

Best Since 2010

Bordeaux En Primeur 2015

Photo and Text by Hubert Li



Chateau Pichon Lalande, Pauillac



UNION DES
Grands Crus de Bordeaux
Le 2015

Union des Grand Cru Tasting held at the Bordeaux Stadium for the first time.

Bordeaux En Primeur 2015

The 2015 growing season has been warm and dry overall. May to July has been hot and dry, giving conditions similar to the 2010 vintage. A little rain in August brought the necessary water to the vines and gave the freshness to the grapes. The cool weather in September allowed the grapes to ripen slowly and evenly until full maturity, and the earlier ripening merlot can be picked under ideal conditions. October is rainy, but the grapes remain in good health because the skins, thickened by the summer heat, could withstand such conditions perfectly.

This is no doubt the greatest vintage since 2010. There is a general consensus among chateaux owners and winemakers that this vintage has the strength of 2005, the flesh of 2009 and subtlety of

2010. This is a vintage with very good concentration and great freshness at the same time. Tannins are so refined that the high alcohol level cannot be felt. Thanks to the favourable weather conditions, merlot is definitely the grape of the vintage, and therefore appellations with more use of merlot in the wines, namely Pomerol, Saint Emilion, Pessac Leognan and Margaux have produced very good to excellent wines across the board.

As with share placements in the stock market, you have to support your broker on some hard to move stocks to be allocated the hard to get one. Accordingly, we will be buying this vintage to secure our future allocation on hard to get wines. If you want to do the same, buy selectively, and we will guarantee your allocation of the same wine for the 2016 vintage.



Chateau Cheval Blanc, Saint Emilion.

The Right Bank

Famous wine critic James Suckling has stormed the market with his high scores that stirred up great interest in the campaign. In particular, Chateau Canon came under the spotlight with a 100pt score, and having tasted the wine myself on two different occasions, I cannot agree more. Those who came to our Rauzan Segla and Canon tasting last month would know how good these two wines can be.

The usual “suspects” have all performed incredibly well. In Pomerol, Petrus with its intense fruit and silky tannins can only be 100 points and it reminded me of the 2010 vintage. I am also extremely impressed with Lafleur, Vieux Chateau Certan, La Fleur Petrus, Trotanoy, Eglise Clinet and Clinet, and they are all candidates for the perfect score.

The Jean Pierre Moueix wines are extremely interesting as their flagship wines La Fleur Petrus,

Trotanoy and Belair Monange are all merlot-based wines but with different soils: namely gravel, clay and limestone, the wines gave equally impressive but very different expressions. Hosanna and Latour a Pomerol are also very impressive with elegant red fruits and rich mid-palate that you should not miss.

Saint Emilion is equally promising with Ausone, Angelus, Canon and Belair Monange leading the pack, followed by Cheval Blanc, Figeac, Beausejour Duffau, Tropong Mondot, Larcis Ducasse and Canon La Gaffeliere.

It is worth noting that Pierre Lurton from Cheval Blanc has announced that no Petit Cheval, their second wine, will be made in 2015, simply because most of the grapes were good enough to go into the grand vin. Let’s hope the release price will be reasonable with a bigger production!



Chateau Pape Clement and Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte, stars of the vintage from Pessac Leognan.

Pessac-Leognan

The wines from Pessac are also outstanding. Haut Brion and La Mission Haut Brion are so rich, complex and pure but always slightly different, with the Haut Brion being a touch more refined while La Mission being more powerful. It's worth paying attention to the other Clarence-Dillon wine from Saint Emilion: Quintus. They have made the best Quintus by far this year and is a wine to put on radar.

Another pleasant surprise from the region is Les Carmes Haut Brion. Winemaker Guillaume Poutier, who was previously the winemaker at Michel Chapoutier in Rhone Valley, has joined

Les Carmes Haut Brion since the 2012 vintage. He believes in extracting the tannins from the stems rather than from the pips of the grapes as this give more refined tannins. The results are remarkable and this wine should not be missed!

Great wines don't stop here. Pape Clement has been much more reasonable in pricing in recent years and the quality this year is simply outstanding. Smith Haut Lafitte is so seductive too, and for 2015 they have decided to apply a new black label to celebrate the 600th Anniversary of the vineyard, and 25th Anniversary under the ownership of the Cathiard family.



Chateau Latour

The Left Bank

Quality on the left bank varies from very good to outstanding, because rainstorm has struck northern parts of the left bank in October 2015 and that can dilute the juice in the cabernet sauvignon, but vineyards with good drainage seem unaffected.

