

## 2019 Bordeaux: An Introduction

Andy Lench - Bordeaux Wine Locators / Chateau Carignan

Where to Start? I arrived at Chateau Carignan from America Monday February 24<sup>th</sup>. News was distant about the Coronavirus and we were to some degree oblivious to what was about to happen to the world. We were busy at Chateau Carignan tasting our vat and barrel samples during February, March, April and May. We were very excited about the quality and felt our wines were better than our great 2018s! It was with this enormous enthusiasm that on May 22<sup>th</sup> I accepted an invitation to taste the 2019s- my 35<sup>th</sup> year tasting Bordeaux barrel samples. Little did I know I would be inadvertently one of the few trade people outside of Bordeaux to have the privilege of tasting this year.

A note about my notes: normally we taste these young wines the end of March/beginning of April during the Union Des Grands Cru tasting; however this is now seven to eight weeks later. One of the overwhelming impressions of this vintage is the freshness and ripeness of the tannins. Could this be the fact the wines have spent two more months in barrel and are more integrated?

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> I was fortunate to be able to taste a large selection of the Right Bank wines, St Emilion and Pomerol. To be precise, 19 Pomerol & 49 St Emilion. A point to note: not the very top properties, this was to come later. This was my first impression of the vintage other than tasting our own wines and I have to say it left me perplexed because frankly I was expecting a lot more than the glass delivered.

One week later, on Friday May 29<sup>th</sup>, off to St Emilion & Pomerol to visit the big guns and what an amazing difference! Now I am over the moon about some of these wines, tasting notes to follow. Rest assured that these are some of the best barrel samples I have ever tasted. These wines are so complete: very expressive nose, fabulous mid palate richness, lovely silky sweet ripe tannins and long finishes.

Tuesday June 2<sup>nd</sup> off to another negociant to taste the Pessac, Margaux, St Julien, Pauillac & St Estephe. Again, mainly lower to mid-range but with a few top names, 89 wines tasted. I had the same overall second impressions as I did with wines of St Emilion & Pomerol - a good to very good vintage. This was now defining my opinion.

Wednesday June 3<sup>rd</sup> a last minute invitation from another top negociant in Bordeaux. This was mainly Left Bank wines:

Margaux, St Julien, Pauillac & St Estephe, however with a smattering of Right Bank wines, St Emilion and Pomerol. 78 wines tasted and this is now further cementing my opinion of the vintage. A good to very good vintage.

Friday June 5<sup>th</sup>, the day I have been eagerly anticipating---Medoc top wines--- the FIRSTS. And boy was there no disappointment there! The long trek up to St Estephe to begin the journey starting with Chateau Montrose and going south, culminating at the end of the day with a tasting of Domaines Barons De Rothschild wines at their Bordeaux headquarters. What a treat—see below tasting notes.

## SUMMARY

First I was a wine lover, so I got into the business to be able to afford the great wines of the world, of which Bordeaux is the greatest. I have now tasted most 2019s 2-3 times, as we normally like to do. I now feel I have a good understanding of the vintage and the quality. I sincerely write these notes not as a wine merchant but as a consumer.

What makes a great vintage or a great wine?

Let's review the weather pattern during the year. April we experienced thunderstorms and rainfall was around 100mm depending on the commune. The temperatures were below the average and there were issues with frost in April. Flowering began in mid-May. Early June was cold and rainy, however the second half of June was mainly dry and very hot. July was very hot and we were reminded of the intense heat in the summer of 2003. Fortunately there was around 30mm of rainfall at the end of the month that was greatly appreciated. The month of August was another dry and very hot month, however with around 33mm rainfall, well below average. September was dry with a small quantity of rain the second half of the month that again proved beneficial for most properties. Harvesting varied from property to property, Merlots being harvested first with most people finishing in early October.

Now to my notes!

## TOP WINES BY COMMUNE

### SAINT ESTEPHE

This is the most northerly commune in the Medoc with two properties ranked Second Growths in the 1855 classification, Cos D'Estournel & Montrose. There are some good to very good wines, with Montrose being at the top of its game.

