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2003 Bordeaux

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April 2004
Special Report

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Bordeaux 2003 Vintage Report "Global Warming"

or

The "Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove" Vintage Tasting in Bordeaux March 27th-April 8th, 2004

K&L's big (literally and figuratively) contingent of five took off for Bordeaux this year. With the likes of Ralph Sands, David Rickenbaker, Tommy Martinez, Trey Beffa, and Clyde Beffa Jr, we looked more like a flag football team than a group of tasters trying to find out if the 2003 Bordeaux vintage was all that so many insiders had said it was, to see if the whispers of "another '47 or 1949 vintage" were in fact true. This is the first time K&L has sent five "heavies" to cover a Bordeaux vintage, as the reports of many serious wines were emanating from some of the most respected Bordeaux negociants. Since much if not all of this report, weather wise, has been supplied by Bill Blatch of Vintex. We thank him greatly.

Overview

With only eight vintages during the 20th Century experiencing such an extended period of extreme temperatures, France has never seen a vintage culminate with such an outrageously fierce August heat. It should have been enough to dry out all the French vineyards, grapes and all. Yet Bordeaux seems to have survived better than elsewhere in France, first by having had a good cold and wet winter, and then by gradually leading up to that extreme August by a hot May, a very hot June and a very hot July. Thankfully some good rainfall in July kept the vines evolving, with the result that only some of the vines actually shut down or dried up.

The harvest started exceptionally early, in the extreme heat of August 12th, the earliest since 1893. A week or two later, after the re-invigorating late summer showers and cooler nights, those whose grapes hadn't totally dried out in August or those who had not panicked into premature picking, could wait for true phenolic ripeness and harvest at a leisurely pace, all through September.



**TWO BOTTLES TASTED AT
CHATEAU LAFITE**

So, we have two kinds of wine, the first burnt into shape by the extreme conditions of August, the second evolved in a more relaxed way thereafter. Both kinds are as unusual as the year's climate. Very few vineyard or winery people had any experience in handling such an extreme vintage or of assessing its results. The sugar levels seemed so high and the acidities so low, and before the grapes were fully ripe, many lesser estates panicked and harvested before any more yield would be lost. Such wines bear the '03 hallmark of high alcohol, light color, and low flavor. But those with more heat-resistant soils, older vines on good rootstock, and well-kept vineyards were able to hold off, and could enjoy watching the acidities at least partially return in the determining fine, but cooler September conditions, and enjoy ripeness as well as alcohol, which of course was high but nowhere near as outrageous as had been anticipated.

At first, these later harvesters were shy to say anything about the quality of the vintage, having just lived through all the hot-vintage nightmares of cooling difficulties during vinification, of stopped fermentations and the ever-present risk of volatile acidity, and then seeing a resulting wine, which because of its exaggerated alcohol and very low acidity, was not at all their or their oenologists' idea of what Bordeaux ought to be. As outsiders have been tasting and admiring their wines, the vintners are gradually warming to them and beginning to admit at least certain comparisons to other extreme vintages (e.g. 1947) that ended up becoming famous. Of course the yields are low, and the moment when these wines will be put on the market is quite soon, so the winery people are not averse to such rumours (high quality + low yield=higher prices). Most remain unconvinced that this is a truly great vintage. But with a plethora of average wines, there are truly some really outstanding successes in 2003. Unlike the last so-called "great" vintage of 2000, the wines of 2003 are quite variable with great wines interspersed with average ones. It was K&L's job to sift through some 500 wines and pick the best available. That is why we sent 10% of our staff to Bordeaux for 10 days.

The Weather

The winter in Bordeaux was a perfectly normal one, mild and normally wet up to the New Year, then very cold and still normally wet for January and early February. Rain fell regularly and slowly all through the winter, allowing the water to penetrate the soil well and building up reserves that were to be vital later on. By summer water tables would be normal. This is the main difference compared to previous similarly hot summer vintages in '89 and '90, which were preceded by arid winters. The mild early winter prevented early pruning, and this provided a good excuse for growers to put it off until much later (the real reason being that yields had been short in 2002, and there was no point in taking undue risks with the 2003 as later pruning reduces risk of frost damage). The mean temperature for January-February ended up 1° colder than the average. This meant that the sap could really go right down, and assured that parasites got killed off. If we have to have global warming (and for the planet, 2003 was +0.45°C warmer than the 40-year-average, making it the third warmest year since records began), it is better that it comes in long cycles, rather than in short bursts.

With the warm days of late February, the sap suddenly started to rise and continued through a rather dry and warm March. Now the vineyards were up to two weeks ahead, with growth literally exploding by April 2. In a month, the vines had gone from total dormancy to vigorous growth. March had been the warmest since '45 and very dry, and the important result here is the dry conditions made the vines' roots go down to find more permanent deeper water reserves (a good thing considering what was in store for June, July and August). There was a negative side to this spring drought, however, which now starved the vine into producing a small-to-average number of embryo bunches and large gaps between bunches. So much for a large harvest in 2003—something everyone had been hoping for to compensate for the low

SUN SETTING BEHIND PICHON-LALANDE WITH PICHON -BARON IN BACKGROUND





RALPH SANDS AT THE VINEX TASTING

yields of 2002. Even with the early bud break, frost was not much of a problem in 2003. By the end of April the vines were still two weeks ahead, and since early years have a better chance of being good years, the growers were generally optimistic. Little did anyone know that this earliness was to put the beginning of the harvest right in the hottest part of August.

May continued dry, and there was another sudden surge of growth. The first flowers were observed over the weekend of May 17—still two weeks early. Then the weather got erratic, and in this less than ideal flowering conditions, it quickly became clear that some damage (although less than last year) had been done especially to the old-vine Merlots in the form of both coulure and millerandage. These were to be precisely the grapes that would suffer the most from the heat stress later, and they didn't need this problem now.

This so far routine, if very early year, now entered a phase that was to set it apart from all other years in the recorded history of Bordeaux. **For 92 days from May 28 right through to August 28, Bordeaux experienced the most unrelenting and totally exceptional heat wave of all time.** June and July were exceptionally hot, but did not break many records. August, however, pulverised all the records, especially those stifling 11 consecutive days over 35°C (August 3-13). As elsewhere in France, that should have dealt the final blow. But strangely, only parts of the Bordeaux vineyard shrivelled and collapsed under the stress. The rest of the vineyards continued to look dark green and flourishing, and went on to enjoy the showers and the fresher weather that followed, and above all, those wonderful days of September that could put the final touches to the ripening of the skins and pips long after the sugar and acidity had arrived at apparent ripeness.

All over France it was said that vines had stopped functioning, the grapes had shut down and shrivelled, and the pickers had to pull them

from the vine in a hurry during the searing heat of August. Of course all this happened in Bordeaux too, but to a much lesser extent. First of all, with its Atlantic climate, Bordeaux's maximum temperatures were more moderate than further east. Almost all of the summer days saw winds from the Atlantic, with at least some moisture. In addition, we have already seen how the winter rainfall was sufficient to maintain moisture deep in the soil. And now, **the rainfall for these three exceptionally hot summer months was perfectly normal.** This was in marked contrast to the total drought of many other parts of Europe, and it also clearly sets the vintage apart from other similarly hot years such as '47 when the heat had been totally dry, with no summer rainfall to alleviate it.

