

2016 Bordeaux Vintage Report



2016 BORDEAUX VINTAGE REPORT FEATURES

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2016 Bordeaux: Perfume, Precision, Purity... Perfectly Priced?

By Clyde Beffa Jr.



More on that headline after I explain a little about the background for our 2016 vintage tasting trip, which took place from April 1 to April 9, 2017. Yes, I cut the trip down by a couple of days back in the early fall of 2016 when we booked our flights. After hearing the weather reports from Bordeaux in May and June, and then during their long, dry summer, I figured we would just go, see our friends

at the properties and a handful of négociants, taste a few wines and come back to concentrate on the very good 2015 vintage. As the winter progressed we kept hearing better and better reports about 2016, but we figured it was just more Bordeaux hype as another “vintage of the century” was born. But some of our most trusted sources in Bordeaux (e.g. Bill Blatch) came out just before our trip with reports of a fantastic 2016 vintage. Oh well, we had to cram 10 days into 8, which meant 12-hour days instead of 9-hour days. Our group included myself, Ralph Sands, Jeff Garneau, Steve Bearden, and two rookies, Jason Marwedel and Tristan Stringer. I must say that the trip featured several 12-hour days, but the crew performed admirably, and not one person missed an appointment or meal.

So, with hopes that the reports we heard about a good vintage were true, we arrived on a beautiful Sunday afternoon and immediately went to a tasting at Barrière Frères just past Château La Lagune and across the street from Château Cantemerle. We got our first sampling of 2016s with

a taste of Lanessan, Beaumont, Beychevelle and Cantemerle, and *wow*, these wines were delicious. The first thing we noticed was vivid color, then fresh and very perfumy aromas, and then very ripe, precise, pure fruit flavours with very round and soft tannins. The wines drank so easily, just like 2015 and 2009. Unlike 2009, these 2016s really tasted like the properties’ terroir and not like the vintage as a whole. We thought of 1982-1983, 1985-1986, 1989-1990, 1995-1996 or 2009-2010... We have back-to-back good vintages in Bordeaux! Hurray, but not so fast—what happened in those other consecutive good vintages? The price of the second vintage was higher than the first and the campaigns stalled. In fact, I remember the 1996 vintage vividly and their higher prices—we had bought a lot of 1996s, just like the 1995s, but the 1996 campaign stalled just after summer and I sold back a lot of stock to the négociants. Wouldn’t you know it, but Robert Parker came out in January 1998 with a glowing 1996 report and I had to buy the wines back—at 20% higher prices! Lesson learned—I think.

We had eight wonderful days of tasting under ideal conditions—in fact, it was quite warm at the end of our trip. All the days seemed to be “fruit-days” instead of “root-days.” The former days are the best wine tasting days, while the latter days are difficult tasting days. The 2016s tasted very good every day of our trip—so easy to taste, so fresh and aromatic, with soft, ripe tannins. The lower alcohols definitely had a role in the tastings. The weather was so nice and warm, I remarked that this tasting week was very much like our 1991 tasting trip. That was a big frost vintage as

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the warm early spring weather had advanced the growth of the vines so quickly and on April 23 or so Bordeaux was frosted. Well, maybe I jinxed them, but there was a devastating frost in Bordeaux on April 27 and April 28, 2017, and many properties lost a big percentage of their crop. More about the 2017 frost later.

When we returned after eight days of intensive tasting, we agreed that the 2016 Bordeaux was truly an excellent vintage—as good as 2015 surely, maybe just a bit behind 2009 and 2010, but many of the wines were truly spectacular. It was not as rich and sexy as '09 nor as structured as '10, but the wines were so fresh and vibrant and fruity. All of the regions of Bordeaux did well, but especially the northern Médoc from Pauillac north, and the

Right Bank wines on the clay soils. How did we get these great wines from some rather bleak weather reports? Let's follow the weather conditions as Bill Blatch helps us see just what happened in 2016.

An Exceptionally Warm and Dry November, December

November and December 2015 were warm, dry and sunny. According to the meteorologists, this was one of the effects of the strongest El Niño ever, and there would be more, they said, during the expected transition into an equally strong La Niña. Turns out they got this one correct: the year would indeed be extreme, in two more very long periods, one wet and the other dry. From January to June there was incessant rain. Ralph was reporting back while on his tour in June and the news was not good. Standing water in the vineyards and not much walking for his group except to and from the bus to the winery. It was looking a lot like 2013!

Early 2016 and Spring: The Rains and Luck

It rained continuously from January to April, with January recording the most rainfall since 1920! All the while it was warm, so pruning was delayed as they feared frost. Thankfully in March there was some cold weather or there would have been a dangerous, early bud burst. Some cite the wet ground as delaying the bud break.

April and May showed chaotic weather with alternating warm and cold days. The grapes were no longer three weeks ahead. People started whispering the dreaded word "2013." Luckily all the shoots were uniformly at the same stage and same height. This is rare in Bordeaux, so this was a bit lucky for the owners. The vines remained



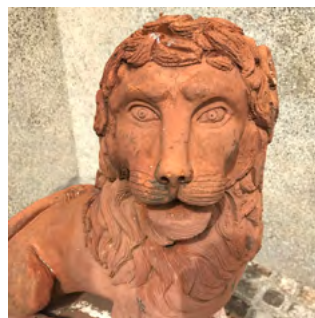
On the path to taste at Léoville-Las Cases.

splendidly and vividly green. It was generally agreed afterward that the excessive amount of water in the soil had loaded it with a goodly dose of nitrogen nourishment. Frost was never much of a problem in Bordeaux like it was in Champagne, the Loire Valley or Burgundy. Again Bordeaux got lucky. May became as chaotic as April, except that it was much warmer and the swings were more violent, with severe storms and hail, especially on certain sectors of the Entre-Deux-Mers. Once again Bordeaux went comparatively unscathed compared to Chablis, Burgundy, the Languedoc and Cognac. Bordeaux was just about the only region in France to be spared from both hail and frost—what luck!

Now the embryo bunches were ready to flower. Continuous rain and temperature fluctuations are not ideal conditions for preparing the vine to flower effectively, and once more there was talk of 2013. But the period of June 2–11 was quite fine weather-wise, with nice daytime temperatures and stable evening temperatures. It was this "magic window" that accounted for 80% of Bordeaux's rapid and regular flowering, and at the same time effectively concluding much of the flowering that had started in less-perfect conditions at the end of May. *This* lucky window and regular flowering was a major factor in the fine quality of 2016 Bordeaux and we never heard this good news, hence we were skeptical about the vintage and I booked our tasting trip to be two less days than normal. *My bad!*

A Record Drought for the Summer

The vintage was beginning to come together and the spectre of 2013 was fading out of the picture. Then on June 20, in the blink of an eye, it stopped raining, the sun came out and the temperature went from 19 to 33 degrees Celsius—in 24 hours. As usual, this turnaround was caused by a sudden increase in atmospheric pressure, but it also happened to coincide with the rapid transition out in the Pacific Ocean from El Niño to La Niña—and over in the UK from the EU to Brexit! Nobody could know it at the time but there would be a four-month period of absolute drought that would continue virtually unabated right through the harvest.



Léoville? Nope—at Château d'Issan.

The previous months had been rather depressing—just rain and gray skies every day. But gradually, as the fine, dry weather set in, the mood now began to change. It started to become apparent that all the tribulations of the year's first half would be mitigated. Looking back, actually there were some very positive aspects to the first half of the year:

- 1) Huge reserves of water had been accumulated in the subsoil, which would come to be very useful if the dry weather were to continue—which, of course, it did.
- 2) The frost and hail damage that had sorely afflicted so many French vineyards had largely been avoided in Bordeaux. The harvest was starting to look sizeable. Lucky.

3) The risk of mildew had stressed everyone for many weeks, but in the end it was contained by early treatments from those who had correctly anticipated it.

4) Even more importantly, apart from a few cases of coulure and millerandage on some of the later-developing vineyards, the flowering had happened quickly and efficiently.

5) And finally, Bordeaux had experienced exactly the same turnaround at exactly the same time at the end of June 2000, and these wines have turned out not too shabby!

There were some problems with the de-leafing as some grapes were sunburned by a very warm and dry summer in combination with some property owners worrying about the wet soils.

The 85 Days of Drought

Between the end of the rains on June 20 and the “saviour” overnight rain of September 13, Mérignac registered less than 20% of normal rainfall. July was less extreme than August, and July was not that hot. As a result, the soil could retain a certain amount of humidity in this first month of the drought. August was in fact no drier than July but its sun hours were 26% above normal. In the end, it is amazing that the catastrophe predicted for such vines at this time never really materialized and very few actually ended up with yellow leaves or no leaves at all. Amazing and lucky.

It was now time for the *véraison*. Most people feared it would not go well but Bordeaux had an incredible bit of meteorological luck in a very short space of time, and could now look forward to great regularity of ripening. The heat and sun hours of August were totally beneficial for consolidating the grapes’ ripening, with the added bonus of very wide day-to-night temperature differences, contributing to the great aromatic potential and freshness of the wines. Still in a state of absolute drought, the period from August 21 to September 13 was as hot as it was dry, above 30°C almost every day. It was in such conditions that the whites had to be picked.



In the cellar at Mähler-Besse.