Montrose: deep black color with a nose of blueberry and chocolate cassis. Fresh ripe tannins and a very rich mid-palate with a long finish. 64% Cabernet Sauvignon 30% Merlot 5% Cabernet Franc 1% Petit Verdot. Tasted once 96-98

Cos d'Estournel: color black with a lovely black cherry cassis nose. Very balanced with good acidity fresh ripe fruit with good structure. Tasted twice. 94-96

Calon Segur has proved again it's at the top of its game with a superb wine. Black in color with a chocolate cassis fragrance and rich ripe sweet tannins with a long, elegant finish. Tasted 4 times 96-98

A very fresh Tronquoy Lalande owned and run by the owners of Montrose. This was a great surprise, black in color with a very expressive nose of cherry cassis. Super fresh ripe fruit with a long finish. 50% Merlot 44% Cabernet Sauvignon 6% Petit Verdot. This is an over achiever this year and given what the price will be, it is a must buy. Tasted once 94-96

Other good wines: Phelan Segur 92-95, Haut Marbuzet 92-95, Meyney 92-95, Les Ormes de Pez 92-94.

### PAUILLAC

This is the commune with the largest number of First Growths: Lafite Rothschild, Latour, and Mouton Rothschild. The top estates of this large commune have made outstanding wines, some which will compete with their great 2018's, 2016's, 2010's and 2009's. From the lower to mid-tier wines there are some good to very good wines but in Pauillac one should pick the best and ignore the rest.

Lafite Rothschild: They are on a roll with the perfect 2016 followed by the amazing 2018, which I remarked that after 34 years of tasting was the best Lafite barrel sample I had ever tasted. A deep black color with a cherry, blueberry very expressive floral character. Then the taste offered up everything you want in a wine--freshness, beautiful ripe tannins and that

fat palate richness, with a very long finish. This is a very refined, polished wine which I am sure will receive 100 points from some of the wine press. 94% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot 1% Petit Verdot. Tasted once 97-99

Latour no longer in the En Primeur system, therefore you can expect the release probably around 2031-2035! The advantage, however, is you will be able to purchase it with perfect provenance. Always one of the best wines of the vintage and no exception here. Black in color with a very exotic and expressive caramel chocolate nose. There is amazing freshness of the tannins and very rich fat ripe fruit that coats your mouth, and a very long finish indeed. 92.5% Cabernet Sauvignon 7.5% Merlot. Tasted once 97-99

Mouton Rothschild: Black cherry color with a caramel, exotic oak nose followed by very refined super fresh tannins with massive rich fruit that one could easily drink now. 90% Cabernet Sauvignon 9% Merlot 1% Petit Verdot. Tasted 3 times-average score 96-98

Pichon Lalande: Wow! This is a great wine! Black color, lovely cherry cassis, sweet ripe fruit on the nose and such powerful rich ripe fruit in the mid palate, possibly better than the fantastic 2016. 71% Cabernet Sauvignon 23% Merlot 6% Cabernet Franc. Tasted once 96-99

Pontet Canet: Always pushing the window. Here is a dark ruby wine with eucalyptus cassis nose, with rich ripe full-bodied succulent fruit and a very long refined finish. Tasted twice average score 95-97

Le Petit Mouton: one of the best ever, black color with cherry tobacco nose. It has a very rich and well delineated full-bodied fruity intensity and long finish. 68% Cabernet Sauvignon 32% Merlot. Tasted 3 times average score 94-96

Lynch Bages: Black in color with a cherry and chocolate nose. This is a big-boned wine with lovely upfront richness nice mid palate and long finish. Tasted 3 times 95-97+

Les Forts de Latour, second wine of Latour. This is a deep, dark, very rich wine, certainly not in the shadow of the Grand Vin. This is another big-boned wine, with lovely upfront richness. Rich ripe tannins which have a lot of finesse and elegance with a super long finish. 65.8% Cabernet Sauvignon 31.9% Merlot 2.3% Petit Verdot. Tasted once 94-97

Grand Puy Lacoste always one of our favorites and, true to form, delivered a lovely wine this year. Color black with a rustic cherry blueberry

fragrance. Quite tannic for the vintage with a very long finish. Tasted twice. 94-97

Clerc Milon: a wine that seems to improve year in and year out. A dark ruby color with a nose of exotic cassis and cherries. This is a very fleshy and fruity wine with supple ripe creamy tannins and a long finish. 77% Cabernet Sauvignon 22% Merlot 4% Cabernet Franc 2% Petit Verdot 94-96

