

2015 Bordeaux Vintage Report



2015 BORDEAUX VINTAGE REPORT FEATURES

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2015 Bordeaux: The 5's Have It

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

The K&L Bordeaux tasting contingent left for Bordeaux on April 2, 2016 and returned on April 12. Our assignment was to assess the 2015 Bordeaux vintage, of which we had heard good preliminary reports from some of the writers who actually go to Bordeaux in early March to taste. We think that tasting even in April may be too soon to judge the new wines, but our protesting over the years has gotten us nowhere—so we figure if you can't beat them, join them. This year our group included four seasoned Bordeaux tasters: Alex Pross (12 years experience), Trey Beffa (20 years), Ralph Sands (25 years), and myself (31 years). Our two first timers—who, I may say, were great to travel with and to get opinions from—were David Driscoll and Phil Bohorfoush. We left with hopes that the reports we heard about a good vintage were true, because we have had a string of decent, “useful” vintages since the great back-to-back 2009 and 2010 vintages. My good friend Jean-Guillaume Prats of Cos d'Estournel fame, when explaining to us the 2007 vintage, coined the term “useful.” He said that Bordeaux vintages fall into two groups: the “vintage of the century” group and the “useful” group. There have not been any bad vintages in Bordeaux since the 1970s.

When we returned after 10 days of intensive tasting, we agreed that 2015 Bordeaux was indeed in the “vintage of the century” group—or at least in the “very good” vintage camp. The wines were not as rich and sexy as the '09s nor as structured as the '10s. Rather, they tasted more like 2005 Bordeaux, which was and is a very good vintage. The 2015s were easy to taste, just like the 2005s. I wrote the 2005 Vintage Report and called it the “Big Easy” vintage. So here we are 10 years later with the same type of vintage, although weather conditions for the two vintages were not very similar. The title at the top can be explained by the curious prevalence of great Bordeaux vintages that have ended in a “5” in the last 70 years.

1945 was truly a “vintage of the century” in Bordeaux, and probably the best vintage of the twentieth century! It was also the vintage of K&L cofounders Todd Zucker and myself. Ralph's vintage, 1955, was superb, as were 1975, 1985, 1995 and 2005. We were treated quite well on the trip, where many meals were served with 1975, 1985, 1995 and 2005 wines.

We thought so much of this vintage, we are back to a 16-page report—our first 16-pager since the 2010 report. We also are asking each of the contingent to write their thoughts on the vintage and list some of their picks for value and quality, or just quality.

The conclusion we all have in common is this: 2015 is a very good vintage in Bordeaux and the wines should merit your attention, especially if the pricing remains “reasonable.” We do expect, and have seen so far, that the prices for 2015 are higher than for 2014. The dollar exchange rates are about the same, so the prices should increase from 10% to 20% over the very low-priced 2014 vintage. We hope that most properties keep the increases in that range, but I am afraid some owners will increase their prices more than 25%, which will make for a difficult 2015 campaign for those wines. As of this writing (May 23), I am happy with the increases so far, which range from zero to 25%. So many good to great wines have opened already, and you can find truly great bargains in the likes of Tour St-Christophe, Cantemerle, Siran, Poujeaux, etc.—all of these under \$30! But more about specific wines later. “Reasonable” is the pricing word for 2015 Bordeaux—that is all we ask.

The layout of this vintage report starts with the weather conditions for 2015—and again, thanks a million to our great Bordeaux friend and weather expert Bill Blatch for supplying us with his vintage report. A lot

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We have great Bordeaux on tap from 2015. Above: racking the wine at Lynch-Bages.

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of the next few pages are the views of Bill and a few other Bordeaux notables. Following the conditions will be articles from our other five Bordeaux companions and their general notes on the different regions and specific wines we think should be bought pre-arrival.

The Making of the 2015s: Winter and Spring

As Bill Blatch (the dean of Bordeaux vintage reports) opens his report: “This is the story of a vintage year in two parts: a totally extraordinary, excessive first half that gradually tempered into a gentle, more typically Atlantic and erratic second half. It is the story of a year which, until high summer, was charged with universal enthusiasm but which ended very variably. For some properties there was a truly great ending, while for others just a very good one.” It was definitely a growing season marked by two totally different climatic phenomena: the early heat and the late rains.

The very dry 2014 harvest period left the vineyards in urgent need of two things: rain and frost. Good rains came in November, but not much in December or the four months following. Luckily, there was a lot of moisture in the soil from the quite wet 2012 and 2013 growing seasons. The frosts came in December, January and February so the vines could stay properly dormant and the pests could be killed off.

March was dangerously hot during the days, but thanks to the cold nights the budding did not start prematurely. April started cool, but by April 6 the weather warmed up, so bud break was on time and nigh on perfect for whites and reds alike. With the very warm April the shoots grew quickly and the embryo bunches were big and many—some think this was because the previous four vintages had relatively low yields.

Summer

May continued very dry, with less than half of normal rainfall (April was short 70%). It was also quite hot in May and the foliage grew quickly. The vine was now ready to flower, but cool weather delayed it until about May 23, when warmer weather took hold. Then it blossomed into the fastest, most efficient flowering possible, this being perhaps the most important stage on the way to a quality vintage. Then the heat suddenly escalated in the first few days of June. Such a sudden burst of heat just as flowering was concluding could have meant casualties in the form of aborted grape-set, but it came just after the main part of the job had been done—timed perfectly, and the set was very big. Great news for a possible early and big vintage. Everyone was thinking a September harvest—a very good indicator of a top-quality vintage. June was a very hot and dry month, with the hottest day of the year on June 29; July continued hot and dry until July 22. The vines started to stress and the foliage began to curl in the midday heat. The grapes remained small and the skins thickened as the vines, trying to survive, ceased to give priority to their reproduction. Up to July, the heat was welcomed by most properties as a harbinger of an early vintage, but by mid-July the feelings turned negative—they needed some water. Lo and behold, the skies opened up from July 22 to 24. The weather was changing, and the second part of the growing season began. August saw the “rains of salvation” for the vintage. It remained hot, but there were four separate episodes of

rain in August. The rains were unequal, with the Entre-Deux-Mers getting very little while the Right Bank got 140 millimeters and the Médoc and Graves 100 millimeters. The rains coincided with veraison, which quickly became the most even and earliest since 2009 and concluded on the weekend of August 8-9. As Blatch says: “As a result of the preceding drought, the vine was already ceasing to foliate, taking in this nourishment for itself and leaving its grapes to concentrate on their own. This premature halt in the growth of the foliage and the nourishment of the bunches was possibly the biggest factor explaining the extreme health of the crop at the end, allowing most harvesters to wait calmly and unhurried for the optimum picking time for each parcel.”

Autumn

The erratic autumn reshuffled the cards, as Blatch points out. The whites were picked starting the last week of August under very good conditions.

Then on September 10 the sunshine ran out and the rains came again. The grapes were in good shape, so the vineyard guys delayed their harvest—they were not worried. The rains of mid-September were also erratic for different regions, with the most falling on the northern Médoc from St-Julien north. The Right Bank got very little, as did the Margaux and Pessac-Léognan regions. Some pickers on the lesser properties rushed out to pick the Merlot, while others waited until September 20–October 1 under fine weather conditions.

The Cabernets Sauvignons on the Left Bank and Francs on the Right Bank were picked under good weather conditions from October 8 until October 22. The harvest was over, except for a few Sauternes properties, by October 22. The big rains returned on October 27. Thus ends this exceptionally unconventional growing season in Bordeaux. Most producers were smiling broadly after the last grapes were picked.

The Wines

The dry whites, harvested under perfect conditions, have a fresh, grapey appeal, with Sauvignon Blanc dominating the blend in most places. The Sémillon suffered more because of the August rains. The wines are quite good—though not any better, in my mind, than the more richly styled ’14s or the briskly acidic, focused ’13s. I think the whites will be priced about the same as the ’14s were, or slightly higher.

The Sauternes had a dream vintage! It seems that lately, every year is good for the stickies: 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015 are all good to great, with the ’15s right at the top. Most estates picked in a series of four pickings, each time with the botrytis set in motion by four patches of wet weather and then four subsequent perfectly sunny, dry and cool days. The first picking was around September 5 and the last was around October 19. These wines are not as fat and unctuous as the 2009s, but more in the style of the 2001s and 2011s. Most of them taste delicious now—that is a good sign that they will be delicious for their whole life. The crop size was quite good and well above the average of the last five years. The prices so far have ranged from the same as 2014 to about 20% above those prices. We tasted Yquem at Château Cheval Blanc, and it was mindblowing—so good right now, with perfect acidity and apricot and pineapple on the nose and palate. Could this rival the 2001? I think so.

The red wines range from OK to very good to outstanding, depending on many factors, like how much rain they received in mid-September to early October, and how they reacted to it. The Left Bank Merlots are not nearly as good as the Right Bank Merlots. The Cabernets on the Left Bank gain in intensity from the north to the south. Therefore, the best regions seem to our group—and most others—to be the Margaux and Pessac-Léognan regions.

