



INDEX

APR 2010



BORDEAUX

Contact: sales@bordeauxindex.com or call 020 7269 0703

# HOLDIN' ON, TEN YEARS GONE

There were no daffodils yet but cricketers had been spotted at The Oval during the week that Bordeaux Index hosted its second annual "ten years on" claret tasting, a sequel to last year's 1999 horizontal. It is becoming an annual tradition, like the first match of the English cricket season being held in Abu Dhabi.

A dirty dozen of wine writers were in attendance; with me it became an unlucky 13. Spring is a time for new beginnings and fresh starts – and the onset of the annual en primeur campaign – so it was an appropriate time to reassess 48 wines from a Bordeaux year that was touted as "vintage of the century."

## Where we likes to go a lot

There is a Flanders and Swann song about a sewage worker enjoying his work: "Hatton Garden is the spot, down below / Where we likes to go a lot, down below".

Bordeaux Index holds its tastings not down below but in a bespoke fourth floor room, home to Michael Schuster's wine School, with plenty of space for wines, tasters, spittoons and laptops.

When I first visited the offices a couple of years ago the smell of new wood made it feel like walking into a chateau's barrel cellar. Happily there are no such distractions now and the only smells of new wood came from the expensively assembled collection of wines – over £16,000 apparently – presented to us.

The budget did not stretch to a butler to serve drinks so it was self-service and we could taste in our own time. This meant that some people had two glasses of Pétrus to ensure a proper assessment. Probably a lot of the wines were not spat, either.

## TOP FIVES

**We were asked to give our top five wines by quality and top five by value, a choice at least as difficult as Portia's suitors having to choose from caskets of gold, silver, and lead in *The Merchant of Venice*.**

With Jancis Robinson and Michael I agreed that Pétrus was the Millennium Falcon. Michael thought it perhaps did not have "the sheer concentration and abundance of the 1989 and 1990, for example, but immensely impressive nonetheless." David Peppercorn called it "very good" but thought the 1998 was superior.

David considered Lafite to be the best of the day, as did Steven Spurrier, who scored it joint top with Haut-Brion. But the consensus put Latour as the First Growth among equals, followed by Haut-Brion, Lafite, Cheval Blanc and Pétrus.

Read on to page 2 for the rest of Stuart George's report on 2000.

## WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT:

### Hot

The word or words on everyone's lips at the moment are En Primeur. Having recently returned from Bordeaux, we're no different. So, 'hot' this month is very much '09 Bordeaux themed. In light of that, I could real off a list of twenty to thirty wines, with some usual suspects and big names. However 'hot' for me from the recent '09 tastings are the second wines of the big names: Carruades, Les Fort de Latour, Pavillon Rouge, Dame de Montrose and the new kid on the block; Le Petit Lion (2nd wine of Leoville Las Cases) which wowed all of us at BI. We've had endless requests and enquiries regarding the 1st Growths since the 2009 hype machine

began, however as great as these wines are, for us the real value will lie outside of the famous five. So keep your eye out for offers on the second wines and some other great contenders from so-called 'lesser' names.

### Not

What's not hot this month? Having to wait for the '09s to be released. It's no secret that the 2009 campaign is going to be big.

Visit the newly launched En Primeur website: [www.bordeauxindex.com/primeur\\_home.php](http://www.bordeauxindex.com/primeur_home.php) where we are offering our customers the opportunity to set their own prices for 2009

Bordeaux. In a vintage of huge demand and legendary quality, we are offering a level of control to the customer that is not available anywhere else.

Create a wishlist of wines you might want.

Pre-order with a price limit you set

Register your interest and ensure you receive all offers

Read all the reviews and commentary that matters

Buy some of the best wines made in a generation.

Guy Ruston, private sales

Read on to page 3 for BI's top 10 wines



Stuart George at Bordeaux Index's recent 2000 tasting.

### Personal values

There was plenty of agreement on what wines were the best, then, but the nominations for best value were far more subjective.