Carruades de Lafite: This is the best Carruades ever!! Black color with a coffee and chocolate bouquet. Very rich ripe tannins, so well integrated, with gobs of fresh powerful fruit. 68% Cabernet Sauvignon 27% Merlot 5% Cabernet Franc. Tasted once 93-96

Duhart Milon Rothschild: This was a real surprise and probably the best Duhart I have ever tasted. Color black with a blueberry cherry bouquet. Super refined tannins and rich powerful fruit and plenty of length. 70% Cabernet Sauvignon 30% Merlot. Tasted once 94-95

Pichon Comtesse Reserve: This wine is very classy, a cherry blueberry nose with refined strong tannins. A very precise wine with luscious fruit. It's a real winner at a bargain price. 51% Cabernet Sauvignon 46% Merlot 3% Cabernet Franc. Tasted once 93-95

Armailhac is improving every year. Dark ruby color, with a bouquet of black cherry that is very expressive. It has rich ripe balanced fruit with toasty oak and vanilla flavors. Tasted 3 times 93-95

## SAINT JULIEN

This commune for me is the most consistent of all the communes this year. Every wine is great and some have made superb wines even eclipsing some of their best efforts of the last 30 years.

Ducru Beaucaillou has been on a roll for the past 25 years and the 2019 is no exception. A deep brooding color with a fragrance of eucalyptus and chocolate. The fruit has massive flesh and explosive power, very rich and fat with beautiful fine tannins and lots of length. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon 20% Merlot Tasted once 96-98

Leoville Poyferre: One of our favorite wines, always well made and precise. This is another great Poyferre like the great 1982, 1990, 2003 & 2010. Black in color, a cherry cassis nose, with tannins that coat the entire palate. Rich fat ripe up-front fruit that carries all the way through to a long finish--a superb effort. Tasted 3 times 96-98

Gruaud Larose: one of the underdog Second Growths but when it is good it is fantastic, like the perfect 100 point 1982. I believe this to be the best Gruaud Larose since that famous 1982. Plenty of replanting and work at the property during the past 15 years and it is really showing. Dark ruby in color, nose of cherry and cassis and super elegant refined tannins with a purity of fruit, not to mention, very long on the palate. How long will this wine remain a relative bargain? Tasted twice 95-98

The Third of the Leovilles: Leoville Barton has also been challenging the top spot and this year it can be compared in quality to the Wine Spectator #1 wine of the year 2016. Dark ruby color, cherry tobacco nose and rich up-front fruit with expansive chewy tannins--another great effort. Tasted 3 times 95-97+

Saint Pierre a small but well-run property. To me, it always over achieves and this year is no exception with a robust cassis nose and rich fat ripe tannins that coat the entire mouth. It has great power and freshness with a very long finish. Tasted 3 times 95-97

Talbot: black color with a nose of black cherry. It is a very rich fat ripe wine with super fine tannins and great structure; given the price, a great value. Tasted 3 times 94-97

Brancaire Ducru has steadily been improving and certainly showed its place among the elite of Saint Julien this vintage. A charming well-balanced wine with super ripe tannins, elegance and finesse including the necessary rich, full-bodied length--a very classy wine. Tasted 4 times 93-95

Beychevelle: Always a charming wine and since 2016, improving all the time. Dark ruby color with a rich cherry blueberry nose. Has nice richness and balance with good structure and long finish. 93-95

Gloria: Always very well made and this year is no exception--it's a quintessential St Julien and at a bargain price. A wine that can cellar for 30 years or more. Color medium ruby with a cherry and cassis nose. It has a lovely fat rich mid palate that continues through on the finish. Refined and balanced tannins. Tasted 3 times 93-95

Unfortunately, Leoville Las Cases and family wines still not tasted.

Other notable wines: La Croix de Beaucaillou 93-95; Le Petit Ducru, the new member of the Borie family, 91-93; Madame de Beaucaillou (Haut Medoc) 91-93

## MARGAUX

The commune with one First Growth and many Second Growths.