On the Right Bank, Pomerol is as usual the shining star. There are many great St-Emilions, and there are some not so great—those that were pushed or overly extracted. Of course, there are some stunning wines in St-Julien, Pauillac and St-Estèphe, but these regions had a bit more rainfall in September and October than their southern neighbors. There was more Cabernet in the blends in many of these northern communes, where that variety handled the rain well. The grand vins were mostly very good, but, interestingly, I found some of the second wines to be less good than the other lesser properties made by these owners. For example, I preferred Capbern to Marquis de Calon, Tronquoy-Lalande to Dame de Montrose, and Duhart-Milon to Carruades de Lafite. Also, Clos du Marquis to the Petit Lion of las Cases.

I put the Margaux region as the top performer of 2015, narrowly beating out Pessac-Léognan and Pomerol. The vast Margaux region shines in 2015—in so many recent vintages that was not the case. The UGC Margaux tasting at the beautiful du Tertre property was so enjoyable. Almost every wine was sweet and lush with fine balancing acidity and plenty of structure underneath the forward, fruity palate impressions. Some great values here, like Siran and La Tour de Mons at well under \$30. At first the acidities for the reds seemed to be too low, but they caught up naturally during the vinification and ended up more balanced than similarly hot vintages like 1990, 2003 and 2009.

One point that Mr. Blatch brings up concerns how the small red grapes with their thick skins turned out to produce silky, suave wines. As he says: “The 2015 red Bordeaux have an identity that lies first in their naturally quite high alcohol levels, then in their aromatic complexity and in the silkiness of their suave tannins. It was puzzling at first that such small, thick-skinned grapes could take so long to deliver their tannins during fermentation. Maybe the skins had hardened so early in the cycle that they didn’t ‘tanninise’ at the usual rate after the véraison, especially during the shock of the wet August after all those months of drought. At the time there were many allusions to the Burgundy style, beautifully ripe and velvety but not tremendously extractable, and the press wines generally didn’t add much either. In addition, there was a general tendency toward very gentle extractions, in order to preserve all the potential features of the vintage’s finesse.”

Conclusion and the Marketplace

As Mr. Blatch so correctly points out: “Even before the 2014s had been made, people were saying that a vintage ending in a ‘5’ was destined to be great: ‘05, ‘95, ‘85, ‘75, ‘55 and ‘45. During the whole year, the 2015s were almost willed along into being great, and in June, even greater than great, after four consecutive months of heat and drought, an

early bud-burst and an efficient flowering had seemed to set it on that path to greatness.” But as you can see, this changed dramatically with July, through the harvest. Some really great wines have been made, but by no means everywhere. During the early summer’s exuberant optimism, the 1961 vintage was mentioned with the new vintages of 2005, 2009 and 2010. While most do not think 2015 has reached the heights of 1961 or 2009 or 2010, it could give 2005 a run for its money. What we know for sure is that 2015 can be mentioned in the top five vintages of the past 15 years with 2000, 2005, 2009 and 2010 as its competitors. We think 2015 is quite similar to 2005 but maybe a bit more fruity and elegant. There is no doubt that there are some stars in 2015 Bordeaux.



Dinnertime at Logis de la Cadene in St-Emilion.

And so it all comes down to the prices for the wines. As has been mentioned before in this report, some quite good wines have opened and their prices are from 5% to 20% higher than the very inexpensive 2014s. Now we wait and see how the top properties price themselves. We pleaded our case for everyone to be “reasonable.” Let’s see if they listened to us and many other Bordeaux wine lovers. Our group thinks that if the prices are reasonable (like Siran, Cantemerle, Poujeaux, Tour St-Christophe, etc.), there could be a very good Bordeaux pre-arrival campaign, the first successful one since the 2010 campaign five years ago. We stated that the 2015s were easy to taste; now, with correct pricing, they should be easy to sell. We can only hope.

Final note: Some great wines have opened at very good prices recently, and Malescot and Pape Clément rouge already sold out of our first tranche allocations. Pontet-Canet and Giscours will sell out quickly, as well.

Bordeaux lost a fine man in March when Paul Pontallier, the director at Château Margaux for over 30 years, passed away. He was the consummate gentleman and the best at his job. We knew him well and he was always gracious to us. —K&L

Clyde's Top 11 Picks for Values of the Vintage — Under \$40

Paloumey, Haut-Médoc (\$14.99) We have sold 2,000-plus bottles of the 2009 and are still selling it now. That vintage is selling for \$20 and this equally as good wine is \$15. Will reward a few years of cellaring, but most people will drink it right up.

Malescasse, Haut-Médoc (\$16.99) These guys always make great wines—heck, we just bought 250 cases of their 2007 on this April trip. This wine is much better—so round and lush on the palate, but with good backbone and structure for aging. Huge scores by the scorers.

Capbern, St-Estephe (750ml \$19.99; 1.5L \$39.99) Amazing wine and I liked it better than the Marquis de Calon. 68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot and 4% Petit Verdot. So lush and round. Drink it now—better than their great 2009 (it was called Capbern Gasqueton in those days).

Haut-Brisson, St-Emilion (750ml \$22.99; 1.5L \$45.99) One of the excellent wines from the Peter Kwok stable of Bordeaux, which includes Tour St-Christophe. We sold a lot of the 2005 Haut-Brisson Reserve, but they stopped making a reserve in 2015, so all that great juice goes into this wine. Fabulous black fruit aromas that follow to the palate. Plenty of structure for aging but a sweet core of fruit. All this for under \$25? 94-95 points JS, too.

Lespault Martillac Rouge, Pessac-Léognan (\$24.99) Blackberry jam aromas, intense and fruity. Black cherry flavors with plenty of mineral undertones. Long and lush on the palate, with a lingering finish. 60% Merlot. Stunning value, but not much made.

Moulin du Cadet, St-Emilion (\$26.99) One of my top 10 best values of the vintage. Reminds me of the great 1970, but with 45 years of improved winemaking and vineyard management. Sweet and lush with tons of blackberry fruit on nose and palate. Tastes so good right now. 91-92 points James Suckling.

Siran, Margaux (750ml \$27.99; 1.5L \$55.99) The best Siran I have ever tasted. 55% Merlot, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Petit Verdot. Such a reasonable price for a great glass of wine. Tons of ripe, forward black fruits with rounded tannins and great acidity.

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) Various other formats are available. I know most others mention this wine in this report, but I must also mention it is my No. 1 favorite value of 2015.

du Tertre, Margaux (\$37.99) Their best ever, in my opinion. Full-bodied and full-flavored red berry fruits. Sweet and lovely wine, with less Cabernet Franc this year.

My two other favorites for value are **Tour St-Christophe (\$25.99)** and **Le Pape (\$24.99)**, but Trey has written them up in this issue.

Haut-Médoc and Other Value Regions 2015

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

You must be careful here—the prices are good, but sometimes the quality is not up to par. Also, some of these wines should be bought after they arrive. *Note that if no price is listed, it means we will only offer them as they arrive.* Just a few comments from the Joanne tasting and visits to négociants:

Côtes de Bordeaux

Marjosse Rouge Sweet aromas and fine flavor on palate. Quite nice and spicy. Well done, Pierre Lurton.

Croix Mouton More black fruit and more tannin; substantial wine. 75% Merlot.

Gigault “Cuvée Viva,” Premières Côtes de Blaye 100% Merlot from our good friend and négociant Christophe Reboul Salze. Fine balance of oak and blackberry fruit. Always a fine value.

Cap de Faugeres (\$Inquire) We really like this one in 2015. Plenty of black fruits from this 85% Merlot wine. Right up there with their excellent 2009.

Belle Colline (\$Inquire) Another Christophe Reboul Salze wine. 90% Merlot. Very rich and jammy, but great acid balance. Seamless.

Puygueraud, Côtes de Francs (\$14.99) A fantastic value from Nicolas Thienpont. 60% Merlot. Very spicy and sexy on the palate. Right up there with their 2009.

La Prade Another Thienpont wine that is very sweet and lush with no hard edges.

Haut-Médoc, Moulis and Listrac

Maucaillou, Moulis Lifted, high-toned. Red fruit. Quite good.

Mauvesin Barton, Moulis (\$16.99) Old school with black fruit aromas and flavor. Made by the Léoville-Barton team.

La Tour Carnet, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) Sweet oak and tons of fruit. Quite good with lots of stuffing for the cellar. A fine Bernard Magrez wine, and it is reasonably priced.

Cambon La Pelouse, Haut-Médoc Nice weight—superb finish. Sweet.

Lanessan, Haut-Médoc (\$14.99) Very sweet and lovely texture. Elegant wine. No stores in the US sell as much Lanessan as we do. This should be a fourth growth.

Beaumont, Haut-Médoc (\$13.99) This wine, supervised by the Beychevelle team, is usually sweet and easy to drink—this one also.

Senejac, Haut-Médoc Easy drinking. Same owner as Talbot.

Larrivau, Haut-Médoc Sweet upfront, easy to drink.

Clarke Rothschild, Listrac (\$21.99) We liked quite a few Listracs, especially these three here. Sweet core of blackberry fruit with some licorice notes.

Fourcas Hosten, Lustrac (\$Inquire) Soft and sweet, just like a Hermès scarf. These Lustracs are not tough like the old days.

Ducluzeau, Lustrac (\$Inquire) Made by the Bruno Borie team at Ducru—can't be bad. 85% Merlot and the wine has no hard edges. We love it and all the wines from Bruno this year.

