

2020 Bordeaux Vintage Report



2021 BORDEAUX VINTAGE REPORT FEATURES

1–4 Clyde Beffa Jr. Reviews the Vintage

5–16 2020 Bordeaux Tasting Notes by Clyde Beffa Jr., Trey Beffa, and Kate Soto

2020 Bordeaux: Fine Wines; Anything but Normal

By Clyde Beffa Jr.



Well, for a second year that nasty COVID-19 upset the whole Bordeaux futures campaign.

However, unlike last year, this year only three of us were able to go to Bordeaux in mid-June to taste some wines in the four days we were there. Unlike a normal Bordeaux futures campaign (like from 1985 to 2018) where we travel to Bordeaux in late March or early April to taste the wines, where we write our report

in April and May, and where the properties open their prices starting in late April, this vintage and the 2019 vintage were *not* normal.

Yes, we got some samples from some properties in April and May of both 2020 and 2021, but they were inconsistent, and we had to reject some on the basis of the quality of the sample—not necessarily the wine. Barrel samples are very fragile, and when they are shipped, they can deteriorate rapidly. We were able to go to France as soon as travel restrictions were lifted, but tasting in mid-June is *not* ideal, especially when all the top wines were releasing their prices while we were there. Not knowing until a few days before departure, our group consisted of myself, Trey Beffa, and Kate Soto. We did not dare bring our normal entourage of five to seven people. No Ralph Sands or Ryan Moses this year—it was hard enough planning for three people. It was Kate's first trip to Bordeaux, and she was a joy on the trip—always positive and very hard-working, posting **On the Trail** blogs from Bordeaux. She and Trey did the whole Médoc on the last day we were there (while I was nursing my newly acquired leg infection at the hotel). Their comments on the Médoc wines appear in a section that starts on page 7.

This newsletter will come out mid-July, well after all the properties have released their prices. This is not normal and *not* ideal for sales. Also, my getting a leg infection in Bordeaux is not normal, as it prevented me from tasting the whole last day of our trip. I call it the “French Infection.” Some say I was reacting to a few aggressive properties’ pricing decisions!

So, I will briefly recap the weather conditions leading up to the harvest as I normally do, and we will have a list of 150-plus wines we tasted in Bordeaux or in California. I will say that evaluating these babies in June is much easier than in March or April—as they are far more developed. I will also list my top 10 *non*-first growths and my magnificent seven best values under \$40. And I will discuss the trilogy aspect of the past three vintages and my ideas on the *non-normal* 2020s.

In stating the weather conditions in most of my past vintage reports, I used the notes of the famous Bill Blatch—“Mr. Bordeaux.” Bill retired from the negociant business several years ago, and I lost my weather source. This year I read a fine 2020 vintage report from two professors at Bordeaux University (Laurence Geny and Axel Marchal) and used a lot of their observations and facts for my weather condition portion of this report. I thank them profusely.

Speaking about weather, I write this on July 15, 2021. Most of you have heard of and seen the problems with rain in Europe—the massive flooding in Belgium and Germany *in July*. Well, there has been a lot of rain in Bordeaux this summer, and that does not bode well for the 2021 vintage. We will see how the 2021 vintage plays out, but it has been a

(Continued on page 2)

Cover: Nice that they left the lights on for us at Château Figeac—we were so glad to return.

(Continued from page 1)

difficult weather year so far in Bordeaux with frost, hail, and lots of rain.

The 2020 Vintage in Bordeaux

The weather conditions in 2020 were anything but normal. There were extremes in the weather, but somehow the wines turned out to be quite well-balanced—a paradox of 2020, which is quite a good vintage in the class with 2018 and 2019. With COVID-19 in full force for the whole 2020 vintage cycle, there were problems that properties had never experienced before. Lack of workers and stay-at-home orders were two of the difficulties they faced.

Before analyzing the weather conditions in 2020 and the characteristics of wines from this vintage, it's important to bear in mind the five prerequisites to create a great red Bordeaux. Please note that these five serve only as a guide in our analysis and should not be interpreted as a score chart for the year. For a fine vintage you need:

- 1) and 2) Relatively quick and even flowering and fruit-set during weather that is sufficiently warm and dry to ensure good pollination and predispose the grapes toward even ripening.
- 3) The gradual onset of water stress thanks to a warm, dry month of July in order to slow down and then put a definitive stop to vine growth no later than véraison (color change).
- 4) Completely ripe grapes thanks to optimum photosynthesis in the leaves up until the harvest, without any noteworthy resumption of vegetative growth.
- 5) Fine (relatively dry and medium-warm) weather during the harvest, making it possible to pick the grapes in each plot at optimum ripeness without running the risk of dilution, rot, or loss of fruity aromas.

Winter and Spring

A glimpse of spring in winter led to very early bud break.

The 2019–2020 winter was characterized by surprisingly mild temperatures and very low rainfall in January and February. This was the second time that the first two months of meteorological winter (defined as the period from December to February) had been so mild, on par with December 2000–January 2001 and just behind December 2015–January 2016. In January, frost was rare in the

vineyard, occurring on only three days compared to eight on average (1981–2010). The mild weather continued into February, which was more reminiscent of April, with overall temperatures 3.5°C above average. The mild start to the year, particularly in March, triggered bud break two to three weeks earlier than normal (early March). Warm weather and rainstorms in April were conducive to the rapid growth of vine shoots, confirming the earliness of the vintage. In terms of maximum monthly temperatures, April 2020 was the third hottest over the past 50 years, just behind 2007 and 2011, and the warmest on record in terms of average minimum temperatures. Cumulative rainfall was 34% above average in April, although unevenly distributed throughout the month, as most of the rain came in the last half of April.

May and June

Reversed seasons: a summer-like May, followed by a spring-like June.

May started out very mild, with heavy rainfall during the first half of the month. On the 10th, the southern Gironde was hit by a hailstorm causing complete destruction in a few areas. Despite below-average temperatures during a rainy spell between the 10th and 15th, May 2020 was nevertheless warmer than usual, thanks to summer-like conditions at the start and end of the month. May 2020 was the fourth hottest in the past 75 years, just behind the record-breaking May 2011, 1989, and 1999. These conditions accelerated vine growth, and, due to early bud break, the first flowers were visible from mid-May onwards in the earliest plots. Flowering picked up pace mid-month, reaching its peak around 26 May—approximately ten days earlier than the 20-year average. Not normal at all. These conditions were conducive to good flowering. Flowering occurred in late May under warm, dry conditions, thus fully satisfying the first prerequisite of a great red vintage.

Summer

An exceptionally hot and dry summer with drought-like conditions until mid-August.

After summer-like weather in May, June got off to a dull start. Frequent rainfall reduced the vineyard's natural defenses and increased the mildew threat, evoking painful memories of the



Back in his element: Clyde Beffa Jr. with wine and notebook at the brand-new cellar of Château Haut-Bailly.



A serious pour: a flight of 2020 samples for Trey Beffa at Château Latour.



Clyde Beffa reflects on the events of the day at Sources de Caudalie overlooking Château Smith Haut Lafitte.

2018 vintage, which, in some cases, suffered major crop loss. Heavy localized precipitation prevented water stress during fruit set. The second condition for a perfect red wine vintage—no rainfall after fruit set—was only partially met. The weather radically changed from mid-June onwards, and with a dry spell in the last week of June, summer conditions finally returned and properly set in.