To begin, Chateau Margaux has certainly excelled itself this year, in constant competition to be the best among the First Growths, with lower yields and more precise winemaking. This is a wine of immense finesse, elegance and freshness. Color is black with a nose of eucalyptus and chocolate and a hint of oak. With very sweet, precise, ripe tannins, this wine shows the most elegance and finesse I have experienced in 35 years of tasting their barrel samples. A very different style to the perfect 2015 and the amazing 2016, but what a rich wine, with a huge finish. 90% Cabernet Sauvignon 7% Merlot 2% Cabernet Franc 1% Petit Verdot. Tasted once 96-99

Palmer: another super effort; what a pleasure it will be in several years to compare 2009, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019, all brilliant wines. Color black with a bouquet of cherry and blackberry. This wine is so fat and rich it coats every part of the palate with its creamy rich tannins and massive powerful fruit. Tasted once 96-98

Rauzan Segla: This property has been on a super roll since 2015 and has made another superb wine. It can now be considered a Super Second Growth. Very expressive bouquet of eucalyptus. Great balance with rich ripe fruit and tremendous length. Very drinkable now. 62% Cabernet Sauvignon 35% Merlot 2.5% Petit Verdot .5% Cabernet Franc. Tasted 3 times 96-98+

Pavillon Rouge, second wine of Margaux. This is one of the best Pavillon Rouges I have tasted from barrel. Dark ruby color with a nose of coffee and cassis. Rich ripe pure fruit with well de lineated tannins, lovely long finish, a serious Pavillon. 94-96

Malescot St Exupery: Always one of our favorites no matter what the vintage. It's a very consistent and well-priced wine. Color very dark ruby with a nose of rich cherries. The wine has rich ripe tannins with a silky, powerful finish; nice structure. Tasted 3 times 94-96

Brane Cantenac: A wine rapidly improving since the great 2015. Color black with a cherry cassis bouquet and fabulous rich fresh ripe fruit. Powerful in the middle and on the finish. Tasted 3 times 94-96

Lascombes has produced one of its best wines to date color of dark ruby with a cherry cassis bouquet. Very rich up front and nice power with good acidity. Tasted 3 times 93-95

Prieure Lichine: A wine that seems to get lost in the shuffle but this year it is speaking out. Color medium ruby with blackberry fragrance on the nose. Very balanced and refined tannins, smooth, rich and good finish. Tasted 3 times 93-95

Labegorce: We fell in love with the 2018 and the 2019 is just as good. It's the value property from Margaux, color medium ruby, a lovely floral nose of eucalyptus and cherries. Very fleshy with rich ripe fruit and sweet tannins. Tasted 3 times 93-95

## PESSAC LEOGNAN

The commune on the edge of Bordeaux with the famous First Growth, Chateau Haut Brion.

The Haut Brion 2019 is black in color with an extraordinary caramel and sweet creme bouquet. Very sweet, ripe tannins and intense fusion and power. This is a legend in the making, loads of fat rich ripe fruit with a monumental voluptuous finish. Tasted once 97-99+

Following on their heels, the neighbor across the road, La Mission Haut Brion: Color a very dark ruby with a caramel and coffee bouquet. It has very refined rich ripe tannins, great acidity and fat mid-palate fruit with a very long finish. 96-97+

Les Carmes Haut Brion: The up-and-coming star of the appellation. Color black with a cherry blackberry nose. On the palate, very rich ripe fruit with great balance and finesse. Powerful structure with a very long finish 39% Cabernet Franc 20% Cabernet Sauvignon 41% Merlot. Tasted once 96-98+

Smith Haut Lafitte: Great attention to detail at this property and another very good example of the appellation. Color dark ruby, an amazingly intense, perfumed wine. Very rich ripe tannins with plenty of muscle and power, great finish. Tasted 3 times 94-96

Another great Pessac, Haut Bailly: Color dark ruby with a full expressive cassis and cherry bouquet. Nice balance and finish 93-95



Domaine de Chevalier: Following on from the great 2018, another fine performance. Color black with exotic floral berries on the nose. It is a rich ripe Well-balanced wine with plenty of length. 93-96

Pape Clement: A big, structured wine--color black with a very interesting nose of lemon tea; nice rich ripe fruit and a fat mid palate. Tasted 4 times 93-95+

## PESSAC LEOGNAN BLANC

There is a distinct hierarchy within the Pessac Blancs, starting with none other than Haut Brion Blanc, which has a miniscule production. I was very fortunate to have many samples of the various Blancs sent to Chateau Carignan, and because many of the whites were already bottled, I have enjoyed them over the last few weeks. I believe this to be a good to very good vintage for the Blancs. While always over-shadowed by the Bordeaux reds, a close look at the whites this year is warranted due to the high quality and the much lower prices.

