers, and we tasted 120 wines! Needless-to-say, there was a bit of palate fatigue. What became clear early on, however, as we tasted through the various communes, there would be, as ever, consistency and inconsistency.

On Monday we started at the top of the Medoc at Calon Segur, and by the time 7pm arrived we had finished tasting at most of the major chateaux, ending at Rauzan Segla. The very top wines of this area have that freshness of tannins which is the hallmark of a great claret. You know that if this factor is present while still so young, you will find it there when the wine is mature and ready to drink.

Below is a brief overview of the main communes of Bordeaux. Additionally, visit our website's homepage to access Bill Blatch's inimitable weather report. It is by far the most comprehensive report and will give you a good idea of which areas were most affected by the rains towards the end of the harvest.

St Estephe:

This northernmost commune is a little irregular in terms of quality due to the rains of early October. The highlights were **Montrose**, a wine of great freshness and balance with a lovely, long finish 93-96pts. Additionally, **Calon Segur** had that same freshness, finesse and balance 94-96pts. Quite a bit lower down the price scale was **Les Ormes de Pez**, a rich, ripe wine with great balance and charm 91-93pts--one to look out for.

Pauillac:

Dropping down from St Estephe, Pauillac has three First Growths along with many great Second through Fifth Growths. Again, Pauillac, faced with the same problem as St Estephe, produced some fabulous wines but also, as a whole, was inconsistent. Highlights: **Latour**, which has a whopping 97.1% Cabernet Sauvignon 97-98pts. **Pontet Canet**, the biodynamic leader in Bordeaux, produced a marvelous, massive wine--rich, ripe fruit with great sweet tannins 96-98pts. **Mouton Rothschild**, a very rich, fat, ripe wine with plenty of length 95-97pts. Another consumer favorite, **Grand Puy Lacoste**, has great balance and super mid-palate richness 95-97pts. **Lynch Bages** again stood out in the commune--a wine with power, finesse and length 94-

96pts. Another wine improving year by year is **Le Petit Mouton**; this is great, with lovely balance and superb ripe tannins and vanillin oak 93-95pts. Also in the Mouton Stable, **Armailhac** is lovely--rich, ripe fruit with finesse and length 92-94pts--always good value. **Clerc Milon**, another favorite, loads of finesse and balance with nice chewy tannins 92-94.

St Julien

Ducru Beaucaillou is clearly the leader here, a fabulous rich, ripe, full-bodied wine that has a very long finish 96-98pts. Followed by **St Pierre**, a very rich wine full of sweet tannins and great length 94-97pts. Next we have **Leoville Poyferre**, a balanced wine full of power, finesse and elegance 94-96pts. **Leoville Las Cases** always tough to taste in barrel but clearly a very good LLC 93-95+. **Beychevelle** seems to be improving year by year and this is a superb example of the property, rich, ripe tannins and an elegance and freshness 92-94pts.

Margaux:

This is one of the most consistent communes, with what we feel may potentially result in two "wines of the vintage"--Chateaux Margaux and Palmer. At **Margaux** is 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, full of rich, ripe, fat fruit throughout the entire palate and a finish that continues for a very long time 96-99pts. **Palmer**, a very different style, only 50% Cab Sauvignon, 44% Merlot and 6% Petit Verdot, was one of the most complete young wines I have ever tasted, so succulent, rich and massive in the mouth with super sweet, ripe tannins--truly magnificent 97-99pts. **Rauzan Segla**: This is the best Rauzan I have tasted in barrel since the fabulous 1986, super rich, lovely sweet tannins and balance with a long finish 96-98pts. We were spoilt by this chateau, which harked back to "days gone by" and allowed us to taste from different barrel producers to give us a more complete idea of this wine's potential. There are so many very good wines, including **Malescot St Exupery**, cassis and black cherry with super ripe fruit and great length 94-96pts. **Giscours**, as always, consistent, lovely fresh, ripe fruit with that Margaux elegance and charm 92-94pts. Plus many others [very good wines](#) too numerous to mention.