From August 2 to August 13, every day saw 35°C+ temperatures. But even with this heat (with a few exceptions like western Pomerol and the plateau of St-Emilion) the vines remained dark green throughout, did not lose their leaves and only really shut down from the 6th to the 13th of August. During this period the *véraison* happened, swiftly and effectively from July 25th. It finished during the extreme heat, around August 7 for the warmer soils, a few days later for the cooler vineyards. The rapidity of this *véraison* caught up a lot of the irregularity that had been occasioned in the bunches during the spun-out flowering, and by mid month, the long bunches of tiny grapes that had survived were looking tired but good, whilst the ones that hadn't made it were already shrivelled and falling off.

In the final days of the early August super heat wave, it was time to harvest many of the Pessac-Léognan whites. They had already lost much of their juice to the heat. The sugars were very high, and any further delay would not only bring further evaporation but any aromas that were left would be totally blown away. Accordingly, in a much-publicized move, Château L'Hospital was reportedly the first

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with a small pick on Tuesday August 12, and this was followed by an even more publicized total pick of the Haut-Brion and Laville Haut-Brion whites. This was the earliest start of any vintage since 1893.

After August 14, the weather cooled to a "mere" 28°C, and some showers occurred during the rest of the month. With the vines nicely refreshed and the grapes reviving from their wrinkled state, the rest of the Pessac-Léognan whites and the Bordeaux whites were harvested throughout the remainder of August. Early September saw the earlier ripening red wine areas such as Pessac-Léognan, St-Emilion and Pomerol start their Merlot harvest, first under bright sunny conditions (between the 3rd to the 5th), then between the showers of the 6th to the 10th (fortunately the really heavy rain fell at night). Most of these three regions had finished their Merlots by September 12th, in a hurry towards the end because those five days of 20-35mm rainfall had provoked some outbreaks of grey rot, about which there was a lot of concern since it would likely spread very quickly during the long period of warm fine weather forecast for the following days.

Growers began to count on this fine weather during the showery days of September 6th-10th. This was to become a determining feature of the vintage. If there had been rain in the forecast, all remaining Merlots and probably a good proportion of the Cabs would have been picked right away. The sugars were very high, the acidities abnormally low; only the pips and the wood of the grape needed to ripen. Better

to have slightly green grapes than rotten ones, and the resulting qualities would have been as mixed as those who had already harvested. So, of those Merlots still to be picked, mainly the Médoc ones, the better Bordeaux and Côtes ones, and the Right Bank ones on clay soils, most now had the confidence to put off harvesting until the following Monday, September 15. Others who had more grapes that were fragile, dried-out or tasteless quickly picked now over the fine weekend of the 13th to the 14th, marginally before total ripeness and, as a result, missed out on the fabulous, almost perfect September conditions that were to come. Half of Bordeaux's vineyards had finished their harvest by now, and the estate owners could only watch with dismay at what they were missing. Bordeaux's best was still on the vine and could now be harvested at leisure right through to the end of the month.

These later harvesters worried over the weekend of September 13th-14th. What if they had miscalculated? What if the grapes had been ripe last week? And, above all, what if the weather forecasts were wrong? With such a small yield hanging on the vines already, it was a tough call, especially for those estate managers who are responsible to shareholders and owning families, with the consultant oenologists almost universally advising earlier harvesting. They were going for broke in the face of nearly all professional advice. And they lucked out, as September 15th to October 1st saw the weather turn very fine

TASTING AT COMPAGNIE MEDOCAINE





LUNCH WITH ANTHONY BARTON

with warm days (rounding off the ripening) and cool nights (returning acidity to the grapes).

The great bulk of Bordeaux's Cabs were in by September 27th, and immediately the juice displayed all those dark colours and strong structures that had been missing from the earlier Merlots and whites. At this time it was thought that this was clearly going to be a Cabernet vintage. It had been an early vintage, but one that had finished much later than originally thought at the véraison. Nobody could quite believe their luck, and maybe because the mass of early harvesters were cursing theirs, those who had been able to harvest later could not quite come to terms with the fact that they had possibly produced something rather special.

Vinification, yields, and the wines

In recent years Bordeaux has made tremendous progress in harvest-reception and vinification equipment. Even with all of this, 2003 was a winemaker's nightmare. The grapes often came in at over 35°C and had to be drastically cooled before any of the above methods could be effective. If cooling could be quickly achieved, a pre-fermentation maceration was just possible, but as soon as the fermentations started, extreme care had to be taken not to extract any of the unripe components. It was one problem after another for the winemakers. The question of acidification has been widely reported, especially by a rather vindictive section of the press, ever since the French government allowed it for this very low-acid vintage. Every property owner or director we asked said they did not need to acidify. Acidity did not show in the analysis, but it sure shows in the tasting of the red wines. **We found there was no problem with acidity in 2003 red Bordeaux.** We were also expecting to find excessively-high alcohols in the wines, and for the most part, the alcohols were high, but not excessive.

The 2003 Bordeaux crop was down only about 15% (Burgundy was down 30%) from the five-year average. Nonetheless, for lesser Bordeaux and Médoc estates, especially those that got hit by hail, this

second short harvest in a row is now spelling financial disaster, coupled with a 12% fall in bulk prices over the year and with a 20% increase in operating costs over the last three years (35-hour week, etc). On the positive side, the great properties had such a fine harvest that they produced more first wine than usual. Maybe K&L will get more allocation of these wines? I am not holding my breath on this one.

We found the wines quite easy to taste compared to the 2002, 1998 or 1996 vintages. Maybe it was the fact that we spread the trip over two extra days or the fact that we scheduled less "100 wines at a seating" tastings. After all these years, we are catching on-maybe! Tasting at the properties is still the best way to see the real wine produced there. The very civilized tasting at the negociant Joanne's office is also a good way to taste. Imagine having the great châteaux served to you by commune, while you sit, taste and spit. The UGC tastings are important, but not always the best way to taste. You can taste a lot of wines over a three-day period, but the atmosphere of so many tasters and so many disinterested pourers leaves us a little cold. Also, the wines are tasted

"What you have are wines of incredible power and brute force covered by prodigious amounts of ripe fruit flavors..."

alphabetically so if you have a refined, delicate wine sandwiched between two "garagist," totally extracted, oaky ones, the classic wine will not show as well. So many journalists come to these UGC tastings and never visit the properties-big mistake. We tasted some wines up to five times over the nine-day period, and we found these young wines changing...sometimes daily. Mean and tough one day and silky the next. Tasting young Bordeaux has to be one of the toughest jobs in the wine business.

Back to the wines. We were expecting very high tannin contents, and we got what we expected, but with one major difference: The tannins, for the most part, were round and ripe, not hard and green. Also, the best wines had so much fruit that the fruit hid the tannins. So, what you have are wines of incredible power and brute force covered by prodigious amounts of ripe fruit flavours, decent acid levels and

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acceptable alcohol levels. Here is what I mean by an “iron fist in a velvet glove” style vintage.

