



THE INSTITUTE OF
MASTERS *of* WINE

Report

The Annual Bordeaux Tasting (Vintage 2008)

Held on 6th November 2012
at Vintners' Hall, London

Introduction

An annual tasting of Bordeaux wines was first established by the Institute in the 1970s and has long since become the single most important annual event in our calendar. Each year, it attracts Masters of Wine, students of the Institute and members of the wine trade from around the world.

The unique aspect of this tasting is that it shows wines from a single vintage at four years of age, allowing the wines to be assessed with some bottle age. No year is missed out – in 2011 we showed wines from 2007 and in 2013 we will show wines from 2009 – so tasters who attend every year gain a unique perspective on the leading wines of Bordeaux and their development in each and every vintage.

This significant event would not be possible without the on-going, generous commitment of the participating producers and we gratefully acknowledge the support we received in 2012 from the Châteaux. We were particularly pleased that Philippe Casteja, Laurent Lebrun, Julien Lebreton and Nathalie Peyraud-Lebreton were able to join us in person in London for the tasting.

Looking ahead, in the next three years the tasting will address a succession of important vintages: 2009, 2010 and 2011. We fully expect that record attendances will be achieved and the date for the 2013 tasting, showing the 2009 vintage, is already set for 7th November at Vintners' Hall in London. As ever, we will be reliant upon the participation of producers to ensure that we can stage the most comprehensive retrospective of the 2009s that we can.

In the meantime, we hope that the following pages provide an informative and useful overview of this year's tasting and hope that we may rely upon your engagement and support in the years ahead.

Mark Bingley MW

Chairman, Events Committee

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Acknowledgements

The Institute wishes to express its sincere thanks to the following for their support in the preparation of this tasting: Sylvain Boivert and Le Conseil des Grands Crus Classés en 1855 for assistance with sourcing the wines; Yvon Mau for arranging the groupage of the wines in Bordeaux; the Vintners' Company for the use of Vintners' Hall; and San Pellegrino/Acqua Panna for the provision of water.

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The Wines

As always, only the first wines of the Grands Crus Classés properties of the Médoc, Sauternes and Barsac, and their Right bank equivalents from the 2008 vintage were shown. We have also maintained the opportunity for attendees to taste all the wines, with the exception of the First Growths, blind.

In total, 108 wines were shown, grouped by appellation or class as follows.

Haut-Médoc

1. Château BELGRAVE
2. Château CAMENSAC
3. Château CANTEMERLE
4. Château LA TOUR CARNET

Pessac-Léognan/Graves

5. Château BOUSCAUT
6. Domaine DE CHEVALIER
7. Château DE FIEUZAL
8. Château HAUT-BAILLY
9. Château LA MISSION HAUT-BRION
10. Château MALARTIC-LAGRAVIÈRE
11. Château OLIVIER
12. Château PAPE-CLÉMENT
13. Château SMITH HAUT LAFITTE

Margaux

14. Château BRANE-CANTENAC
15. Château CANTENAC BROWN
16. Château DAUZAC
17. Château DESMIRAIL
18. Château DURFORT-VIVENS
19. Château FERRIERE
20. Château GISCOURS
21. Château D'ISSAN
22. Château KIRWAN

23. Château LASCOMBES
24. Château MARQUIS DE TERME
25. Château PALMER
26. Château PRIEURÉ-LICHINE
27. Château RAUZAN-GASSIES
28. Château RAUZAN-SÉGLA
29. Château DU TERTRE

First Growths

30. Château HAUT-BRION
31. Château LAFITE-ROTHSCHILD
32. Château MARGAUX
33. Château MOUTON ROTHSCHILD
34. Château CHEVAL BLANC
35. Château D'YQUEM

Saint-Emilion

36. Château BALESTARD LA TONELLE
37. Château BEAUSÉJOUR-BÉCOT
38. Château BERLIQUET
39. Château CADET PIOLA
40. Château CANON
41. Château CANON LA GAFFELIÈRE
42. Château CAP DE MOURLIN
43. Château CORBIN
44. Château DASSAULT
45. Château FIGEAC
46. Clos FOMBRAUGE
47. Clos FOURTET
48. Château GRAND CORBIN
49. Château GRAND MAYNE
50. Château HAUT CORBIN
51. Château LA COUSPAUDE
52. Château LA DOMINIQUE

- 53. Château LARCIS DUCASSE
- 54. Château LARMANDE
- 55. Château LA TOUR FIGEAC
- 56. Clos L'ORATOIRE
- 57. Château PAVIE
- 58. Château PAVIE MACQUIN
- 59. Château PETIT FAURIE DE SOUTARD
- 60. Château SOUTARD
- 61. Château TROTTEVIEILLE

Pomerol

- 62. Château BEAUREGARD
- 63. Château CLINET
- 64. Château GAZIN
- 65. Château LA CONSEILLANTE
- 66. Château LA CROIX DE GAY
- 67. Château LA FLEUR DE GAY
- 68. Château NENIN
- 69. Château PETIT VILLAGE
- 70. Clos RENÉ

Saint-Julien

- 71. Château BEYCHEVELLE
- 72. Château BRANAIRE-DUCRU
- 73. Château GRUAUD LAROSE
- 74. Château LAGRANGE
- 75. Château LANGOA-BARTON
- 76. Château LÉOVILLE-BARTON
- 77. Château LÉOVILLE-LAS CASES
- 78. Château LÉOVILLE-POYFERRÉ
- 79. Château SAINT-PIERRE
- 80. Château TALBOT

Pauillac

- 81. Château BATAILLEY
- 82. Château CLERC MILON
- 83. Château CROIZET-BAGES
- 84. Château D'ARMAILHAC
- 85. Château DUHART-MILON
- 86. Château GRAND-PUY LACOSTE
- 87. Château HAUT-BAGES LIBERAL
- 88. Château HAUT-BATAILLEY
- 89. Château LYNCH-BAGES
- 90. Château LYNCH-MOUSSAS
- 91. Château PEDESCLAUX
- 92. Château PICHON-LONGUEVILLE
- 93. Château PICHON-LONGUEVILLE COMTESSE DE LALANDE
- 94. Château PONTET-CANET