Margaux is no doubt the wine of vintage, with intense dark fruits, coolness and great complexity in the glass already. Their second wine Pavillon Rouge is definitely classified quality. No doubt the wines are so good as only 35% of the production went to the Grand Vin and 22% of the production went to the Pavillon Rouge. Their dry white wine Pavillon Blanc has good acidity and offers a lot of white peaches. The vintage favours the sauvignon blanc grape but not Semillon, hence this 100% sauvignon

blanc wine did well.

Palmer is a blend of 44% merlot, 50% cabernet sauvignon and 6% petit verdot this year, and quality is on par with 2005, 2009 and 2010. Among the other wines in the Margaux appellation, I am also particularly impressed with Rauzan Segla, Malescot Saint Exupery and Lascombes.

Lafite has never been easy to assess during en primeurs, but this year it showed pure fruit, silky tannins and incredibly long aftertaste. Not only the grand vin is excellent, but so do Carruades de Lafite and Duhart Milon.

Latour is a fruit bomb, maybe not to the extreme level of 2010 but not far off, but we won't see it on the market for another 15 years or so, a great wine that



Chateau Lafite Rothschild

needs a lot of patience.

Pontet Canet is one of the best wines in Pauillac. Thanks for the biodynamic growing methods, the grapes mature earlier and therefore they could harvest earlier before being struck by the rain. The wine is intense and extremely pleasing.

Other very good wines from the vintage include Mouton, Pichon Lalande, Pichon Baron, Ducru Beaucaillou, Leoville Lascases and Grand Puy Lacoste. This is not surprising as they have some of the best terroirs.

In Saint Estephe, the iconic wines like Cos d'Estournel, Montrose and Calon Segur are very good, but it is arguable whether they are better than the excellent 2014s.

What really impressed me from the northern part of Medoc is the quality of the second wines, as they generally have more merlot in the blend, giving intense flavours. Wines like Tronquoy Lalande, Pagodes de Cos, Reserve de la Comtesse and Petit Lion are excellent value for money.



Vineyards are being ploughed by horse to prepare for the next growing season.

Is 2015 vintage a good deal?

Prices for the En Primeurs market has corrected substantially during the 2011, 2012 and 2013 campaigns and only rose moderately for 2014, so despite further price increases for this great vintage, the level is likely to be reasonable. This will be a late en primeurs campaign and we expect to see releases of classified growths from mid-May, possibly running through to end of June. The exchange rate between USD and Euro remained similar to same time last year, making it an attractive vintage to buy now.



*Baptiste Guinaudeau,
Chateau Lafleur*



*Alexandre Thienpont,
Chateau Vieux Chateau Certan*



*Stephanie and Thierry Grenie de
Bouard, Chateau Angelus*



*Ronan Laborde,
Chateau Clinet*



*Pierre Lurton,
Chateau Cheval Blanc*



*Christian Moueix, Chateau La Fleur
Petrus, Trotanoy, Belair Monange and
Hosanna*



*Herve Berland,
Chateau Montrose*



*Denis Durantou,
Chateau L'Eglise Clinet*



*Marielle Cazaux,
Chateau La Conseillante*

My Recommendations

My most preferred wines this year come from Pomerol, Saint Emilion, Pessac Leognan and Margaux. Pauillac and Saint Julien are also very good, in particular from the best terroirs, as well as the merlot-based wines.

My top picks are as follows:

The Left Bank

- Margaux, Margaux
- Palmer, Margaux
- Haut Brion, Pessac Leognan
- La Mission Haut Brion, Pessac Leognan
- Pape Clement, Pessac Leognan
- Smith Haut Lafitte, Pessac Leognan
- Lafite Rothschild, Pauillac
- Pontet Canet, Pauillac

The Right Bank

- Petrus, Pomerol
- Eglise Clinet, Pomerol
- Vieux Chateau Certan, Pomerol
- La Fleur Petrus, Pomerol
- Trotanoy, Pomerol
- Lafleur, Pomerol
- Clinet, Pomerol
- Angelus, Saint Emilion
- Ausone, Saint Emilion
- Belair-Monange, Saint Emilion
- Canon, Saint Emilion
- Cheval Blanc, Saint Emilion
- Figeac, Saint Emilion
- Troplong Mondot, Saint Emilion
- Beausejour Duffau, Saint Emilion
- Larcis Ducasse, Saint Emilion

And my value picks are as follows:

The Left Bank

- Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux
- Tronquoy Lalande, Saint Estephe
- Reserve de la Comtesse, Pauillac
- Lacoste Borie, Pauillac
- Petit Lion, Saint Julien

The Right Bank

- Berliquet, Saint Emilion
- De Fonbel, Saint Emilion
- Petit Village, Pomerol
- Siaurac, Lalande de Pomerol
- Montlandrie, Castillon Cotes de Bordeaux



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