So ended a frighteningly unusual year, producing wines that were often excessive, to the extent that nobody has a clear idea about them even now. A vintage with too much sun is better than one with too much rain, however. 2003 is a hot-climate vintage, which may turn out better than 2000 or even 1989 and 1982 for some wines. The properties now have better means to deal with almost any kind of a vintage than they did in 2000. 1982 really seems like the “old days” of wine-making, and vineyard practices. Of what vintage does 2003 remind us? Very hard to say, but the vintage in general is a very good one, perhaps very great for some wines. Bill Blatch, the famous negociant mentioned above, says (half jokingly) “it is a mixture of 25% '29, 25% '47/'49 and 50% '89? But of course the most obvious similarity is to none of the above but rather to the 1540 vintage, which, at the end of the last period of global warming, was the last time you could cross the Garonne (above Langon) without getting your feet wet.” A bit more recently, how about 1/6 1982, 1/3 1986, 1/3 1989, and 1/6 2000?

The best wines are extraordinary wines with power hiding behind finesse and massive ripe fruit. It is definitely not like 2000, which was so consistent from wine to wine, from the lesser Bordeaux up to the First Growths. No such luck with 2003; you must choose wisely. That's why K&L sent our “A” team to dissect the vintage. I do not believe any other store in the world sent five persons to taste this vintage in Bordeaux. We have many pages of tasting notes compiled on the trip by the five of us. Clyde wrote them, as well as this report, with a lot of help from his travelling companions and of course Bill Blatch. There are brief notes for each commune in Bordeaux in the tasting note section also some photos interspersed throughout.

Some of the perks of this gruelling tasting trip were the great meals we had at Cordeillan Bages, Cos d'Estournel, Pichon-Baron, Léoville-Barton, Latour, Destieux, Barde-Haut, Smith-Haut-Lafitte, and Haut-Bailly, not to mention wonderful meals at Pierre Lawton's (Alias) and Pierre Antoine Casteja's (Joanne) homes. A few wines we were served included (in no particular order) 1970 and 1959 Latour, 1959 Suduiraut, 1958 Mouton in magnum, 1975 Pichon-Lalande, 1982 Cos, 1985 Lynch-Bages, etc, etc. Our heartfelt thanks to all of our fine friends in Bordeaux. You made our trip very enjoyable. And, as an aside, the first annual Joanne-Alias-K&L golf tourney was won by Pierre Antoine Casteja and Trey Beffa. We had to have one day off!

And the prices

A touchy subject, but I am sure some properties will raise their prices from the low levels of 2002. In fact, a few wines have already opened at small increases (in Euros). Unfortunately the dollar is 20-25% below its level of last year. So, the prices for us will be higher than 2002s even if there is no price increase from the properties. Many properties know they have made outstanding wines in 2003, and the yields were below the 5-year average. We can only hope the increases over 2002 levels are minimal, but I am afraid the First Growths may go crazy this year. You won't see any \$99 bottles of 2003 First Growths like last year, unless they are for half bottles!

What should you do? First of all, if you are at all interested in this vintage I would get on the K&L waiting lists for your favorite wines. We already have some 85 wines in the system though no prices of course. You are under no obligation to buy the wine, but you will be notified when the wine is available. This year's campaign could be short and

sweet, so use the waiting list. We may not great big allocations with first tranche pricing. Since we were one of the few retailers in the US.. that offered the 2002s, we are in pretty good shape with several of the best and biggest negociants as far as allocations of the classified growths go. But we never get enough!

There are some must buys this year as some châteaux made their best wine EVER. These wines will afford drinking pleasure for many years to come. I hope we can offer the First Growths for \$149-\$159 at first tranche. If so, buy all you can afford! Have you noticed the prices of 2000s lately? And these 2003s are every bit as good. Take a look at the tasting notes and talk to Ralph Sands, Tom Martinez, David Rickenbaker, Trey Beffa or myself. Don't say I didn't warn you.

I want to thank my fellow “heavies” mentioned above for a great trip and for helping me compile this report and the tasting notes below. These guys are the future of K&L, and they did just fine on this gruelling trip. Nobody got sick or “hit the wall.”

Clyde Beffa Jr

Written April 1st -8th, 2004

2003 BORDEAUX TASTING NOTES

We tasted wines 1) at the properties 2) at the UGC tastings 3) at the negociant offices and 4) at the big Joanne tasting on April 5th. We tasted many more wines than those listed below. Some wines we found not to our liking and did not include here. We will offer some of the wines below on a futures basis. NOT ALL OF THEM.

-. means fabulous wines worthy of your cellar no matter the price.*

**-.*.5+ very fine wines that you should consider. Price could be determining factor.*

.5-.5*+ worth looking at when they arrive in our stores.*

Notes below were written by Clyde Jr (with comments from Ralph, Trey, Tom, and David R) during and immediately after the trip.

Bordeaux Blanc, Graves and Pessac-Léognan Blanc

Quite rich wines, but most lack that zingy acidity of 2001 and 2002. I miss the citric elements here-not a super successful area in 2003. Too hot at harvest.

Marjosse Blanc, Entre-deux-Mers

A superb, fresh white wine for around \$10. Wine available around July. Creamy notes meshed with citric flavors. Excellent everyday drinker. We bought it.

Lynch-Bages Blanc, Bordeaux

Very fine balance and lots of flavor. Some pear and touch of citrus. Richer than previous vintages. Nice depth. Not offered on futures basis.

Pavillon Blanc de Margaux, Bordeaux

Only 20 hectoliters per hectare. 13.5% alcohol that is not apparent. Fine entry and on the rich side. Is there enough acidity?

Carbonnieux Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Good, but not one to buy on futures basis.

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Domaine de Chevalier Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Stony aromas and light on palate right now. May come around. Judgment reserved. High alcohol. Tasted at LD Vins, it was bright with a creamy, oaky texture. Acidity is ok. .5*

Haut-Bergey Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Very oaky, toasty vanilla aromas. Good entry, but still a little unresolved.

Haut-Brion Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

52% semillon and 48% sauvignon blanc. Very citric aromas and flavors. Light and elegant. Very long and not overdone. A lighter style of Haut-Brion Blanc. *.5

Laville-Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

87% semillon and 13% sauvignon blanc. Lots of alcohol. Pear aromas and flavor. Round and rich. *

Malartic-Lagraviere Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Some oaky nuances, but a solid, well-balanced wine. Clean and refreshing. .5*

Smith-Haut-Lafitte Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Big wine with some oaky nuances and melony aromas. Some gardenia aromas. Good palate entry and lingering finish. Lots of alcohol-acidity is questionable. Showed best at LD Vins tasting. *

Villa Bel-Air Blanc, Graves

Very perfumed nose. Melon and then citrus flavors. Some oak evident. 50% semillon and 50% sauvignon blanc

Graves Rouge, Pessac-Léognan

This region had some superstars and quite a few underperformers. Merlot was surprisingly strong here. Light soils hurt some properties.

Bahans-Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

48% cabernet sauvignon, 27% merlot and 25% cabernet franc. Black raspberry aromas. Quite spicy with tannic finish. Slightly hollow middle. Wine grows on you. .5*

Cantelys Rouge, Pessac-Léognan

60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. Spicy upfront fruit flavors. Some gritty tannins at the back. Good middle fruit on the palate. Well-made .5*

Carbonnieux Rouge, Pessac-Léognan

Nice soft red fruit aromas. Very new wave compared to past vintages. Quite sweet up front and tannic at back end. .5*

Chapelle de La Mission, Pessac-Léognan

50% cabernet franc, 25% merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Lighter color with more red licorice flavors. Sweet entry and gritty middle. Slightly short.