Even if vine growth was slow just after fruit set, the berries continued to swell and bunch closure was observed in early July, thus confirming the earliness of the vintage. Precipitation was at an all-time low in July, with the average cumulative total below 10mm in Gironde. However, heavy rainfall during the first few months of the year prevented water stress from setting in early. Temperatures in early July were not exceptionally high. Due to the earliness of the vintage and waterlogged soils, the lack of rainfall was insufficient to halt vine growth in the lead up to *véraison*.

The fulfilment of the third prerequisite thus varied considerably, depending on the terroirs, grape varieties, and location of the plots. In late July, despite the lack of rainfall and high temperatures, only young vines with shallow root systems displayed obvious signs of water stress. *Véraison* slowed down in these plots and progressed at an uneven pace with initial signs of interrupted physiological development.

Water stress increased in early August and its effects really affected the plots planted with shallow-rooted young vines. Cooler temperatures in early August helped complete *véraison*. Around 10 August, storms of varying intensity swept over the Bordeaux region, preventing drought conditions. In general, though, the rain that arrived just after *véraison* put an end to the early blocked ripening observed in the most well-drained plots.

Harvest

The stormy conditions were followed by cooler temperatures and the first white wine grapes were harvested under clear skies.

The end of August was not excessively hot. Nights were cool and ripening accelerated without excessive heat. The earliest-ripening Sauvignon Blanc grapes were picked on 14 August in the Sauternes region—about ten days earlier than in 2019. Not normal at all. In the Graves and Pessac-Léognan region, the harvest began on 20 August with the picking of Sauvignon Blanc grapes and finished at the end of the first week of September. Very hot summers are generally not conducive to aromatic and refreshing white wines. However, most of the white grapes in the 2020 vintage retained their good acidity. While less exuberant compared to 2019, their aromas were nevertheless quite intense, and they

were picked in perfect condition. I really like the 2020 white wines. They are a combination of 2018 and 2019 with the richness of 2018 combined with the acidity of 2019.

A great sweet white wine requires alternating periods of rainfall conducive to the spread of *Botrytis cinerea*, and dry weather



K&L's Team Vintage 2020 (Kate Soto, Trey Beffa, Clyde Beffa Jr.) at Château Haut-Bailly, with general manager Véronique Sanders and her husband Alexander Van Beek.

propitious to the concentration of the grapes. Although the grapes of the 2020 vintage were perfectly ripe in early September, dry conditions delayed the development of noble rot, which became widespread following rainfall in mid-September. Unfortunately, frequent precipitation prevented the increase in sugar levels. Most grapes were picked over several days thanks to a providential window of fine weather mid-October. The difficulties encountered and very low yields should not overshadow the surprisingly satisfactory quality of the resulting wines. I really liked the few Sauternes we tasted, especially Suduiraut, Coutet, and Doisy-Daëne.

The first half of September was dry and sunny, which accelerated ripening, and the Merlot harvest began around 10 September under fine conditions, thus fulfilling the fourth prerequisite—at least for the Merlots. From mid-September onwards, the weather turned unsettled. While light rain showers prevented the grapes from shrinking and helped them finish ripening, their frequency started to worry winegrowers. The Cabernet grapes were picked after the Merlot, in excellent condition overall. The fifth prerequisite was thus fulfilled for the Merlots and early-ripening Cabernets, whereas the later-ripening Cabernets sometimes needed to be picked in haste due to deteriorating weather conditions caused by storm Alex. The majority of the red grapes were harvested in early October. As you can see the fulfilment of the fourth and fifth prerequisites also varied considerably, depending on the terroirs, grape varieties, and location of the plots.

Our Conclusion and the Marketplace

To sum it all up, some great wines were produced in 2020, and some good wines were produced. 2020 is a fine vintage in general even though it was anything but normal. I would say the trilogy of 2018, 2019, and 2020 is valid for very good vintages of Bordeaux though not quite to the level of 1988, 1989, and 1990. As far as the quantity of the 2020s produced and released to us, we were severely allocated on some of the wines. I would say on average we were offered 25% less than 2019, and 2019 was an allocated vintage for sure. In fact, we have almost *no* 2019 Bordeaux for sale as of this writing. And the pricing you ask? Well, the first wines released came out at good prices with only about a 10–15% increase over the 2019s. And the 2019s came out at quite low prices compared to 2018s. The later properties to open their prices (those that opened while we were in Bordeaux) came out at prices from 20% to 50% over the 2019s—many of these properties matched their 2018 prices, while a few exceeded this level. Most prices vs. quality levels were reasonable, but some properties really pushed the envelope—we will see if they sell.

Some of the properties increased their prices because they had a new “special” label. In fact, I must make a comment on the proliferation of 2020 Bordeaux wines with new or special labels. In all my years of going to Bordeaux (36 years) I have never seen so many “special” labels—commemorating from 30 to 300 years of winemaking. Of course, Mouton has a new label—but Mouton never changes.



Open the gates! Masked and on task, Clyde Beffa Jr. once again leads the charge for our customers at Château Margaux.

Clyde's Top Twelve Non-First Growths

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

As you can see below, there is no favorite region in 2020. All of them, from the Right Bank St-Emilions to the northern Médoc, had superb wines. The only region missing here is St-Estèphe, but I never tasted Montrose, Cos Estournel, or Calon-Segur. And remember that I never was able to taste any of the top St-Estèphes, or Pontet-Canet, or Ducru-Beaucaillou.

La Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$79.99) One of the best 2020s I have tasted. Fabulous aromas of black raspberry and blackberry. Very perfumy. Quite full-bodied, thick, and palate-filling. Lush, sweet, and sexy. Seamless and regal. A super value for sure. Tasting at the property: 20% less production than 2019. 60% Merlot and 40% Cab Franc. Asian spice aromas with some chocolate thrown in. Super fresh and elegant. Brings back memories of the great La Gaffelières—1953, 1955, 1959, 1961, and 1964.

Canon, St-Emilion (\$149.99) These guys and gals are on top of their game. Great wines year after year, like in the early '80s. Try the 1982 and the 1983. Tons of black fruits, with some chocolate. Quite rich and sweet on the palate. Fruit is hiding the tannins. Close to 2015 in quality and \$100 less.

Figeac, St-Emilion (\$239.99) This property will probably be the next first growth in St-Emilion, joining Pavie and Angélus. This is a unique blend of 37% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Franc, and 31% Cabernet Sauvignon. Red fruit flavors from the Cabernet grapes. Cassis undertones. Tannins are round, but hidden by the tremendous fruit content. Long and lush on the palate. Better buy it now—after it becomes a first growth, price goes up.

Clinet, Pomerol (\$104.99) Surely one of the top wines of the vintage. Intense, ripe blackberry jam on the nose. Nuances of blueberries on the palate. Plummy, lush, sweet and sexy on the palate. So well made. Long finish. A must-buy.

Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac-Léognan (\$69.99) What a great value here! Soft and sweet on the palate with earthy flavors, and great length on the finish. Black cherry flavors. Soft, round tannins. As good as their 2016 and 2018—and well-priced for sure.

Haut-Bailly, Pessac-Léognan (\$149.99) Dark, inky color. Very spicy aromas with hints of lilac. Full mouthful of red berries and black currants. Packed with ripe fruit that overpowers and hides the tannins. Very elegant wine with a long, lingering finish. Must be one of the top wines for 2020 Bordeaux. 42% Merlot, 52% Cab Sauv, and mix of PV and CF. Full-bodied wine when tasted at the property. Will age well for a long time. Close to 2009 in quality.

Maletot-St-Exupéry, Margaux (\$59.99) By far my lowest-priced in the top twelve of 2020. Intriguing nose of sage and violets; some Asian spice thrown in. Not a huge wine, but in perfect proportion. Just a fine wine as usual for Jean Zuger—and very well-priced. This will give the 2015 a run for its money.