Saint-Estèphe

- 95. Château CALON-SEGUR
- 96. Château COS D'ESTOURNEL
- 97. Château COS LABORY
- 98. Château LAFON-ROCHET
- 99. Château MONTROSE

Sauternes & Barsac

- 100. Château CLIMENS
- 101. Château CLOS HAUT PEYRAGUEY
- 102. Château GUIRAUD
- 103. Château LAFAURIE-PEYRAGUEY
- 104. Château LA TOUR BLANCHE
- 105. Château DE MYRAT
- 106. Château NAIRAC
- 107. Château RIEUSSEC
- 108. Château SUDUIRAUT

The 2008 Vintage

Climatically, 2008 was a hugely variable year. After a wet and rainy spring and a devastating frost on April 7th that ruined many Sauternes properties' chances, summer only really arrived at the end of June. Overall June and July were drier than average but temperatures remained below normal. Importantly, the weather during the flowering period at the beginning of June was cool and damp and a poor fruit set resulted in low yields throughout the region.

August, as anyone who holidayed in France will remember, was dismal and, although total rainfall was not significantly above average, it was persistent rain that gave little chance to the grapes to develop thick skins and required growers to spray regularly if they were to avoid problems with oidium and mildew.

By the beginning of September, fears were growing that 2008 would be the worst vintage for many years. Fortunately, from 15th September magnificent weather set in with clear skies and decent temperatures that accelerated the much-needed ripening process. Sugar levels rose quickly and a northerly wind dried out the grapes, concentrating all the elements in the juice (both sugar and acidity) and reducing the ratio of juice to skin. This compensated for the poor summer weather and well-maintained vineyards were able to take advantage of the fine weather by delaying harvesting until well into October. Indeed a few Saint Emilion properties were still gathering grapes in November.

In the Médoc, most châteaux consider that their later-ripening cabernet sauvignon benefitted more than the merlot from the autumn weather and indeed was so ripe and generous in texture that it did not need much merlot to fill it out. Thus, Châteaux Latour and Margaux are 94% and 87% cabernet sauvignon respectively.

On the right bank, those châteaux with a high proportion of cabernet franc in the vineyard used most of it in the *grand vin* adding freshness and extra character to their wines.

Overall, 2008 was saved by the Indian summer and the wines are richer and more concentrated than 2007 and have more charm if less structure and length than 2006. They are good wines but do not have the richness and depth of the two great vintages that followed.

The prices en primeur were reasonable (significantly below 2007 prices) and after initial hesitation by many buyers, a generous assessment of the vintage by Robert Parker and buoyant Asian demand for claret in general, resulted in a successful campaign for the well-known crus classés. Indeed many wines quickly showed impressive price increases and, despite weakening over the past eighteen months, have so far proved to be good investments.

Charles Taylor MW

Charles Taylor Wines, London

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Attendees

This year's tasting attracted an international audience of 130 attendees, including almost 50 Masters of Wine, students of the Institute, other senior figures from the wine trade and private collectors.

The auction houses of Christies and Sothebys were represented along with wine writers, including Oz Clarke, and Michael Schuster.

In addition to a strong presence from the UK wine community, members of the trade travelled to the tasting from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, and the USA.

The Masters of Wine present were:

Sarah Abbott MW

Nick Adams MW

David Allen MW

Richard Bampfield MW

Clive Barlow MW

Mark Bingley MW

Sebastian Bredal MW

David Burns MW

John Casson MW

Charles Curtis MW

Sarah Jane Evans MW

Anthony Foster MW

Adrian Garforth MW

Marina Gayan MW

Caroline Gilby MW

Nancy Gilchrist MW

Lisa Granik MW

Richard Harvey MW

Andy Howard MW

Justin Howard-Sneyd MW

Susan Hulme MW

James John MW

Simon Larkin MW

Konstantinos Lazarakis MW

Paul Liversedge MW

Jo Locke MW

Christophe Macra MW

Jane Masters MW

Caro Maurer MW

Peter Mitchell MW

Martin Moran MW

Sheri Morano MW

Antony Moss MW

Sebastian Payne MW

David Peppercorn MW

Peter Richards MW

Liz Robertson MW

Arne Ronold MW

Greg Sherwood MW

Derek Smedley MW

Serena Sutcliffe MW

Beverley Tabbron MW

Charles Taylor MW

Anne Tupker MW

Jean-Michel Valette MW

Cathy Van Zyl MW

Junior Vianna MW

Survey Results

The tasters were asked to complete a feedback questionnaire after the tasting, giving their thoughts on the vintage. The majority described 2008 as a classic Bordeaux vintage.

The appellations which tasters felt were most successful in 2008 were Pauillac, Saint-Julien and Pessac-Léognan. However, it was universally acknowledged that there were successful wines to be found in each appellation. The quotes below provide a flavour of the comments received.

“It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the wines, especially the fine wines, will need a good 7 years to begin to come into their own, but their relative subtlety, elegance and refinement should shine then.”

Lisa Granik MW

“A drinker’s vintage”

Nick Adams MW

“Good, elegant, fairly easy drinking vintage. Balanced and fine. Good mid-term ageing potential. ‘Classic’ but in a positive way; and still good value vs. 2009, 2010 and 2005.”