On September 13, the temperature suddenly plummeted and in the space of a single night, the weather went from summer to autumn, just as suddenly as it had gone from spring to summer on June 20. From this moment on, the temperature dropped 10–15 degrees to normal September temperatures. This was an important factor in the retention of freshness in the grapes. More importantly, it rained on September 13, over all of Bordeaux. It rained all night long, steadily and continuously, penetrating rather than running off the parched soil, which seemed grateful to retain all that the sky gave it. *This* was the saving grace of the vintage, which, without



Team Bordeaux 2016 at Château le Thil, April 2017.

it, would probably not have gone the distance. It was another piece of luck that totally changed the course of the vintage. It happened two weeks before the red harvest was to start, and it breathed new life into the vines, allowing them to put the finishing touches to the grapes’ ripening. For all the rest of September, it was cool but very fine, allowing for the Merlots to get fully ripe. It rained again on September 30: 10 to 20 millimeters fell everywhere, allowing the grape skins to soften and their tannins to fine down. Both banks picked all their Merlots during the following week of October 3–7. Up to the fifteenth, all the final Merlots were brought in, perfectly healthy, very black and looking lovely. Then the first Cabernets became ready. The weekend of October 15–16, the Cabernet harvest was at its maximum, but at a very relaxed pace. The red harvest was over by the end of October. The year that had started so early thus ended late. The bunches came down the sorting tables in perfect condition. Once the harvest was in and crushed, the color and the aromas were released immediately. The 2016 reds are in general softer and silkier and less aggressive than the 2015s. Also, the alcohol levels are generally less in 2016 than 2015. Where the Merlots were 15% in 2015, they are 14% in 2016 and the Cabernets ended up at about 13%. Some people think the lower alcohol levels are a result of slowing of photosynthesis during the summer drought, making less sugar in the grapes. Maybe like the old days?

The acidities were fine for the most part. The Merlots just loved the long, dry summer and autumn and turned out very black, quite dense, occasionally even sumptuous—equal if not superior to 2010. The summer conditions clearly benefited the Merlots, except the younger vines or those on lighter soils, where they suffered more during the drought. As always the Cabernets coped with the situation very steadily and some will be truly great wines.

Whereas all of France produced 10% less wine in 2016, Bordeaux actually produced 7% more. Hurray for that. Most of the top estates seem to have produced a very satisfactory 45 to 55 hectoliters per hectare. Hopefully that will hold down the prices a bit.

Sauternes

Another fine year for the stickies, more like 1988 than the richer 1989 and 1990. We can start to guess what they will be like: a bit lighter than the 2015s, less massive than the 2009s and, by their relatively low pH, less vivacious than the 2014s. But with the finesse and purity of their concentration, they will certainly qualify for a position in the better vintages of the last 15 years. Thanks to Bill Blatch for his report—much of it is here.

Conclusion: My Impressions and the Marketplace

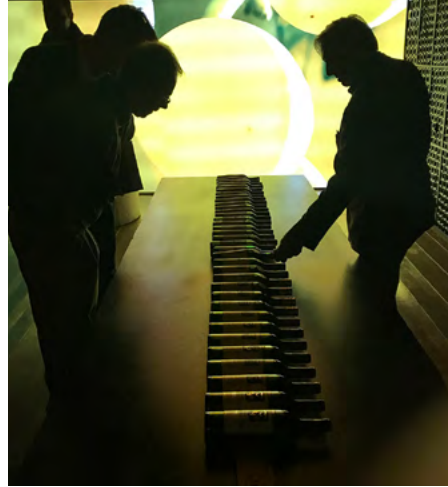
The 2016s were easy to taste, just like the 2015s. They were fresh and vibrant with incredible aromatics. The alcohols are lower—so that helps a lot. Most are more precise and focused than their '15 counterparts. Whereas the Margaux and Pessac-Léognan regions were best in 2015, I would give the nod to St-Estèphe, Pauillac and Pomerol. We found great wines in all regions of Bordeaux, but the properties with heavier soils seem to be better. We were skeptical about all the hype before the trip, but we are all believers now. 2016 is a very good to great vintage for Bordeaux: sweet like 2009 but not as flamboyant, softer on the palate than 2010, but the wines still have tannin under all that fruit. They have lower alcohol contents than almost all the other Bordeaux vintages since 2000. They are so pure! I had some problems with some of the second wines in the Médoc—I think the weather conditions did not help here. It is hard to pick a vintage that 2016 Bordeaux resembles—soft like 1953? About that vintage some people remarked, “The wines are too soft too soon, drink them up.” I have had some great '53s in the last 10 years. And that is 60-plus years of aging.

As you can see from this report, Bordeaux lucked out in 2016, not just once but several times. As the late-great Denis Dubourdieu wrote about his last vintage: “2016 was a year of extremes, records, and some good luck.” Dubourdieu continues:



Ralph Sands at work during the 2016 vintage tour.

“The three lucky events were: 1) A wonderful window of opportunity opened up during the wet spring—it was wide enough to enable flowering to take place quickly and evenly. 2) Thanks to two light showers on July 30 and August 4, the veraison (color change) was just as even as the flowering had been. 3) A miraculous rainfall on September 13 gave a new impetus to the ripening process. The leaves stayed green until October and the vines looked every bit as beautiful as in 2015...”



In the cellar at Smith Haut Lafitte with Daniel Cathiard.

As usual, it all comes down to the prices for the wines. And here you have to bring 2015 and 2017 into play. In 2015, some properties priced their wine properly—these were the first ones to market and they represented many of the properties from the Margaux region as well as the Pessac-Léognan region and the Right Bank. Wines like Malescot-St-Exupéry, Siran, Malartic-Lagravière,

Pape Clément and Tour St-Christophe opened at very good and fair prices and we sold many cases of them (i.e. over 250 cases of Malescot and 100 cases of Pape Clément). Even Alfred Tesseron priced his Pontet-Canet very fairly. But then on that fateful Monday late in May, some of the Northern Médoc properties opened at prices a bit too high and our campaign slowed to a crawl. So basically it was a tale of two campaigns. As of April 15, Tour St-Christophe opened at a good price and Cos d'Estournel opened at the same price as last year (a good thing for the market). We sold very much of both wines. The 2016 Cos is much better than the 2015, and they had priced their 2015 too high.

Lastly, the 2017 vintage will definitely affect the 2016 market. On April 27 and 28, there was a devastating frost in Bordeaux, à la 1991. Some properties lost up to 100% of their crop. Some of the estates along the Gironde were spared because the estuary winds kept the vineyards warmer—just like in 1991. So some of Bordeaux lucked out, but the majority of Bordeaux properties were severely affected. Some of those properties are holding back allocations and some have raised their prices up to 15% above 2015. Let's hope the remaining properties will keep their opening price “reasonable” and follow the lead of Cos d'Estournel. We will know soon.

Clyde's Top Nine Picks for Values of the 2016 Vintage—Under \$30

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

Labégorce, Margaux (750ml \$29.99; 1.5L \$59.99) Is this the best-tasting young Cabernet blend in the world today? No argument from me. 52% M, 38% CS, and the rest PV and CF. We were blown away by this wine on three separate occasions. Asian spices and violets mixed in the aromas. Very feminine style with roses showing through on the palate. Precise and pure.

Lilian Ladouys, St-Estèphe (750ml \$20.99; 1.5L \$42.99) The northern Médoc was a star in 2016, and this is one of the best values there: 62% Merlot and 100% unadulterated tasting joy. Super spicy wine with intense aromatics of blackberry and blueberry. Super lush on the palate—all this for \$21?

Siran, Margaux (\$29.99) How could this be better than last year's monumental wine? Violets, licorice, black fruit flavors conceal the latent tannins. A finish that lasts a minute. Do not miss it—the property sold out of its entire first tranche allocation in two hours.

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) Various sizes available. Again, this wine hits my top 10 values list. Only 12.8 degrees of alcohol—like the old days. 52% CS, smoky, toasty aromas. Sexy black fruit flavors are intense. Philippe Dambrine has this property hitting it out of the park yearly.

Capbern, St-Estèphe (750ml \$20.99; 1.5L \$44.99) Three years in a row here—a top-value wine that we discovered with the 2014 vintage. I actually prefer this wine to the second wine of Calon-Ségur. 69% CS and the red roses come out on the palate. Spicy, fresh and tangy.

Fombrauge, St-Emilion (\$24.99) Like the other Bernard Magrez wines in 2016, this is spot-on delicious. Black cherry aromas and flavors. Fairly rich, but wonderful balance.

Haut-Brisson, St-Emilion (750ml \$23.99; 1.5L \$49.99) And yet another repeater from last year's list. Another of the excellent wines from the Peter Kwok stable of Bordeaux. Coffee and tea aromas with a touch of tobacco. Powerful yet sweet on the palate. All this for under \$25?

Tour St-Christophe, St-Emilion (750ml \$26.99; 1.5L \$54.99) Second year in a row that this makes my top 10 of values. Fresh and lively and as good as their 2015. This Peter Kwok wine, managed admirably by J-C Meyrou, is hitting it out of the ballpark the last few years. Boysenberry aromas and some minerality on the palate. We have already sold 100-plus cases. They were hit very hard by the 2017 frost and lost most of their crop.