Palmer, Margaux (\$359.99) 48% Merlot and 48% Cabernet Sauvignon with 4% Petit Verdot thrown in. I sure like these Merlot-based wines in 2020. So lush and sweet, full-bodied, while being elegant at the same time. Blackberry jelly here. So fresh and lively with relatively low acidity. A classic Palmer. I had a magnum of 1991 Palmer on July 4—perfection in a bottle and so good after thirty years. It has always been great—the best of the 1991s.

Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge, Pessac-Léognan (\$149.99) With a special label honoring the Cathiards' 30 years of winemaking at Smith, this wine has huge scores from the writers with three or four possible 100 points. 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, plus PV and Cab Franc. This wine is like a laser beam, very precise and focused. I think 2020 is their best wine in thirty years of winemaking—Fabian is a great winemaker. Sexy and ripe; will age well.



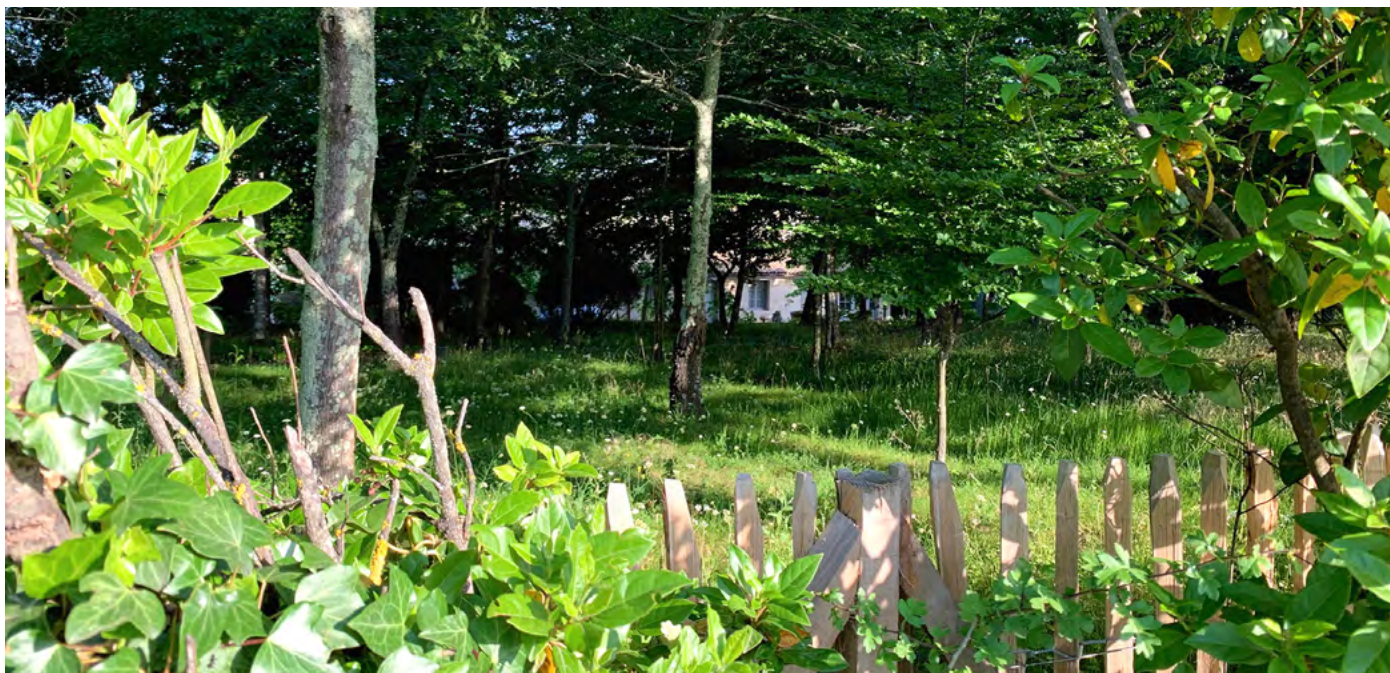
Daniel and Florence Cathiard, ever the gracious hosts, treated us to a nice lunch at Château Smith Haut Lafitte.

Léoville-Poyferré, St-Julien (\$109.99) And we have another special label for this wine in 2020. I love this wine—so sexy and sweet. Intense and perfumy blackberry fruit aromas. Seamless on the palate. Big, vibrant, and full-flavored. Great length. Soft tannins covered by all the fruit. Bravo!

Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (\$139.99) Tasted with UGC wines and at the château, the château bottle being fresher and more lively. Blueberry and pencil shaving aromas. Some blackcurrant and rose on the palate. Sweet mid-palate and fine balance of tannins, acid, and fruit. Ager. I missed tasting it at the property—the French Infection, you know.

Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac (\$199.99) So good it reminds me of the fabulous 1989, which is drinking perfectly now after thirty-plus years. The Merlot really shines here. This wine will give any of the fabulous vintages 1981 through 1990 a run for the money. So elegant, but with enough grip for a long aging.

Key: \$Inquire Price not yet released. All wines in red, bold type (hyperlinked in the PDF version) in this Vintage Report are 2020 vintage with pre-arrival pricing. If no price is listed, we will only offer them as they arrive. Prices quoted are as of July 14, 2021 and may change at any time. M Merlot CS Cabernet Sauvignon CF Cabernet Franc PV Petit Verdot



Over the ivy and through the woods: A glimpse into the values of 2020 Bordeaux at Château Troplong-Mondot.

Clyde's Magnificent Seven: 2020 Values Under \$40

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

Siran, Margaux (\$32.99) These guys have been making great value wines for the past 15 years. Violet aromas with black raspberry undertones. Sweet palate entry, and the wine just coats the mouth with sweet fruit. Long, lingering finish. Will drink well early on. Tasted at Joanne: Tons of red fruits on palate. Some oaky notes.



Tasting with Hélène Garcin-Lévêque at Château Barde-Haut.

Tour St-Christophe, St-Emilion (\$31.99) Tasted in California: Deep color, almost black. Lovely nose of Asian spice and toasty oak. Powerful, blackberry flavors, with some red berry hints on the back palate. Big and powerful wine with lots of mineral at the back end. Very good as usual. Tasted at the property: Very sweet and sexy, fresh and vibrant.

Barde-Haut, St-Emilion (\$33.99) Tasted in California: Blackish purple, vibrant color. Nose reserved when just opened, but really comes on strong after a few minutes. Gobs of black raspberry fruit on the nose that follows to the palate. Sweet and sexy with a lot of structure at the same time. Can age it. Sweet finish. *Nice.* Tasted at the property: Pretty nose, very elegant and feminine style. So good for early drinking.

La Patache, Pomerol (\$31.99) Our first buy from this property—and this wine is super good. Flashy blackberry and toasty oak nose. Some minty undertones. Very forward, ripe, and sexy on the palate. A great value, but very few cases produced. Ripe tannins at the back. A touch modern, but I love it. Tasted at the property: Sweet and refreshing. Soft, round tannins.

Labégorce, Margaux (\$31.99) Tasted in California: Bright nose of raspberries and spice. Another winner here. Tasted at the property: 50% Cab Sauv, 37% Merlot, 10% CF, and 3% PV. Rose and cassis aromas; elegant wine with lingering aftertaste of red fruits. Very round tannins.

Gloria, St-Julien (\$39.99) Wow—very perfumy aromas of black cherry and toasty oak. Blackberry fruit flavors. Vibrant wine that tastes so good now. Long finish—a must-buy.