Paul Liversedge MW

Tasters were asked to highlight wines which they felt had been particularly successful in the vintage. The results, listed in order of number of votes received, were:

1. Ch. Palmer
2. eq Ch. Margaux / eq Ch. Yquem
3. eq Domaine de Chevalier / eq Ch. Mouton-Rothschild / eq Ch. Leoville- Poyferre/ eq. Ch. Pichon-Longueville
4. eq Ch. La Mission HautBrion/ eq. Ch. Haut-Brion
5. eq Ch. Léoville-Las-Cases / eq. Ch. Pontet-Canet
6. Clos Fourtet
7. eq Ch. Lafite-Rothschild / eq. Ch. Canon la Gaffeliere/ eq. Ch. Figeac / eq. Ch. Leoville Barton/ eq. Ch. Grand-Puy-Lacoste / eq. CH. Montrose
8. eq. Ch. Gruaud Larose / eq. Ch. Climens / eq. Ch. Suduiraut
9. eq. Ch. Smith Haut Lafite / eq. Ch. Rauzan-Segla/ eq. Ch. Cheval Blanc/ eq. Ch. Langoa Barton/ eq. Ch. Duhart Milon/ Ch. Pichon-Longueville Comtesse De Lalande / eq. Ch. Calon-Segur/ Ch. Cos d’Estournel/ Ch. Rieussec
10. eq Ch. Belgrave/ Ch. Haut-Bailly/ eq. Ch. Pape-Clement / eq. Ch. Brane-Cantenac/ eq. Ch. Clinet/ eq. Ch. Petit Village

The most popular wines by appellation, excluding the First growths, were as follows:

Haut-Médoc

1. Ch. Belgrave
2. Ch. Cantemerle
3. Ch. La Tour Carnet

Pessac-Léognan/Graves

1. Dom. De Chevalier
2. Ch. La Mission Haut-Brion
3. Ch. Smith Haut-Lafitte

Margaux

1. Ch. Palmer
2. Ch. Rauzan-Ségla
3. Ch. Brane-Cantenac

Pauillac

1. Ch. Pichon-Longueville
2. Ch. Pontet-Canet
3. Ch. Grand-Puy-Lacoste

Saint-Estèphe

1. Ch. Montrose
2. eq. Ch. Calon-Segur
2. eq. Ch. Cos d'Estournel
3. Ch. Lafon-Rochet

Saint-Julien

1. Ch. Léoville-Poyferré
2. Ch. Léoville-Las-Cases
3. Ch. Léoville-Barton

Saint-Emilion

1. Clos Fourtet
2. eq. Ch. Canon la Gaffelière
2. eq. Ch. Figeac
3. eq. Ch. Canon
3. eq. Ch. La Dominique
3. eq. Ch. Trottevieille

Pomerol

1. Ch. Petit Village
1. eq. Ch. Clinet
2. eq. Ch. Gazin
2. eq. Ch. La Conseillante
3. eq. Ch. Beaugard
3. eq. Ch. La Croix de Gay

Sauternes & Barsac

1. eq. Ch. Climens
1. eq. Ch. Suduiraut
2. Ch. Rieussec
3. Ch. Lafaurie Peyraguey

This year a group of Masters of Wine kindly supplied their tasting notes in order to show a broader range of opinions.

Haut-Medoc - James John MW

1. Château Belgrave

The most vigorous in colour of the four Haut Medocs in the tasting, still with pigments of purple.

Good, strong Cabernet Sauvignon nose showing ripe, full fruit, surrounded by pleasant harmonies of aromas.

Tannins still dominant and aggressive but there are promises of soft, seductive textures to come.

Start opening: 2015?

2. Château Camensac

More developed in colour than Belgrave, with reds and some orange showing through.

A savoury and ripe style which is noticeably enriched by the mature reach of the alcohol.

Although the tannins are still awkward, they are softening and there are definite suggestions of a charmer waiting to come out.

Start opening 2014?

3. Château Cantermerle

Still a full red robe of colour.

Early, developing nose giving warm fruit and ripe components of noticeable character.

At the same stage as Camensac with similar promises of an easy charm to follow at the right time.

Start opening 2014?

4. Château La Tour Carnet

At that point in maturity when there is a whole gamut of colours from purple, through red to orange.

Narrow, focused nose developing steadily.

Very Cabernet Sauvignon.

Epitome of 'claret' in the traditional style.

Rugged, well-made and tannin-conscious.

Start opening 2015?

Pessac-Léognan/Graves - John Casson MW

5. Château Bouscaut

Medium depth; still some purple but moving towards mid red hue

Elegant fruit, some spiciness, oak in balance

Quite light texture but totally consistent across the palate, quite low acidity with soft tannins

Attractive finish in a light style; already quite forward and should be drinking by 2014

6. Domaine de Chevalier

Medium depth; mid purple.

Restrained fruit on nose with attractive oak overtones

Medium depth of fruit, elegant rather than powerful, soft ripe tannins

Still quite closed on finish and will need time to develop; drinking from 2018.

7. Château de Fieuzal

Medium depth; mid purple.

Ripe fruit with Cabernet predominant; oak still quite evident

Leaner than expected from the nose yet totally consistent across the palate; soft tannins.

Beginning to show some class on the finish;

relatively early developing; drinking from

2015.

8. Château Haut-Bailly

Medium depth; still some purple but moving towards mid red hue

Still very closed on nose; just a hint of oak

Elegant initial fruit on palate and then rather light on mid palate. Light tannin with no

bitterness; seems to have higher acidity than many other wines.

Fruit character remains very closed; finish is carried by the acidity. While in a light overall

style this wine may need quite a few years of maturation in bottle to show its true qualities.

Drinking from 2016.

9. Château La Mission Haut-Brion

Medium depth; still some purple but moving towards mid red hue.

Intense fruit on nose with elegant use of oak.

Medium weight of fruit, intense flavour, with excellent depth and balance for this vintage. A

lighter style compared to this Château in earlier vintages. Drinking from 2018.

10. Château Malartic-Lagraviere

Medium depth; mid purple.

Elegant rather than powerful, predominantly Merlot, with delicate use of oak.

Medium to light depth of fruit yet totally

consistent across the palate; soft ripe tannins.

Attractive fruit on finish and well balanced.

Early developing and drinking from 2014.

11. Château Olivier

Medium depth; still some purple but moving towards mid red hue

Restrained nose, hint of spice, elegant oak

Lean on the palate with light tannin and fairly

low acidity. Attractive in a light forward style;

early developing and drinking from 2014.

12. Château Pape Clement

Medium depth; mid purple.

The most backward of all the Pessac Léognan wines on the nose yet with some intensity of fruit and firm oak overtones.