Potensac, Médoc (\$24.99) From the Delon stable of fine wines, this wine sings. This is a powerful, very rich wine for the cellar.

Chasse-Spleen, Moulis (\$29.99) Fine middle fruit. Good effort from Céline Villars-Foubet.

Sociando-Mallet (\$32.99) Good entry, big and powerful wine. Ager.

Poujeaux, Moulis (\$29.99) Good upfront fruit—will be good value. Red fruits abound. Always one of our faves.

La Lagune, Haut-Médoc (\$48.99) Tasted three times with varying notes. At UGC: Very sweet with fine mid-palate. Great texture.

Lynch-Bages Blanc, Bordeaux (\$Inquire) 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 33% Sémillon, 17% Muscadelle. Delightful wine—spicy, lemony aromas, racy on the palate like the 2013. Summertime sipper.

Joanin Bécot, Côtes de Castillon (\$Inquire) The wine and the owner are both lovely. Juliette Bécot has fashioned a silky wine in 2015. It's 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc, and will be drinking well when released.

La Dauphine, Fronsac (\$19.99) Another fine entry from this up-and-coming property. 90% Merlot. Black cherry aromas and flavors. Has some tannin at the back. Value!

Trey's Wines to Buy from 2015

By Trey Beffa

Despite a very difficult schedule, the 2015 vintage might have been one of the easiest vintages to taste out of barrel. Definitely the easiest since the 2009! The best wines from 2015 are highlighted by wonderfully ripe fruit, lush textures, and ripe, fleshy tannins. We found the quality of the wines from Margaux, Pessac and the Right Bank to be very high, whereas St-Estèphe, Pauillac, and St-Julien seemed to be more inconsistent. This makes sense, as the rain that came at the end of summer in 2015 was much heavier in the northern Médoc.

Below is a list of 2015s that I would recommend buying. I have taken out the first growths and other top wines where the prices are on the higher side. My top five wines of the vintage list at the bottom includes all wines, including the first growths.

Capbern, St-Estèphe (750ml \$19.99; 1.5L \$39.99) Bright red fruits in the nose and the mouth; clean, fresh and lively; silky mid-palate. Should be a sleeper and will be very drinkable upon release!

La Tour de Mons, Margaux (\$20.99) This wine should represent a great value from the vintage. While I have never really been a big fan of this wine out of barrel, the 2015 is wonderfully ripe and fleshy with an elegant, long supple finish. Excellent freshness and lift. A sleeper!

Tour St-Christophe, St-Emilion (750ml \$25.99; 1.5L \$49.99) Inky color, lots of upfront fruit; very ripe and layered in the mouth; loaded with mocha, cream and blackberry flavors. Shows a fair amount of structure, and the wine is fresh on the finish. This is a sleeper and a great buy from the 2015 vintage!

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (750ml \$29.99; 1.5L \$59.99) I tasted this wine on three separate occasions and loved it every time. Aromatic and wonderfully fresh, crisp fruit that is nearly silky in the mouth; tannins are ripe and sweet with a long, lingering finish.

Pichon-Baron, Pauillac (\$Inquire) This is a lush, mouthcoating wine. Hints of cocoa and vanilla bean on the nose, followed by fleshy fruit

that feels broad in the mouth and carries through to the finish. There are no holes in this wine—the tannins are firm but ripe and are hidden by the copious amount of fruit. This is a very solid effort.

Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Pauillac (\$64.99) Aromatic and toasty in the nose, with lots of ripe fruit, velvety middle, nice balance and length. Usually a bit tough for my taste, but this wine is delicious and well made. Excellent effort in 2015!

Duhart-Milon, Pauillac (\$66.99) Most times while tasting at Lafite *en premier* I am puzzled by the majority of the wines—including Lafite, but especially by this wine. Not this year. This wine showed sweet and savory, loaded with ripe fruit while still maintaining wonderful freshness and lift. This should be a drinker right upon release but has the structure, acidity and freshness to age well for mid-term cellaring.

Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (\$Inquire) The 2015 Lynch-Bages was another winner from Pauillac. Aromatic on the nose; in the mouth there are hints of black cherry, cedar, spice and licorice. This wine shows purity and elegance in the mid-palate while the finish is long and lingering.

Brancaire-Ducru, St-Julien (\$52.99) A winner in St-Julien, this wine is elegant and sweet, with spicy red fruits and a fresh, crisp backbone that holds all the sweet fruit in check. Should be excellent to drink right out of the gate.

Croix de Beaucaillou, St-Julien (\$43.99) I have enjoyed several bottles of the 2005 La Croix de Beaucaillou recently, and that wine is showing fantastically! 2015 is very similar but will even show sweeter and more approachable earlier. It is a great wine for short to mid-term cellaring.

Lalande-Borie, St-Julien (\$24.99) Another sleeper from Bruno Borie, the Lalande-Borie is velvety, supple and lush, with a round, silky mouthfeel and a lingering, spicy finish. This is going to drink great upon release!

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
Point scores from critics are abbreviated: (94-95 JS) means a range of 94-95 points from James Suckling. All wines in red, bold type (hyperlinked in the PDF version) in this special report are 2015 vintage at pre-arrival pricing. If no price is listed, we will only offer them as they arrive. Prices quoted are as of June 3 and may change at any time.

Léoville-Poyferre, St-Julien (\$74.99) Dark, inky color. This is quite extracted and rich, with layers of fruit that coat the mouth. Tannins are firm but ripe. Solid wine.

D'Issan, Margaux (\$55.99) At the right price this wine will be a great buy! As always, this wine has a minerality at its core, but with the 2015 its freshness and lively fruit grab your attention. This is an elegant and sweet D'Issan that should show well upon release.

Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux (\$64.99) As we heard from many properties in the Médoc, "this is not a second wine," but another expression of the vineyards. Either way, the Alter Ego is fabulous in 2015. The color is dark and inky, with black cherry, cassis and chocolate flavors that are intertwined within the lovely velvety texture of this wine. This wine is nearly exotic but still shows a wonderful freshness and finesse.

Giscours, Margaux (\$Inquire) Dark and aromatic, this rich and fleshy wine shows tons of chocolate, black cherry and mocha flavors. Tannins are integrated and firm yet ripe. This is a sleeper from the vintage and one of the best Giscours I can remember tasting out of barrel!

Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux (\$79.99) Another winner from the Margaux appellation, the Rauzan-Ségla is polished and concentrated with hints of cola, cassis and red cherries that linger on the finish. Lots of layers here—excellent focus yet nearly flamboyant!

Brane-Cantenac, Margaux (\$64.99) Hints of coffee, spice and red currant fruit are followed by a rich, fleshy texture and velvety finish. This wine is juicy and spicy. Usually not one of my favorites out of barrel, this is another winner from Margaux!

Malescot St-Exupéry, Margaux (\$59.99) One of my possible candidates for wine of the vintage! Very dark color, lovely spicy nose, hints of bittersweet chocolate, and polished, juicy texture with a hint of mint and savory herbs. Tannins are ripe and integrated. Very fresh and balanced with a long, lingering finish. A wine to buy for the cellar!

Haut-Bailly, Pessac-Léognan (\$Inquire) Another one of the top wines from the vintage, this is an elegant, sweet and fleshy Haut-Bailly. It is loaded with a wonderful core of red fruits that is complemented with hints of minerals, cedar and graphite. It is well-structured and balanced and should be a good candidate for cellaring.

Smith Haut Lafitte, Pessac-Léognan (\$84.99) The all-black label for the 2015 will represent the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Cathiards buying the property. The 2015 is almost black in color. A rich, nearly exotic fruit profile, with hints of graphite, cassis, chocolate and Asian spice. The tannins are fleshy and juicy—this is a delicious wine!

Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac-Léognan (\$64.99) Very fresh and ripe nose; velvety, sweet fruit; hints of red licorice. Elegant with a long, spicy finish. Complex and very fine. Should drink well on release.

Pape Clément, Pessac-Léognan (\$99.99) A blend of 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot and 4% Cabernet Franc, this is a seriously good wine. Dark, chewy fruit; intensely concentrated, showing hints of meat and smoke but not overdone; spicy, ripe and fleshy in the mid-palate. The finish is long and fresh. Definite buy!

Canon, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) 72% Merlot and 28% Cabernet Franc. This wine is toasty up front, with lots of red currants and red cherry

fruit, a seamless mid-palate and a long, spicy finish. This wine has a lot of finesse and elegance. Great purity and precision!

Petit Village, Pomerol (\$69.99) Aromatic nose, round and lush fruit, juicy texture with hints of mocha and black cherries. Easy to taste—soft and fleshy! This was one of the first wines we tasted on our first full day, so I was a bit unsure of my notes. Luckily, we tasted it several more times and I enjoyed it every time. A winner in 2015!

Nenin, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Jean-Hubert Delon continues to make great strides at this property—could be his best there?

Tropelong Mondot, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) The 2015 Tropelong Mondot shows a rich, ripe and nearly exotic fruit character that is touched with a hint of toasty oak and chocolate. The mouth is broad and concentrated. This will be a good wine for mid-term cellaring!