Tasted at Joanne: Lovely, sweet cola aromas. Lively and fruit-forward. Tastes great right now. Spicy back end.

Sociando-Mallet, Haut-Médoc (\$34.99) Tasted at Joanne: This is a serious wine—power and freshness together. Long finish. Will cellar well for many years. Outstanding.

Trey Beffa and Kate Soto: the Dynamic Duo

Introduction by Clyde Beffa Jr.

I am so glad that Trey and Kate were with me on this short Bordeaux trip. They spent all of our last day in Bordeaux touring and tasting in the Médoc region while I nursed a bad leg back at the hotel. Below, Kate gives her impression of the 2020 vintage. Then, Trey and Kate have notes on specific wines they tasted on that last day and during the other three days in Bordeaux. I thank them profusely.

The notes will mainly be Trey's, and Kate Soto's comments on the wines will be prefaced with the initials "KS."



Kate's Take

Many Bordelaise are saying that the 2020 vintage completes a trilogy of recent good vintages: 2018, 2019, and 2020. Though they were all very good, they were distinct, and for me,

2020 is in a class by itself. The Left and Right Bank each had their own characteristics, but what you can count on from 2020 wines is freshness, balance, and a return to "classic Bordeaux." The alcohol in these wines is low; the acid is high. In general, it's safe to say that you will find a lifted, elegant expression in this vintage—a return to a more benchmark style of Bordeaux. Charles Fournier of Pichon-Lalande put it perfectly when he called it a "modern classic vintage," as it shows the sophistication of winemaking and ripeness of fruit of the modern era, with classic alcohol and freshness levels. This is a vintage that will no doubt please people who have been following Bordeaux for decades as well as those new to the scene. They are flat-out gorgeous wines.

While the wines are classic, the campaign was not. The earliest châteaux released their prices in early May, and the late openers did not finish until the end of June. It was also a year without the standard en primeur visits to Bordeaux from customers around the world. In fact, thanks to our fearless co-owner Clyde's enthusiasm to get to France as soon as possible, we were the first Americans to visit most of the châteaux and taste the vintage there. We've seen the brand-new cellars, we've been in the vineyards, we've tasted the wines—stay tuned for our inside scoop! We'll also be posting tales and pictures from our trip. So many good wines, so many good people, so many new cellars!



Day Four: Trey and Kate in the Médoc

Léoville-Barton, St-Julien (\$94.99)

Wonderful nose, aromatic and fresh.

Explosive fruit jumps from the glass. Long and lingering finish. One of my favorite 2020s!

Carruades de Lafite, Pauillac (\$259.99)

Velvety and sweet in the mouth. Very open and approachable, this wine almost melts in your mouth. Tannins are integrated and silky. A wine to enjoy on the earlier side while you wait for your Lafite to age in the cellar.

Clerc Milon, Pauillac (\$87.99) A blend of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, 2% PV, and 8% Cabernet Franc. Dark in color, rich, deep fruit, with hints of cola, spice, and minerals. Tannins are soft and supple, while a nice core of fruit follows through on the finish.

d'Armailhac, Pauillac (\$51.99) A blend of 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc, and 3% PV. Savory fruit, hints of mineral and earth with fresh berry and red cherry fruit. Medium body with firm tannins.

Haut-Batailley, Pauillac (\$61.99) A blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Merlot. A "classic" style Bordeaux wine. Lots of structure, with a good solid core of dark fruits. Tannins are firm and grab you on the finish. One for the cellar.

Lafite Rothschild, Pauillac (\$709.99) The 2020 Lafite has an alcohol level of just 12.8%. I found that very interesting, as I found the wine densely concentrated with plenty of power and ripeness of fruit. I would never have thought it had an alcohol level under 13%. Hints of graphite and mineral flavors linger in the background while the fruit is pure and fresh. The wine had a nearly velvety texture with tannins that were integrated and ripe. This wine should age quite well. A blend of 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, and 1% Petit Verdot. KS: This is wonderful. Delicious waves of chocolate and mocha, cherry and graphite. Silky smooth tannins, round mouthfeel, and so balanced. The fruit is integrated; it has power and freshness and complexity—the whole package. I don't want to stop tasting this.

Latour, Pauillac *Not offered en primeur.* Lots of power and depth of fruit. Deeply concentrated and broad in the mouth. Dark fruits.

Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (\$139.99) A blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Petit Verdot. This blend accounts for one of the lowest percentages of Cabernet in the final blend in recent memory. Toasty aromas with hints of coffee and chocolate in the mouth. This is a classic-styled Lynch-Bages that will age well. The wine will see 18 months in 75% new French oak and alcohol is 13.41%. KS: First year that the wines were made in the new winery. This is vintage for the long haul. Drought in July but otherwise not so much stress in the growing season. Tannins are a bit



Defensible space: The tastefully arranged landscaping is both modern and classic on the walk up to Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande in Pauillac.

dry but the palate is delicious. Long and supple. Clearly needs more time but this will be so good for the long haul. Black fruit, coffee, and spice and graphite. Concentrated and rich.

Blanc de Lynch-Bages, Bordeaux (\$46.99) KS: I like the freshness and refreshingness. Not as full as some of the others from this vintage, but more linear and crisp.

Mouton Rothschild, Pauillac (\$659.99) A blend of 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot. Toasty, perfumy, nearly exotic fruit in the aromas. Cassis and velvety red currant fruit in the mouth. Ripe fruit tannins that are integrated with the rest of the wine. This is a classic Mouton with alcohol around 13%. A wine that should age well but also show well early on in its life. KS: Notes of iodine. Fine and long, sexy. Blackberry, currant; very lifted. Fine tannins. It's opening with air, developing an herbal note. Very elegant and balanced. Velvety tannins. Perfumy.

Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac (\$199.99) A blend of 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Merlot, and 6% Cabernet Franc. Savory, sweet, and elegant in the mouth, with hints of coffee and tea, this wine shows a wonderful freshness of fruit that lingers in the mouth. Tannins are fresh and elegant. This wine has elegance, density and explosive fruit. It's described as a "modern classic" at the property, and we would agree. KS: Very elegant. Red fruit. Richness. Savory notes of graphite and cocoa powder. Finesse. A feminine, long, long wine.

Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$114.99) A blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Petit Verdot. Wonderful purity and freshness. Hints of red currants, cassis, and tea. Savory, concentrated fruit. 50% new oak was used in 2020. KS: Silky, silky. Black fruit. Fresh but with great concentration. A touch of sauvage, or gaminess, that's very unique. Lots of texture and aromatics. Would be great with cheese. Nice, lifted, long, elegant, with fine, melted tannins.



Besides showing us how the Biodynamic cow horn preparations are made, Alfred and Justine Tesseron of Château Pontet-Canet treated us to a tasting, and an amazing lunch with veggies plucked straight from their garden.



Fresh samples of the 2020 vintage at Château Cos d'Estournel.

Cos d'Estournel, St-Estèphe (\$225.00) A blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Merlot. Alcohol is at 13.46% aged in 55% new barrels. The fruit seems to jump from the glass. Crunchy red currant and black cherry fruit are concentrated yet balanced. This wine shows a good deal of power and density but still is alive and fresh in the mouth. Savory flavors of sweet herbs, spice and cocoa powder linger on the finish. KS: Sweet fruit, low alcohol, good structure. Dry tannins, supple body with lifted acidity. Very fresh. Honeyed berries, violets, crunchy fresh fruit. Feminine. Elegant. Medium bodied.