Clos Marsalette, Pessac-Léognan

High tones on the nose. Very sweet red berry flavors. Soft and forward. Very well-made. * Could be a sleeper.

Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac-Léognan

65% cabernet sauvignon, 23% merlot, 7% petit verdot and 5% cabernet franc. Very peppery and spicy aromas. Good mid-palate sweetness. Lovely wine. *

Haut-Bergey Rouge, Pessac-Léognan

Very toasty oaky aromas. Tobacco and coffee flavors. Sexy wine with some exotic spice flavors. Has grip on the back palate. A wine in control and balanced. A complete wine and not overdone. *+

Haut-Bailly, Pessac-Léognan

56% cabernet sauvignon, 38% merlot and 6% cabernet franc. This wine tastes much better at the Chateau, but the aromas were great every time we tasted it. 50% into first wine. It is a pure expression of the terroir with only 50% new oak used. Here as in Haut-Brion, the Merlot was the strength behind the blend (Unusual in 2003). Also they had good rainfall on July 15th, August 16th and August 19th to replenish the moisture in the soil. As a result their wines did not suffer from the heat. A good proportion of clay soil also helped. Very sweet aromas of violets and undertones of black licorice. Sweet palate entry; Substantial on the palate. Mid-fruit is there. Some extraction and grip with noticeable tannins at the back. Normal size crop here (6000 cases) **

K&L WITH NEGOCIANT PIERRE LAWTON AND JEAN GUILLAUME PRATS AT COS D'ESTOURNEL



2003 BORDEAUX TASTING NOTES

Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

58% merlot, 31% cabernet sauvignon and 9% cabernet franc. A very high percentage of Merlot this year. Deep color with black fruits and violets on the nose. Lush mouth feel. Sweet and ripe with fine grip on the palate. Tannins integrated and lots of sweet spices. A more feminine style than La Mission, but nevertheless it is a restrained monster. Some clove flavors. Elegant, earthy, and lingering finish. Extremely complex-a lot going on here. **+

La Mission Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

52% cabernet sauvignon, 39% merlot and 9% cabernet franc. Smoky, meaty aromas. Exotic spices with earthy undertones. Intense wine with meaty flavors. Racy with drying tannins at the back. Big wine. **

Latour-Martillac, Pessac-Léognan

Another rising star from the Pessac area. Good sweetness and lovely fruit flavors. Has quite good depth with some tannins at the back end. Elegant and bright. *

La Tour Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

68% merlot and 32% cabernet franc. Deep color. Reserved nose. Some meatiness and very tannic at the end. A bit hot with some whisky undertones.

Les Carmes Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

Awful label, but fine wine. Rich and mineral aromas. Earthy on the palate and tannins are integrated. Lots of fruit. *+

Malartic-Lagraviere, Pessac-Léognan

Flashy wine. Lots of toasty oak. Spicy wine. Semi new wave, but in control. Earthy flavors with blackberry fruits evident. Has an elegance not found in many Pessac wines. Bravo! *.5

Pape-Clément, Pessac-Léognan

One of the best of the region. Very deep and dark wine. Exotic Asian spices on the nose. Very sweet and lovely texture on the palate. Stunning wine. Very rich and totally delicious right now. Lots of stuffing in reserve. *.5+

Smith-Haut-Lafite Rouge, Pessac-Léognan

Tasted many times-results not consistent. At UGC tasting-intense, black fruit aromas, sweet mid-palate and quite full-bodied. At LD Vins, Boysenberry and blueberry aromas. Tannic on back palate, but seems to have good stuffing and very sweet fruit flavors. The aromas were more consistent than the flavors. *.5

Villa Bel-Air Rouge, Graves

65% cabernet sauvignon and 35% merlot. Good up front spice and fruit. Short but could be a decent value when it arrives.

Médoc, Haut-Médoc

The northern properties of the Médoc were fortunate to have heavier soils and some wines were outstanding. Some great values here.

Bernadotte, Haut-Médoc

57% cabernet sauvignon, 41% merlot and 2% mixed. Sweet nose and fruity mid-palate. Slightly hollow but should be a value at a low price. Wine has an edge to it, but will soften. At Joanne-superb nose of chocolate. Black fruit flavors. Dry at back-should do well. *

Cambon La Pelouse, Haut-Médoc

This place is making great value wines now. Superb sweetness and forward fruits abound. Perfect balance. This is a sleeper and one to buy. As good as many big name classified growths. Ralph and Clyde will buy cases. *+. It just opened on 8th April, and it is a steal!

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc

Tons of toasty black fruit aromas. Sweet core of fruit with a silky palate entry. Old school style. Lovely wine for the traditionalists. A great value. * Tasted several times.

Chasse-Spleen, Moulis

Quite fruity up front with tons of tannin at the back end. Could develop. Old school. Everyone in group likes it, and it is a wine that will drink early as well as age well for ten years. A sleeper. *+ Wine opened on April 5th at 5% higher price than 2002 (Euros). It sold out immediately. We only got 25 cases.

Clement-Pichon, Médoc

A new rising star in Bordeaux. Good sweetness and finish. Buy on arrival. .5*

Goulee, Médoc

The new and everpresent Goulee from our friend Jean Guillaume Prats has taken the Bordeaux commune by storm. From a vineyard area north of St-Estèphe (great terroir for 2003), this wine is black in color, ripe and jammy on the nose and palate. A semi new wave left bank wine. Very well-made. It will be a great value if we can sell it for \$20. *+ Tasted many times.

La Lagune, Haut-Médoc

60% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot and 10% petit verdot. Steely aromas and old school flavors. Has good sweetness on palate. 12000 cases. Cassis and red fruit. More purity of fruit, depth and richness than we've ever seen from this fine property. This could be a value. .5*

Latour Carnet, Haut-Médoc

Good aromas of red fruits and orange zest. Elegant style with tannic finish. Good length. Ralph likes its flashy, grapey style that is in control. * Tasted three times.

Malescasse, Haut-Médoc

Toasty, spicy aromas. Some black pepper nuances with a freshness and fine richness. Solid effort to buy when it arrives. .5*

Plagnac, Médoc

Look for this value when it arrives. Very rich boysenberry flavors. Powerful wine, but sweet. Best ever from here? .5*

Potensac, Médoc

43% cabernet sauvignon, 33% merlot and 23% cabernet franc. Perfumey, almost flowery nose. Forward and ripe. Some Asian spices and coca-cola also on the nose. Lots of grip to this wine with tons of tannin at back end. This

TASTING AT CHATEAU LATOUR WITH FREDERIC ENGERER





RALPH SANDS AND TOMMY MARTINEZ AT MOUTON

could develop well-time will tell. .5*

Poujeaux, Moulis

Always one of our favorites. Bright and fresh aromas, both raspberry and black raspberry with hints of smoke and toast. Good length and depth of flavor. Nice wine done in the traditionalist style. Not overdone. Has grip on the back end. *+ Tasted four times.