Figeac, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Always made in a "classic" style, the Figeac 2015 shows lots of bright, high-toned fruits, a focused and lean mouthfeel with lots of spicy edges, and hints of tobacco and sweet herbs. I would think this wine will come together nicely with some more barrel age. Should prove to be an excellent if not great Figeac!

Trey's Top 5 of the Vintage

Ducru-Beaucaillou, St-Julien (\$Inquire) This was a candidate for wine of the vintage for most of our group. It is quite open in the nose for Ducru, with layers of sweet fruit, mocha, graphite and minerals in the mouth. There are firm but ripe tannins. Very balanced and long on the finish, it is dense and powerful but deceptively supple and fleshy. I must buy this for my cellar!

Palmer, Margaux (\$Inquire) A blend of 44% Merlot, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Petit Verdot, this wine is dark and inky in color and loaded with black licorice, mocha and sweet blueberries. This is a big wine with lots of structure and tannin but it shows amazing purity of fruit, length and freshness.

Vieux Château Certan, Pomerol (\$Inquire) This one wowed us! Amazingly pure and elegant, with a velvety texture and seamless, lush, sweet core of fruit that goes on and on in the mouth. It is not a monster but the definition of elegance, balance and finesse.

Margaux, Margaux (\$Inquire) The 2015 Château Margaux is a dense, rich and powerful wine showing velvety texture and a long, sweet finish. There is plenty of structure and tannin here for the long haul but it is difficult to find under such copious amounts of fruit.

L'Evangile, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Along with 2010 Petrus and a few others, this could be one of the greatest wines I have ever tasted out of barrel. In the mouth the wine is so rich, polished and lush that it practically melts into you. Hints of cedar, cola and black currants are followed by a long, sweet and spicy finish that lasts for at least a minute. A blend of 84% Merlot and 16% Cabernet Franc, this wine has a nearly perfect balance between power and finesse. Wow!



K&L Bordeaux expert Ralph Sands inspects the vineyard at Château Latour.

Ralph's 2015 Values

By Ralph Sands

Now that the scores are in and some prices are out, we are indeed having our first real pre-arrival campaign since 2010, and everyone who loves Bordeaux is happy with the opening prices—at least, so far. I'm thrilled with the wines across the board—the absolute natural beauty the wines feature, the great purity of fruit, the tremendous freshness, and above all, their great taste.

This is the perfect vintage for young people to lay the foundation of a great wine cellar. And if you are up there in age, it is important to know that this is not a vintage loaded with lots of firm tannin. Many of these wines will drink very well young, just a few years after arriving in 2018, but the exquisite balance—found in wines like the 1982s, 1985s, 2005s and 2009s before them—will ensure a nice life in the cellar.

This vintage offers great value for great tasting wines like La Tour de Mons, Siran, Malescot, Branaire-Ducru, Alter Ego, Croix de Beaucaillou, Clos du Marquis, d'Aiguilhe, Clos de l'Oratoire, Beaugard and Côte de Baleau—this list could go on and on. This vintage also brings to the table wines that will be considered legendary: wines like Ch. Latour, Ch. Margaux, Cheval Blanc, Vieux Château Certan, Petrus, Palmer and Ducru-Beaucaillou. We always have to remember that great wines taste great from the very beginning of their lives, and with 2015 I wrote down in my notes “tastes great” over and over again.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have—it will be my pleasure to help you. Go Bordeaux and Go Giants!

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) 60% CS, 30% M, 6% CF, 4% PV. Our entire team loved this wine, and a 13% increase in price is very reasonable number for what might be Bordeaux's greatest value. Great nose and taste of effusive black fruits with hints of earth, chocolate and wood, all beautifully balanced. Loved it! 2 stars from me. ★★

Siran, Margaux (\$27.99) The commune of Margaux is without a doubt the “star commune” in 2015. But if you ask me for the greatest overall wine for the money, it is Ch. Siran. We visited owner Edouard Mialhe here a few years ago and have been watching his wine continue to

improve. I think his 2015 will be the wine that brings Siran back to the forefront of the marketplace. The wine has beautiful sweetness in its ripe fruit, good richness and weight, fine mid-palate texture and lovely finish. 2 stars. ★★

Clos du Marquis, St-Julien (\$52.99) 66% CS, 31% M, 3% CF. Average vine age is 35 years. Loaded with deep red currant fruit, a very silky wine with good, rounded tannins. Very good! This parcel, located directly across the street from the walled vineyard of Las Cases, makes incredible wine. In many years it is so very close in quality to LLC, for far less money.

Poujeaux, Moulis (\$29.99) 50% CS, 40% M, 5% CF, 5% PV. The 2015 Poujeaux is a perfect example why this wine has been a top-selling wine here for decades. Beautifully polished, ripe, sweet fruit with classic structure. The kicker here is the exquisite balance this wine always possesses. 2 stars ★★

Fleur Cardinale, St-Emilion (\$38.99) 75% M, 20% CF, 5% CS. This wine shows you all the flashy, attractive Merlot fruit and oak you could ever want without spending hundreds of dollars! Definitely New World/international in style and flat-out just delicious! 2 stars ★★

Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux (\$64.99) This wine has just killed me in the last few years—I just love it! 52% M, 42% CS, 6% PV. This wine may be the best-tasting wine in Bordeaux over the last 10 years running. The old vine Merlot here at Palmer makes a spectacular wine with such delicious, sweet fruit it is hard to believe it does not go into the first wine. Rich black-red fruits with a little grip; so attractive, classy, and hard not to drink it all young! 2 stars from me. ★★

Croix de Beaucaillou, St-Julien (\$43.99) The first wine, Ducru-Beaucaillou, may well be the wine of the vintage, and the second wine, Le Croix, shows you exactly why as it is also fantastic! Sleek, racy wine with plenty of black fruits and cassis that explode in the mid-palate. It possesses wonderful, sweet tannins and texture throughout the finish. Impressive and delicious! 2 stars from me! ★★

Duhart-Milon, Pauillac (\$66.99) 73% CS, 27% M. This wine from the Lafite Rothschild team is on one heck of a roll. Beautiful aromatics! Deep, round, silky fruit with hints of blackberry jam and polished tannins. Flat-out delicious and drubs the second wine of Lafite. ★★

Marquis d'Alesme, Margaux (\$39.99) 60% CS, 30% M, 7% CF, 3% PV. Super bright, blue fruits; good middle fruit texture; very pretty with nice tannin control. The best wine I have ever tasted here! ★★

La Tour de Mons, Margaux (\$20.99) 47% CS, 56% M, 6% PV. La Tour de Mons excelled in 2015. This property is truly a textbook Margaux and an amazing value. Bright, elegant, red-blue fruit all in absolutely perfect balance—floats across the palate as a great wine from Margaux should. This will be a delicious young drink! 2 stars for value! ★★

Score key: One star ★ means I like the wine and would buy it for K&L as well as for myself; two stars ★★ means I feel it is an outstanding wine and I would love to have it in my collection; three stars ★★★ means a wine of absolute greatness and possibly legendary.

Cuvée key: CS = Cabernet Sauvignon, CF = Cabernet Franc, M = Merlot, PV = Petit Verdot.



The team heads off to lunch at the Cathiard's Chartreuse, next to Smith Haut Lafitte.

Pessac-Léognan: The Overlooked Gem of Bordeaux

By Alex Pross

There are five major communes for red wine in the Left Bank region of Bordeaux. They are, in no particular order: Pauillac, Margaux, St-Julien, St-Estèphe and Pessac-Léognan. Pessac-Léognan seems to always be spoken about after the first four listed here. This may be because the appellation includes the city of Bordeaux as well as the Graves region, or it might stem from the fact that they make both white and red wines, which means their quality of vintage can't be as easily discerned. It could be that the famed twin châteaux of Haut-Brion and La Mission Haut-Brion have cast such large shadows that other châteaux struggle to gain acknowledgement—or the fact that the 1855 Classification of Bordeaux did not include any wines from this region except Haut-Brion. Whatever the reason, the winner is the consumer—because this region is probably the most consistent producer on a vintage-to-vintage basis as well as boasting the highest percentage of quality wines under \$100—in my opinion—from the 2015 vintage.

There are so many outstanding values that it's hard to know where to start. But let's begin with one of the best buys of the entire campaign, **Pape Clément (\$99.99)** (97-98 JS, 95-97 RP, 93-96 VN, 93-96 WS, 93-95 WE, 95 DC). With agreement from almost every critic, this is one of the wines you need to buy. Unfortunately, we sold out of our first tranche allocation. But we are working on the second tranche pricing. Loaded with pure, dark berry fruit and aromas of black licorice and crushed volcanic rock, this seamless beauty is a smashing success. Right on the heels of the Pape Clément is the **Domaine de Chevalier Rouge (\$64.99)** (95-97 RP, 96-97 JS, 94-96 WE, 93-96 VN, 91-94 WS), a dynamic wine with telltale Graves notes of minerals and spice. With red berry fruit and perfect balance, this is a classic

claret that should age extremely well. Another outstanding value that should be snatched up is the **Malartic-Lagravière Rouge (\$Inquire)** (95-97 VN, 94-96 RP, 96-97 JS, 94-96 WE, 91-94 WS). This property, along with Malescot St-Exupéry, could be the value of the vintage.