Ormes de Pez, St Estèphe (\$29.99) Spicy, cedary aromas. Bright red fruits. A bit tight and lean in the midpalate but very fresh. Fine value.

Montrose, St-Estèphe (\$194.99) Toasty aromas, hints of cedar, graphite and minerals with a sweet velvety core of fruit. Crunchy and fresh with wonderful energy and life. Powerful yet balanced, this wine should age quite well. A blend of 71% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. KS: cherry cordial and herbs. Complex! Wow nose! The fruit is so expressive. Cocoa and cherry and green herb notes with violet and minerality. Firm tannins. Quite big but still elegant. Delicious. Crazy long finish.

Day One, Two, and Three

Margaux

Giscours (\$64.99) A big winner in 2020! Dark cherry and red currant fruit with hints of mocha and sweet herbs that linger on the finish. The mid palate is sweet and fleshy. A blend of 44% Merlot and 56% Cabernet Sauvignon. Almost sold out.

Château Margaux (\$659.99) This is a concentrated wine with lots of depth of fruit, power, and complexity, yet it almost seems like you could drink now. Its velvety fruit is fresh and silky in the mouth. Overall, the wine shows finesse, balance, and freshness, yet should age quite well in a cellar for years to come. A blend of 89% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot and 1% Cabernet Franc. KS: Violets and chocolate and lots of spice. Fine tannins, very round and smooth. Medium bodied.

Palmer (\$359.99) Very dark in color, dense and powerful, yet with a wonderful elegance and sweetness of fruit. Alive and fresh with a wonderful purity. One of my favorites of the vintage. A blend of 48% Merlot, 48% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot. KS: Smooth and silky. Blue fruit and graphite, spice. Very fresh fruit. Very balanced. Concentrated, satiny. Good structure and ultra-fine tannins.

Pessac-Léognan

Domaine de Chevalier Rouge (\$69.99) Very aromatic in the nose, the 2020 Domaine de Chevalier shows lots of power and depth. The middle fruit is full and ripe but shows plenty of finesse and balance. Hints of minerals and cedar carry through to the firm finish.

Haut-Bailly (\$149.99) Rich and toasty with a velvety core of dark cherry and blackberry fruit. Concentrated but very pure and seamless. Balanced and fresh. Hints of minerals and graphite in the background.

Haut-Brion (\$659.99) KS: A “wow” wine. The palate unfolds in layers. Rich chocolate, mocha, minerals, sweet fruit with a long, long finish. Lots of body. Long ripe and firm tannins which are integrated and balanced.

Haut-Brion Blanc (\$919.99) Tight on nose and maybe a bit of reduction but a mineral drive. Round and luscious on palate. Almond paste. Layers of sweet pineapple and crème brûlée, with a mineral undertone. Only a few bottles available.

La Mission Haut Brion (\$384.99) Red fruits, hints of coffee and tea in nose. Bright and fresh fruits. Firm and tannic on the finish with velvety middle, this wine is concentrated, and a bit closed at this stage. Will need some time to come together.

Smith Haut Lafitte (\$149.99) Very concentrated and rich, this wine shows wonderful potential. A near seamless, velvety texture with tons of spicy red fruits. Wonderfully pure and fresh. A great pick for your cellar.

Panorama at Troplong Mondot. Nice place to stay for a night, peaceful and serene.





Our hosts at Troplong Mondot invited us to a demonstration of their horse-powered vineyard tillage program.

St-Emilion

Barde-Haut (\$33.99) Dark inky color, perfumy nose, sweet core of fruit with hints of cola, plums and minerals. Fresh and crunchy fruit with ripe integrated tannins. Very expressive and long on the finish. Excellent value!

Canon (\$149.99) Lovely upfront fruit with a silky texture. Coffee and tea flavors are mixed in with a very fresh core of berry and currant fruit. Spicy, elegant and very alive in the mouth.

Canon-La-Gaffelière (\$79.99) Red currant fruit; round and velvety texture in the mouth; fresh and bright. Not a powerhouse but a wine that shows charm and freshness.

Cheval Blanc (\$599.99) Another “wow” wine from the vintage! So elegant and pure. Hints of graphite, lead pencil and cassis. The blend this year is 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, with 5% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Figeac (\$239.99) Pure and seamless. Crunchy high-toned fruit, lots of minerals and a balanced yet firm finish. Excellent wine that should be included in your cellar selections.

La Mondotte (\$199.99) Toasty aromas, crunchy red fruits, balanced and fresh.

La Gaffelière (\$79.99) Dark color, intensely concentrated fruit, velvety and explosive fruit that lingers on the finish. Hints of mocha and black cherry. Tannins are ripe and integrated. Lots of power but the wine seems very approachable.



Frédéric Faye, technical director at Château Figeac, sets us up for a tasting.

Troplong Mondot (\$109.99) Dark purple in color and aromatic in the nose. Hints of lead pencil, and black and red currents explode from the glass. Big wine with broad shoulders but doesn't come off as harsh or out of balance. Intensely concentrated yet fresh. Another good pick for the cellar. A blend of 85% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon and 2% Cabernet Franc.

Pomerol

L'Evangile (\$274.99) Concentrated and intense, the layers of fruit pile up in the mouth. Very pure and focused. Wonderful freshness of fruit. Bright and spicy. Mouthwatering

La Conseillante (\$239.99) The blend is 87% Merlot with 13% Cabernet Franc. Aromas of cassis jump from the glass. This is elegant and silky in the mouth.

Vieux Château Certan (\$379.99) Lots of power and concentration with this wine. 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc. Hints of coffee, tobacco and mocha, this is a balanced yet complex wine that seems a bit closed right now. This will be a wine for the cellar. Sold out.



Alexandre Thienpont, manager at Vieux Château Certan, tries to convey the intricacies of the vintage.

Clyde's Notes: From Right Bank to Left Bank in 2020

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

When tasting the 2020s in California in April and May, the K&L team was very impressed by the Right Bank wines. The first 20 wines we tasted from 2020 were Right Bankers like the fabulous Angélus, the delicious Carillon de Angélus, and the value wines of Tour St-Christophe and La Patache. Maybe we have a soft spot in our hearts for these Merlot-based wines, but they were delicious and quite drinkable. After tasting in Bordeaux we began respecting more the Left Bank wines, but these Right Bank beauties are not to be missed.

St-Emilion

Croix de Labrie (\$104.99) The first 2020 I tasted in April. Exotic nose of Asian spice and toasty oak. Tons of everything—fruit, acid, tannin. Big mouthful and a definite ager. Blueberry fruits at the end. Plenty of tannins evident, but they are round.

Haut-Brisson (\$25.99) Purple-black color. Very spicy aromas that follow to the palate with raspberry nuances. Still, has some tannins at the back end.

Bellefont-Belcier (\$47.99) Wow, what a treat here. Raspberry aromas abound. Very feminine and elegant on the palate. Rich, ripe, sweet black fruit flavors. Round tannins, elegant finish. Delicious wine.

Carillon d'Angélus (\$99.99) Sent from the château, the wine arrived just eight days after bottling. This is the best Carillon I have tasted. Fruity and forward. It's ripe and lively, with lots of black fruits on the palate. Balanced, sweet, and sexy. I love it.

Angélus (\$384.99) Blackish color and tons of blackberries on the nose. Some Asian spices on the palate. Big baby and full mouthful. Tasted four different bottles, all exactly the same. Closed at the back end—age this beauty. Outstanding at the property. First growth stuff.