Ormes de Pez, St-Estèphe (750ml \$29.99; 1.5L \$64.99) So much better than their 2015, this wine has 52% Merlot in the blend. Substantial wine like most St-Estèphes are. Blueberry and blackberry aromas. Blackberry flavors. The Merlot did very well in these clay soils of St-Estèphe.

Six Gems Under \$20

d'Arce, Côtes de Castillon (\$14.99) The third vintage from this Hélène Garcin Lévêque property and it is so good. I do not know what she is doing to it (maybe adding in some Barde-Haut!), but the wine is sweet and sexy—smooth as glass with a lingering black cherry finish. Drink it early and often.

Lanessan, Haut-Médoc (750ml \$14.99; 1.5L \$29.99) I think Paz Espejo has her best effort here at Lanessan. K&L is known as the king of Lanessan sales and we will sell a lot of this one. Very fruity wine, no hard edges. Some Coca-Cola aromas like St-Julien wines. Will be good young and better with five years aging.

Puygueraud, Côtes de Bordeaux (\$14.99) A Nicolas Thienpont wine, so it can't be bad. Very spicy, oaky, flashy style. A bit modern I would say, but it tastes good and it will be fine for many years out.

Senejac, Haut-Médoc (\$14.99) Their best in years—a steal for \$15. Plenty of strength on the palate and great structure, but quite sweet on the finish.

Les Grand Chenes, Haut-Médoc (750ml \$15.99; 1.5L \$31.99) Bernard Magrez has really toned down his wines in the past couple of years—less apparent oak and less over-the-top extraction. This wine is precise and focused with a lot of black fruit aromas and flavor. Best yet for them?

Mauvesin Barton, Moulis-en-Médoc (\$16.99) Lilian Barton's home and her third year of production. Their best to date, but they lost all of their 2017 crop to frost damage. Spicy and lively entry here. Great balance of fruit with tannin and acid.



Scouting out the values in St-Emilion, April 2017.

Key: \$Inquire Price not yet released RP Robert Parker's Wine Advocate WS Wine Spectator JS James Suckling WE Wine Enthusiast VN Antonio Galloni's Vinous DC Decanter M Merlot CS Cabernet Sauvignon CF Cabernet Franc PV Petit Verdot. All wines in red, bold type (hyperlinked in the PDF version) in this Vintage Report are 2016 vintage with pre-arrival pricing. If no price is listed, we will only offer them as they arrive. Prices quoted are as of June 1, 2017 and may change at any time.

The Barometers of a Great Vintage

By Ralph Sands



We land on Sunday, April 2, and head right to négociant Barrière—Sunday tastings are very rare but we know these folks well.

We taste 21 wines, buy a few nice ones and get our first sip of a classified 2016 Château Beychevelle and I'm a bit shocked, as it is very good. I'm aware of the fact that Beychevelle has undergone a complete renovation, and this might be the best I've ever tasted. I say to myself, nice start but it's only one wine.

Monday is the big Union des Grands Crus silent tasting at the hangar and you get a two-hour slot, nowhere near enough time to taste them all. I head straight for the Margaux tables—I cannot wait to see how the '16s stack up to the greatest Margaux vintage I've ever tasted, 2015. As in 2015 every single wine was very good—Cantenac Brown, Giscours and Malescot were outstanding! I turn away shaking my head. Pretty damn impressive.

I move to the Pessac-Léognans, and while they were not as perfect across the board as Margaux, they were also very impressive with estates like Bouscaut, de France and Carmes Haut-Brion making the best wines I've ever had. The stars of the region, Smith Haut Lafitte, Pape Clément, Malartic-Lagravière, Domaine de Chevalier and Latour-Martillac, performed like the stars they are!

I've now tasted two classified communes and both have plenty of high-toned, great-tasting fruit, and for a fleeting moment I start to question myself. I'm thinking: how the heck can a vintage with such extreme conditions—vines ripe for disease and damn near drowning at the end of June, and then almost shutting down from dehydration from two brutal, searing months of heat in July and August—make a great vintage?

We are off to a great start but the real test and best barometer of a great vintage for me are the Haut-Médoc wines. Their tables are by far the least crowded, which is always the case, as folks race to taste and mug for pictures and videos at the more famous communes' estates and their proprietors. After tasting very good wines from Coufran, La Tour de By, Citran and Belgrave, followed by outstanding wines from Cantemerle, Poujeaux, Maucaillou and Fourcas Hosten, there was no doubt in my mind that we have something very special here. I don't even have to taste St-Julien, Pauillac and St-Estèphe to know this because the Haut-Médoc appellation stretches from Cantemerle south of Margaux to La Tour de By in the far northern reaches of St-Estèphe. I was absolutely sure that these historic estates of Bordeaux would be great, and as our week unfolded that was indeed true.

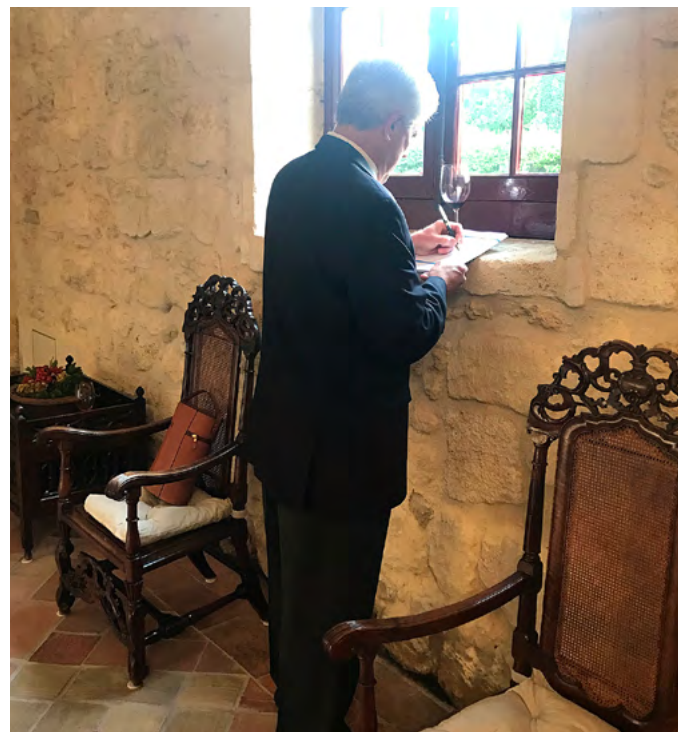
Another great barometer for me is the wine of Lynch-Bages. They make a lot of wine at Lynch and if it's great you can bet the others are great as well. I thought the 2016 Lynch-Bages had delicious fruit with great concentration and texture, making it my favorite Lynch since the great 2000.

I grade these barrel samples on a three-star system: one star means I like the wine and would buy it for myself and K&L; two stars means an outstanding wine I would love to own and add to my collection; three stars, I think it is a wine of greatness and could be legendary.

In my opinion 2016 is a vintage that produced many great three-star wines. The first growths performed as they usually do in a great vintage: loaded with great fruit, but tightly spun and will require at least 20 years of aging. Other great, long-aging three-star wines include Las Cases, Léoville-Barton, Pichon-Baron, Montrose, Calon-Ségur, La Mission, Palmer, Pichon-Lalande, Trotanoy, Petrus and Haut-Bailly. On the lush, plush and hard-to-stay-away-from side you have Pontet-Canet, Ducru-Beaucaillou, Malescot, Cantenac Brown, Léoville-Poyferre, Smith Haut Lafitte, Pape Clément, Clos Eglise, Cos d'Estournel, Domaine de Chevalier and Le Pin.

I can't help thinking that 2014, 2015 and 2016 remind me of 1988, 1989 and 1990, where the vintages were all good but were better with each vintage. To be honest, knowing the weather conditions before tasting these wines, I could have never imagined the wines could be this great, but the wines speak for themselves. To quote Véronique Sanders from Château Haut-Bailly: "2016 is proof that God loves Bordeaux, as it dodged all the bullets of frost, rain, mildew and drought that ravaged France."

Cheers, Toujours Bordeaux and Go Giants!



If this photo looks like one we've run before, it's only because Ralph Sands works on his vintage notes at this window at Château Léoville-Barton every year since 1990—and sometimes someone is there to snap a photo.

Steve's Left Bank Favorites

By Steve Bearden



2016 may be remembered in Bordeaux for the classic Pauillacs, the ethereal wines of Margaux or the exact and fine offerings from St-Estèphe, yet I don't think any appellation rose above the quality of the 2015s as much as St-Julien. In 2016 the top wines from St-Julien have all the depth, richness and chew you expect but with an added dimension of precision and execution.

My tasting notes of the appellation reflect great depth, lavish fruit and power coupled with a freshness and balance that rendered the wines seamless and complete. Although there are too many top recommendations to list, here are some standouts.