With incredibly delineated red fruit and intoxicating floral notes, this is a beautiful wine that is a steal of a deal. A notch below but offering some crazy value, too, is one of my favorite overlooked producers: **Les Carmes Haut-Brion Rouge (\$74.99)** (96-97 JS, 92-95 WS, 92-94 RP, 90-93 VN) comes from a walled-in property that sits within the city of Bordeaux and is literally a stone's throw away from Haut-Brion. A powerful red that also feels balanced and charming, it is a great compromise for those who do not want to pay the hefty tariff both La Mission and Haut-Brion require.

Two of my favorite properties in Pessac-Léognan are Smith Haut Lafitte and Haut-Bailly. These two properties both seemingly resurrected themselves in the mid-to-late '90s at the hands of two indomitable women (Florence Cathiard at Smith Haut Lafitte and Veronique Sanders at Haut-Bailly). Always a pleasure to visit these properties, and they have once again made wines that can challenge for the mantle of wine of the vintage. The **Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge (\$84.99)** (94-97 WS, 95-97 RP, 94-96 WE, 97-98 JS, 93-96 RP) is a stunner—much depth and power! Loaded with dark berry fruit, black licorice, molten rock and silky-smooth tannins, this wine is an iron fist in a velvet glove! The **Haut-Bailly (\$Inquire)** (95-97 RP, 95-97 WE, 98-99 JS, 95-97 VN) is a classic wine, loaded with red berry fruit, cinnamon notes, red flower aromas and the perfect balance between tannin and acid. This wine is so beautiful and alluring that it will be hard to resist opening the moment it arrives.

Quite possibly my favorite appointment every year is the Haut-Brion/La Mission Haut-Brion tasting. Both properties are beautiful. The **Haut-Brion Rouge (\$Inquire)** (98-100 RP, 97-98 JS, 95-97 VN, 95-97 WE) is a candidate for wine of the vintage. Immensely structured and deeply wound, this powerhouse is just starting to scratch the surface. Aromas of graphite and freshly laid brick combine with black currant and dark cherry liqueur flavors to make one blockbuster of a wine. Usually I prefer the Haut-Brion when we taste, but this year I preferred the **La Mission Haut-Brion Rouge (\$Inquire)** (100 JS, 97-99 RP, 96-98 WE, 94-97 VN), which was more open-knit this year. Gorgeous berry fruit dominates, with aromas of freshly macerated berries. So pure, so fresh, with such a long, long finish, this wine blew my mind!

It would be incredibly remiss of me not to discuss the white wines of Pessac-Léognan, which are usually a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon. Every time I taste these wonderful whites I think to myself: *this is how Sauvignon Blanc should taste!* These wines are fantastic and offer a great alternative, thanks to their ageability, to white Burgundy.

There's an acknowledged quartet of producers in Pessac-Léognan making outstanding whites. The **Pape Clément Blanc (\$134.99)** (92-95 WS, 92-94 RP, 93-95 WE, 95-96 JS) is an exotic beauty with hints of mango, passion fruit, pineapple and lime blossom, with notes of almonds and hints of salinity. This is one of the more heady and exotic whites made in Bordeaux. The classically styled **Domaine de Chevalier Blanc (\$99.99)** (97-98 JS, 93-96 WS, 93-96 VN, 95 DC, 92-95 WE, 92-94 RP) is a monumental wine in the making. Rich and powerful, with lemon verbena, iodine, sandalwood and butter pecan notes, this feels like a fine white Burgundy. The **Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc (\$89.99)** (95-98 WS, 94-96 RP, 94-96 WE, 96-97 JS, 92-95 VN, 96 DC) blows you away from the first sniff with lime blossoms,

A Few Pessac-Léognan Wines That Clyde Likes

de Chantegrive Rouge, Graves (\$14.99) A delicious, spicy, toasty wine with lively acidity and plenty of minerality. What a steal here—as good as their great 2009. Drink young and often.

Le Thil (\$24.99) We stayed at this beautiful château and you can too—just contact Les Sources de Caudalie. Owned by the Cathiards of Smith fame. The wine is solid and sweet. It will be a great buy when it comes in.

La Parde de Haut-Bailly (\$Inquire) This could be their best ever. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon. Very sweet up front and through the mid-palate, with grip at the back.

Latour-Martillac (\$32.99) Tons of Asian spice on the nose. Lovely and long on the palate. Should be a great value.

Larivet Haut-Brion (\$34.99) This château gets no respect, but the wine is quite good in 2015—as good as their fabulous 2001. Pretty, upfront fruit flavors. Tons of earthy flavors.

—Clyde Beffa Jr.

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. Last, but most certainly not least is the **Malartic-Lagravière Blanc (\$54.99)** (95-96 JS, 94-96 WE, 94-96 RP, 91-94 WS, 91-94 VN, 93 DC), which will most certainly be the best buy of all white Bordeaux offered from the 2015 vintage. Lean, taut and racy with great acidity, gooseberry, makrut lime, iodine and green apple all deftly mingle on an energetic finish. If you haven't been buying whites from Pessac-Léognan, then you need to start!

2015 Margaux: An Embarrassment of Riches!

By Alex Pross

The commune of Margaux is not only the largest of the seven major communes that make up Bordeaux, but it also boasts the most classified growths from the 1855 classification, with 21 properties obtaining a classified status. Nestled north of the city of Bordeaux and south of St-Julien, Margaux was able to dodge the September rains that plagued their neighbors to the north. With so much land and numerous properties, in a strong vintage like 2015, Margaux has produced an array of dazzling wines that run the price gamut from the high \$20 range all the way up to several hundred dollars for Château Margaux and Château Palmer. If you love classically styled Bordeaux, I guarantee we have a Margaux wine that will fit your taste preference as well as your price point.

Some of the first releases we have seen from Margaux are coincidentally some of the best values. Easily the greatest young Siran I have tasted, the **Siran, Margaux (\$27.99)** (90-93 WS, 92-94 RP, 92-94 WE, 94-95 JS) is a gorgeous wine that oozes beautiful berry fruit, hints of spice and earth with an underlying purity and intoxicating

nose that combine to make this one of my top 10 value wines for the entire vintage. Not to be outdone, we have a dynamic duo from the Perenco Group (an oil company based in Paris and London) with the **Labegorce (\$27.99)** (91-93 RP, 94-96 WE, 93-94 JS, 90-92 VN). A perennial K&L favorite, this once again surpasses all our expectations with silky, red cherry fruit, milk chocolate and mocha notes all rolled into one velvety, smooth package. The sister property Marquis d'Alesme, which used to be known as Marquis d'Alesme Becker, is a close neighbor to Château Margaux—the vineyards run right up to the forest that separates the two properties. The **Marquis d'Alesme (\$39.99)** (90-93 WS, 91-93 RP, 92-93 JS, 91-94 VN, 91 DC) is a beautiful wine with dense purple fruits, exotic spice and floral notes all nestled against fine, silky tannins. This is a blockbuster of a Margaux and a fantastic deal, to boot.

In 2015, Margaux really produced a preponderance of great, top-notch offerings that should all be available for less than \$100 on futures. It is a who's who of the 1855 classification of Margaux. With so many

exceptional wines, it was difficult to choose just nine for less than \$100. Two properties that I feel made some of the best wines I have ever tasted are **Giscours (\$Inquire)** (92-95 WS, 94-96 RP, 94-96 WE, 96-97 JS, 91-94 VN), which is an absolute revelation, with such purity of fruit and intense floral notes that my soul was moved, while **Rauzan-Ségla (\$79.99)** (92-95 WS, 96-98 RP, 94-96 WE, 97-98 JS, 93-96 VN, 95 DC) has such precision and delineation of fruit, culminating in such a seamless package, it is hard to accept that it is merely a barrel sample. These two offerings are quintessentially Margaux, with beautiful fruit and intense, floral aromas that remind you why Margaux can be so intoxicating.

Besides the Giscours and Rauzan-Ségla, there is a quintet of must-have wines that cannot be ignored in this vintage: **Alter Ego de Palmer (\$64.99)** (90-92 RP, 93-95 WE, 94-97 JS, 90-93 VN) is the famed second wine of Château Palmer, and the last four vintages of this wine have seen huge uptick in quality—to the point where it competes against many other properties' grand vin offerings. The **Malescot St-Exupéry (\$59.99)** (93-96 WS, 93-95 RP, 91-93 WE, 92-95 VN, 93 DC) is another standout, with fantastic berry fruit, baker's chocolate and super-silky tannins, all with that unmistakable Margaux feel.

Another property that has reappeared on my radar is Château d'Issan. The **d'Issan (\$55.99)** (93-95 RP, 93-95 WE, 94-95 JS, 93-95 VN, 93 DC) is a special wine that oozes dark cherry and plum fruit, with ample structure that makes it ideal for long-term aging.

The next two properties of our quintet of desire, I always seem to get mixed up: The **Brane-Cantenac (\$64.99)** (90-93 WS, 93-95 RP, 93-94

JS, 92-95 VN, 93 DC) is a beautiful wine with delicate red fruits, herb and tobacco notes as well as a hint of mocha on the soft, lush finish. A classic Margaux, this is a delicious wine. Last, but most certainly not least, is the **Cantenac Brown (\$49.99)** (91-94 WS, 92-94 RP, 94-96 WE, 93-94 JS, 93-96 VN). Gorgeous fruits, silky tannins and pretty floral aromas make this an irresistible Margaux!