Sociando-Mallet, Haut-Médoc

They are making super wines these days, and this wine is as good as wines three times as expensive. Black color and very concentrated wine. Has strength and power together with an elegance and sweetness not usually found here. Should be an ager. Perfect soil to handle this torrid vintage. *.5+

St-Estèphe

The length on the palate comes mainly from the Cabernet this year-both cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. The heavier clay soils from this area made for some monumental wines in 2003.

Andron Blanquette, St-Estèphe

Ripe boysenberry nose-nice fruit.

Calon-Segur, St-Estèphe

Rich and powerful-red fruits. Intense brute-holding back while showing lots of sweet red berry fruit upfront. Extremely well-balanced. *.5+

Clauzet, St-Estèphe

Wow! Here is a bargain and sleeper of the vintage. Tasted several times and we are impressed. Cellarmaster came from Mouton-Rothschild; owners have put a lot of money into this property. Big, but finely balance. Tremendous mid-palate sweetness and very lingering aftertaste. Worth a buy at around \$20. *+

Cos d'Estournel, St-Estèphe

They are on a roll here. We tasted 2003 alongside 2002 and 2001. 2001 is fabulous and forward with smoked meat aromas and plenty of coffee nuances on the palate. 2002 is much more powerful with oak and vanilla sweetness on the palate and very much tannin at the back. Very powerful. The 2003 is a combination of the two with some 1982 and 1986 thrown in. 70% cabernet

sauvignon and 27% merlot with a touch of petit verdot and cabernet franc. Very high cabernet content for Cos as their vineyard near Lafite produced a fine wine and was included in the final grand vin blend. This wine has power and strength with great acidity and balance. Still holding back but it will be magnificent. Here is your iron fist in a velvet glove. **+ Vines had deep root structure and did not shutdown during the torrid August spell. They were picked at optimum ripeness-not too early or too late. The harvest time was the secret at Cos.

Haut Marbuzet, St-Estephe

Sweet oak and feminine style. Elegant style. Solid wine, but only tasted once. Judgement reserved.

Lafon-Rochet, St-Estèphe

Sweet wine and cassis flavors. Polished wine. No harsh tannins here. Could be their best ever. *.5

Les-Ormes-de-Pez, St-Estèphe

55% cabernet, 30% merlot and 15% cabernet franc. Very spicy nose. Flavor of red fruits. Substantial wine. *+ At Joanne tasting-Sweet and focused. Not overextracted. Very clean. Sweet on palate. Best ever from this property? Should be a fine value.

Meyney, St-Estèphe

68% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot and 7% petit verdot. Great terroir for 2003. A sleeper! Best ever from them. Super perfumy red berry aromas. Fat, ripe, and polished for this property. Softer on the palate than previous vintages. *.5

Montrose, St-Estèphe

Intense nose-blackberries. Deep and concentrated. Tight and holding back, but here is power behind this baby. Magnificent. Only tasted once. **

Petit Boscq, St-Estèphe

Good wine with blackberry fruits abounding. Lush palate impression and fine length. .5*

2003 BORDEAUX TASTING NOTES

Phelan-Segur, St-Estèphe

Some meaty, smoky aromas. Sweet and soft upfront with considerable grip at the back end. Lots of mid-palate sweetness. Lingering finish. Should be a value. *

Pauillac

Along with St-Estèphe and St-Julien, Pauillac was the most successful and consistent region in Bordeaux 2003. A few unbelievable wines here.

Carruades de Lafite, Pauillac

50% merlot, 48% cabernet franc and 2% other. Some orange zest on the nose. Nice spicy, red fruit flavors that are quite evolved. Red licorice on mid palate. Very pleasant upfront and ok length on the palate. *+

Clerc-Milon, Pauillac

55% cabernet sauvignon, 39% merlot, 3% cabernet franc and 2% petit verdot. Closed on the nose and a lightish palate impression. More red fruits prevalent on the palate. Tight at the time-must retaste. Does have good length on the palate. At Joanne-Dry tannins. Holding back-ager. A brute that is in a cage for now. *.5

Cordeillan Bages, Pauillac

Rustic style. Tight and holding back at first. Some red fruit flavors. 1000 cases produced. Not tannic. Easy and straight forward wine ready to drink at a young age. Buy when it arrives.

Duhart-Milon, Pauillac

73% cabernet and 27% merlot. Somewhat closed on the nose, but good fruity impression on the palate. Some herbaceous flavors on palate, but this wine is quite good with fine length. A very good effort this year. *

d'Armailhac, Pauillac

65% cabernet sauvignon, 20% merlot, 12% cabernet franc and 3% petit verdot. 13% alcohol. Very deep color. Quite forward on the nose with black licorice and blackberry fruits prevailing on the palate. Sweet and supple right now; tannic edge at back. Quite nice and approachable. Could be a sleeper. At Joanne-Lovely sweetness and a touch hollow, but will round out. This wine just keeps getting better. *.5+

Grand-Puy-Ducasse, Pauillac

One of their best efforts ever. This wine is quite sweet and polished for them. Only used two of the three plots of vineyard. 35% less wine here. Main vineyard is between Mouton and Pontet-Canet. Sweet and lovely palate entry. Round tannins and sweet mid-palate. Can you believe an elegant GPD? *

Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Pauillac

Boysenberry aromas. Tight and compact. Some sweetness, touch green. Tasted twice-same results.

Haut-Bages-Averous, Pauillac

Some blackberry aromas. Nice mouthfeel. Good length and depth. Could be a sleeper. 20 to 25% Merlot. Not as rustic as usual. .5*

Haut-Bages-Libéral, Pauillac

Another property run by Claire Villars. There is high clay content in soil-next to Latour. Soil held the moisture so the vines did not suffer much with the heat of August. This wine has lots of stuffing and a long finish. A little rustic right now, but should smooth out over the next year. Could be a sleeper of the vintage. Powerful and tannic. *+ At Joanne-Tight at first with fruit on mid-palate.

Haut-Batailley, Pauillac

Only tasted once and it was a little green. Dry at back end. Perhaps a bad sample?

CLYDE AND PAUL PONTELLIER AT CHATEAU MARGAUX





CLYDE AND BERNARD DE LAAGE AT CHATEAU PALMER

Lafite-Rothschild, Pauillac

86% cabernet sauvignon, 9% merlot, 3% cabernet franc and 2% petit verdot. Deep, rich nose of cassis and toasty oak. Thick mid-palate-long and sweet. Big wine with very long aftertaste. Has finesse, but a brute of a wine-concentrated. Will cellar well for many years. Outstanding. **.5+

Latour, Pauillac

81% cabernet sauvignon and 18% merlot with a little petit verdot. Lots of power here. Closed up on the nose, but there is tons of chocolate on the palate. Sweet upfront fruit, but the wine is holding back. Tremendous length. Some characteristics of 1982 with more tannins in the mix. Must taste again as this wine has the potential to be the wine of the vintage. **.5+

Les Forts de Latour, Pauillac

78% cabernet sauvignon and 22% merlot. First wine tasted on the trip- 9 am Monday morning. Chocolate aromas that follow to the palate. Very well-balanced with fine acidity. This wine has very good length and the high tannins are hidden by the fruit. *.5+