Haut Brion Blanc: A beautiful color with a lanolin and peach fragrance. Beautiful weight and balance and very rich fat and ripe fruit, very powerful and long on the finish. 65% Sauvignon Blanc 35% Semillon. Tasted once 96-98

La Mission Haut Brion Blanc: Color clear with an expressive nose of lanolin. Balanced and powerful wine with a rich long fruity finish. 70% Sauvignon Blanc 30 % Semillon Blanc. Tasted once 96-98

Smith Haut Lafite Blanc: The best Blanc here for many a year. An intense floral bouquet of lanolin and peach. Big structure and very rich mid palate with a super long powerful finish. Tasted twice 94-96

Domaine de Chevalier Blanc: always a favorite and great to drink when 15+ years old. Here is another good example--color pale straw with an exotic and expressive nose of peach. Very refined, with good structure and acidity, nice length 93-96

Pape Clement Blanc: Here is a wine with a lovely straw yellow color and lemony floral bouquet. Fat richness and lovely finish. 93-95

These are just the highlights of the Blancs; there are many great values out there including Larive Haut Brion 93-95, Carbonnieux 92-94, De Fieuzal 92-94, Latour Martillac 92-94.

## POMEROL

My day out in Pomerol was a great treat and I tasted two of the wines vying for wine of the vintage Vieux Chateau Certan and Lafleur. Close too, and maybe perfect wines. Chateau L'Evangile has hit the jackpot with a stunning effort. A great La Conseillante, La Fleur De Gay and Gazin. Very good wines from La Violette, Le Gay, L'Eglise Clinet, Taillefer, Clos Rene and Rouget. Not to forget the two great efforts from the Guinaudeau family, Les Pensees coming from the vineyard of Lafleur, and Les Perrieres which comes from the vineyards of Grand Village in Fronsac. Note Petrus still to be tasted.

Lafleur: This is one of the most meticulously run vineyards in all of Bordeaux. A property that is so consistent, and always produces great wines.

The 2019 Lafleur is a candidate for the wine of the vintage as it has everything you look for in a wine. Color black with a nose of cherry and eucalyptus. From the front of the palate to the back it is massive fat rich ripe fruit up front with super richness in the mid and back palate. Wow! This is a super star with such balance and extreme length on the finish. 47% Bouchet 53% Merlot. Tasted once 98-100

Vieux Chateau Certan: Another candidate for wine of the vintage. Color dark ruby with an exotic floral bouquet of wild berries. This is a wine of amazing finesse and precision. It is massive in structure but very refined. Again, a wine with front, mid and back palate expressions of rich gorgeous ripe fruit. Beautiful tannins, and the finish lasted halfway back from Pomerol to Bordeaux. Destined to garner 100 points and a must-buy if you can afford it. Tasted twice 98-100 both times.

I was very fortunate to visit Le Pin with Alexandre & son Guillaume Thienpont to taste Le Pin. We tasted from three different barrels. What a rare treat--Le Pin is at the top of its game with another superb effort. This is a wine of enormous elegance, finesse and power. Color black, a bouquet of black cherry and cassis with very smooth rich ripe creamy tannins with a powerful long finish! No spitting here. 98-99

L'Evangile There is a new generation in control with an eye on raising the quality and this L'Evangile is the best since the perfect 2009. Black in color, with cherry and blueberry bouquet. This is a succulent rich ripe wine with super refined powerful tannins. Perfect balance with an impressive mid palate and a very long finish. 83.5% Merlot 16% Cabernet Franc 0.5% Cabernet Sauvignon 97-99

La Conseillante: There have been so many great wines produced at this estate and this is the best La Conseillante since the great 1990. Color black with a powerful eucalyptus floral bouquet. Tannic and powerful with great mid-palate structure and silky ripe tannins. A luscious and a long finish. 84% Merlot 16% Cabernet Franc. Tasted once 98-99