When I think of Margaux, two wines immediately spring to mind: Château Margaux and Château Palmer. These titans are easily the two greatest properties in Margaux, and in 2015 they made not only the two best wines in Margaux but two of the best wines of the entire 2015 vintage. When I tasted the **Palmer (\$Inquire)** (95-97 RP, 97-99 WE, 99-100 JS, 94-97 VN) I immediately thought of the famed '83 vintage. The 2015 screams Margaux with vivid, red berry fruit and aromas of macerated berries coupled with fresh-cut green tobacco and dried herbs. This wine is a stunner and could easily end up being the wine of the vintage, if it weren't for the **Château Margaux (\$Inquire)** (98-100 RP, 98-100 WE, 100 JS, 95-96 VN). It was incredibly somber at the newly completed cellar at Château Margaux, because just 10 days earlier, winemaker and head technical director of Château Margaux for the last 30-plus years, Paul Pontallier, had died of cancer. Mr. Pontallier was a great ambassador for both Château Margaux and Bordeaux in general and was known equally for his keen palate as for his jovial disposition. Paul will be sorely missed.

The 2015 Château Margaux is a fitting tribute to Mr. Pontallier, and this wine of the vintage will handsomely reward the purchaser.



Touring the fermentation room at Château Margaux.



Tasting at Château Branaire-Ducru with Patrick Maroteaux and son.

The 2015 St-Julien Report

By Philip Bohorfoush

The signature of the best wines of 2015 was emerged as a pure core of dense fruit, fresh acidity and unctuous texture, with floral top notes and perfume. We found that expression in the elite wines of St-Julien, as well. In 2015, Ducru-Beaucaillou, Léoville-Las Cases, and Léoville-Poyferré are absolutely beautiful and will easily compete against some of the Left Bank's best wines. Also not to be missed are Branaire-Ducru, Léoville-Barton, Clos du Marquis, and La Croix de Beaucaillou. If pricing is right, St-Julien could steal the show in 2015.

Ducru-Beaucaillou (\$Inquire) **One of the wines of the vintage** Intense core of Cabernet fruit wrapped within poised structure and tension. Very fresh, pure and deep, with cassis, black currant, graphite and spice. Outstanding. 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot. (94-96 JS, 94-96 RP)

La Croix de Beaucaillou (\$43.99) **Don't miss** 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot. Spicy and floral with an excellent core of black and blue fruits, great polish and very smooth tannins. This is the second wine for Ducru-Beaucaillou but there is nothing secondary about it. (93-94 JS, 91-93 RP)

Léoville-Las Cases (\$Inquire) **One of the wines of the vintage** 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Franc. Classically built claret in the finest way. Dark-fruited and complex, with scorched earth, anise, violet, cedar, smoke and mineral. Iron fist in a velvet glove. Absolutely love it. (95-98 VN, 96-97 JS)

Clos du Marquis (\$52.99) **Don't miss** 66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc. This is from a separate parcel, and not the second wine of Léoville-las Cases. Scorched dark fruits, deep, with excellent flesh (30-plus-year-old vines) and notes of blackberry coulis, mint, lavender and earth. Medium-bodied with a velvet finish. (93-94 JS, 91-93 RP)

Léoville-Poyferré (\$74.99) **One of the wines of the vintage** 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot. Savory with deep cherry, black currant and cassis, and a floral lift. This has an intense,

polished and pliant mid-palate, with iron minerality. My first and my last taste at UGC St-Julien, this was a standout—and tasted again at the château with consistent notes. (95-96 JS, 93-96 VN)

Léoville-Barton (\$76.99) **Don't miss** 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Merlot. Classic, firm and intense with brooding dark fruits, brambly blackberry, coffee and scorched earth. Excellent depth and old vine clarity. Solid. (94-96 RP, 93-96 VN)

Langoa-Barton (\$48.99) 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot. Fine and elegant. The fruit is a straight-lined beam of black cherry, plum and mocha in a medium-bodied and balanced frame. Good finish. I like the fruit and the bit of tannic grip. (92-93 JS, 90-93 VN)

Branaire-Ducru (\$52.99) **Don't miss** 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc. Supremely elegant with dark red fruits, red currant, wild berry, mineral and perfume. Superb depth and purity; very fine and classy. (92-94 VN, 92-93 JS)

Gruaud-Larose (\$64.99) 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Franc. A very Gruaud-Larose nose with herbs, tea and cigar. Red-fruited, with good detail and moderate tannins. (93-94 JS, 90-92 RP)

Beychevelle (\$69.99) 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 47% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot. Elegant red fruits with a very pretty nose of wild berries and flowers. Medium-bodied, with integrated but firm tannins. (92-94 RP, 92-94 VN)

Gloria (\$39.99) 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 6% Petit Verdot. Black fruits, earth and wild berries. Good palate—rich, balanced and fresh. (92-93 JS, 90-92 RP)

Lalande-Borie, St-Julien (\$24.99) **Sleeper pick** Owned by Bruno Borie. 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 55% Merlot. Plush, ripe and polished, with dark and spicy fruits. Delicious and will drink well early. A consistent favorite. (91-92 JS, 91 RP)

Clyde's Picks from the 2015 Vintage in Pauillac

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

The most famous red wine region in the world, Pauillac boasts three first growths and several second or “super second” growths. There was some rain in this region before picking, but the Cabernet Sauvignon grapes were tough and turned out fine. Some of the Merlot suffered—maybe that is why I prefer some of the separate properties over the second wines, which have more Merlot in them? (e.g. Duhart-Milon over Carruades.)

Pedesclaux (\$39.99) A fifth growth that must be watched—their wines since the 2009 vintage have been great buys.

Lynch-Moussas (\$37.99) Meaty nose and good fruit flavors. Excellent value.

Echo de Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (\$Inquire) This could be a great value if priced correctly. Lots of upfront cassis fruit flavors.

Lynch-Bages (\$Inquire) A big and powerful wine with cranberry and cassis aromas—the lead pencil is there, too. See Trey's notes on page 5.

Pibran (\$33.99) Black licorice flavors—good intensity and mouthfeel. 50/50 Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Les Tourelles de Pichon-Baron (\$34.99) The second wine of Pichon-Baron, with more Cabernet in the blend than the Griffons de Pichon-Baron. Blackberry jelly on the Tourelles, while the Griffons has more red berry fruit.

Pichon-Baron (\$Inquire) Intense nose and powerful wine with lots of spice on the nose. Big boy that needs cellaring, but still sweet and sexy. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon. See Trey's notes on page 5.

d'Armailhac (\$42.99) I absolutely love this wine—maybe because it tastes so good right now. Great perfume with some spice and red fruits. A sexy value. I will buy a case.

Clerc Milon (\$59.99) Blue fruit, good richness on palate. Black fruits abound. Great balance, big wine. As good as this is, I prefer the Armailhac right now.

Le Petit de Mouton Rothschild (\$Inquire) 78% Cabernet Sauvignon. Tougher wine with considerable tannin. I have to reserve judgement.

Mouton Rothschild (\$Inquire) Another top wine of the vintage. Exotic aromas of spice, tobacco and coffee mixed with toasted oak. Velvety on the palate. So approachable. Maybe I can enjoy this in the next 10 years. 82% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Reserve de Comtesse (\$Inquire) Tons of red fruit flavors at the Joanne tasting. At the property, it was sweet and lovely. Good value here.

Pichon-Lalande (\$Inquire) Elegance personified. Black raspberry aromas with a mix of chocolate and earth. Dark fruit flavors, but much softer wine than its neighbor, the Baron.

Grand-Puy-Lacoste (\$64.99) Good entry and fine mid-palate sweetness. So spicy on the nose. Fabulous texture. Another winner here. See Trey on page 5.

Duhart-Milon (\$66.99) I love this one. See Trey's notes on page 5 and Ralph's on page 7.

Carruades de Lafite (\$Inquire) Closed up at the time of tasting—only tasted it once. I prefer Duhart today.

Lafite Rothschild (\$Inquire) Another fabulous first growth, with a doughy, toasty nose. Long and lingering on the palate. The cassis notes shine through here with this 91% Cabernet Sauvignon wine.

Les Forts de Latour Bright and fresh and spicy, but not for sale on futures. You have to wait a few years here.

Latour One of the best of the vintage, no doubt. Seamless and layered with tons of Asian spices. 97% Cabernet Sauvignon. But you have to wait—not for sale this year.

Pontet-Canet (\$109.99) As usual, one of the top wines of the vintage. 65% CS with 30% M and rest PV and CF. Not a monster like 2010, nor as voluptuous as their 2009, but it is one-third the price! Alfred Tesseron says this is his best year for the quality of the fruit at picking time. BIO (organic) wine. Dark, spicy, lovely sweetness and peppery spice nuances. A must-buy again.

Pauillac de Latour When this is released be sure to buy it. Sweet red raspberry aromas with toasty oak. Lush on the palate—will be a great value! In the meantime look for the 2010 Pauillac, which will be released soon. Under \$100 and stunning.