Lynch-Bages, Pauillac

Only 15% merlot in vineyard. Less in this vintage. Spicy wine and plenty of red currant fruit. Great mouthfeel and fine length. Concentrated and well structured. Holding back right now. At Joanne-holding back and hard to judge right now. Tasted four times. Should be superb, but too big to tell right now. *.5+

Mouton-Rothschild, Pauillac

76% cabernet sauvignon, 14% merlot, 8% cabernet franc and 2% petit verdot. Spicy, smoky aromas with meaty nuances and coffee on the nose. Toasty oak flavors with black fruits abounding. A very sexy wine with good palate impression. Power behind elegance right now. Very good. **+

Pedesclaux, Pauillac

A rising star in the Pauillac area. This is sweet and lovely wine. Good strength and lingering aftertaste. A sleeper. Ralph says buy cases of this-California Cabernet lovers take note here. Tasted four times. *+

Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac

High amount of Cabernet this year. Blackberry fruits on nose. Also mid-palate flavors. Good richness throughout. Some power and concentration that tight-

ens the wine up. Holding back and should come out after several years. Quite big for the property. **

Pichon-Baron, Pauillac

65% cabernet sauvignon and 35% merlot. Deep nose and black color. It has great balance and length with lots of structure. Powerful wine with plenty of tannins. Should turn out well. Some cola flavors. This wine will open up. At Joanne-Chocolate flavors and aromas. Superb wine. Racy and super concentrated at the same time. Tasted three times-very consistent. Ralph says that this wine and Pontet-Canet are the new superstars of the Médoc. **+

Pibran, Pauillac

65% merlot and 35% cabernet sauvignon. Red licorice aromas and flavors. A bit rustic, but should smooth out.

Pontet-Canet, Pauillac

Chocolate and cassis aromas. This is an extracted wine with tremendous polish and depth at the same time. Superb-best ever at property. Sweet and lush wine. Forward on the palate with lots of concentration behind. Tasted four times with same notes. Superb wine. Could be a great value-buy it. **+

Tourelles de Pichon, Pauillac

50% merlot, 35% cabernet sauvignon and 15% cabernet franc. Black fruit aromas. Blackberry flavors with tons of tannin at the back. Rustic style.

Tour de Pibran, Pauillac

This is the second label of Pibran, and it is 50% cabernet sauvignon, 45% merlot and 5% cabernet franc. Nice nose with toasty oak and some red cherry flavors.

St-Julien

The three Léovilles made great wines here. Ducru is different, but very good and there are a couple of values in this region.

Beychevelle, St-Julien

Lots of chocolate and spice aromas-espresso coffee also. Ripe and forward fruit flavors-very tasty. Lighter, but very good. Tasted three times with same notes.

2003 BORDEAUX TASTING NOTES



**TOMMY MARTINEZ AND DAVID RICKENBAKER
AT CHATEAU MARGAUX**

We like this. *.5

Branaire-Ducru, St-Julien

Cranberry aromas and flavor. Tasted very good at UGC tastings. Lush and soft. Forward wine with lingering finish. Another super value wine of the vintage- Ralph puts it up there with Pichon-Baron and Pontet-Canet and loves the purity, sweet fruit, and supple tannins. *.5

Clos du Marquis, St-Julien

55% cabernet sauvignon 42% merlot and 3% petit verdot. Closed on the nose. Quite fine depth of flavor and superb richness. Quite tannic at back end. Plenty of sweet mid-palate fruit. Blackberries abound. Only 21 hectoliters/ hectare-one of lowest in Bordeaux in 2003. Ralph thinks it is one of the best second wines of the vintage, says it tastes like a classified growth. *.5

Ducru-Beaucaillou, St-Julien

Under the capable ownership of Bruno Borie, Ducru is improving on what was already a great wine. Also it is changing style to a more flashy, fruity style. Their second wine Croix de Beaucaillou just opened today (March 29) at a very reasonable price. It is quite elegant for the property with a good amount of sweet fruit on the palate. Ducru (80% cabernet sauvignon and 20% merlot) is closed on the nose, but it has a silky mouthfeel upfront with a tannic finish. Big wine with earthy components and super structure. I think it is a bit more elegant than previous vintages, but has power behind it. At Joanne-it shows even more fruit upfront with a hard edge at back. **

Du Glana, St-Julien

A very nice, easy going wine with good length and body. Buy on arrival.

Gruaud-Larose, St-Julien

Very spicy, exotic Asian spice aromas and flavors. Huge wine. Holding back. Very extracted wine. Some hollowness but this wine should come around. Hard to taste? Tasted two times. *+?

Lalande-Borie, St-Julien

A small property under Bruno Borie control. It opened today (29th Mar). 70% cabernet sauvignon and 25% merlot with 5% cabernet franc. Red licorice aromas. Very forward and fruity wine. Will be good young. Sweet and lush middle. Fresh and fruity. Good effort. .5*

Lagrange, St-Julien

Tons of oak. Some weediness. I don't understand the wine. Tasted three times.

Langoa-Barton, St-Julien

This is a winner and it is very elegant and polished for this property. Boysenberry and blueberry aromas. Very sweet and rich on the palate with very round, ripe tannins. Red currants abound. I like this very much. Tasted twice. Could be a sleeper of the vintage. *.5+

Léoville-Barton, St-Julien

Tasted three times with consistent notes. Tons of cassis and chocolate on the nose. Amazing as usual-blueberry and blackberry flavors. Perfect through and through. Focus and power and balance all together. Just outstanding wine. ***+

Léoville-Las-Cases, St-Julien

70% cabernet sauvignon, 17% merlot, and 13% cabernet franc. With 5% of the press wine in the blend. Nose is holding back a little, but everything seems there. Tons of ripe red berry flavors. Elegant palate entry, but this brute is lurking behind a ton of fruit. Mouth coating flavors. An ager-very concentrated and only 21 hectoliters per hectare. ***+

Léoville-Poyferré, St-Julien

Very sweet and balanced on the nose and palate. Once again his wine is

2003 BORDEAUX TASTING NOTES

outstanding and should be reasonably priced. No greenness present like older Poyferré's seem to have. Could be a fine value. Tasted three times-good every time. *.5+

Talbot, St-Julien

Very sweet and forward on the palate. Touch heavy at back end. It tastes better at Joanne tasting. Ralph loves this wine and recent vintages also-this will drink well when it is young .5*

Margaux

The Margaux region was more affected by hot, dry weather than St-Estèphe or Pauillac. The soil is lighter and does not hold the water as well. Less clay in soil just like some of Pomerol and St-Emilion. There are, however, some excellent wines here in 2003.