Concentrated fruit, plenty of extraction giving some bitter tannins, but quite approachable given the low apparent acidity.

Still very restrained on the finish and will need many years to show at its best. Drinking from 2020.

13. Château Smith Haut Lafitte

Medium depth; still some purple but moving towards mid red hue

Ripe fruit on nose with elegant oak

Fruit is quite light but absolutely consistent across the palate; tannins are soft.

Attractive balance; drinking from 2015

Margaux – Andy Howard MW

14. Château Brane-Cantenac

Attractive vibrant, youthful colour, quite intense dusky red fruits on nose with a well-integrated hint of oak. Medium-bodied palate with spicy red/black fruits evident, crisp acidity, smooth and ripe tannins suggest a wine that will drink well when relatively young (2-5 years) but has the structure and balance to age well for 10 years.

15. Château Cantenac-Brown

Quite deep purple hue, nose quite restrained at the moment but hints at black fruits waiting to emerge, a slightly cool, forest floor character also evident. On the palate, the wine is well-structured with tannins quite prominent. Fruit characters are less dominant but the wine has the concentration and balance to evolve well as it ages. Well-integrated new oak is well-balanced with the other components.

16. Château Dauzac

Intense deep-purple colour very perfumed nose with hints of violet complementing ripe red/blackcurrant spiced fruit characters. Full-bodied with ripe, smooth and long-lasting mouth-coating tannins which are beautifully integrated with the spicy and concentrated palate. Capable of ageing well for at least a decade, this wine can be enjoyed relatively early.

17. Château Desmirail

Medium-deep hue, nose suggests warm, ripe red-berry fruits with a hint of spice, oak quite evident and will need a bit of time to fully integrate. Soft and ripe palate has medium-weight, good grip and fresh, cleansing acidity. Tannins need a bit of time to soften and the

wine will benefit from ageing for 3-6 years before reaching its prime. However, it has the extraction and balance to age well for the long-term.

18. Château Durfort-Vivens

An intense deep-purple colour is combined with a full-bodied palate with powerful tannins and notable new oak characters. The nose is characterised by dark fruits, spice and an intriguing long-lasting perfume which suggest the wine has a long life ahead of it.

Concentrated and pure, this is a fine example of a more oak driven style of Margaux.

19. Château Ferriere

Deep-colour, some slightly evolved notes on the nose with a cool, spicy character also evident. Full-bodied, ripe fruit characters are apparent on the palate with excellent ripeness and a fruit forward style perhaps best suited to relatively early drinking. Could be enjoyed in 2-4 years but also has enough weight and concentration to keep well. A modern style of Margaux which should prove popular with buyers.

20. Château Giscours

Cool, classic aromas of spice, elegant red/black fruits with well-integrated and fine oak are evident on the nose. The palate is beautifully poised with excellent extraction, spice and lovely ripe tannins. Elegance and harmony are very evident in this fine example of 2008 Bordeaux. A long lingering finish with palate cleansing acidity highlight the success achieved with this wine. Fine and high-quality.

21. Château D'Issan

Deep and concentrated in colour with aromas dominated at the moment by prominent use of new oak. A crowd-pleasing style on the nose is backed up with a beautifully balanced palate with luscious fruit character, fine, ripe tannins and very good levels of extract. A more modern style of Margaux but with the capability of evolution for many years to come. Full-bodied but with a great balance of fruit ripeness, use of oak, acid and glossy tannins.

22. Château Kirwan

Deep-purple in colour with great intensity on the nose showing concentrated dark fruits and prominent new oak character. The palate shows quite an extracted style with tannins which are somewhat harsh at the moment and need time to mellow. However, the overall concentration of the wine suggests that with time, the tannins, acid and oak will develop well to provide a fine example of Margaux for the longer-term.

23. Château Lascombes

Hints of coffee character are evident on the nose with the volume of newer oak rather dominating the more classic perfume of red/black fruits at the moment. The palate is dominated by soft ripe fruits and lush, ripe tannins with very good concentration. A full-bodied wine which will drink well relatively early but appears to have the structure for long ageing. A very good example of a more fruit forward style of wine, possibly less typical of Margaux but a fine wine nevertheless.

24. Château Marquis de Terme

Medium-bodied palate, the wine shows spicy red currant characters with notable, grippy tannins. Good levels of extraction suggest a wine that needs some time to evolve and it will benefit from keeping for 3-5 years before starting to reach its prime. A more traditional style of Margaux, with cool characters on both palate and nose, well-balanced use of oak and fresh acidity.

25. Château Palmer

Deep-purple hue, lovely enveloping aromas suggesting lush velvet are matched on the palate with great concentration of black fruits, spice, fine grained tannins and a voluptuous body. Despite the weight and extract on the palate and the powerful aromatics on the nose, this is a beautifully balanced and very fine example of Margaux. Oak is seamlessly integrated and tannins fine and ripe. For the 2008 vintage, it is a great success and will drink very well when young and also keep for 15+ years.

26. Château Prieuré-Lichine

Vibrant and attractive red/black fruit flavours leap out of the glass in this medium-bodied example. Ripe, soft fruits are well-integrated with good use of oak but perhaps without some of the extra intensity of some other wines. A fine result for the 2008 vintage with good ripeness and nice concentration leading to a relatively early drinking style of Margaux.

27. Château Rauzan-Gassies

A deep purple hue combines with an intense blackcurrant spice on the palate, new oak is evident and will need some time to fully integrate. Good concentration of ripe fruits and a medium/full-bodied palate suggest a long-life ahead of this wine. Tannins and acidity still not fully-integrated, but all the elements are there for further development.

28. Château Rauzan-Segla

Refined aromas on the nose are combined with smooth, concentrated and elegant characters on the palate. Full-bodied with luscious soft black fruit characters on the palate, fine grained tannins and refined oak flavours promise well for the future. A very fine example of Margaux which appears to be particularly successful for the 2008 vintage. Drinking well now but with the weight and extract to develop very well for many years to come.