Jean-Michel Cazes of Lynch-Bages explains the racking to Ralph and Clyde.



Security patrols the precious vines of Montrose.

The 2015 St-Estèphe Report

By Philip Bohorfoush

The superb vintage conditions of 2015 existed in St-Estèphe, but they did experience more rain in the northern Médoc than is typical. The châteaux are more experienced and prepared for this, utilizing cover crops, green harvesting and leaf thinning to increase air circulation. Vineyards with more gravelly soils allowed for better drainage, while severe selections for the grand vins—whether using mechanized optical sorters or manual sorting (or both)—set the stage to make some excellent wines. The assemblage was also important, as the Cabernet Sauvignon fared better than the Merlot in the northern Médoc. Undoubtedly, Montrose and Cos should be included in the discussion of some of the top wines in 2015.

Cos d'Estournel (\$Inquire) 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Franc. Only 39% of the harvest was used in the grand vin, and it includes 40–100 year-old Merlot grown in gravel soils. Cos d'Estournel has one of the most privileged terroirs on the southern slopes of the hill of Cos. They also use all gravity flow throughout the winemaking facilities. Dark and spicy with currant, black fruits and graphite. Firm but rich-fruited and dense from the old vines. (97-98 JS, 92-94 RP, 92-95 VN)

Cos d'Estournel Blanc (\$Inquire) Yes, Cos makes an excellent Bordeaux blanc (since 2005), which is a blend of 75% Sauvignon Blanc and 25% Sémillon, barrel fermented in 15% new oak. Smoky and exotic, bright and tropical with gooseberry, citrus, pomelo and crystalline minerality. We won't get much, but we secured what we could on the spot. (94-95 JS, 91-93 RP)

Pagodes de Cos (\$Inquire) Les Pagodes de Cos is the second wine, grown from younger vines on the same terroir. 46% Merlot, 44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot. Modern, round and ripe with dark red fruits, plum and mocha. Balanced and rich finish. (91-92 JS, 90-93 VN)

Montrose (\$Inquire) 67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot and 4% Cabernet Franc. It is easy to understand the purity of fruit, focus, and great core here when you find out that Montrose conducted three passes through the sorting tables and then used an optical sorter.

Cassis, blueberry, deep black and blue fruits with graphite. Medium-plus bodied, silky, balanced and pure. Excellent. (93-95 RP, 93-94, JS 90-93 VN)

La Dame de Montrose (\$Inquire) 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 41% Merlot and 4% Petit Verdot. Excellent fruit and mid-palate. The Cabernet shines. This is open and very approachable—a great second wine. (91-92 JS, 91 VN)

Calon-Ségur (\$74.99) 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot. Good bones here and you can sense the potential underneath. Great fruit with Cabernet-driven nose of black currant, cedar, mint and smoke. Calon-Ségur is one to watch, as the quality of the wines is rising and the property is undergoing a significant investment in the vineyards and winery. (95 DC, 93-94 JS)

Capbern (\$19.99) *Sleeper pick* Brimming with currants, plum and red berries. Excellent flesh and moderate-plus body. Packed with berry fruit on the juicy finish. (90-91 JS, 88-90 RP)

Lafon-Rochet (\$39.99) *Top value* Pure and clean fruit, very fresh, excellent quality. Love it for its combination of fruit, power and balance. Shows the quality of vintage. 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 5% Petit Verdot. (92-95 VN, 91-93 WE)

Phélan-Ségur (\$41.99) Phélan Ségur has large holdings very close to Château Montrose. In 2011, an extensive renovation was completed and Michel Rolland consults. 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 47% Merlot. Full-bodied and muscular, deep-fruited with black fruits and spice. Looking forward to see how this develops. (93-94 JS, 91-93 RP)

Ormes de Pez (\$29.99) Owned by the Cazes family. 49% Merlot, 44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. Black cherry, plum and wild berries; medium-bodied, with moderate tannins. Great value. (91-92 JS, 90 DC)

Lilian Ladouys (\$19.99) 62% Merlot, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc. Red-fruited and bright with notes of red currants, black cherry and spice. Medium-plus body and dusty tannins. A top cru bourgeois that will blossom.

The Right Bankers—Wines of Comte von Neipperg

By Trey Beffa

The wines of the Right Bank in 2015 were outstanding overall and a pleasure to taste. Historically, K&L has been called a “Left Bank” store, focused on the wines of the Médoc and Pessac. Justified or not, there is a reason for this. For us as tasters, there have indeed been some past vintages from the Right Bank that were extremely difficult to taste *en premier*!

It was here where the “garage” style wines flourished in the late ’90s and early 2000s. Even in a vintage where the quality was very high, like the 2000 vintage, it was very difficult to taste these wines out of barrel. The extraction levels and tannin would just knock you upside your head. In 2015, it seems like the majority of the winemakers on the Right Bank tempered the urge to extract, and allowed the wines to show their true character. The 2015 vintage brings us ripe and elegant wines that have pretty fruit and silky tannins.

Our last visit on the Right Bank during our trip was with Comtes Von Neipperg at Canon-la-Gaffelière. His wines are always some of our favorites year in and year out. The 2015s are no different.

D’Aiguilhe, Côtes de Castillon (\$22.99) Ripe and juicy aromas and texture, lots of body and richness with layers of fruit, and a long, fleshy finish. This is a juicy wine that should be delicious upon release.

Clos de L’Oratoire, St-Emilion (\$38.99) Very dark in color with loads of coffee aromas and spice, dark, roasted black fruits, lots of middle fruit and length, and a long, juicy finish. 13.6% alcohol—balanced and refined but with a nice, sexy fruit appeal!

Canon-la-Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$79.99) Bright and aromatic, this wine shows lots of finesse and elegance in the mouth. The fruit is very high-toned and leans toward the red cherry and red currant side of the spectrum. The finish is spicy and long. The 2015 is a blend of 55% Merlot, 38% Cabernet Franc and 7% Cabernet Sauvignon.

La Mondotte, St-Emilion Nearly black in color, the La Mondotte is, as always, a big wine. But this vintage shows some elegance and balance. It is loaded with fruit but is not overdone. Intense, rich and concentrated, this wine will be an excellent candidate for the cellar.

The Wines of Jean-Pierre Moueix from 2015

By Clyde Beffa Jr. and David Driscoll

Our first Right Bank tasting of this trip was held at the JP Moueix offices on the banks of the Dordogne—at high tide. This was Thursday, and we were spending the better part of three days tasting Right Bankers—unheard of in past years of our Bordeaux tastings. We had to extend the normal eight-day trip to 10 days to accommodate all this Right Bank tasting—after all, the wines are quite good in 2015. David has some good notes on three of the wines tasted at Moueix:

“The **Lafleur-Gazin, Pomerol (\$44.99)**, one of the better deals in Pomerol, coated my palate with plush, purple fruits, but finished dry and fine on the back end. It’s the kind of wine that gives Merlot a good name, a wine that’s almost too delicious to wait on. I’ll be interested to see how it develops, though. If you’re looking for something a little more old school and less fruit-forward, then the **Bourgneuf, Pomerol (\$48.99)** is the wine for you. There was more pronounced oak on the palate that will need to integrate over the next five years, and a dustiness to the tannins that helped balance the lush fruit. This is a wine that should evolve beautifully over the next decade, and a real cellar candidate.

Of course, the big winner from this tasting was the **Hosanna (Sold Out)**, one of a handful of Pomerol wines that are receiving monster scores from critics. With 82% Merlot in the blend, the plummy fruit is there in spades, but it’s balanced by the structure from 18% Cabernet Franc, and a lovely note of tobacco and earth add complexity to all that ripeness.” —David Driscoll

Other outstanding wines from the Moueix portfolio:

Certan de May, Pomerol (\$124.99) Great terroir across the street from VCC. Fabulous blackberry aromas and toasty oak nuances. Great black fruit flavors; tremendous depth and fine balance. A touch of black licorice. Best in a long time.

La Fleur Petrus, Pomerol (\$Inquire) It will be expensive and hard to find, but worth the search. So elegant and sweet, with a finish that lasts over a minute.

Trotanoy, Pomerol (\$Inquire) Only seven hectares here, with 93% Merlot. A very big wine, with an iron core on the mid-palate. Perfumy black currant aromas that follow to the palate. Substantial tannins cover up all the fruity flavor nuances.

A great start for the day that would show us just how good the 2015s were on the Right Bank. Next stop at 9:45am was **Vieux Château Certan, Pomerol (\$Inquire)**. This wine was perfect for me—one of the best three of the vintage. This wine is written up by others in this newsletter, so I can’t add anything—100 points, three stars, whatever. Then to the UGC Pomerol tasting, where all eight wines were good. A few have been already written up, so here are the others, briefly:

Le Bon Pasteur, Pomerol (\$79.99) Sweet, ripe, black fruits, fresh and lively. **Clinet, Pomerol (\$Inquire)** Lush and long on the palate. **Gazin, Pomerol (\$64.99)** Always well-made—toasty aromas with hints of animal-like Côte-Rôtie. Superb palate-pleaser. **La Pointe, Pomerol (\$39.99)** Very spicy with good richness and length—should be a value. **Beauregard, Pomerol (\$49.99)** We stayed two nights at this beautiful property, which has been recently purchased by the Cathiards of Smith Haut Lafitte fame. Asian spices abound here—their best ever?