Brane-Cantenac, Margaux

Could be one of the best values this year. Lots of blackberries and black cherries. Sweet and fruity and lovely texture. Tastes great right now. Has strength with ripe forward fruit. Complete wine and elegant. *.5+

Cantenac-Brown, Margaux

Their second wine is now called Brio which is rustic with a dryish finish. The Cantenac-Brown has 65% cabernet sauvignon and 35% merlot. Nose holding back now and there is some red fruit flavors with good balance. Tasted three times. Judgment reserved-too hard to taste at this time as samples are inconsistent.

du Tertre, Margaux

Flashy, oaky aromas and flavors. Lots of spice here. Also chocolate flavors. Extracted but balanced. This property is doing quite well. Exotic, but complete. *.+

d'Angludet, Margaux

Purple black color. Intense wine. Tasted much better at the property. Big wine with tons of everything and great mid-palate impression. This is a good value for the vintage. *.+

d'Issan, Margaux

Ripe berries on the nose. Concentrated and finely balanced. Blackberry flavors. They are making very good wines here. A sleeper and fine value. Elegant wine with fine breed. It was also very good at Joanne and LD Vins tastings. *.5

Ferriere, Margaux

Watch for this property now and in the future. Under the control of Clair Villars (daughter of the late Bernadotte Villars of Chasse Spleen), this chateau now deserves its classified growth ranking. 75% cabernet sauvignon and 25% merlot. The press wine was so good here the final blend has 15% press wine in it. Thick and inky, this wine has red fruit flavors with some tannins at the back. Rounded tannins make this wine seem approachable right now. Will be great when young. Tasted three times with consistent notes. Very fine. *.+

Giscours, Margaux

Solid effort-not new wave. Good middle fruit, but a bit hot at back. .5*

Kirwan, Margaux

Very good wine. Soft and elegant. Forward fruit flavors. Only tasted once. *

Labegorce, Margaux

Toasty, smoky nose with soft fruit flavors. Good effort. Quite sweet. .5*

La Gurgue, Margaux

72% cabernet sauvignon and 28% merlot. Black licorice here. Very sweet and lush. Lighter style. Good effort. Usually 40 hectoliters per hectare, but this year only 30 per. Buy it on arrival. .5*

Lascombes, Margaux

Very extracted with dry tannins in the back. Hard to taste. Judgement reserved-tasted three times.

Malescot-St-Exupéry, Margaux

Here is a property with great terroir and new leadership. Quite fruity with power behind its fruity appearance and mouthfeel. The middle palate impression is thick and creamy. Could be a sleeper. *.+

Margaux, Margaux

Very spicy wine with violet aromas. Powerful wine, but silky mouthfeel. 83% cabernet sauvignon 12% merlot 3% cabernet franc and only 2% petit verdot. A delicious wine that has fruit hiding its tannin. Highest tannin levels ever at Margaux, but you can't taste them it has so much fruit. This is one of best wines of vintage. Ralph thinks this is the best 2003 we tasted with no hard edges, impeccable purity with richness and elegance combined. ***

Palmer, Margaux

68% cabernet and 20% merlot with 12% petit verdot. A lovely elegant style of wine on feminine side. So delicious right now, but there is excellent structure and concentration. Will taste great young and age well for many years. Red currant flavors-lush and full on the palate. **

Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux

53% cabernet sauvignon and 47% merlot. Only 25 hectoliters/hectare which is much less than usual. Blackberries on the nose and on the palate. Sweet and lush-will be a sleeper of the vintage. Racy. *.+

Pavillon Rouge, Margaux

65% cabernet sauvignon and 35% merlot. Tons of blackberry fruit on the nose and palate. Very tight and tannic right now. Exceptional length on palate. 20% less than 2002 because so much juice went into grand vin. Should be a super valued ager. *.5

Prieure-Lichine, Margaux

A bit tough on the palate. Hard and dry. Tasted three times with same results. Must be going through a bad phase.

Rausan-Gassies, Margaux

Nice aromas of boysenberries that follow to the palate. Sweet mid-palate and smooth long finish. Getting better every year. .5*

Rausan-Segla, Margaux

Only tasted once and it was very good. Fat, sweet mid-palate with fine depth and length. *.+

St-Emilion

Wines were all over the board (so to speak) in this region. Vineyards with more clay and old vines fared better. Some great wines and some not so good wines.

Angélu, St-Emilion

Blackberry jam aromas. Thick wine. Super concentrated. Tons of blackberry and boysenberry flavors. Very full-bodied wine. Sweet and long. 14% natural alcohol. 50% cabernet franc and 50% merlot. Power from the cabernet franc and freshness from the Merlot-opposite of usual. Harvested merlot on Sept. 9th and cab on Oct. 4th. A fabulous wine. **.5

2003 BORDEAUX TASTING NOTES

Ausone, St-Emilion-not tasted

Barde Haut, St-Emilion

Quite toasty and some meaty notes. Has semi new wave mouthfeel. Good. .5*

Beauséjour-Becot, St.-Emilion

Garage style. Some people will love it. Tasted three times. At LD Vins the wine was in better shape with good balance along with all that toasty oak and extraction. Sure makes a statement. **+

Beauséjour Duffau-Lagarosse, St-Emilion

Intense, concentrated wine made in a more traditional style. Tight and tannic. Has great length and depth. A very fine effort. *.5+

Berliquet, St-Emilion

A serious wine with peppery, spicy aromas and flavors. Nice wine. *

Canon-La-Gaffelière, St-Emilion

Reserved style. At UGC tasting it was very fruity and meaty on the nose. Some smoky nuances. Soft and supple. In balance and elegant style. A bit dry finish, but very good overall. *.5

Cheval Blanc, St. Emilion

60% cabernet franc and 40% merlot. Fabulous nose of blackberry and black cherry. Fruity and forward with fine structure. Has an edge, but is quite racy. Will develop slowly because of concentration. Very fine indeed. 5000 cases produced. **+

Le Petit Cheval, St-Emilion

50% merlot and 50% cabernet franc. Superb nose, but wine is difficult to judge right now.

Clos d'Oratoire, St-Emilion

At UGC tasting-Very fine richness and good depth. Focused wine with integrated tannins. At Joanne tasting-Reserved on nose. Clean and balanced. More polished than usual. **+

Cantenac, St-Emilion

Lots of chocolate aromas that follow to the palate. Good wine. Big and bruising, but will be good. Tasted several times with consistent results. *

Dassault, St-Emilion

Another big and tannic wine with some excellent flavors. .5*

Destieux, St-Emilion

Tasted better at property. New wave style, but good richness on the palate. Quite racy with tannic finish. .5*

Figeac, St-Emilion

A bit herbal on the nose. Very good strength and sweetness on the palate. A bit dry and tannic on the finish. .5*

Grand Pontet, St-Emilion

Meaty aromas and slightly smoky. Nice flavors and balance. Pretty good. .5*

La Couspaude, St-Emilion

Tasted several times and all samples were different. Excellent at UGC tasting-Exotic Asian spice aromas with hints of coffee. Toasty oak and smoky, meaty flavors. Sexy wine. **+

La Fleur de Jaugue, St-Emilion

Old school wine that is quite impressive for its purity. Good sweetness and fine length. A sleeper? *

La Gomerie, St-Emilion

Big wine with tannic finish. A bit dry at the end.

La Mondotte, St-Emilion-not tasted

La Gaffelière, St-Emilion

California styled wine. Will have its admirers. Not overdone at all. Solid. .5*

Larcis-Ducasse, St-Emilion

Very many red fruit flavors and excellent mid-palate. A property to watch. *

Le Tertre-Roteboeuf, St-Emilion

Very fine wine that is balanced and harmonious. Sweet and lush with ripe, rounded tannins and a ton of fruit. Excellent. *.5+

Montlisse, St-Emilion

Very ripe wine. A little whisky barrel on the nose. Too much for me, but at the property, the wine showed much better. Ralph loves this California styled wine. *

Monbousquet, St-Emilion

Very racy wine. Not overextracted and it will have admirers-not my style, but Ralph gives it a *.