29. Château Du Tertre

Elegant, structured and well-balanced, a classic example of classed growth wine from the Haut-Medoc. Fine grained tannins, well-integrated oak and ripe red/black currant fruit flavours provide a fresh, medium-bodied example which will drink well when young and also age well. Long and spicy aftertaste.

First Growths - James John MW

30. Château Haut-Brion

Surprisingly developed and light in colour. Still at varying tones of red stage.

Complex, ripe nose although rather subdued at this point. Warm and ripe elements emerging. Sinewy, ripe flavours which, like the nose, are still quite reserved. There is, however, a sense of a powerful surge to come.

Start opening: 2015 then look at again?

31. Château Lafite-Rothschild

Mainly full red tones with one or two pigments turning orange.

Outstanding aromas of Cabernet Sauvignon. Meaty and rich and surprisingly approachable after only four years.

The flavours unsurprisingly show a lot of tannins and oak which are keeping the finish dry. Will always be a focused, serious style with very little unctuous, superfluous fruit. Start opening: 2016?

32. Châteaux Margaux

Mainly full, red tones beginning to change to something paler.

Very developed nose with the fruit already switching from berry fruits to savoury. Some delightful elements of subtle aromas. Already lovely.

The fruit and tannins are already coming together. A very pretty wine.

Start opening: 2016?

33. Château Mouton Rothschild

Full red tones and some orange peeping through.

A very seductive nose with ripe, well-seasoned aromas. Very complex.

The most gravitas of all the First Growths shown, indicating the most richness, the most interest and the most potential.
Start opening: 2017?

34. Château Cheval Blanc

Tones of red with autumnal orange emerging. Nose developing well, softening at the edges to show a beguiling rich ripeness. A luscious, chewy mouthful, bedding-down and waiting for the tannins to fall. A handsome wine emerging slowly.
Start opening: 2017?

35. Château d'Yquem

Still pale straw with attractive traces of green. (Not a colour-ripe year). Reserved botrytis nose yet to break cover but an orchestra of intricate components all emerging most attractively. Luscious rich texture, well ahead of the nose. So much depth and so many layers of sweet, elegant ripeness. Traces of orange zest and cloves. A lovely experience.
Start opening: 2018?

St Emilion – David Allen MW

36. Château Balestard La Tonelle

Darkly pigmented, but not opaque ruby red colour. Slightly chalky notes combine with restrained plummy aromas. The wine has a pleasant freshness, balanced alcohol and medium weight. The tannins display both suppleness and some grip. There are delicate leafy notes to the plummy red fruit character. Acidity is in balance and length is acceptable. This is a pleasantly balanced wine.

37. Château Beauséjour-Bécot

An almost opaque ruby red in colour. Aromas are of dark, rich, ripe fruits overlaid with notes of cocoa butter and vanilla. On the palate notes of rich plums meld with ripe black fruit touches. The deep, opulent fruit closes up quite quickly, leaving a finish dominated by tight fine, elegant tannins. The alcohol is balanced and the acid is balanced to low. This seems likely to develop beautifully as its tannins soften.

38. Château Berliquet

This is a virtually opaque, dark ruby coloured wine. The aromas are ripe and jammy, running across a spectrum of dark red through to black fruits. Currently the palate is quite angular, with firm tannins dominating and touches of leafiness within the restrained elegant red fruit flavours.

The wine is concentrated with plentiful tannins. Good balancing freshness provides a fair length. The tannins, however, currently overwhelm the fruit on the finish.

39. Château Cadet Picola

The wine is a deep, dark ruby red, without being opaque. The aromas are restrained and combine meatiness with notes of ripe black cherries. The wine is currently slightly disjointed. The medium bodied palate has a savoury nature with restrained black fruit, notes of leaf and toasty oak. A combination of firm tannins and fresh acidity leave the finish a little angular.

40. Château Canon

Deep in colour with dark ruby red pigmentation, it is not quite opaque, but has a distinctly purple hue to the rim. The aromas are opulent and rich with an appealing modern, clean style that combines black fruits with cocoa butter notes. The palate is medium to full-bodied with nice depth and fruit concentration. The tannins are supple and velvety. The combination of soft acidity, warm alcohol and dark fruits combine to produce a long, succulent finish.

41. Château Canon La Gaffeliere

This is a virtually opaque ruby to black/red colour. An attractive, opulent, rich nose displays very ripe black cherry and boysenberry fruits. The palate has a plush velvety texture, warm alcohol and a compote of rich, ripe dark fruit flavours. The plentiful fine tannins have a wonderful suppleness. Fresh acidity lifts the fruit at the finish which in turn gives good length.

42. Château Cap de Mourlin

The wine has a medium depth of darkly pigmented ruby red colour. Jammy red fruit aromas are restrained and fade quickly. The wine is medium to light bodied and quite angular, its acidity is fresh and both enhances leafy notes in the fruit and emphasises the grainy nature of the tannins. The firm structure stands out from the jammy red fruits on the palate. Alcohol is balanced and the length of flavour fairly good.

43. Château Corbin

An almost opaque, dark ruby red colour. The restrained nose gives a little redcurrant fruit and a touch of leafiness. The wine is in a light elegant style. It is a lean, well structured wine with delicate red fruits supported by plentiful fine tannins that

currently rather close up the fruit, revealing leafy notes. The acidity gives freshness and the alcohol appears balanced. This is a balanced, elegant wine that is currently quite closed.

44. Château Dassault

The wine has a medium intensity of darkly pigmented ruby red colour.

The aromas are dominated by toasty oak, but there are ripe, liquorice-like notes behind the oak.

The palate has rich fruit and an elegant structure, with ripe black fruits and notes of cocoa butter. The wine's alcohol is slightly warming and its acidity is balanced. The mid-weight fruit gives way to toasty oak that currently dominates the finish - despite this the length is acceptable.

45. Château Figeac

A deep, dark ruby red that is on the verge of being opaque.

The fruit on the nose is restrained and is dominated by notes of cocoa butter and fine new oak.

The palate has a superb intensity of flavour with ripe liquorice notes, violet perfume and a fine, firm tannic structure that integrates seamlessly with the fruit. The alcohol is balanced to warm and the acidity fresh. The finish is exceptionally long and very elegant

46. Clos Fombrauge

The deep, dark ruby red colour is not quite opaque.