Gazin: Given the price of its neighbors this is very good value. Color dark ruby, nose of blackcurrant and cassis. Steely refined tannins and great balance with a good hefty finish. Tasted twice 95-97

Guillot Clauzel is now under management of Guillaume Theinpont, who started at the end of the harvest in 2018. Color black with cherry and chocolate bouquet. Nice rich balanced fruit with fine refined tannins. Definitely a property to watch. Tasted once. 95-97

Rouget: One of the bargains of Pomerol, this is a super effort and the best I have ever tasted from this property. Color black with a cherry blueberry bouquet. Rich ripe and powerful with fine tannins and a strong finish. Tasted three times 95-97

## SAINT EMILION

This commune boasts the largest number of properties and is always the commune with the greatest variation in quality.

Cheval Blanc has hit the jackpot with its potential wine of the vintage. WOW! Color black with a powerful exotic blueberry bouquet which jumped from the glass. Such power and structure with beautiful silky ripe tannins. Great finesse and elegance with that great, rich mid-palate fruit combined with a long finish. 58% Merlot 34% Cabernet Franc 8% Cabernet Sauvignon. Tasted once 98-100

Angelus: Dark ruby color with the most exotic cassis eucalyptus bouquet. This is the best young Angelus I have ever tasted. It has everything you want in a wine. Beautiful fresh ripe tannins, very balanced and silky. The mouth is coated with a purity of fresh ripe fruit and a very long, powerful finish. 60% Merlot 40% Cabernet Franc 96-99

Canon: It has been on a roll since the amazing 2015, with a superb 2016 and 2018. Color black with a nose of caramel, spices and a hint of oak. It is a very rich fat full-bodied wine coating the tannins all around the palate. It has a freshness, elegance and power 69% Merlot 31% Cabernet Franc. Tasted once 96-98+

Figeac another super effort following the brilliant 2015, 2016 and 2018. Black in color, with a cherry boysenberry bouquet. This is a big-boned Figeac, full of powerful rich ripe tannins. Great structure and fleshy racy fruit plus a long finish. 30% Merlot 34% Cabernet Sauvignon 36% Cabernet Franc. Tasted once 96-98

Pavie Macquin: Black in color with an exotic dense cherry bouquet. Very rich and powerful up-front fruit on the palate, another fine effort with plenty of finish. 78% Merlot 20% Cabernet Franc 2% Cabernet Sauvignon. Tasted 3 times 94-96+

Canon La Gaffeliere: Dark ruby in color with a cherry cassis bouquet. The wine has super ripe tannins and a great freshness with a long finish. It is certainly the best made here for many a year. Tasted 3 times 96-98

Clos de Sarpe, a tiny property just 3.7 hectares and only 18000 bottles produced. I have been fortunate to taste many of the older vintages at the chateau and this wine is very understated when young but matures beautifully after several years in the bottle. Color black with a black cherry bouquet. Rich ripe fruit front mid and back palate. Refined tannins and powerful finish. 85% Merlot 15% Cabernet Franc. Tasted twice 95-97

Larcis Ducasse: Color dark ruby with a black cherry bouquet and the palate exudes rich ripe fruit. Lovely finesse and power. 88% Merlot 12% Cabernet Franc. Tasted 3 times 93-96

Beausejour Duffau Lagarosse: Dark ruby color with an exotic cassis bouquet. Refined and full bodied with ripe tannins and a strong finish. 86% Merlot 14% Cabernet Franc. Tasted 3 times 93-95

Cote de Baleau: What a huge surprise this wine is--one of the best deals in all of Bordeaux. I was blown away by the quality given the price. Color dark ruby with a rich cherry blueberry bouquet. Lovely sweet ripe tannins that coat the whole palate, a very succulent and long finish. A must buy!! Tasted twice 94-96

Tour St Christophe: One of our favorite new wines from this commune. This year it continues on from the great 2016. Color is dark ruby with a bouquet of cherry and cassis. Exotic rich ripe fruit with creamy tannins and a great finish. Tasted twice 94-96

## SAUTERNES

The following are notes on the sweet white wines of 2019 Bordeaux by Bill Blatch, used with his permission. Blatch has been in Bordeaux since the mid-seventies and is a Sauternes specialist.