Michael's best value five was Belair, Lagrange, Haut-Bailly, Brane-Cantenac and Pichon-Baron. Jancis nominated Lagrange, Langoa-Barton, Grand-Puy Lacoste, Domaine de Chevalier and Haut-Bailly.

The overall result for best value wines was, in order, Langoa-Barton; Smith Haut-Lafitte; Cos d'Estournel; Domaine de Chevalier; and Léoville-Barton.

### Champagne socialists

Neal Martin was recovering from his wife's 40th birthday party held the previous evening. This job requires stamina.

He began his 2000 Bordeaux write-up at erobertparker.com with a 500+ word riff on Anna Ford, Christmas, Lego sets, B&Q flashing illuminations, Christianity and Buddhism.

His point was, in short, "Patience is a virtue. Bordeaux is not a wine for the impatient." He believes, like many of his fellow tasters, that the top wines of the 2000 vintage will take a long time to reach full maturity. With all that plush richness, some were as seductive as Lolita. But even the most moreish 2000s need a bit longer, three to five years perhaps, to reach maturity. And once they do become responsible adults they will stay that way for a long time.

Simon Hoggart, parliamentary sketch-writer for The Guardian and wine correspondent of The Spectator, tapped busily into a calculator to work out how much a glass of Pétrus would cost. He worked it out at £37.22 per centilitre, which would equate to £465 for a standard pub measure – "plus tax and duty," he noted dryly.

Simon wrote gleefully in his weekly Guardian column about trying Le Pin and Pétrus, admitting, "I almost never drink really expensive wine." But there

is a story in his recently published book *Life's Too Short to Drink Bad Wine: 100 Wines for the Discerning Drinker* about an enormous lunch in Strasbourg being paid for because he was, as his hosts told him, "a guest of the European Socialist Group."

### Millennium bugs

The overall standard was exceptionally high but two wines proved to be sore disappointments.

Quite how Sociando-Mallet produced a green, unripe wine in a year that bathed in the atoms of the sun boggles the mind. An attack of millennium bugs in the vineyard, perhaps?

Second only to Pétrus in the price league these days, Le Pin polarised opinion. Steven described it as a "fine young red, good spice and richness, concentrated warm, earthy and fragrant fruit, perfect balance, perhaps not the greatest length. Drink up to 2018." Michael's note conveyed a "dense, sweetly ripe Merlot nose with a hint of caramel, roasted warmth, and a lovely suggestion of 'fruit'... graceful across the palate... Hugely seductive, a wine giving enormous pleasure already but with decades to go. Now-2025+." But others felt that it was an oddball and suggested that it was not a good bottle.

### Carpe diem

The Times' Chief Sports Writer Simon Barnes defined greatness as "the ability to seize a moment." With few exceptions the Bordelais did that in 2000. Presented with the warmest and driest autumn since 1990, there was no excuse not to make something special.

Even allowing for the vaunted prices, this tasting proved that it is an outstanding vintage, though Michael expressed some reservations: "In sum, I think there are few wines here in the league of the best from '59, '61, '82, '89, '90... But the vintage is not far behind, in its distinctive, fruit packed, firmer style."

Towards the end of the pleasant lunch prepared by Monika Schuster – there's a bespoke kitchen too – with a bright and

# WHAT WE'VE BEEN DRINKING RECENTLY

### Sociando Mallet 2003 –

"lovely minerality to the nose. Big & backward, tanic, firm. Great balance and backbone. Lovely grip plus bags of fruit" - 92 points Bordeaux Index.

**Gazin 2001 Pomerol** – "Totally under-rated right bank vintage and this is perfect evidence that 2001's are drinking now. Devine texture, soft and supple yet beautiful depth and harmony. Stood up above 96 Pichon Lalande tasted next to it!!!" - 95 points Bordeaux Index.

Sam Gleave, sales director

Please contact your account manager for further enquiries.