Pessac Leognan:

Another one of the most consistent communes this year with the major three chateaux nestled in the city of Bordeaux. **Haut Brion**, another potential for "wine of the vintage," a wine with massive power and fruit with fresh tannins and an enormous finish 97-99pts. **La Mission Haut-Brion**, always a different style from Haut Brion, surprisingly, as the vineyards are just across the road from each other. Big structure massive tannins but sweet and ripe with a great freshness 96-98pts. Followed by a very impressive **Smith Haut Lafite** where the Cathiards are celebrating their 25th anniversary. Very powerful, rich, fat wine with a long finish 94-96pts. A very nice **Haut Bailly**, plenty of finesse and ripe sweet tannins 92-95pts. Additionally, **Pape Clement** showed very well, not the usual over-extracted wine. Nice fruit, well integrated with good tension and balance 93-95pts. **Domaine de Chevallier** was a bright and powerful wine, well integrated with nice

silky tannins 93-95pts. **Malartic La Graviere** a very rich, balanced wine with good structure and finish 92-94pts.

Pomerol:

This commune, with its small number of properties, is the most consistent. Another potential "wine of the vintage," **Lafleur**. Wow! What a concentrated wine with pure, ripe fruit and such balance, finesse, elegance and fine structure, and with the longest of finishes 97-99+pts. Followed closely by **Vieux Ch Certan** 80% Merlot 19% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. It has rich creamy tannins and fat, opulent fruit that lasts a very long time on the finish 97-99pts. **L'Evangile** also exceptional structure of fat, rich, ripe fruit and great length 96-98pts. **La Conseillante** was extremely attractive, super ripe fruit, great balance and finish 94-96pts. Plus many other great wines.

St Emilion:

Oh, it could have been so much better, BUT-----the best are fantastic, but as usual, with many there is way too much over extraction which yielded many unpleasant wines. When will they learn? **Canon** was definitely the wine of the commune, what a fantastic wine. Lovely creamy rich tannins, balanced and elegant while offering a massive taste of rich, ripe fruit 97-99pts. **Beausejour Duffau Lagarosse**, exotic spices and black cherry, a super-rich full-bodied wine with a very long finish 96-98pts. **Le Dome** is a very succulent, fat, rich, ripe wine with great length 96-98+. **Ausone** was terrific, a wine of great density, powerful fruit and length 95-97+pts. **Troplong Mondot** lovely, rich, ripe fat fruit, refined and intense 95-97pts. **Clos Fourtet** super-ripe tannins and rich fruit with loads of finesse 95-97pts. **Cheval Blanc** was delicious 45% Cab Franc & 55% Merlot, very balanced and refined with a nice purity of fruit 94-96pts. **Pavie Macquin**, another great effort, super fine tannins rich, fat fruit and great power 94-96pts. **Larcis Ducasse**, very exotic fruit with rich, creamy tannins, full bodied 93-96+. And the best surprise was **Faugeres**--tasted five times with consistent notes. This is the best from the property, lovely violet nose and black cherry with creamy rich tannins and a powerful finish 94-96pts. Numerous other great wines here, but tread carefully.

Pessac Blanc:

The whites of this region are good to very good with many of the consumer-friendly brands, Carbonnieux, La Louviere, Malartic Lagraviere, Latour Martillac and La Garde, producing very fine wines. Of course, the great **Haut Brion Blanc** showed marvelously, peach nose and fabulous richness from the luscious 69% Sauvignon Blanc and 31% Semillon, with a very long finish 96-98pts. **La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc**, a big, bold wine which was quite closed but still full-bodied with vibrant, fleshy fruit 95-97pts. **Domaine de Chevallier Blanc** on top form, as usual, lovely citrus fruit and good acidity and balance 93-95pts.

Sauternes:

This region, like some of the red wine communes, is very inconsistent, but the best are extremely good. **Chateau d'Yquem** is outstanding, very rich and refined, with the

requisite botrytis, great length and power but very elegant 96-98pts. **Doisy Daene**, well-structured and bright, elegant with plenty of rich power on the finish 95-97pts. **Guiraud**, a lovely, sweet, rich, ripe wine--peach nectar with a great finish 94-96pts. **Latour Blanche**, always a model of refinement, with rich, fat, ripe peach and apricot flavors that last for over a minute 94-96pts. And many other good to very good wines which should prove to be a bargain.

Good luck and good hunting!

Cheers,

Andy Lench

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