St-Julien Top Wines

2016 Léoville-Las Cases (\$Inquire) Once again the top property in the appellation turns out a classic iron fist in a velvet glove. This silky, elegant wine is deeply concentrated, impeccably balanced and the picture of finesse. A sleek, classy and intense wine poised on the cusp of perfection. ★★½+

2016 Ducru-Beaucaillou (\$Inquire) This is packed and stacked with tons of spiced red and black fruit, a long, thick texture and super sweet tannins. Blackberry, wild raspberry, pencil lead and dark chocolate are present in this huge and tensile wine of strength and focus. ★★½

2016 Léoville-Poyferre (\$Inquire) More flamboyant and forward than the Las Cases and nearly as precise with a rich, creamy texture of sweet fruit and a fresh, fine finish. An almost exotic St-Julien with depth, structure and fruit to spare all encased in an aura of nuance. ★★+

2016 Léoville-Barton (\$Inquire) All the brooding potential and massive power you expect from this wine but tempered by a roundness of the edges and a fresh lift to the middle. This is dark and dense-looking with a chewy blackberry middle of surprising finesse and a super-sweet finish of grainy tannin showing ample tug. This will need time but it screams potential. ★★+

2016 Beychevelle (\$Inquire) This huge wine has impressive heft and weight but stays light on its feet due to the finely tuned and fresh finish. Tons of smoky, spiced blackberries ooze through the thick middle but never overwhelm the classy lines. ★★+

St-Julien Values

2016 Branaire-Ducru (\$54.99) This powerful yet polished and beguiling wine is the best from this property in a long time. Raspberry, cherry and currant fruit form a creamy texture that glides across the gentle, rounded tannins in this sleek, dark and packed wine. Hints of tobacco, spice and cocoa poke through the middle of effortless balance. Here the muscle is wearing cashmere. ★★

2016 Lalande-Borie (\$26.99) This is a real winner with an aromatic profile of plump, juicy fruit, a rich but supple texture and very sweet tannins. There is real richness to the blueberry, blackberry and currant fruit and great tension from beginning to end on this plush and balanced bargain. ★½

2016 Langoa-Barton (\$49.99) This is surprisingly bright and balanced, with crisp and effortless texture to the substantial body. Black cherry, dark plum, cola and damp clay are present in this structured, clean and fresh wine. ★½

It seems that Margaux has been the appellation leading the charge in every great vintage of the last 10 years, and 2016 is no different. Once again these wines are textbook expressions of the vintage with their polished structure, poise and amazing equilibrium.

Margaux Top Wines

2016 Palmer (\$309.99) This is silky, sweet, seamless and pure with great balance between the opulent fruit, elegant middle and satin finish. Flowery scents give way to flavors and aromas of dark plum, blackberry, cherry liqueur and baking chocolate that stay precise and articulated. More voluptuous than Château Margaux and my favorite of the appellation. ★★½++

2016 Château Margaux (\$Inquire) This is tight, clean, classy and weightless, with a glassy, polished texture. There is obvious strength to the intense and steely middle but the seamless integration of elements allows this to glide effortlessly from beginning to end. This is pitch-perfect and will only blossom with age. ★★½+

2016 Malescot-St-Exupéry (\$56.99) This is full, rich and almost extravagant but held in check by the integration of powerful structure, wonderful proportion and a finish of fine, ripe tannin. ★★

2016 Rauzan-Ségla (\$84.99) Rich and creamy, though a tad less fruity than the Malescot, a touch more elegant and of equal quality. This is sweet and sappy with potpourri, ripe red fruit, velvety texture and a long, precise finish. ★★

Margaux Values

2016 Marquis D'Alesme (\$39.99) The aromas are of sweet flowers and raspberry cream with cedar shavings. The middle is creamy, rich and very fresh with a long finish of very fine grip. This is an elegant bargain with wonderful depth of flavor, great texture and fantastic purity. ★½+

2016 Labégorce (\$29.99) The best this property has ever achieved and possibly *the* value of the appellation. This is thick and full with a powerful presence and a long, fine structure. It is flowery, sweet, smooth and the picture of elegance with violets, cherries and boysenberries blending effortlessly on the gentle finish. ★½

2016 Siran (\$29.99) This is dark, sleek and grapey with a clean, fresh body and a strong finish. Already complex and should flesh out nicely. ★½

2016 Northern Médoc: Powerful Pauillac and Stately St-Estèphe

By Jeff Garneau



The 2016 vintage in Bordeaux is remarkably consistent, and there are wines of the highest quality in every part of the region and at every price point. That being said, the wines of the northern Médoc truly shine in 2016. A few reasons why:

The quality of the Cabernet Sauvignon in 2016 was especially good. Small, thick-

skinned berries grown under drought conditions meant high tannin and anthocyanin levels, producing deeply colored, structured wines. Pronounced temperature differences between daytime highs and nighttime lows throughout the late summer and early autumn gave the wines great freshness and aromatic intensity. Most producers noted that the harvest was extended over a longer period and completed later than average. Ideal harvest conditions meant that each parcel could be picked at the peak of ripeness, favoring later-ripening varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon. You can see that in the composition of the wines, with the proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon ranging from 65% to 95%.

The 2016 vintage seems to have brought out the very best in the wines of the northern Médoc, reducing them to their quintessential character by some alchemical miracle, stripping them of all excess and revealing the true nature within, resulting in terroir-driven wines of astonishing typicity.

The vintage of 2016 has produced wines of immense power and grace, very elegant and precise. They are not bold and assertive, but rather self-assured and full of quiet authority. It is a style that seems expressly designed to showcase the wines of the northern Médoc.

I cannot recall a vintage in which I have rated the wines of St-Estèphe more highly. The 2016 Montrose is a marvel—intense, concentrated and brooding. The 2016 Calon-Ségur, by contrast, is understated and reserved, the epitome of minimalist restraint. The 2016 Cos d’Estournel brought tears to my eyes, a return to form that recalled the many great, classic vintages of the 1980s. Tasting the 2016 vintage was like meeting an old friend—*mon vieux!*—whom you never expected to see again this side of heaven. *Deuxième Cru Cos d’Estournel* may give the *Premier Crus* a run for their money in 2016. Speaking of which...

Like a trio of dowager countesses quietly establishing the standards for High Society, the three first growths set the tone in 2016 for all of Pauillac with wines of incomparable quality. The 2016 Mouton Rothschild, grand and magisterial, eschews ostentation. The 2016 Lafite Rothschild is weighty and opulent, the 2016 Latour lush and convivial. With these wines, Cabernet Sauvignon makes up an astonishing 80% to 90% of the blends.

With 85% Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend, the **2016 Pichon-Baron, Pauillac (\$Inquire)** is the very definition of Pauillac, a classic in the making. Though 2016 was one of the latest harvests ever here, across the road at Pichon-Lalande they finished picking one day later still, ultimately deciding on a blend that is 75% Cabernet Sauvignon. Polished, elegant, and refined this **2016 Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac (\$Inquire)** has the potential to compete with some of the great vintages of the past. Comparable perhaps to 1982, 1989 or 1996?

The **2016 Duhart-Milon, Pauillac (\$73.99)** is ripe and concentrated, dense, dark and black-fruited. Plays to the strengths of the vintage with a blend of two-thirds Cabernet Sauvignon to one-third Merlot. Tannins quite fine here. Deceptively easy to taste.

The **2016 d’Armailhac, Pauillac (\$44.99)** may be the finest I have yet tasted—big, brash, self-assured, but with a warm and friendly manner that puts you immediately at ease. The wine makes an immediate impression in the mouth, demonstrating obvious class and character. The **2016 Clerc Milon, Pauillac (\$69.99)**, too, is a supremely polished effort with great presence and weight. Generous. Expansive. Dense and rich. Superb.

Perennial ingénue Pontet-Canet is poised to please many a palate with this 2016 offering. The **2016 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$Inquire)** hits all the highlights of the vintage—intense color, aromatic nose, fine tannins—and adds to that a lush texture and plenty of ripe, sweet fruit. Sensuous and seductive.

The **2016 Lynch-Bages, Pauillac** was a study in quiet power, confident and self-assured. “Perhaps the best we have ever made from a technical perspective,” noted owner Jean-Michel Cazes. A wine of extraordinary concentration, it is, for me, one of the wines of the vintage. Transformative. An epiphany in a glass. Truly awe-inspiring.



Tasting with Jean-Michel Cazes at Lynch-Bages.

Right Bank, Left Bank, Values All Around the Town!

By Jason Marwedel



Learning I was to join Team K&L for the annual En Primeur tasting in Bordeaux this year was a great thrill. Little did I know what a truly magical experience it would be. Simply put, it was the trip of a lifetime: perfect weather conditions, tremendous hospitality and a *fantastic* vintage!

In general, 2016 is the type of vintage we all crave. The wines are expressive, approachable and showcase terroir above all else. This was a common thread across both banks and at all price points. 2016 displays the hallmarks of a successful vintage, one I am confident will be well received by our customers for its quality and value. As I'm known around here as the ultimate value shopper, here are a few of my favorites in the value category:

The northern appellations really shine in this vintage, with the **2016 Lilian Ladouys, St-Estèphe (\$20.99)** standing out as a top value. Lifted aromatics lead to a lively palate of black fruit, cinnamon and sweet herbs. I love how the intensity and silky mouthfeel persist throughout.

Traveling southwest to the Haut-Médoc, one outstanding value is the **2016 Peyraban, Haut-Médoc (\$12.99)**. This wine has quietly become a customer (and staff) favorite in recent years. Lovely aromatics of red and black fruits are entwined with notes of flowers and exotic spice. This fragrant nose leads to a dense palate of sweet and savory currant fruit and perfectly placed tannins.