## INSIDE KNOWLEDGE

Keep up-to-date with what the BI team have to report. [Click here to read the new BI blog....](#)

fruity Pol Roger 2000 as the post-tasting mouthwash, Gary Boom waved goodbye and muttered something about having to go back to his office downstairs "to try and pay for this thing..."

At least Gary can console himself with the knowledge that next year's tasting of 2001s will require slightly less funding.

Stuart George is a freelance writer in London. He has travelled widely across the world's wine regions and worked harvests in France, Italy and Australia. In 2003 he was the UK Young Wine Writer of the Year. He blogs at [worcestersauce.wordpress.com](http://worcestersauce.wordpress.com)

To view Michael Schuster's notes on the 2000 tasting, [click here](#)

[Click here](#) to view our new 'press section' on our website, which keeps you up-to-date with the latest news from Bordeaux Index.



Keith from our HK office enjoying a glass of Petrus

## BORDEAUX INDEX'S TOP 10 ON THE '09s

### **Petrus - 98-100 points Bordeaux Index**

The nose has everything. Impossibly complex and exotic. Sweet red fruit, cherry, tangerine, fantastic minerality. On the attack, amazing velvet texture. Cream and satin, then magnificent concentration and depth, huge power yet so balanced. Intense and rich, with layers and layers of gorgeous ripe fruit coating the palate. Incredible persistence and imperious elegance. A monumental effort.

### **Latour - 98-100 points Bordeaux Index**

A brooding Latour on the nose, not so showy and quite tight knit. Fat and supple on the entry with wonderful freshness mixed with Indian spice and layers of dark cherry fruit. Massively complex, dense concentration and beautifully smooth.

### **Margaux - 97-99 points Bordeaux Index**

Sublime, silky texture with the freshness that is the hallmark of the Medoc in this vintage. Seamless and rich....the intensity of fruit explodes in the mouth. Wonderful structure. Supple tannins caress the mouth. Fantastic length.

### **Palmer - 96-98 points Bordeaux Index**

An amazingly exotic, expressive and intense nose. Screams pure class. Silk texture. Supple tannin. Very fresh. Unbelievable purity of fruit and explosive richness. Surreal succulence and outstanding length.

### **Leoville Las Cases - 96-98 points Bordeaux Index**

Nose quite restrained, a little licorice and dark cherry. Pure. Fresh yet rich. Good grip. Huge concentration. Massively complex. Endless finish. Outstanding harmony.

### **Lafite - 96-98 points Bordeaux Index**

Dense with wonderful minerality. Mind-blowing texture, silky and supple. Quite expressive for a young Lafite. Immediate intensity of sweet red fruit. Huge complexity and massive structure with superb balance and length.

### **Le Pin - 96-98 points Bordeaux Index**

Quite light in colour but very expressive. Tobacco, cumin and chocolate intertwined with crisp, fresh sweet fruit. Satin texture but

huge power. Very refined and pure. Long and endless.

### **Ausone - 96-97 points Bordeaux Index**

Huge deep concentration of black fruit. Iron, gravel, fantastic minerality. Palate packed full of fruit with lovely elegant, silky tannin. Great weight. Excellent balance. Dry, powdery tannin on finish. Absolute brute!

### **Montrose - 95-97 points Bordeaux Index**

Wonderfully exotic nose. Citrus almost and pure essence of dark, black fruit. Velvet attack then beautiful freshness. Pure, rich and ripe. Seamless, elegant and very, very stylish. An epic Montrose. So concentrated and dense. Unreal power on the finish. Sheer class.

### **La Conseillante - 95-97 points Bordeaux Index**

Sweetly perfumed. Incredibly floral. Very elegant. The texture just draws you in and then sweet suppleness and rich red fruit leaves you happily hanging until a little tannic grip wakes you leading to a very, very sexy, balanced and pure finish. Wonderfully structured with fantastic length.

## OUR QUARTERLY MARKET REPORT

Click [here](#) to read our latest market analysis 'All in the garden is rosy'

Right: Some of the BI team writing their notes and scores at Pichon Lalande