Valandraud (\$164.99) This wine is always huge on the palate. Big, black color. Tons of fruit, acid, tannin, oak. One of the biggest 2020s I have tasted so far. Tannins hiding the fruit here.

Poesia (\$31.99) Very ripe, toasty blackberry jam aromas. Very nice mouthfeel. Round with touch of tannins at back end. Maybe the best they have ever made here?

Villemaurine (\$44.99) Racy, Asian spice aromas mixed with black cherry nuances. Modern style on the nose. Spicy on the palate, this is an intriguing wine which I like very much. Tending to *garagiste*, but finely balanced on the palate. Fine length. Delicious.

Grand Mayne (\$43.99) I really like this property and its well-priced wines. 15-day-old sample but it sure sang out. Soft and fruity blackberry flavors. Very nice length.

La Dominique (\$54.99) This property is sure improving of late. Slight candy apple and black raspberry jam on the nose. Red fruit flavors and smooth finish. Old sample.

Larcis-Ducasse Sold out. A combo of red and black fruit aromas. Asian spice thrown in. A property to watch and buy in future and from the last 10 vintages. Soft palate entry. Extremely well-balanced. Another must buy.

Pavie-Macquin (\$89.99) This is a beauty. Deep. Blackish purple color. Full-bodied wine that will age very well. Tons of everything here. Modern, but I love it. This property doing well under Nicolas Thienpont's direction.

Canon-la-Gaffelière (\$79.99) Another winner for this great property. Minty, blueberry aromas with some oak thrown in. Some rose flavors on the palate. Big wine—slightly new wave, but finely balanced.



Magali Mallet hosts our tasting at Canon-la-Gaffelière.



Clos Fourtet Sold out. This is a big wine in the masculine style. Some allspice on the nose. Full mouthful here. Ripe and sweet. Tons of ripe tannins. Ager.

Laroque (\$34.99) Almost sold out. Spicy, modern, ripe and sweet. More red fruits than black.

Clos de l'Oratoire (\$39.99) Tasted at Canon La Gaffelière: Black cherry fruit flavors with some tannin at the back. Nice value.

Berliquet (\$54.99) Tasted in France: One for the cellar. Finely balanced and a full mouthful here.

Beau-Séjour Bécot (\$67.99) Black raspberry aromas that follow to the palate. Bright and lively. These people are making great wines of late. Bravo Juliette.

Fleur Cardinale (\$42.99) Another property that is making great value wines on the Right Bank. Soft and fruity with good texture on the palate.

Fombrauge (\$34.99) From the Bernard Magrez stable, and we have loved this baby for the last ten years. Dark chocolate flavors, black fruit aromas. Quite good.

Pomerol

Enclos Tourmaline (\$139.99) One of the top of the Kwok stable. But very few cases made. Extremely ripe, lush, new wave aromas of blueberry and toasty oak. Racy wine that is not huge, but round on the palate. Very good indeed. Super great at the property. Very small allocation.

Clos l'Eglise (\$84.99) Tasted on May 19. Sample from property. Toasty, blueberry aromas. On the palate, the wine is thick and lush—plenty of tannins, which are hiding the fine black fruit flavors. Ager here. Even better at the property—fresh and precise

Rouget (\$49.99) Very ripe, plummy aromas on April 28. Super sweet, lush, new wave flavors of toast and blackberries. Lingering finish. Delicious.

Le Bon Pasteur (\$64.99) Red raspberry aromas. Focused on the palate. Full mouthful here. Plenty of acid and tannins covering the copious fruit content. Ager?

Gazin (\$84.99) Tasted on April 13. Good sample. Black raspberry aromas mixed with toasty oak. Mid-weight, soft and elegant beauty. Feminine style—very easy to enjoy even now. Tasted at Moueix tasting: New wave; extremely fruity; ripe, toasty aromas; plenty of blackberry flavors.

Nenin (\$77.99) Big improvements here by Jean-Hubert Delon. Best Nenin I have tasted. Plummy fruity, fat and lush with fine balance and length. Ten years easy.

Lafleur-Gazin (\$49.99) Nice crunchy blackberry aromas. Very nice on the palate with blackberry jam notes. Quite good.

Bourgneuf (\$69.99) Big boy here, but quite reserved on the nose. Mouthfilling. Cellar it.

Certan de May (\$Inquire) Very spicy aromas with toasty oak nuances. Soft and silky on the palate. Very good.

La Fleur-Pétrus (\$259.99) One of the stars of Pomerol for sure. Very focused wine with lots of sweetness and spicy undertones on the palate. It just tastes really good. Some tannin on the back. Cellar candidate.

La Conseillante (\$239.99) Tasted at the property: 87% Merlot, 13% Cab Franc. They call this property the Burgundy of Bordeaux, but this wine is all Pomerol. Plummy, fat, and quite rich on the palate. Fresh and lively, very focused on the palate. Sweet finish, with tannins being hidden by fruit.



Marielle Cazaux pours our tasting at La Conseillante.

Pessac-Léognan Reds

Close to 2015 in overall quality in this region. In fact, three of my top twelve came from this region. The Merlot really came on strong here. Two excellent wines we will carry on delivery are Le Pape from Haut-Bailly and Le Thil from Smith Haut Lafitte.

de Chantegrive Rouge, Graves (\$17.49) What a delightful value red from Graves. I always like this red, and the 2020 is as good as I have tasted from them in ten years. 60% Merlot. Nice perfume of ripe blackberries. Soft and forward on the palate; sweet and lovely. Drink it young.

Haut Bailly II (\$42.99) Tasted May 13—sample only four days old. This wine is so good, right now. Lovely, black cherry aromas and a sweet mid-palate with red berry flavors and a touch of oak. Minerals on the finish. Tasted at Haut-Bailly: Blueberry aromas; sweet and lush on the palate. A bit tannic at the end. Very good.

Pape Clement (\$97.99) Tasted great in California, as Mr. Magrez sent two sets of samples. At Joanne tasting: Spicy, mineral aromas and flavors. Modern but balanced. Good; long on the palate. Ripe.

Latour Martillac (\$33.99) and **Malartic-Lagravière (\$44.99)** We missed tasting these two of our favorites in France and the samples sent to us in California were a bit too old.

Clos Marsalette (\$21.99) Now here is a great value, but quantities are limited. Tasted at Canon La Gaffelière: Tons of spicy fruit aromas mixed with a touch of oak and mineral. Delightful wine with blueberry jam flavors. No harsh tannins.

Lespault-Martillac (\$24.99) Tasted at Domaine de Chevalier and made by their team: 65% Merlot. Very earthy, mineral aromas. Actually has red berry fruit flavors. Smooth at back end. Great buy.

Esprit de Chevalier (\$Inquire) We will carry this when it is in bottle. Easy drinker for sure with 65% Cab Sauv. Minty aromas that follow to the palate. Vibrant and refreshing.

Margaux

Again, this region had a lot of winners, just like in 2015. And there are good values here—for the most part. It's a huge region, with wines that are great and not as great, next to each other.

Brane-Cantenac (\$79.99) This wine is selling out quickly. Sweet and lovely on palate. Nice aromas of blackberry and blueberry. Top quality.

Alter Ego de Palmer (\$79.99) 46% M, 50% CS, with 4% PV. A mini Palmer—soft and elegant, very ripe and lush on the palate. That Left Bank Merlot shines through here.

Marquis d'Alesme (\$41.99) Deep purple color. Very ripe red fruit aromas with some cassis. A touch of violets on the nose. Great mid-palate texture—red berries abound. A bit dry at the back but should be great value wine. Sample was 25 days old. Tasted at the property: Classic Margaux with aromas of violet and red rose, and flavors of cassis.