Heading further south, one of the great surprises of the Left Bank is the **2016 Senejac, Haut-Médoc (\$14.99)**. This wine is so elegant! Bright red fruit, flowers and spice grace the stylish nose. The palate offers purity and depth while maintaining perfectly polished edges.

Not to be forgotten, the Right Bank offers a host of amazing wines in 2016. My top value has to be the **2016 Puy-Blanquet, St-Emilion (\$23.99)**. Deep dark color with notes of cherry, vanilla, bay leaf and black olive that fill the glass. The palate is decadent, sweet and round with supple tannins and mouthwatering acidity.

I highly encourage everyone to explore the 2016 vintage in Bordeaux, especially some of these lesser-known properties. The wines of 2016 will be quite enjoyable upon release, but offer enormous pleasure to those of you who can squirrel a few cases away for a future day.



Le Pin and Pétrus: Cream of the Crop in Pomerol

By Tristan Stringer



The 2016 vintage in Bordeaux has turned out to be quite spectacular, though it was a treacherous path to success. Unusually high spring rainfall totals followed by a sustained summer drought tested the vines, and due to those conditions winemakers consistently identified the older vines on clay soil as being the best performers. Near-record days of sunlight coupled with cool summer nights helped develop superb ripeness while

maintaining the required acidity for well-balanced wines. Across the board we encountered high-quality wines, but here I will highlight the upper-tier standouts from Pomerol.

2016 Le Pin, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Although Le Pin is one of the most sought-after wines in the world, it comes from noticeably modest beginnings relative to the spectacularly lavish properties on the Left Bank. The production of this Right Bank property is miniscule, with around 500 cases produced annually. In 2016 the harvest of the grapes (100% Merlot) did not begin until October, the latest in the history of

the estate. At 14.5% ABV one might expect a more robust presence on the palate, but the wine is decidedly feminine with incredible smoothness and a soft, supple mouthfeel. Notes of black plum, blackberry and hints of dark chocolate currently dominate the wine's profile, and it should age spectacularly for anyone fortunate enough to secure any of the bottles.

2016 Pétrus, Pomerol (\$Inquire) The winemakers at Pétrus live an interesting dichotomy, steeped in tradition while simultaneously embracing cutting-edge viticulture technology. They recently launched a fleet of drones to help monitor the ripening process within the vineyard, carefully cataloging the GPS coordinates of each individual vine. Given the all the variables within a single vineyard, winemakers around the globe have long elected to pick certain blocks at different times, but this new approach takes things to an entirely new level. Picking decisions can now be made on a vine-by-vine basis, allowing for the precise selection of perfectly ripe clusters. The 2016 Pétrus is saturated ruby, with aromatics of mocha and stewed dark cherry that leap from the glass. At Pétrus their stated goal is "pleasure for the wine drinker," and the 2016 vintage certainly delivered.

St-Julien, Pauillac, St-Estèphe 2016 —The Best of the Rest

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

Three of the top regions in Bordeaux for 2016. Steve and Jeff already gave you their choices—here are a few more gems.

St-Julien

Gloria, St-Julien (\$39.99) Wonderful red berry aromas and flavor. Cabernet at 65% shines through here. Quite spicy on the palate. Should be a fine buy for mid-term aging. Slight tannic finish, but good balance.

Gruaud-Larose, St-Julien (\$72.99) Exceptionally fruity wine with long, lingering finish. Only tasted it at UGC tasting.

Lagrange, St-Julien (\$Inquire) Lots of upfront fruit. Only tasted at UGC and not the best sample.

St-Pierre, St-Julien (\$59.99) Blackish color. Big and powerful wine. Lots of cassis on nose and palate. Ager here.

Talbot, St-Julien (\$57.99) Flashy, modern style here. Lots of black cherries and blackberries on the nose. Slightly oaky. A bit new wave.

Pauillac

Pedesclaux, Pauillac (\$Inquire) A fifth growth that must be watched—their wines since the 2009 vintage have been great buys. Big boy here but still sweet and balanced. Cinammon and clove aromas. Lingering finish with some tannins evident.

Lynch-Moussas, Pauillac (\$39.99) Chocolate aromas here mixed with black raspberry. Sweet and lovely—watch this great value fifth growth. 83% CS, 17% M.

Echo de Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (\$39.99) This could be a great value if priced correctly. Lots of upfront cassis fruit flavors. I prefer this to their 2015.

Pibran, Pauillac (\$34.99) Blackberry aromas, sweet and ripe tannins. Black licorice flavors, good intensity and mouthfeel. 55% CS, 45% M. Lots of wine for the price.

Les Tourelles de Pichon-Baron, Pauillac (\$Inquire) This Merlot-dominated wine also did well in 2016. 58% M, 25% CS, 12% CF and 5% PV. Fine texture and structure. Holding back a bit when we tasted it at 8:00 a.m. Monday morning. Will taste in June at UGC.

Griffons de Pichon-Baron, Pauillac (\$Inquire) Their newest addition, this is a Cabernet-based wine and really the second wine of Pichon-Baron. Softer than the Tourelles today, more expressive on the nose and palate. Soft and elegant.

Clerc Milon, Pauillac (\$69.99) Smaller quantity released this year. Frost problems in 2017. Blue fruit, good richness on palate. Black fruits abound on the palate. Firm structure. Big wine.

Le Petit de Mouton Rothschild, Pauillac (\$Inquire) 78% CS. Boysenberry aromas that follow to the palate. Chunky wine that usually does not show well when young. I like this much more than their 2015.

Reserve de Comtesse, Pauillac (\$42.99) 54% CS here, so tons of red fruit flavors at the property. I must say this is much better than their 2015. Fresh and lively wine.

Grand-Puy-Lacoste (\$Inquire) Good entry and fine mid-palate sweetness. So spicy on the nose. Fabulous texture. Better than their fine 2015—as good as their great 2000! Ager here.

Duhart-Milon, Pauillac (\$73.99) 67% CS, 33% M. One of the best-tasting young Duharts in a long time. So aromatic and not green at all! Red rose perfume, so sweet on the palate—long, long, long.

Les Forts de Latour, Pauillac 64% CS. Lots of licorice—so spicy, like clove and cinnamon. Bright and fresh and spicy, but not for sale on futures. You have to wait a few years here.

Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$Inquire) With all the weather issues this year, Pontet-Canet still made one of the best of the vintage. Alfred Tesseron says his best year for the quality of the fruit at picking time was 2015. I think this wine is as good as their 2015. Spicy, meaty aromas. Sexy and silky on the palate. Layers of fruit. In my top 10.

St-Estèphe

Lafon-Rochet, St-Estèphe (\$Inquire) This is a big boy in terms of evident tannin. It will need a good amount of cellar time. Should be a good value.

Phélan-Ségur, St-Estèphe (\$Inquire) This wine is as sweet as its managing director! Could be the best from them in many years. Packed with sweet red fruits and cassis. Toasty, round and inviting. A big wine underneath—but definitely “an iron fist in a velvet glove.” Pure and precise. Bravo!

Capbern, St-Estèphe (750ml \$20.99; 1.5L \$44.99) This property continues to impress the K&L staff. 69% Cabernet in the blend. So fresh and spicy on the nose. Lively and vibrant on the palate, sweet and easy. Great value and I prefer to their Marquis du Calon at this time. But remember, we only tasted them two times and wines change daily.

Tronquoy-Lalande, St-Estèphe (May not be released as futures) Grab this one when it arrives. The new acquisition of prime vineyards from Phélan-Ségur has boosted this wine to a star in its own right. Black, deep blue color. Fabulous, sweet palate entry—raspberries abound here. Spectacular effort, but you may have to wait to drink it. Better than their great 2009.

Dame de Montrose, St-Estèphe (\$34.99) Here is a great second wine. Mostly Merlot in the blend—black fruit aromas. Full-bodied, but balanced perfectly. Great depth and length. All that for under \$40.

Meyney, St-Estèphe (750ml \$29.99; 1.5L \$59.99) Delightful wine from the best region in 2016 Bordeaux. Blackberry on the nose with some exotic Asian spice on the palate. Superb value for the cellar or drinking young.

Pagodes de Cos, St-Estèphe (\$44.99) Another great second wine. Seems like the second wines in St-Estèphe did just fine. Cos is in the top 10 of my overall picks for 2016, so it stands to reason that this should be good. Well, it is very good. 50% CS and 46% M with a touch of others. Lush on the palate with some tannins evident at the end.

2016 Margaux Wines: Another Winner—for the Most Part

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

The commune of Margaux is not only the largest of the seven major communes of Bordeaux, but it also boasts the most classified growths from the 1855 classification, with 21 properties obtaining a classified status. Many of the Margaux properties survived the drought of the summer of 2016, although some on the sandier soils had some problems—especially with the younger vines.

We have Margaux wines from under \$25 to over \$400. Two of the best buys in 2016 are Siran and Labégorce.

La Tour De Mons, Margaux (\$21.99) Lush and lovely. Sexy, modern style. Better than 2015? **93-94 JS**

Durfort-Vivens, Margaux (\$Inquire) Great upfront, forward fruit that attacks the palate. I love this very aromatic Cabernet—cassis and red berry flavors.

Kirwan, Margaux (\$44.99) I love this property—the sweetest Kirwan in years. Like most Margaux wines, this one is quite rich and at the same time still elegant on the palate. Beautiful new property. Value.

