

## **Wine column September 2007**

### **BORDEAUX**

When it comes to still wines Bordeaux is without a doubt, the most famous of all of France's wine producing regions. Even people who claim to know nothing about wine have usually heard of this corner of south western France for its prestigious red wines and sweet wines.

Bordeaux's reputation is due, at least in part; to the long-standing relationship the British have had with the area.

UK has been importing its wine since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when Henry II married the Duchess of Aquitaine.

The other reason for Bordeaux's celebrity is the reputation of its top wines.

The names of prestigious châteaux like:

Lafite-Rothschild, Margaux, Cheval Blanc, Latour, Palmer and Mouton-Rothschild, and the prices their wines command, resonate across the wine world, raising the profile of the whole region, and its sweet wines, especially those of Sauternes, are the most popular dessert wines to be sold in the UK.

The first thing to remember about Bordeaux is that it makes wines of various styles, according to the many different appellations; therefore you can find very competitively priced wine without paying premium prices.

Red wines are produced across the entire region.

The Cabernet Sauvignon grape is dominant on the left bank of the Garonne, and gives the wine their tannic structure and plenty of blackcurrant fruit.

Merlot, on the other hand dominates on the right bank, and gives its wines a fruity wine with ripe lushness.

The other red grape like Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Carmener, are used in small proportions to add complexity to the final blend.

The appellations became increasingly focused on terroir, the place where the grapes are grown. On the left bank, Medoc and Haut-Medoc provide the widest frame of reference.

The top wine, however, come from specifically named communes, such as St-Julien, Margaux, Pauillac, and St-Estèphe.

Further south, along the bank of the Garonne, you will find the appellations of Graves and Pessac-Leognan, between the Garonne and the Dordogne lies the Entre-Deux-Mers region, mainly famed for its dry white wine.

To the North, on the right bank of the Dordogne, are appellations like St-Emilion and Pomerol, the wines of these relatively small AOC can be reaching stratospheric prices, but the "Satellite" appellations that surround them are among the most dynamic wine producing regions in France offering better value, look far Lalande-de-Pomerol, Côte de Costillon, Côte de Bourg, Fronsac and Côte de Blaye.

Bordeaux's sweet wine can be made from Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon or Muscadelle. Those harvested end of September are labeled as moelleux when they are extremely ripe and full of sugar. Those sold as liquoreux are made of grapes that have been infected with a fungus known as botrytis cinerea, the effect of Botrytis infection is to concentrate the sugars in the already ripe grapes, creating a honeyed, rich nectar that has to be tasted to be believed.

The very best sweet wine are from the Sauternes region, the good value wine can be found in many appellations such as:

Barsac, Loupiac, Ste-Croix-Du-Mont.

The most prestigious sweet wine is château Yquem.

Bordeaux also produces small amounts of often deeply coloured Rosé wines, in fact, these wines are often known as Clairet, a term which gave its name to the region's red wine, which were once more lightly coloured than they are now. This is why Bordeaux's wine are often called Claret.

Today wines from Bordeaux are far more accessible and fruity than they were in the past, and most of them don't need to gather dust in a cellar for 20 years before you uncork them.

Wine recommendations:

Châteaux Perron, Lalande-De-Pomerol 2001      £9.95

Château Fleur de Sol, Grand Cru St Emilion 2002      £13.95

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Château de Ricaud, Loupiac 2001 (dessert wine)      £11.60

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