Pavie, St-Emilion

Tons of ripe fruit aromas and flavors. Big wine. Super concentrated. Block-buster wine. Should age well for many years. I have to admit it-this wine is special. **+

Pavie-Decesse, St-Emilion

A little drier than Pavie, with some sweetness on the palate. Good, but could be expensive. *

Pavie-Macquin, St-Emilion

Great tasting wine with intense blackberry fruit aromas. Full-bodied, flashy and under control. Very long on the palate. *.5

Troplong-Mondot, St-Emilion

Tons of richness on the palate, but high alcohol also evident. Semi new wave with very tannic finish.

Pomerol and Lalande-de-Pomerol

There were some problems in these regions because of the torrid summer. Vineyards with clay fared much better. We missed UGC tasting here so only tasted wines at negotiant offices.

Beauregard, Pomerol

Blackberries and black licorice flavors dominate. Little tough at back.

Bon Pasteur, Pomerol

Some sweetness upfront. Quite tannic at back end. Ralph liked it and gave it a star.

Clos l'Eglise, Pomerol

80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Blackberry jam flavors. Very deep and long-one of the better Pomerols. Full, thick and round. *.5

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La Clemence, Pomerol

New oak and flashy nose. Almost whisky-like. Very new wave, flashy and sexy. A bit too much oak for me.

La Conseillante, Pomerol

Ripe and smoky aromas. Good flavors and some richness. Price determines if it is a value pre-arrival. *+

Le Jardin de Petit Village, Pomerol

Second wine of Petit Village. 55% of crop in 2003. Soft, spicy, coca cola flavors. Zinfandel-like.

P'Eglise Clinet, Pomerol-not tasted

P'Evangile, Pomerol-not tasted

Nenin, Pomerol

Under the outstanding leadership of Jean Hubert Delon (Las Cases), this property is getting better and better. Blackberry aromas and superb ripe berry palate entry. Has tannins to resolve and a bit short-good for the area. .5*

Petit Village, Pomerol

50% merlot and 50% cabernet france. Nice black fruit flavors. A bit short on the palate, but good overall. .5*

Petrus, Pomerol-not tasted

Rouget, Pomerol

Sweet nose and palate entry. Good substance and decent length. Some meatiness on the nose and fine richness on the mid-palate. A fine value from Pomerol. We bought some for futures sales. Superb wine for the past three straight years. *

Vieux-Château-Certan, Pomerol-not tasted

de Viaud, Lalande-de-Pomerol

Good sweetness and depth. Buy on arrival.

Jean de Gue, Lalande-de-Pomerol

Nice richness and thick on the palate. Has good potential. .5*

La Fleur de Bouard, Lalande-de-Pomerol

Very tannic and tough on palate. Needs long time. Hard to judge right now. Tasted twice. A bit green, but has potential. Could be well-priced value. .5*

Côtes and Fronsac Wines

The wines here are as varied as the landscape. Quite a few renovated properties that are producing great value wines.

Clos P'Eglise, Côtes de Castillon

Ripe and round. Tons of extract. Blackberries abound. In balance. .5*

d'Aiguilhe, Côtes de Castillon

Tons of blackberries. Jammy wine. Big and juicy. Fine indeed. Powerful wine-very ripe and extracted. .*+

d'Aiguilhe Querre, Côtes de Castillon

A rather new property and another semi new wave wine but with good balance. Blackberry fruit flavors. Sexy wine. .5*

Fontinel, Fronsac

Flashy, but in balance. At LD Vins tasting, the wine was very ripe and oaky. A little dry at back end. Ralph found it very California styled. .5*

Gigault "Cuvee Viva," Côtes de Blaye

90% merlot and 6% cabernet franc and 4% cabernet sauvignon. Our friend and negociant Christophe Reboul Salze has a winner here. Lovely texture. Intense wine with lots of sweetness and good middle. Nice and balanced. Red fruit flavors. 15% natural alcohol and you can't taste it. Tasted best at Joanne tasting.*+

Joanin Becot, Côtes de Castillon

Another new wave Castillon that is extracted and very ripe. Some people will love this style. A bit too much for me. Big wine. Tasted four times.

Les Grands Marechaux, Côtes de Blaye

Only 7000 cases of this value produced. 80% merlot and 10% of each of the Cabernets. Flashy, upfront and forward wine, but quite concentrated with fine depth of flavor. Very ripe and sweet. .5*

Roc de Cambes, Côtes de Bourg

Great toasty, tobacco and coffee aromas. Sweet black licorice flavors. Very well made. *+

Les Trois Croix, Fronsac

Orange zest aromas. Little dry and light on palate.

Sauternes

These wines are extremely rich with tons of botrytis and rather low acidity, a style similar to 1990. They will have many admirers. Fat, oily and tasty. An easy vintage to pick as most properties only made two or three passes through the vineyards. Easy to drink young, but will fruit preserve them for long aging? An easy vintage to taste. Not as good as 2001, but seems a bit better than the 2002s.

Climens, Barsac-not tasted

Coutet, Sauternes

Nice balance. Mouth-coating entry to the palate. Very thick and honeyed. Fine concentration. *.5

Doisy-Daëne, Sauternes

Lemon flavors and grapefruit aromas. Fat and lush.

Doisy-Vedrines, Sauternes

Coconut and honey aromas. Has some lemony undertones on the palate. Very rich and concentrated. Oily. *.5

de Myrat, Sauternes

A step behind their 2001, but very rich and thick. Balance is good. *

Guiraud, Sauternes

More spice and fine balance. Coconut aromas mixed with spicy coconut and pineapple. Should be good. *

Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Sauternes

Good balance. Some lemon aromas and flavors. Elegant style. Seems to have plenty of acid? I like this style. *.5

Just One of the Bottles the K&L Contingent Enjoyed in France!



Rabaud-Promis, Sauternes

Focused and finely crafted. Elegant style-well structured. *

Rayne-Vigneau, Sauternes

Tastes like licorice. Spicy and very well-made. This wine seems to have enough acidity to go with its sweet honeyed flavors. *

Rieussec, Sauternes

Only tasted once-too hard to judge, but they are good every year.

Suduiraut, Sauternes

The Suduiraut is honey personified on the palate. Tons of botrytis. Full flavored but finely balanced. This is another fine vintage for stickies it seems. Tasted three times-very good wine. *.5

Castelnaud de Suduiraut, Sauternes

Usually a great stickie value. Some honey and coconut aromas. 90% semillon and 10% sauvignon blanc. 17 hectoliters per hectare for these wines. Quite full-bodied and lush. Usually not offered on futures basis. .5*

Miscellaneous areas

2003 Circus Parade Minervois

GSC blend. Very ripe and sweet. New from Jean Michel Cazes, from south of France

2003 L'Ostel Cazes

Also from Jean Michel Cazes. New property. 100% estate grapes. More substantial wine. Quite well made. Nice drinking.



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