We walked into **Château Petrus, Pomerol (\$Inquire)** at 10:00am—right on time. And 20 minutes later as we left, we all said: “One of the best of the vintage.” 14.6% alcohol for this Merlot-based wine. Almost perfect—only the price prevents it from perfection. Very elegant style here—not a monster. Before 11:00am we were at **Château La Conseillante, Pomerol (\$Inquire)**, which is the Burgundy of Bordeaux—ultra spicy with tobacco aromas; super sweet on the palate. Velvety. Their other wine, Duo, is also worth buying when it is released. At 11:00 we were at their neighbor **Château l’Evangile, Pomerol (\$Inquire)**, which Trey writes about on page 6. What a morning! But one last appointment, at **Château Cheval Blanc, St-Emilion (\$Inquire)**. 45% Cabernet Franc, 55% Merlot—Cabernet Franc is the backbone—even though the property is just across the way from La Conseillante and Evangile. This wine is so elegant, with Asian spices on the nose and lots of red currant flavors. Sweet and long—regal, just like its price. Buy a bottle if it is under \$500.

At Cheval, we tasted their newest addition in 2008, **Château Quinault Enclos, St-Emilion (\$33.99)**. Excellent wine with lots of spicy black cherry flavors. A value. To finish off the morning, we tasted the mindblowing **Château d’Yquem, Sauternes (\$Inquire)** at Cheval.

Three stars—could be as good as their perfect 2001. Pineapple and coconut aromas. Perfect botrytis and acid balance. Liquid gold. A great morning of tasting, and we finished it off with lunch at Cheval Blanc—six of the 22 people that day invited to dine in the château—*spectacular*.

Late afternoon Friday we visited **Château La Fleur de Boüard, Lalande-de-Pomerol (\$27.99)**. This is a superb value from the Right Bank, spicy and lively, while the **Plus de Fleur de Boüard (\$94.99)** is very peppery and spicy—and thankfully, not overextracted like some older vintages. This one was perfectly balanced and lush on the palate.

Last appointment Friday was at the famous **Château Angelus (\$Inquire)**, a first growth since 2012 and tasting like one. Smoky, toasty aromas that follow to the palate with layers of black fruits. Sensational. The **Carillon de Angelus (\$Inquire)** is 40% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Merlot. Has great length on the palate with red fruits dominating. Soft tannins—could be a value. The 100% Merlot **Château Bellevue, St-Emilion (\$44.99)** has black raspberry aromas—expansive on the palate. Their best, I believe.

—Clyde Beffa Jr.

Touring the Right Bank—Saturday, April 9

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

Well, we had to ask some properties to open their doors on a weekend—and they all did so. It was a great day and the wines showed well. We started early at Canon, where we tasted an amazing range of great wines from this venerable property.

Canon, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) One of the best terroirs in St-Emilion, and the wine is one of the best of the 2015 vintage. Trey writes about it on page 6. My notes say fresh, pure, elegant. Black raspberry flavors and a finish that lasts a minute. Bravo—but very limited availability.

Two visits to Château Tour St-Christophe on the same day—a record for us. We already wrote about Tour St-Christophe and Haut-Brisson in this newsletter—they were and are great values for 2015.

Haut-Musset, Lalande de Pomerol Made by and owned by the winemaker of Tour St-Christophe, this wine is simply delicious and intriguing right now. We will carry it when released. An exotic and spicy value.

Enclos Tourmaline, Pomerol (\$149.99) We had never heard of this wine and not tasted it before—what a wine it is. Only 3,000 bottles made, with plots near Clinet and La Fleur Petrus. Intense black fruit aromas and flavors—also a ton of minerality on the palate. Superb!

Lunch with the lovely and energetic Hélène Garcin-Lévêque is always fun, especially at Château Barde-Haut, across the valley from Tour St-Christophe.

D’Arce, Castillon A new wine for them and we will carry it when bottled—spectacular value. Toasty, bacony aromas and flavor. Value!

Barde-Haut, St-Emilion (\$34.99) Precise, great mouthfeel; intense but easy to drink. Sweet and sexy. Another winner here.

Clos l’Eglise, Pomerol (\$79.99) Across the path from Eglise-Clinet (it used to be part of that famous property). Lush and quite sweet—no hard edges here. Regal.

Off to the center of town and the office of the “Bad Boy” of St-Emilion, Jean-Luc Thunevin.

Mauvais Garçon “Bad Boy,” Bordeaux Will be offered on arrival. 100% Merlot and well worth its price.

Virginie de Valandraud, St-Emilion (\$36.99) A baby Valandraud at one-fourth the price. 85% Merlot. Elegant and sweet with very rounded tannins. Excellent buy.

Valandraud, St-Emilion (\$149.99) The big boy is also 85% Merlot. Classic wine with plenty of stuffing for the long run. Very perfumy aromas of black cherries that follow to the palate. Perfect balance and plenty of latent tannin here.

Off to **Canon-la-Gaffelière**—see Trey’s notes on page 14. Then a tasting and fabulous dinner at Château Larcis Ducasse with famous winemaker Nicolas Thienpont and owner Mr. Gratiot.

Berliquet, St-Emilion (\$35.99) Bright and lively. Very fine value—a property to watch in the future, as Nicolas owns it for four years.

Larcis Ducasse, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) As good as their 2012 and 2010? Exotic aromas of Asian spice and tobacco. Serious wine for the long haul.

Pavie Macquin, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) Blackberry jam and a big frame. This wine will need time to evolve. Intense.

Beauséjour-Duffau, St-Emilion (\$Inquire) So much of everything—fruit, acid, tannin. Ager.



2015 Sauternes to Rock Any Occasion

By David Driscoll

Somewhere along the evolutionary line of French food tradition and the general etiquette of the fine meal, sweet wines were deemed only worthy of the headliner position—appropriate solely as the final act to a veritable festival of great appearances. Champagne generally opens the show. White wine usually picks up the momentum of that initial electricity, followed by claret, and then a nice port with the cheese plate before dessert is served and Sauternes can take its place on stage to bring down the house after a long night of exciting acts. The problem these days for Sauternes, however, is that extended Coachella-esque food festivals like this are becoming similarly once-a-year occurrences. Few folks have the stamina or the desire to sit through an all-nighter, choosing instead to have a glass of white and a quick salad in front of the TV before getting back to their emails. Where does that leave Sauternes? In the lurch, that's where, looking for a way to make an earlier entrance.

When we tasted through the 2015 Sauternes vintage in Bordeaux this past April, we were all in agreement that the wines were simply outstanding. Top-notch. World-class. Fresh, approachable and delicious in their youth. Hedonistic at times. Jaw-dropping. Astounding. So good you didn't dare spit them out no matter how early it was in the day. Take the **d'Yquem (\$Inquire)** for example, considered by many to be the best wine in the world. We tasted the new vintage before lunch at Cheval Blanc, and my colleague Alex Pross and I just about fainted. It was a slow burn of tropical splendor with pitch-perfect acidity and length that would make eternity seem foolhardy. It was the best wine I tasted the entire time we were there, so good I would probably rank it among the best wines I've ever tasted—period. But will anyone care? This is sweet wine we're talking about. Who has the time or the occasion these days to drink sweet wine?

You know who has started to make time for Sauternes? Legendary Bordeaux négociant and amateur weatherman Bill Blatch, who now hosts an annual "Sauternes and Sausages" party to showcase the wine's natural affinity for more than just lemon tarts and crème brûlée. "Any time is a good time for Sauternes," he said to me after dinner at Smith Haut Lafitte. "We just need to break out of our rigidity." Take the **Clos Haut-Peyraguey (\$35.99)** for example. It's loaded with stone fruits and an almost dried apple note, which made it a standout Sauternes for me. I could serve that wine today as an aperitif on a warm summer evening, to a standing ovation. The **Coutet (\$39.99)** showcases a lovely tropical mai tai note right on the entry, followed by a firm mineral note on the mid-palate and mouthwatering acidity on the finish. It's refreshing and decadent at the same time. I could pair that with spicy Chinese takeout on Wednesday night, no problem. The **Doisy-Daëne (\$38.99)** was more fresh, lively and restrained on the palate, far less rich than some of the more decadent Sauternes we tasted this year. If you're looking for something fun to enjoy in the short term, this is worth keeping an eye on. If you want mango galore, try the **Doisy-Védrines (\$34.99)** for a rich, creamy, succulent palate of purely hedonistic splendor. Perhaps the best combinations of class and quality, however, were the **Suduiraut (\$64.99)** and **Guiraud (\$42.99)** wines, specifically. The Guiraud has bright acidity on the entry, but it's tempered by delicate flavors of tropical fruit and ample sweetness, all in perfect harmony. The Suduiraut is just a classic Sauternes in every way. There's a perfect balance of lush, hedonistic fruit, with ample sweetness, and a long, lingering finish of candied lemon zest and mango followed by just enough tanginess from the acidity. It's a "wow" wine. But the vintage as a whole is great.

Now, who's going to sit down and drink these with me?

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