Marquis de Terme, Margaux (\$42.99) This property is on a roll of late. Meaty, toasty oak and black licorice aromas. Very modern style here—long and lingering on the palate.

Prieuré-Lichine, Margaux (\$41.99) Deeply colored. Toasty oak and red raspberry aromas that follow to palate. Lots of wine for the price.

du Tertre, Margaux (\$39.99; 12-OWC \$475.00) Very good effort—maybe a step behind their fabulous 2015. Plenty of stuffing for a long bottle-aging process. Will need time.

Siran, Margaux (\$29.99; 12-OWC \$349.00) How can this be so good? On a level with the 2015. Violets and blackberry fruit aromas. Black licorice flavor. Very sweet and very well balanced. Again one of the best buys in 2016 Bordeaux. **92-94 RP, 94-96 WE, 94-95 JS**

Labégorce, Margaux (\$29.99; 12-OWC \$349.00) Here is what Alex said about their 2015: “A perennial K&L favorite once again surpassing all our expectations with silky red cherry fruit, milk chocolate and mocha notes all rolled into one velvety smooth package.” Well, the 2016 is better! *The best-buy Bordeaux 2016 for under \$30!* Super spicy with violet undertones. Very elegant, red fruit entry. It tastes so good, you want to drink it now. Pure pleasure! **94-96 RP, 94-96 WE, 94-95 JS**

Marquis d’Alesme, Margaux (\$39.99) 62% CS. This is the big brother of Labégorce. What a beautiful renovation of the property—it is literally a stone’s throw from Château Margaux with vineyards that run right up to the forest that separates the two properties. Intense aromatics, precise and focused on the palate. Some tannin on the back. Late-picked here. **91-94 WS, 92-94 RP, 91-92 JS**

Giscours, Margaux (\$Inquire) Tough to beat their spectacular 2015, but this comes close. So fresh and vibrant, very lush and balanced. **92-95 WS, 93-95 RP, 96-98 WE, 96-97 JS**

Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux (\$84.99) This was the first major name we tasted on our trip—Sunday night at the property. 13.5 alcohol. 68%

CS and it shows in the red berry fruit. Superbly deeply colored, this super-sweet second growth is one of the best of all Margaux in 2016. Very concentrated and structured for the cellar, but it has gobs of ripe fruit on the palate. They say the wet spring brought out the aromatics in 2016 Bordeaux? Maybe, but I never heard of that before. This wine lingers on the palate and they even made more in 2016 than 2015. A lot of 95-98 scores from all.

Malescot-St-Exupéry, Margaux (\$56.99) Another standout with fantastic berry fruit, baker’s chocolate and super-silky tannins with that unmistakable Margaux feel. This was the biggest seller we had for the 2015 Bordeaux offering, and this wine is vying with it for the crown of best in store. Bright and lively, so lush and ripe. Jean-Luc Zuger has fashioned another top wine for 2016. Can we sell 250 cases like we did with the 2015? Depends on the price. This wine is a bit more precise than the 2015. **94-96 RP, 92-94 WE, 98-99 JS**

Blason d’Issan, Margaux (\$Inquire) 60% Merlot and it is so lush on the palate and delicious to drink today, I’ll bet you can easily drink it when released in another year or so. Raspberry cream comes to mind.

d’Issan, Margaux (\$Inquire) 64% Cabernet. A special wine that oozes dark cherry and plum fruit with ample structure that makes it ideal for long term aging. Silky and velvety! **93-95 RP, 96-97 JS, 94-96 WE**

Brane-Cantenac, Margaux (\$Inquire) One of the top wines of the vintage. Such great texture on the palate. Very sweet mid-palate impression. Great balance, so it will age very well for 10–20 years. **96-98 RP, 95-96 JS**

Cantenac Brown, Margaux (\$Inquire) Tasted twice and the wine was much different each time. At Joanne, it was super sweet and soft—on the elegant side? But at UGC it was more tannic and harder to evaluate.

Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux (\$66.99; 12-OWC \$789.00) Another winner here, as Palmer is one of the top 10 wines of the vintage in my mind and this was an excellent second wine. 40% M, 48% CS, 12% PV—lots of Petit Verdot here. Serious wine with a concentrated nose of black cherry and toasty oak. Lovely wine but only 6,000 cases made. **95-96 JS, 93-95 WE**

Palmer, Margaux (\$309.99) 11,000 cases made. 47% M, 47% CS, 6% PV. Seamless wine and so pure with black raspberry aromas. Perfectly structured and balanced. Powerhouse wine. Ager. **95-97 RP, 98-100 WE, 99-100 JS, 98 DC**

Pavillon Rouge de Margaux, Margaux (\$Inquire) 84% CS, 13% M, 3% PV. Sweet, perfumy aromas of toasted oak and red berries. More powerful than their excellent 2015. A core of cassis fruit and a lingering finish.

Margaux, Margaux (\$Inquire) Impossible to duplicate their perfect 2015. Paul Pontieiller is gone. 94% CS and only 13% ABV. Red roses and violets on the nose and red currant flavors. Very lush, very good and I am sure, very expensive. **97-99 RP, 97-99 WE, 97 DC**

2016 Haut-Médoc and Other Value Regions

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

Quality varies a lot in 2016, as the weather did not cooperate 100%. Some of the lighter soils suffered under the drought conditions, whereas the heavy clay soils held enough water to get through the long, dry season. If no price is listed, it means we will only offer them as they arrive.

Côtes de Bordeaux

Gigault “Cuvée Viva” (\$Inquire) 100% Merlot from our good friend and négociant Christophe Reboul Salze. Fine balance of oak and blackberry fruit. Very sweet and juicy this year. Best yet?

Cap de Faugeres (\$Inquire) We really loved this one in 2015. The 2016 is very fresh and quite toasty—modern style, but well balanced.

Belle Coline (\$Inquire) Another Christophe Reboul Salze wine. 90% Merlot. Very rich and jammy on the palate, quite soft upfront with some evident tannin at the back end.

Puygueraud (\$14.99) A fantastic value from Nicolas Thienpont. 60% Merlot. As good as their 2009, this wine has Asian spice aromas and sweet, ripe black fruit flavors. Flashy. Value.

Haut-Médoc, Moulis and Listrac

Maucaillou, Moulis (\$23.99) One of Ralph’s favorite value wines—it is very good. Lively, black licorice aromas and flavor. Very spicy and very modern style.

Mauvesin Barton, Moulis (\$16.99) Much more modern style than their 2015—very fresh and lively, an easy drinker. Lilian Barton Sartorius’ home and made with the Léoville-Barton team. They lost all of their 2017 to frost.

La Tour Carnet, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) Bernard Magrez wine and his prices are reasonable. Tons of ripe fruit and some oak on the palate. The wine has lots of grip underneath covered by a layer of ripe, forward black fruit.

Lanessan, Haut-Médoc (750ml \$14.99; 1.5L \$29.99) Always one of our favorites and Paz Espejo hit it right on this year. It was the first 2016 we tasted on our trip and we had it three times—consistent and very good value. Elegant wine.



Château Lanessan—always a favorite at K&L.

Beaumont, Haut-Médoc (\$13.99)

I always love this wine, which is supervised by the Beychevelle team. It is usually so sweet and easy to drink and is a perfect crossover wine from California Cabernet to Bordeaux—this one too. Sexy wine for under \$15.

de Camensac, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) Céline Villars-Foubet has fashioned a fine 2016 here. Could it be as good as the 1989 still is? This is a big boy in structure but with that fresh 2016 fruit flavor.

Coufran, Haut-Médoc (\$17.99) A great wine to buy when it arrives. 13.5% ABV and 85% Merlot. Smoky, toasty, tobacco aromas with blackberry fruit on the palate. Could be their best ever? Meanwhile, enjoy their 2005, 2009 and 2012.

Senejac, Haut-Médoc (\$14.99) Off-the-charts great value—see my comments on [page 5](#).

Sociando-Mallet, Haut-Médoc (\$36.99) This wine is exceptional and I have a soft spot in my heart for Sociando, as it was the first chateau in Bordeaux I ever visited—in 1985. This 2016 is far better than the 1984 we tasted on that cool April day in 1985. This one has an intense blackberry aroma. Very full-bodied and powerfully built for the cellar, yet there is a lot of sweet fruit on the mid-palate and at the end.

de Lamarque, Haut-Médoc (\$Inquire) A blend of 45% Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon with 10% Petit Verdot. Black licorice aromas and flavors. Sweet, lingering finish. A great value! If priced correctly.

Peyrabon, Haut-Médoc (\$12.99) A superstar value and much better than the 2009 or 2010. And we sold thousands of bottles of those two.

Les Grands Chenes, Haut-Médoc (\$15.99) Bernard Magrez wines are exceptional in 2016 and this is the best value among them. This is elegant, round and supple. Fresh and vibrant on the palate. On the super sweet side—and that is the good super sweet side.

Goulée, Haut-Médoc (\$Inquire) Without a doubt the best Goulee ever made, hands down. 77% Merlot and 100% satisfying on the palate. Extremely aromatic—like many of these far northern Médoc wines. All fruit in the mouth. Seamless.

Clarke Rothschild, Listrac (\$23.99) We liked quite a few Listracs in 2015 and the 2016s are just as good. Sweet core of blackberry fruit with some licorice notes. Seems richer than the 2015.