The nose is a harmonious marriage of clean, new, cedary oak aromas and red fruits.

A mouth-watering freshness is combined with concentrated red fruits to produce an elegant and appealing wine. Lovely lifted notes of concentrated strawberry and ripe raspberry fruit marry well with spicy, cedary oak and cocoa butter flavours. The tannins are fine and the texture is silky smooth. The long finish displays plenty of clean, elegant fruit.

47. Clos Fourtet

Deep, almost opaque, dark, ruby red colour. Dark black cherry and black olive notes combine with toasty oak on a relatively restrained nose.

The palate is well structured with concentrated black fruit and plentiful, fine tannins that are both supple and gripping at the same time.

The plentiful toasty oak frames the powerful fruit, the two enduring well to the finish. The wine's acid is balanced and its alcohol adds a welcome touch of richness to the long, concentrated finish.

48. Château Grand Corbin

Medium depth of ruby to garnet red colour.

Aromas are of ripe jammy red and black fruits. Palate is initially soft textured with jammy red fruits, enlivened by fresh acidity. The finish however is currently a little disjointed as the fruit closes up leaving the tannins become more angular. Ripe dark fruit hints that persist on the finish suggest its fruit concentration will allow the wine to come into harmony.

49. Château Grand Mayne

The colour is a medium intensity of ruby red. Aromas are well defined red fruits such as redcurrant and plum.

St Emilion – Saran Abbott MW

50. Château Haut Corbin

Quite firmly extracted, with oak quite prominent. A sturdier style. More emphasis than refinement.

51. Château La Couspaude

Attractive mocha scented fruit. Quite open and supple. Already drinking. Quite graceful. Nicely bright fruit on finish.

52. Château La Dominique

Quite a statement, with assertive oak and scented fruit. Fresh acidity balanced by ripe, lush fruit. Firm but very polished tannins. Confidently bold.

53. Château Larcis Ducasse

Hugely plummy and sweet on the nose. Heady and lush. A big wine, but balanced. Impressive, in this bolder, sweeter style.

54. Château Larmande

Open and fresh on the nose. Understated. Fresh acidity. Attractive fruit and gently balanced tannin.

55. Château La Tour Figeac

Lovely depth and definition on the nose. Refined grip to the tannins. Fresh but not sharp - delicious, long, mineral, vibrant finish.

56. Clos L'Oratoire

Very attractive fruit. Opens quite plush. No spiky acidity here. Blandishing. Charming. Seductive.

57. Château Pavie

Lovely lifted aromatics on the nose. Massive dollop of extract on the palate. Super concentrated. Uncompromisingly dense. Very hard-going at this stage. Will be interesting to see how it develops with time.

58. Château Pavie Macquin

Very bright, lifted intense aromatics. Dense, but more supple than the Pavie. Good inherent balance, in its big way.

59. Château Petit Faurie de Soutard

Quite green, but attractive enough on the nose. Bit sinewy on the palate- dry, woody finish

60. Château Soutard

Rather hard going today, with slightly laboured tannin, but some characterful fruit behind. Decent, sturdy and will relax with time.

61. Château Trottevieille

Sweet and smoky. Very confidently extracted. That sweet oak. Plush, confident.

Pomerol - Cathy Van Zyl MW**62. Château Beaugard**

Deep centre with slight bricking rim; bouquet of ink and iron overlain with hints of cloves and cardamom; ripe and plummy fruit core wrapped with supple tannins, good length and gentle yet firm grip. Attractive and fruitful, drinking well now yet with sufficient structure to improve over the next decade.

63. Château Clinet

Youthful hue with light rim and deep centre; whiffs of lemon and iron tops raspberry and plum fruit; silky with just a nudge of ripe tannin on the conclusion. While not as challenging or cerebral as classic vintages, there's a sense of completeness, of soulfulness; this wine sips beautifully now but will reward five+ years cellaring.

64. Château Gazin

The first bottle tasted had a decent hue but showed less intensity than several of its compatriots; perfumed almost ethereal bouquet belied plum-chocolate palate, grippy tannins. These are the key to this taut 2008 adding a slight refreshing bitter edge and extending the length. A second bottle was called for and this exhibited greater fruit intensity. As with the first, this showed a very firm tannic structure and was the least yielding of the line-up. Obviously a powerful expression of the vintage.

65. Château La Conseillante

The most youthful in appearance of all in this flight; forthcoming damson and spun sugar whiffs overlain with faint leafy top wafts; rich – almost sweet – fruit on the palate cosseted by plush tannins; extended black fruit pastille finish. A wine with plenty of obvious appeal,

underlying seriousness. Needs five+ years cellaring to gain complexity, add layers of aromas and flavours.

66. Château La Croix de Gay

Decent claret hue; floral and leaf bouquet already developing tertiary aromas of undergrowth and forest floor; fresh entry with slight lemon acidity; satisfying vinosity and length with just a nudge of tannin on the finish. Approachable and ready now, with the structure to improve up to five years.

67. Château La Fleur de Gay

Deep centre and light rim; attractive floral nose lifted by lemon and leaf notes, some inky characters adding gravitas; very firm but ripe tannins and dusty tobacco finish. Quintessential claret, in a decent but not outstanding year, offering just the right fruit intensity/complexity and providing the tannin structure for lengthy cellaring.

68. Château Nenin

Fair depth and intensity of hue; forward sugar plum bouquet with hints of malt or cola, and jam; fruit character extends to palate where it bumps up against somewhat stinky tannins. Some promising raw material, but needs time to knit, gain complexity.

69. Château Petit Village

Lighter hue than most in line-up; delicate but appealing raspberry nose daubed with spice (and some very faint hints of cola); ripe palate with supple tannins and good length. Satisfying if uncomplex, will drink well now to five years hence.