La Tour de Mons (\$Inquire) Will sell on arrival. Blackish color. Very ripe, spicy black currant aromas and flavor. Round and subtle. Very well made. Slightly modern style. Super value. Tasted at the property: Even better than in California. Here is a wine to buy when it is released. Now made by the Labégorce team.

Cantenac Brown (\$52.99) Their best wine in many years. Very nice perfume of red fruits. Sleek and very nice on palate. Silky and soft. Bravo Josie.

d'Issan, (\$64.99) This wine is always solid of late. Red raspberry aromas that follow to the palate. It's a serious wine for the cellar. And a great value.

Marquis de Terme (\$44.99) Lovely wine. Tasted at Joanne: Good sweetness on the palate. A bit closed on the nose. Nice middle fruit and fine balance. Round tannins.

du Tertre (\$41.99) Sample was bad in California and unfortunately we did not taste it in Bordeaux. New ownership.

Prieuré-Lichine (\$39.99) This should have been in my magnificent seven of values. I love this 2020. So vibrant and elegant. Tasted great in California. Violets and roses on the nose; ripe and elegant on the palate. Mouthwatering on the palate. Smooth, sweet finish. Alexis would be proud of this beauty.

Kirwan (\$46.99) Another super effort in 2020. Congratulations to Sophie and the Kirwan team. Spicy, toasty oak aromas with black raspberries thrown in. Great texture on the palate. Superb depth of flavor and a lingering finish—all this for under \$50.

Lascombes (\$74.99) The sample in California was too old and we were not able to taste in Bordeaux.

Rauzan-Ségla (\$104.99) One of the Chanel stars and one of the best from Margaux again in 2020. They are on a roll. The wine came out at a very reasonable price and it is almost sold out. Tasted at Joanne: Super wine. Tons of bright, forward fruit. One of the top wines from Margaux. Tasted at Canon: Rich and delicious. Lots of violets on the nose. Superstar.

Médoc, Haut-Médoc, Moulis

You think Margaux is a big region in Bordeaux? Well, the vast region of the Médoc and Haut-Médoc is much bigger, stretching from Parempuyre in the south all the way past St-Estèphe in the north. There are all sorts of mesoclimates (or microclimates) here. Some really excellent wines were made in 2020. I especially like the Médoc, which is usually considered as north of St-Estèphe. Here, Merlot reigns, and the clay soils can hold the water in dry years like 2020.

Potensac, Médoc (\$26.99) Great perfumy nose. Red fruit flavors. Nice finish. A value. One of the fine wines in the Las Cases stable.

La Tour de By, Médoc (\$Inquire)

La Tour de By "Marc Pages" (\$Inquire) These two beauties are from that far north part of Bordeaux. The regular bottling has a combination of red and black fruit aromas and flavors. Tons of ripe, sweet fruit on the palate. Soft tannins. Superb value! The special cuvée is a big wine with more blackberry aromas and flavors. Substantial wine with plenty of guts for the cellar.

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$28.99) This property has been on a roll since Philippe Dambrine took over in the early 2000s. Seems like they hit the ball out of the park yearly. Nice aromas of cassis and rose. Good mid-palate flavors and lingering finish. This property is south of the Margaux region. Try the mindblowing 1949—if you can ever find it—or the delicious 1983.

La Lagune, Haut-Médoc (\$39.99) Literally across the street from Cantemerle, this wine was very spicy when I tasted it in California. Great mouthfeel also. One of their best recently.

Poujeaux, Moulis-en-Médoc (\$28.99) Always one of K&L's favorite properties because they deliver a lot of wine for a reasonable price. Nice, spicy blackberry aromas, and sweet on the palate. Again, a lot of wine for a good price.

Mauvesin Barton, Moulis-en-Médoc (\$18.99) The newest property of the Anthony Barton family—and their horse ranch to boot. I missed tasting this because of my leg infection, but Kate and Trey said it was a very good value.



Tasting with Lilian Barton Sartorius at Langoa-Barton.

St-Julien

One of the tiny wine regions in Bordeaux, but it is packed with great properties and many second growths. When we tasted the wines in California we thought this region had some of the best wines for 2020. We confirmed that when we were in Bordeaux.

Langoa-Barton (\$49.99) What a delightful wine with super Asian spice aromas and some cherry cola on the palate. Finely balanced with fruit covering the tannins. More black fruit flavors than red fruits.

Beychevelle (\$89.99) Almost sold out. Very little of this made it into our inventory. It's elegant and on the soft, feminine side.

Branaire-Ducru (\$47.99) Tasted from two-week-old sample and it was still bright and lively. Pretty black cherry aromas. Very elegant on the palate. Plenty of bright acidity and cassis flavors. Quite forward and ripe. Drink it young.



Lean, clean, and green: Château Pichon Longueville Baron.

Saint-Pierre (\$59.99) Tasted at Joanne: Fine cherry cola aromas and flavor. Quite ripe. Nice-plus.

Talbot (\$59.99) Toasty, coffee aromas that follow to palate. Fine spice on the finish. Nice package, too.

Lagrange (\$52.99) Toasty, oaky aromas and flavors. A bit exotic, but in good balance.

Clos du Marquis (\$57.99) At the Joanne tasting: Holding back on the nose, but not on the palate. Sweet and lovely. Very good.

Léoville-Las Cases (\$309.99) At Joanne tasting: Super on nose. Big wine. Long and lingering. A big ager for sure. Big in every respect: fruit, acid, tannin—and price.

Gruaud-Larose (\$84.99) Unfortunately we did not taste this in Bordeaux.

Ducru Beaucaillou (\$244.99),

Croix de Beaucaillou (\$49.99)

Sadly our wires got crossed in Bordeaux and we missed tasting these beauties.

Pauillac

The most famous region in Bordeaux and home to three first growths. I missed the day in Pauillac but see Kate and Trey's notes in this newsletter, and my top 12 picks.

Les Tourelles de Longueville (\$39.99) We missed tasting this.

Les Griffons de Pichon-Baron (\$47.99) Fruity with blueberry and cassis on the palate. Lots of ripe fruit here. The Cabernet did well.

Réserve de la Comtesse de Lalande (\$51.99) Always a good value. Tasted at Joanne: Sweet and lush. Tons of spice on palate. Hey, you get four bottles of this for one of the first wine!



Coffee table reading at Château Pichon-Lalande.

Echo de Lynch Bages (\$44.99) Some vanilla oak on the nose mixed with black raspberry aromas. Toasty. Some tannins at the back end. A bit rustic.

Duhart-Milon (\$84.99) Another fine property that I missed tasting.

Lynch-Moussas (\$39.99) Always a great value, given their high-priced neighbors. This is a fruity and spicy wine—and it should have made my top seven values.

Grand Puy Lacoste (\$76.99) This property flies under the radar usually. Tasted at Joanne: Big wine with lots of fruit, acid, and tannin. Will cellar well.

Pichon-Baron (\$174.99) Coffee and tobacco flavors. Long on the palate. Super wine. Jean-René is making great stuff at Baron. This wine is a keeper.

Pédesclaux (\$41.99) Another property to watch. Great terroir, but the wines years ago were too rustic. Now they are polished like a fine crystal. Black currant aromas and flavors. Big wine that will need some cellaring. A fine value for saving 20 years.

St-Estèphe

There were superb wines in 2020, but I missed most of them. Check out Kate and Trey's notes. The clay soils here sure helped the properties through the drought.

Meyney (\$31.99) Always a great value and perfect terroir for 2020. Spicy, toasty oak aromas and flavors. Such a deal.