Fourcas Hosten, Listrac (\$18.99) Soft and silky just like the owners’ world-famous scarves. The new Listrac is here.

Ducluzeau, Listrac (\$Inquire) Made by the Bruno Borie team at Ducru. The wine has no hard edges. We love it and all the wines from Bruno.

Chasse-Spleen, Moulis (\$29.99) Fine middle fruit. Good effort from Celine Villars Foubet and a bit more elegant than recent vintages.

Poujeaux, Moulis (\$29.99) Always a hit at K&L, this wine does not let us down—superb from the very aromatic red rose and black cherry aromas to the lingering finish.

La Lagune, Haut-Médoc (\$49.99) Raspberries abound here. Solid wine and perhaps a touch better than their 2015.

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) Check out my notes on [page 5](#)—but heck, just buy a case and enjoy for 15 years.

2016 Pessac-Léognan Reds: Some Compelling Wines

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

The 2015 vintage was a classic for this underrated region—2016 was very good also and the red wines were so easy to taste. Here are some of our favorites, all red Pessac-Léognan wines:

De Fieuzal Rouge (\$Inquire) Solid wine here—focused and quite earthy on the palate.

Latour-Martillac Rouge (\$34.99) Great balance and superb value, I am sure.

Larrivet Haut-Brion Rouge (\$34.99) I always love this wine and this vintage is spot-on. Easy to taste and will be an early-maturing wine. Value, I am sure.

Gazin-Rocquencourt Rouge (\$Inquire) 55% CS, 45% M and 50% new oak. Intense nose of boysenberry jam. Lovely mouthfeel with some tannins at the back end. Should be a value.

Malartic-Lagravière Rouge (\$Inquire) Very spicy, jammy blackberry aromas. Voluptuous wine in the modern style, but with fine acidity to balance. We sold over 200 cases of their excellent 2015, and this one is as good. They are making fine juice here.

Les Carmes Haut-Brion Rouge (\$Inquire) Walled-in property that sits within the city of Bordeaux, literally a stone's throw away from Haut-Brion. An unknown small property that makes fantastic wines. Very high proportion of Cabernet Franc in the blend. Ginger ale and red fruit aromas. Very spicy and sweet on the palate. Great depth of flavor and lingering finish. Problems here with 2017 frost. I really love this wine.

Lespault-Martillac Rouge (\$24.99) 70% Merlot and a great value from the Domaine de Chevalier team. Very black fruit-dominated and quite lush and sweet on the palate. Juicy wine that represents a fine value.

Domaine de Chevalier Rouge (\$Inquire) One of our favorites and I have at least two vintages in my cellar. Superb minerality in this very precise and focused wine. So fresh and lively. Layers of ripe fruit and some latent tannin underneath. Lovely and usually priced correctly. They suffered a lot from the April 2017 frost.

Le Pape (\$29.99) A new property for Véronique Sanders and her team at Haut-Bailly. Small production here and we sold all 20 cases we got in the 2015 vintage. Not sure how much we get this year, but I like this vintage as much as the 2015. Sweet black cherry aromas, lovely texture on the palate. Very long on the finish. Surely a great value.

La Parde De Haut-Bailly (\$Inquire) 13.5% alcohol here in the second wine of Haut-Bailly. One of the second wines I loved in 2016. Bright and vibrant wine with a fine texture and finish. Their best ever?

Haut-Bailly (\$Inquire) We all love this property and its managing director Véronique Sanders. Ever since she started managing the estate in the very late '90s, Haut-Bailly has been one of K&L's best-selling Bordeaux wines. My notes: pure silk! And at the property: iron fist in a velvet glove! Refined, seamless, balanced. You name it. But the quantities they release will not be much for us.



At Smith Haut Lafitte with Florence and Daniel Cathiard, winemaker Fabien Teitgen and Betsy Reynaud.

Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge (\$Inquire) The Cathiards have brought Smith from underperforming to Bordeaux superstar in 25 years. They have learned from their earlier vintages and now make surely a second growth-quality wine—maybe super-second—at a good price. The 2015 sold very well, and this is as good. 65% CS for this sexy, somewhat exotic mouthful of pleasure. Full-bodied and quite rich on the palate. Some red roses and cassis shining through on this modern rendition.

Pape Clément Rouge (\$89.99) Another winner for Bernard Magrez and his team. His 2015 was one of our best-selling wines and this 2016 is just as good. It shows earthy elements in the nose and on the palate, and is quite spicy with some fine tannins on the finish. This wine will need some time even though it is lush on the palate. They released 20% less than normal this year because they were severely affected by the late April 2017 frost. Just a warning to he who hesitates—you know what happens.

Le Clarence de Haut-Brion (\$139.99) Very nice second wine of the big boy, Haut-Brion. Red berry aromas and flavors. Linear tannins, plenty of acidity in this blend, with 51% Merlot. Very nice—depends on the price.

La Mission Haut-Brion Rouge (\$Inquire) Huge wine here and some think one of the best of the vintage. Wonderful nose of cassis, spice and toasty oak. Depth of flavor off the charts. An ager for sure. Hopefully not a crazy price.

Haut-Brion Rouge (\$Inquire) One of my top 10 wines of the vintage. Ethereal nose—a regal wine and much more elegant than La Mission. Layers of ripe fruit and minerality. Full mouthful. Better than the great 1995 I drank twice last week.

The Right Bank 2016

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

The good news is that like the 2015 vintage, 2016 saw some great wines produced. The bad news is we had much less time to spend tasting the wines, as we cut one day from the Right Bank on this latest trip. My notes are brief here.

D'Arce, Castillon, Tour St-Christophe, Haut-Brisson and Fombrague were all written about in my best buy page ([see page 5](#)).

Fleur de Boüard, Lalande de Pomerol (\$29.99) At this price, the wine is a steal. Very focused and fresh. Sweet finish.

Siaurac, Lalande de Pomerol (\$19.99) 7% Malbec. Beautiful property. Very good value wines like 2009, 2010 and this beauty. Violet color, pricy aromas, classic style. They lost most of their 2017 to frost.

Clos l'Eglise, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Super spicy aromas and flavor. Another sexy wine from our friend Hélène Garcin Lévêque. Best ever?

La Patache, Pomerol (\$24.99) A Peter Kwok wine and a great value from Pomerol. One of the better values on the Right Bank in 2016. Round and supple.

Enclos Tourmaline, Pomerol (\$129.99) Another Kwok wine—only 3,000 bottles made with plots near Clinet and La Fleur Petrus. 100% Merlot. Intense black fruit aromas and flavors—also a ton of minerality on the palate. Superb! Quite modern style. As good as their magnificent 2015.

Beauregard, Pomerol (\$Inquire) One of the Cathiard projects and this wine is quite good, just like most other Pomerols. Bright and lively on the palate. Big boy.

Le Bon Pasteur, Pomerol (\$79.99) Much less expensive than Sloan! Full-flavored wine with fine texture and great structure. An ager.

La Cabanne, Pomerol (\$34.99) These guys are on a roll. This is semi-modern in style, but well balanced and lingering on the palate. Their best in a long time?

Clinet, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Elegant side here. Just tons of plum and black fruits. Tastes great right now.

Gazin, Pomerol (\$79.99) Closed up and hard to taste—only tasted once. Judgment reserved.

Petit-Village, Pomerol (\$72.99) 77% M, 10% CS, 13% CF. Good depth here. Very perfumy.

La Pointe, Pomerol (\$42.99) Flashy, new wave style, fat and lush.

Vray Croix de Gay, Pomerol (\$59.99) Great texture on the palate. Quite sweet and much better than most older vintages from this property.

Vieux Château Certan, Pomerol (\$Inquire) They always make great wine here. Only 5% CS in the field these days. A year of selection here. Incredible aromas of blackberry. Seamless and nearly perfect.

Pétrus, Pomerol (\$Inquire) For those who have everything and want more. Silky, sexy, precise, pure—all the adjectives you can name for this one. Will be very expensive. Double the normal color this year.

La Conseillante, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Big, voluptuous aromas of plum, allspice and blackberry. Superb, velvety wine—the Burgundy of Bordeaux! They used drones to pick the ripest plots first.

l'Évangile, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Open, elegant nose of black cherry. Opulent on the palate. Lots of cinnamon and chocolate. Lovely wine!

Le Pin, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Tiny winery—my first visit to this property. Smoky, meaty aromas and toasty black fruit. So expensive, but great.

Carillon d'Angéus, St-Emilion (\$99.99) Great nose—fresh and sweet. And probably 25% of the first wine price.



The vintage rests in style at Château Angéus.

Angéus, St-Emilion (750ml \$379.99; 1.5L \$769.99) Both red and black fruit aromas and flavors. So smooth and lush. Seamless. Cashmere texture. Off the charts—hope price is correct.

Bellevue, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) 100% Merlot here. Could be a great buy if priced correctly. Black raspberry overtones on a very fruity, forward wine.

Quinault l'Enclos, St-Emilion (\$34.99) Black licorice dominates. Best in a long time.

Cheval Blanc, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) 59% M, 37% CF, 3% CS. Tons of red rose and Asian spice aromas. Quite elegant wine with layers of sweet red fruits. Classy wine, but probably very expensive.

d'Aiguilhe, Côtes de Castillon (\$23.99) Always one of our favorites. Round and rich.