70. Clos René

An exceptionally deeply coloured with no bricking at the rim – youthful. The nose on the first bottle was a tad 'funky' and the palate one-dimensional, lacking in fruit definition and intensity. The second bottle was far fresher with more red fruit and perfumed appeal. Both had obvious oak on the finish but the second was far more attractive with sufficient vinosity and structure to reward cellaring for a decade. Athletic.

Saint Julien – Greg Sherwood MW**71. Château Beychevelle**

Dusty sweet baking spices, red liquorice stick, red currant and complex exotic fruit notes. Palate is plush, dense and weighty with a round glycerol textural breadth. Sweet plump tannins, mouth filling fruit density, wrapped up by fresh delineating acids. Wonderful complex mint leaf, black plum and cassis

melange on the finish. Drink from 2015 to 2030+.

72. Château Branaire-Ducru

A nose of dusty black cherry, warm sun baked grey slate, and fresh mineral notes. Palate shows layers of black cassis, wet tar and damson plum. Some tension in the wine with a taught, tight palate, sleek polished fine grained tannins, fresh acids and a spicy mineral cassis finish. A classical, direct style of wine. Needs 7 to 8 years cellaring and will then drink well until 2030+.

73. Château Gruaud Larose

A tight, dusty, chalky musky nose of black berry fruit and hints of baking spices. Complex sweet red cherry, dusty aniseed root, red currant and red liquorice notes. Creamy suave tannins balanced by plump fleshy glycerol weight and a fine balanced espresso, brulee tinged black berry finish. A classy effort. Drink from 2014 to 2030.

74. Château Lagrange

Nose of sweet confectionary, musk, black fruit pastille, and red liquorice. A rich and expressive wine with plenty of dusty, chalky mineral complexity. Palate exhibits rich, fleshy glycerol weight, zesty black cherry and cassis fruit, fine grained stony tannins with a talcum finish. An impressive overall effort that is suave and already showing a fine balance between elegance and power. Drink from 2014 to 2030+.

75. Château Langoa Barton

A nose of sweet earthy forest berry fruits, leafy cassis, damson plums, and subtle red apple flesh lift. Palate is unctuous and dense with a weighty texture and complex notes of salty cassis, oyster shell, sea breeze, and kelp under pinned by a stony minerality, piercingly fresh acids and fine grained tannins. An impressive wine with balance and power. Drink from 2015 to 2030+.

76. Château Léoville Barton

Dark dense black cherry and cassis notes dominate on a fragrant nose of black pastille fruits. Very intense and expressive with complex sea breeze, kelp, black tar and black liquorice nuances. Plenty of minerality melding with a fragrant perfume veil. Palate is wonderfully balanced with fine grained chalky powdery tannins, a fresh vibrant acidity, salty cassis fruit layers and a long elegant finish. Very impressive in its youth. Drink from 2015 to 2035+.

77. Château Léoville Las Cases

A complex lifted fragrance floods out the glass together with black pastille, musky red liquorice notes and a definite wet river pebble minerality. Palate displays super suave, balanced, fine grained majestic chalky mineral tannins together with balancing fresh acids in a seamless parcel. A stylish wine with plenty of elegance and class. A really fine effort typifying the elegance and power of Saint Julien. Drink from 2016 to 2035+.

78. Château Léoville Poyferré

Nose bursts forth with sweet Christmas cake, cassis, brulée notes and mocha, espresso richness with an underlying stony minerality. Palate is dense and compact showing fresh cassis zest, black cherry, and salty seashore kelp notes. Wonderfully elegant but supremely powerful with seamless tannins and a fine grained texture. Very classy balance. An impressive wine with pedigree. Drink from 2016 to 2035 onwards.

79. Château Saint Pierre

A dense, black plum fruited wine with nuances of Christmas pudding and chocolatey mocha notes. Attractive appeal, subtle pastille and cassis fruit on the palate together with zesty, glassy fresh acids and spicy oak notes, polished tannins and a vibrant mineral finish. Drink from 2014 to 2025+.

80. Château Talbot

Opulent nose of sweet bon bons and cassis pastille fruit notes, a dusty, musky fragrant lift and a dense dark brooding depth. Restrained, mineral and elegant, there are complex nuances of mint leaf, cassis leaf, and crushed gravel. The tannins are soft, sweet and seamless and the finish is fleshy and densely black fruited. A classy, polished and elegant effort for the vintage. Drink from 2014 to 2025+.

Pauillac – Charles Taylor MW

81. Château Batailley

Ripe, spicy nose with lots of fruit. Medium-bodied, carefully-extracted wine with clean, ripe fruit. Fresh and generous on the palate with attractive fruity finish.

82. Château Clerc Milon

Ripe, plummy nose with attractive cedary notes. Fine, generous texture. Ripe and round. Tannins quite firm but lovely tight wine. Good length on the finish. Just needs time.

83. Château Croizet Bages

Rich, hot, rustic nose.

Full and firm on the palate. Attractive, gutsy wine, not as polished as some but ripe, generous finish.

84. Château d'Armailhac

Fine, aromatic, vividly fruity nose. Clean and crisp.

Attractive, fresh style. Ripe and round on the palate. Rich and fleshy with ripe tannins and good acidity. Attractive, fruity aftertaste.

85. Château Duhart Milon

Rich and aromatic. Lovely, open, spicy, cedary nose.

Very fresh and lively on the palate. Carefully extracted, ripe and succulent. Not a blockbuster but finishes sweet and long.

86. Château Grand Puy Lacoste

Rich, gamey nose with healthy dose of new oak.

Full-bodied, stylish wine. Big and fleshy with fine, ripe tannins and lowish acidity. Long, sweet finish.

87. Château Haut Bages Liberal

Closed on the nose. Not very forthcoming. Medium-bodied, unexciting wine. Nothing wrong with it but little flair. Rather dumb and finishes a bit lean and dry.

88. Château Haut Batailley

Fresh, open, aromatic nose.

Ripe and elegant. Well-balanced, attractive wine. Soft and generous on the palate. Well-rounded with lowish acidity and ripe tannins. Not the most concentrated, but all very stylish and finishes well.

89. Château Lynch Bages

Sweet, ripe nose with generous fruit.