*As soon as we were de-confined, I spent 4 days in Sauternes tasting the vintage. It has come a long way since my first tastings back in February, with the zestiness now being more cloaked in the quite opulent form of concentration. This is clearly becoming a much more serious wine than the rather bright-styled agreeable wine that I had perceived before.*

*So now we clearly have on our hands a very fine vintage of full, opulent wines (most of the residuals arrived easily at 125 – 150 g/l), tightened by a freshness of clean fruit, rather similar to the style of the 2017s. This is an amazing accomplishment after such a widespread invasion of acid rot in September – October, almost as prevalent as in 1997, and this freshness of style attests to the enormous devotion of the Sauternais to discard anything that was not nobly rotten, poking around in the bunches to eliminate the year's sneaky bad rot, so only retaining the best and consequently reducing their yields to a puny handful of ho/ha, in spite of their continuing financial stress.*

*Yields had already been badly hit by the frosts of 2017, by the mildew of 2018, and now they were losing production to this by this pernicious acid rot. But the Sauternais never surrender and are now sporting big smiles, if not at their bank balances, at least at their satisfaction with what they have in their barrels.*

*The first half of the vineyard year followed a similar pattern to the reds: a warm winter provoking an early budding, a few odd bits of frost in the lower reaches in May, but generally a very large « sortie » with plentiful bunches. The stormy days during the flowering resulted in some coulure and millerandage but, in view of the volume of the potential, was not considered worrisome. An incredibly hot June and July ensured maximum early ripening.*

*Then the two lines diverged as the reds went on to benefit from the late July showers and to build on themselves right to the end of the harvest whilst in Sauternes these conditions provoked an unusually early wine-fly infection, causing widespread acid rot.*

*September was largely too dry for any good botrytis to develop so there was time on hand to cut out the ensuing bad rot. During this time, a little*

*noble rot did eventually form and, during this «nettoyage» process, a small first picking of very perfumed fine-styled botrytis musts could be made.*

*By early October, the grapes were ultra-sweet but it was still too dry for noble rot. Then, with the following early October damper days, major noble rot arrived progressively during the week of 7<sup>th</sup>, crescendoing into the sudden heat-wave of 11<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup>, when the biggest and the best of the harvest was picked. The stress was almost unbearable as the forecast was for heavy rain on the Monday evening 14<sup>th</sup>. The pickers were working against the clock but were slowed down by the very laborious process of selecting only the good rot and discarding the bad. What was retained was magnificent and I take my hat off to the valiant Sauternais for being so totally uncompromising.*

*By Monday evening when the rain arrived, all of Barsac and lower Sauternes had finished (hence their higher yields) but the higher ground Sauternes needed to finalise their picking for the rainy week that followed. Only a few lots picked right away made it into the Grand Vin blends, thereafter, most were declassified into 2<sup>nd</sup> wine or generic.*

*The net result is an infinitesimal volume of very high quality pure and fresh styled wines of great concentration and opulence that are a real pleasure to taste.*

## WINES OF THE VINTAGE

- Angelus
- Canon
- Cheval Blanc
- Figeac
- La Conseillante
- Lafite Rothschild
- Lafleur
- Latour
- Margaux
- Montrose
- Mouton Rothschild
- Palmer
- Rauzan Segla
- Vieux Chateau Certan

## OVER ACHIEVERS

- Canon
- Carillon D'Angelus
- Carignan Prima
- Figeac
- Grand Village
- La Conseillante
- La Croix Ducru Beaucaillou
- Leoville Barton
- Leoville Poyferre
- Les Carmes Haut Brion
- Larcis Ducasse
- Les Perrieres
- Les Pensees
- Pavie Macquin
- Pichon Comtesse Reserve
- Puygueraud
- Rauzan Segla
- Rouget
- Tronquoy Lalande
- Vieux Chateau Certan

## VALUE DRINKERS

- Armaillhac
- Capbern
- Carignan
- Carignan Prima
- Clerc Milon
- Grand Village
- Gruaud Larose
- Labegorce
- Madame De Beaucaillou
- Malescot St Exupery
- Petit Ducru
- Pichon Comtesse Reserve
- Puygueraud
- Saint Pierre
- Tronquoy Lalande