Clos de l'Oratoire, St-Emilion (\$39.99) Big, chunky wine with lots of sweet blackberry flavors.

Canon-la-Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Deeply colored and very aromatic notes of black cherry and toasty oak. Big wine, good mouthfeel. Perfect balance.

La Mondotte, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Plush and full-bodied. Big in every respect. Cellar it many years.

Barde-Haut, St-Emilion (750ml \$37.99; 1.5L \$75.99) More richness and precision here. Blackberry jam. Sweet and sexy. Another winner.

Poesia, St-Emilion (\$34.99) Boysenberry jam on toast. Their best effort.

Canon, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) One of the best terroirs in St-Emilion and the wine is again among the better 2016s. Tasted out of barrel. Toasty aromas, black color, black cherry flavors. Ethereal wine.

Berliquet, St-Emilion (\$37.99) Missed tasting this.

Larcis-Ducasse, St-Emilion (\$71.99) As good as their 2015? Exotic aromas of Asian spice and tobacco. Serious wine for the long haul. Sexy and ripe.

Pavie Macquin, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Nice spice here. Long and lingering. Bright and delicious wine.

Beauséjour-Duffau, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Tough to taste—judgment reserved.

Le Prioure, St-Emilion (\$44.99) I love this wine. Toasty and mineral aromas. It's a very elegant wine with layers of ripe fruit that hide the tannins.

Fonplégade, St-Emilion (\$36.99) Modern style, but well-balanced. Great crossover wine for California Cabernet. Spicy, blackberry flavors.

Chauvin, St-Emilion (\$39.99) Sylvie Cazes has a winner here. Fresh and lively. Focused.

Fleur Cardinale, St-Emilion (\$41.99) There won't be any 2017—big frost here. Sweet and spicy, always a good choice on the Right Bank.

La Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$64.99) A winner here—as good as their 1970? Easy drinking.

Clos Fourtet, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) One of the many winners in 2016. This wine is packed with fruit. Very spicy and lovely on the palate. Drink it young or old.

Troplong Mondot, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Great texture, and a must-buy for 2016. The Merlot shines through here.

Figeac, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Off the charts here—top 10 of the vintage. We saved the best for last. A must-buy.

The Delon Left Bank Wines

Jean-Hubert Delon has been making great wines for the past 20-plus years. They seem to be getting better and better. Most of you have drunk the 1997 Potensac—well, his wines are light years better since then. We sold about 20,000 bottles of that gem.

Potensac, Médoc (\$25.99; 1.5L \$52.99) Less expensive than the 1997 and much better. This is a powerful, very rich and spicy wine, but it has a ton of blackberry fruit on the palate. The extreme northern part of the Médoc had some of the best wines of 2016. Superb value for the cellar or for twentieth birthday wines. **93-94 JS**

Clos du Marquis, St-Julien (750ml \$54.99; 1.5L \$112.99; 6-OWC \$329.00) Cinammon spice on the nose. Quite spicy and fresh on the palate. Big wine in need of several years aging to soften up. **93-96 WS**

Le Petit Lion du Marquis de Las Cases (\$Inquire) This is the best they have made in the few years of its existence. As good as their very fine indeed 2010.

Léoville-Las Cases, St-Julien (\$Inquire) Just 13.6% alcohol on this—one of the best wines of the vintage. Surprise! Surprise! Chocolate and spice and everything nice on the nose. Totally integrated on the palate. Seamless and pure, lovely texture. Will age a long time because of the balance. Almost perfect, but it won't be cheap.

Christian Moueix Wines

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

I must say that the 9:00 a.m. tasting at the offices of Moueix was the most enjoyable we have ever experienced. Most all of the wines were easy to taste and so fruity.

Puy Blanquet, St-Emilion (\$23.99) What a great start to the tasting, and the best we have ever tasted for sure. So aromatic, a voluptuous wine with black raspberry aromas and flavors. So sweet and lovely, you want to drink it immediately.

de Sales, Pomerol (\$39.99) Not tasted for some reason.

Lafleur-Gazin, Pomerol (\$48.99) Minty, blueberry aromas. One of their best ever? Elegant with no hard edges. Superb value. **92-95 WS**

Bourgneuf, Pomerol (\$49.99) Smoky nose and flavors. Sexy on the palate. Fine balance. Will need some time but very good effort.

Certan de May, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Tons of red fruits and sweet palate entry. Powerful wine, but holding back a bit. **97-98 JS, 93-96 VN, 94-96 WE**

Hosanna, Pomerol (\$169.99; 6-OWC \$999.00) Big, powerful blockbuster wine. Black color. Iron fist in a velvet glove wine. Very limited availability. Ager. **96-97 JS**

La Fleur-Pétrus, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Fabulous wine with a very spicy nose and tons of fruit on the palate. Long and lingering. A truly great wine only surpassed by Trotanoy in this lineup. **98-99 JS, 95-98 VN, 95-98 WS**

Trotanoy, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Heavenly wine—one of the truly great 2016s. Regal, deep, not flashy. Expensive, surely. **98-100 DC**

Stickies and Blancs: Sauternes and Bordeaux Dry White Wines of 2016

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

2016 Sauternes

Suau (500ml \$19.99) A new project of Domaine de Chevalier and the wine is quite good. Fresh and fine acidity. Honeyed aromas. Value.

Bastor-Lamontagne (\$Inquire) Under the ownership of Florence and Daniel Cathiard. Pineapple aromas and flavors. Fresh and lively, with some coconut undertones. Always a value here.

Guiraud (375ml \$19.99; 750ml \$39.99) Fat and lush on the palate. Super sweet—usually one of our biggest sellers. A crowd pleaser.

La Tour Blanche (375ml \$19.99; 750ml \$39.99) We missed this somehow. Same price as 2015.

Lafaurie-Peyraguey (375ml \$24.99; 750ml \$49.99) Fresh and lively. Finely balanced. One of the top of the vintage.

Doisy-Védrines (375ml \$16.99; 750ml \$33.99) Always a K&L favorite. Plenty of citrus on the nose and palate. Perfectly balanced. Some lingering pineapple flavors.

Doisy-Daëne (375ml \$19.99; 750ml \$39.99) One of our biggest sellers. Very spicy aromas with honeyed flavors. A winner.

Coutet (375ml \$18.99; 750ml \$37.99) Also not tasted, but we heard it was on top of its game in 2016.

Clos Haut-Peyraguey (\$Inquire) A Bernard Magrez wine. Lots of the noble rot on the nose. Pineapple and pear flavors; quite rich on the palate.

Suduiraut (375ml \$32.99; 750ml \$64.99) The first sweet wine we tasted on the trip. A late botrytis year and 5,000 cases produced. Lots of coconut on the palate and nose. Long and lingering.

Rieussec (375ml \$27.99; 750ml \$54.99) Somehow we missed tasting this wine. The good news is that there is no price increase this year, as with most all stickies.

Climens (375ml \$33.99; 750ml \$66.99) We tasted the unblended wine our last night at Sources de Caudalie. They were samples from the north, south, east and west parts of the property. The final blend should be spectacular.

d'Yquem Does not release on premier. Small production here with 60% declassified. Pineapple, white flower, mango aromas and flavor. Very much like 2010.

2016 Bordeaux Dry White Wines

The 2016 white Bordeaux wines are solid—just a step behind 2014 and 2015—and most have not changed their prices even though they had a disastrous frost in 2017. Sauvignon Blanc (SB) dominates the blends.

Lynch-Bages Blanc, Bordeaux (\$39.99) I love this wine. Superb acidity and tons of fruit. Fresh and complete.

Mouton Rothschild “Aile d’Argent” Bordeaux Blanc (\$Inquire) Spicy, vibrant wine—these northern Médoc wines are impressive.

Cos d’Estournel Blanc, Bordeaux (\$119.99) We loved this at the property—refreshing, lively entry with long, clean finish.

Pavillon Blanc de Margaux, Bordeaux (\$Inquire) 100% SB. Superbly made in 2016. Upfront fruit with white flower aromas and flavors.

Gazin-Rocquencourt Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$Inquire) A touch creamy on the palate. A fine value.

Malartic-Lagravière Blanc (\$Inquire) 85% SB. Clean and lemony on the palate. Good value! **93-94 JS, 94-96 WE**

Lespault-Martillac Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$24.99) A fine value for this property that has the Domaine de Chevalier team looking after it.

Domaine de Chevalier Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$Inquire) We always love this wine and 2016 is very good—maybe just behind 2014. Superbly balanced with citric notes on the nose and palate. **96-97 JS, 95-97 WE**

Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$Inquire) Blows you away from the first sniff with lime blossoms, crushed seashells and white flowers, while on the palate sour lemon, pink grapefruit and spice all marry with just the right amount of rich oak accents. **96-97 JS**

Pape Clément Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$129.99) An exotic beauty with hints of passion fruit, pineapple and lime blossom. Quite dense and rich. **94-95 JS**

La Clarté de Haut-Brion Blanc, Pessac-Léognan Citrus and wildflower aromas. Very citric on the palate. 76% Sémillon.

La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc, Pessac-Léognan and Haut-Brion Blanc Of course, these two white are ethereal, with the La Mission having white flower aromas and crisp acidity, while the Haut-Brion shows more power. They will be very expensive.

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