Lilian Ladouys (\$19.99) Sample tasted one week after bottling. Some ripe, black raspberry aromas. Some tannin on the palate entry and plenty at the back.

Lafon-Rochet (\$39.99) Fruity, black cherry aromas that follow to the palate. Nice, sweet mid-palate, and good texture. Quite nice.

Phélan-Ségur (\$47.99) Excellent property recently sold by the Gardinier family. Tough to beat their fabulous 2019, but this 2020 comes close. Nice nose and full-bodied on the palate. Plenty of structure for the long haul.

2020 Bordeaux: The Dry White Wines

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

The few 2020 white Bordeaux wines that we tasted were very good—much better than 2018 and as good as 2017. They are lovely wines with tremendous aromatics of white flowers and citrus, a great mid-palate texture that leads to a crisp citric finish, and fine acidity, for the most part.

Clos Floridène Blanc, Graves (\$Inquire) Will arrive late this year. It should be under \$23.

Blanc de Lynch Bages, Bordeaux (\$46.99) This wine has improved dramatically over the last twenty years. This 2020 may be the best wine they have made to date. Perfumy, fruity nose due to a bit of Muscadelle, and citric undertones. Very lemony on the palate. A clean and refreshing wine. So lively and delicious, you will want to drink the whole bottle. Long and lovely. First tasted May 12 from a one-week-old sample.

Clos Marsalette Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$24.99) Full-flavored and on the lush side. Perfumy white flower aromas. Fine acidity at the back. Another value white from 2020.

Lespault Martillac Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$28.99) 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Sémillon. Fine acidity and texture on the palate. Easy to enjoy young and not very expensive.

Latour Martillac Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$34.99) This property is making very good, affordable Bordeaux—both red and white. I love their 2020 white. It's both creamy and lemony on the palate with white flower aromas. Superb depth and length. Tasted April 23 in Redwood City.

Carbonnieux, Pessac-Léognan (\$34.99) Also tasted April 23. I love this property for its excellent white wines, and the fact that I was inducted into the Commanderie du Bontemps at the property in 2001. White flowers on the nose and citric flavors; excellent balance with lingering finish. Clean and lovely. As good as their excellent 2017.

de Fieuzal Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$54.99) This beauty is rather lush on the palate entry, but the fine acidity comes out on the mid-palate. A rich style, but it is held together by the fine acidity. Also tasted April 23.

de France (\$Inquire) Spicy, citric aromas. Great balance. Well-made with fine acidity and length. Will be a big seller when it arrives.



Brave new Bages: Jean-Charles Cazes hosts our tour of the ultra-modern winemaking facility at Lynch-Bages.

Malartic-Lagravière Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$56.99) First tasted on April 27. Intriguing, spicy, oaky aromas. A bit muted on the palate, but this should turn out great. Sample was 10 days old.

Domaine de Chevalier Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$99.99) Tasted twice in Redwood City store. First time: Perfumy white peach aromas. Seamless wine that's lush on the palate with plenty of acidity and a touch of oak, but very well balanced. Long and lovely. Second sample from the property: Citrus and fig aromas. Lovely texture on the palate. Seamless and superb length and depth. Very focused and balanced—elegant and almost perfect. Their second wine **l'Esprit de Chevalier Blanc (\$28.99)** is fabulous in 2020. Buy this one while you wait for the first wine to mature. By the way, while we were at the property for lunch, we drank two bottles of the 2000 DDC—awesome stuff.

Le Clarté de Haut-Brion, Pessac (\$104.99) 75% Sémillon and the figgy character shines through. Very fresh and lively.

Mouton Rothschild Aile d'Argent Blanc (\$114.99) KS: Lots of SB on the nose. Tropical. Round body, glycerol. Nice and fresh but a lot of mid-palate weight. Some nice oak spice there that keeps me going back into the glass. Tasty.

Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$149.99) This wine has steadily improved since the '90s. Tasted in Redwood City from a 10-day old sample: Stunning wine, creamy and lush on the palate. Citrus and a touch of toasty oak on the nose. Big wine with incredible, long finish. Fantastic.

Pape Clément Blanc, Pessac-Léognan (\$139.99) An exotic beauty with hints of passion fruit, pineapple, and honeydew melon. Rich on the front palate and good acidity at the back end. Round and lush on palate. Fine indeed.

Pavillon Blanc du Margaux, Bordeaux (\$269.99) 100% Sauvignon Blanc. Full-blown on the palate with layers of fruit. Great acidity and lingering finish. The last wine I tasted in Bordeaux, as I missed the whole last day of tasting with my French Infection.



Through a few glasses darkly: tasting at Domaine de Chevalier.



Days of winegrapes and roses: vineyards at Haut-Bailly.

La Mission Haut Brion Blanc, Pessac (\$739.99) 45% Sémillon, 55% Sauvignon Blanc. Fresh citric aromas and flavors. Fabulous wine but a tad pricey. Only a few bottles available.

Haut-Brion Blanc, Pessac (\$919.99) 28% Sémillon, 72% Sauvignon Blanc. So elegant on the nose while lush on the palate. Delicious; but expensive. KS: Tight on nose and maybe a bit of reduction but a minerally drive. Round and luscious on palate. Almond paste. Layers of sweet pineapple and crème brûlée, with a mineral undertone.

2020 Sauternes

We have only tasted 12 Sauternes so far. It was a difficult year for Sauternes in terms of quantity. The weather did not cooperate and getting botrytis was difficult. But some properties like Suduiraut made a very good stickie.

Coutet, Barsac (375ml \$21.99; 750ml \$42.99) The sample bottle was one month old and not showing well. At the Joanne tasting: Bright and lively. Great balance.

Doisy-Daëne, Barsac (375ml \$19.99; 750ml \$39.99) Pretty, honeyed aromas that follow to the palate. Full-bodied and very spicy. Seems richer than recent years. Decent acidity. On the lush side.

Doisy-Védrières, Barsac (375ml \$18.99; 750ml \$37.99) Fairly rich on the palate and some fig aromas. Good acidity. Sample was one month old.

Guiraud, Sauternes (375ml \$23.99; 750ml \$47.99) Spicy, coconut, and honey aromas. As usual it is full and mouth-filling. Tons of sweetness and balanced by fine acidity. Very good.

Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Sauternes (\$Inquire) Coconut aromas that follow to the palate. Nice texture and plenty of acidity. Quite nice. At Joanne: Lush with fine acidity. Very good.

Suduiraut, Sauternes (375ml \$32.99; 750ml \$64.99) Honey and coconut aromas. Very fat and full-bodied with some botrytis. Very sweet with acidity in the back. Quite good.

K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061

P (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687

HOURS Tues-Sun 11am-7pm (Closed Mondays)

LOCKERS Daily 11am-6:30pm (Last Appt. 6pm)

KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637

Email: customerservice@klwines.com

K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028

P (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853

HOURS Tues-Sun 11am-7pm (Closed Mondays)

K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host virtual events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to [KLWines.com/Local-Events](https://www.klwines.com/Local-Events).

K&L SAN FRANCISCO

855 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

P (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739

HOURS Tues-Sun 11am-7pm (Closed Mondays)

LOCKERS Daily 11am-6:30pm (Last Appt. 6pm)

CURBSIDE PICKUP

All locations daily, 11am-7pm

We accept American Express, Discover, Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.

For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit [KLWines.com](https://www.klwines.com)



FOLLOW OUR BLOGS ON THE TRAIL AND SPIRITS JOURNAL FOR THE LATEST UPDATES FROM K&L