Attractive, well balanced, stylish wine. Medium to full-bodied, fine rich style. Tannins a bit on the dry side but good length on the finish.

90. Château Lynch Moussas

Hot, spicy nose with attractive, ripe fruit. Stylish, ripe, round wine. Carefully-extracted and finely balanced. Soft and generous on palate. Not as concentrated as some but attractive, sweet finish.

91. Château Pedesclaux

Medium colour.

Pretty, ripe, fragrant nose, no great depth. Medium bodied, simple wine. Lovely fruit but lacks depth and concentration. Attractive, forward style, for early drinking.

92. Château Pichon Longueville

Dark colour.

Rich intense nose, warm and spicy with lots of new oak.

Full bodied, firm wine. Plenty of tannin and extract but well covered by lots of ripe fruit. Powerful burly wine, fine Pauillac character. Long finish.

93. Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande

Fine, floral, open, aromatic nose. Slightly grassy but fresh and clean.

Medium bodied, compact wine, not that fleshy but carefully-extracted and well-balanced with attractive sweet finish.

94. Château Pontet Canet

Dark Colour.

Rich, intense but somewhat hot and slightly stewed nose. Full bodied, gutsy wine. A lot of tannin but masses of sweet, ripe fruit to balance it. Intense flavours but lacks a little charm. Finishes long but dry. Needs time. Impressive rather than charming.

Saint Estephe – Greg Sherwood MW**95. Château Calon Segur**

Wonderfully forward, open nose of kirsch, crème de cassis and fragrant violets. An attractive wine in its youth, showing mocha and espresso notes. An expressive effort with a sleek, suave elegant texture, bright fresh acids, fine grained sweet tannins and a fine, gravelly mineral finish. Medium-bodied and dense, but structured. Drink in 5 to 8 years' time and over the next 20 years.

96. Château Cos D'Estournel

Exhibits a dark black broody nose of mulberries, black plum, black cherry and an exotic sweet quince-like fragrant note. Rich, unctuous and densely textured on the palate, there is a broad creaminess to the wine and a full, glycerol mouth feel with moderate acids. Plenty of sweet but dusty mineral graphite tannins supported by layers of black plum, cassis and coffee bean complexity. Finishes dry and slightly shorter than entry and palate weight would suggest. Still and impressive wine to drink in 6 to 7 years' time and over the next 25 years.

97. Château Cos Labory

Initially, nose is very closed but slowly reveals red berry compote, red currant and strawberry fruits. Broody mineral notes with exotic baking spice and cinnamon complexity. Sleek texture, accessible, fine grained with some elegance and balance with mid palate acidity freshness,

medium weight and dry grippy chalky tannins on the finish. Drink from 2016 to 2028.

98. Château Lafon-Rochet

Dusty lifted nose of gravel, musk and talc, wet stones and wood spice. Bright fresh acid palate entry showing restrained black cassis and black plum fruits. Soft gravelly chalky tannins and a classically dry St Estephe mineral finish. Slight rustic edge to the wine's texture and slightly one-dimensional at this early age. Drink from 2014 to 2025+

99. Château Montrose

Dusty chalky liquid mineral nose mixed with spicy black plum, forest fruits and cedary cassis notes. Plenty of wood spice and dusty gravelly mineral complexity runs through the wine's youthfully taut structure. Tannins are dry but fine grained shaping a dense black fruited palate profile. Restrained and backwards now, but should develop well over next 10 to 20 years. Drink from 2016 to 2040.

Sauternes & Barsac – Derek Smedley MW

100. Château Climens

The nose is rich opulent with a mix of apricot and candied orange peel. The mid palate is lush with lots of sweet fruit quince and ripe yellow plum but there is some underlying lime that refreshes and balances the sensuous richness. There are layers of flavour lots of complexity hints of noble rot and a lovely length. Drink 2015-35

101. Château Clos Haut Peyraguey

The nose is sweet with a lot of ripe peach and apricot. The start of the palate has depth of flavour the rich mix of apricots and candied peel balanced by the freshness that is there towards the back. Although it seems very ready now it will go on developing. Drink 2013-28

102. Château Guiraud

Ripe apricot, yellow peach and caramelized orange peel enriches both nose and palate. There is a fleshy sweetness with layers of rich ripe fruit on the mid palate but just enough citrus to balance and to give a lighter feel on the back palate. The finish has the lushness of ripe fruit. Drink 2014-30

103. Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey

The mix of flavours is light fragrant quite fruity but lacking richness. The mid palate has sweetness a peachy apricot mix but it is lacking in richness concentration and depth of flavour. Despite the lighter character there is a fragrant charm to the wine. Drink 2013-28

104. Château La Tour Blanche

The fruit is sweet and ripe the nose full of candied peel and rich fruit. There is a good weight of flavour on the palate some ripe tropical fruits and candied peel and although slightly lighter and fresher towards the back the finish has fruit sweetness. Drink 2014-30

105. Château de Myrat

The nose is fat and fleshy but lacking in fruit complexity. The start of the palate is the same very sweet fleshy lush and although towards the back it is lighter with some freshness it lacks real balance, complexity and finish. Drink 2013-28

106. Château Nairac

There is a lot of fruit on the nose rich flavours ripe fruit backed by caramelized orange and lemon peel. The sweet flavours pack out the palate layers of fruit all nicely balanced by the underlying citrus mix. There are some hints of noble rot adding complexity and the finish is lush and sweet fruited. Drink 2015-30

107. Château Rieussec

There is a fleshy richness to the nose and a lovely depth of fruit on the palate. Ripe yellow peaches and candied peel are underpinned by freshness real balance and harmony. The back palate is lush with ripe fruit a touch of noble rot spice and a sensuously rich finish. Drink 2015-35

108. Château Suduiraut

The nose is full of ripe flavours yellow peaches, apricots and candied orange peel and this rich mix of fruit fills out the start of the palate. There is a voluptuous fleshiness in the middle but the sweetness is balanced by a touch of lime that comes through towards the back leaving the finish slightly lighter. Drink 2015-30

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