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Bordeaux 2014 En Primeur Report

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Chateau Lynch-Moussas©Copyright



Bordeaux 2014 En Primeur Report

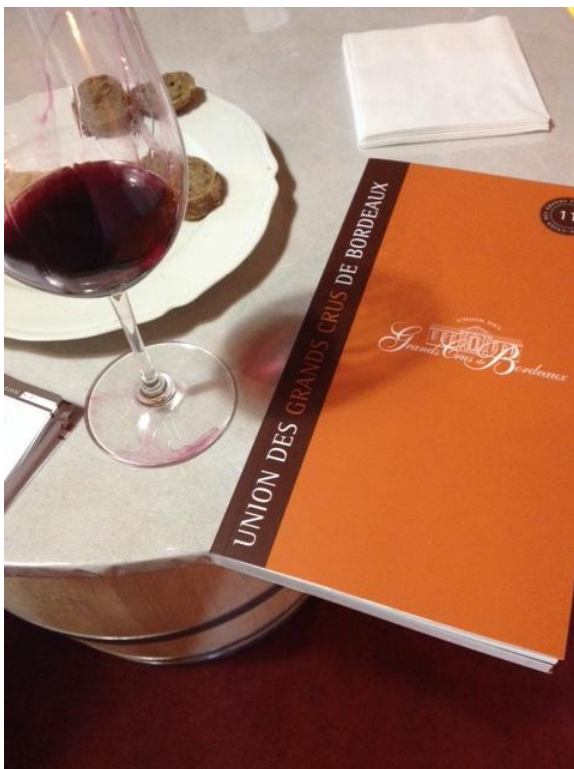
By **Diarmuid Cawley** (*Wine & Beverage Lecturer; School of Culinary Arts, DIT*) April 12th 2015

2014 was almost another disaster for the Bordelaise. Every winemaker we spoke with said that in mid-august the grass around their vineyards was lush, thick and green. The ground was sodden and the temperatures had been low and cool. Roughly one month before harvest when many had already written yet another vintage off, the rain suddenly stopped and the sun appeared. The race was on.

It stayed sunny and hot right through harvest time making 2014 somewhat of a miracle vintage. The wines are there or thereabouts with some

appellations faring better than others but most making respectable wine, thanks in part to a ripe and juicy Merlot harvest. Some producers seem to have panicked, picking early, using oak and sulphur awkwardly and heavily extracting the grapes, presumably to give some semblance of structure to the wines. They needn't have done so, as some of the finer wines we tried were slightly lighter in body and were showing very well. Not every Bordeaux vintage has to be broody, muscular and long lived.

*A note on the wines below: We did not taste in every appellation but managed quite a few. This is a quick breakdown of the better wines from the appellations we did visit and a few not so good ones thrown in for good measure. The notes are purposely short and to the point without a points rating for each wine.



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If some expected Chateau are not mentioned, we either did not taste their or they failed to impress. We tasted with the **Union des Grand Crus de Bordeaux**, an organisation consisting of 133 Grand Cru estates of equal and measured quality.



Appellations – Lustrac/Moulis/Haut Medoc/Medoc

The morning tasting for these appellations took place in the wonderful *Chateau de Lamarque*.

Chateau Clarke - Firm drying tannins, good concentration, and black dark fruits.

Chateau Fourcas Dupre - Lovely balance, keen acidity, gravel soils really showing through. This will be good value.

Chateua Fourcas Hosten - A lovely wine, good structure, plenty of fruit.

Chateau Chasse-Spleen - A really nice effort with strong tannins and lots of Cabernet showing through on the nose and palate.

Chateau Maucaillou - Tannins abound, the wine is rich and full. Good.

Chateau Poujeaux - Very well structured, firm, pleasing, lots of ripe fruit.

Chateau Beaumont - High percentage of Merlot, 45%. Something slightly out of balance with this wine. Nose had a vegetal funk and the palate did not seem pure. Perhaps with time it will settle.

Chateau de Camensac - Nice fruit, firm but ripe tannins, a good wine but not for long aging.

Chateau Cantemerle - A lighter style. Sadly the alcohol was showing through too much.

Chateau Citran - The nose was promising with a sweet violet aroma but ultimately this wine was disappointing.

Chateau Coufran - "The Pomerol of the Medoc" - Merlot dominates this wine, plush, velvety and sappy. Very nice.

Chateau La Lagune - One of the finest wines of this first session. The nose is perfumed and delicate. The wine itself has excellent character and although it is a much lighter style than other wines of the region, this is its strong point. An elegant wine for the mid-term.

Chateau de Lamarque - Thankfully our hosts also managed to make a fine wine in 2014. Nose of plums and sweet cassis with floral notes. Drying tannins and a long finish. Impressive though not for the long term.

Chateau La Tour Carnet - Certainly the best wine in this first session. Like La Lagune they have made a very balanced wine with lots of charm. It is deeper and richer however. Certainly on my list of buys.

Chateau La Tour de By - Mineral driven and expressive. Loads of good Cabernet fruit and earthiness coming through. They have done a good job here.



Chateau de Lamarque ©Copyright



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Appellations - Pauillac & Saint-Estephe

The afternoon tasting was held at the beautiful, but mud and rain swamped, *Chateau Lynch-Moussas*.

Chateau d'Armailhac – The first wine we tasted here was one of the best on show from the renowned appellation of Pauillac. The tannins are ripe but firm and dry. You taste and feel the vineyard is in this wine. There is a darkness and a broody nature here too. Finishes with brambly fruit and touches of bitter sloe berry.

Chateau Batailley - 82% Cabernet. 15% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot and 1% Cabernet Franc. A higher percentage of Cabernet than most in the region. The wine is good, well made and solid but not a classic.

Chateau Clerc Milon - The nose is very expressive with sweet raspberry fruit and lovely fragrant spices. The palate is long and seamless with balanced acidity. This one is very good and maybe even poised for greatness.

Chateau Croizet Bages - A sweeter softer style than others in the region. 11% of the wine is press wine. You sense that there was bit of nervousness here when it came to the winemaking. They have used good quality fruit and the results are not bad at all but it lacks something. Confidence perhaps.

Chateau Grand-Puy Ducasse - The nose is meaty and ripe. The wine is big, dark and tannic yet is already showing a great structure and quality. One of the best.

Chateau Grand-Puy Lacoste - Overshadowed by the other Grand-Puy. Lacoste have made a wine that has lovely ripe fruit, long drying tannins and plenty of spicy character. The alcohol sticks out awkwardly at the moment,

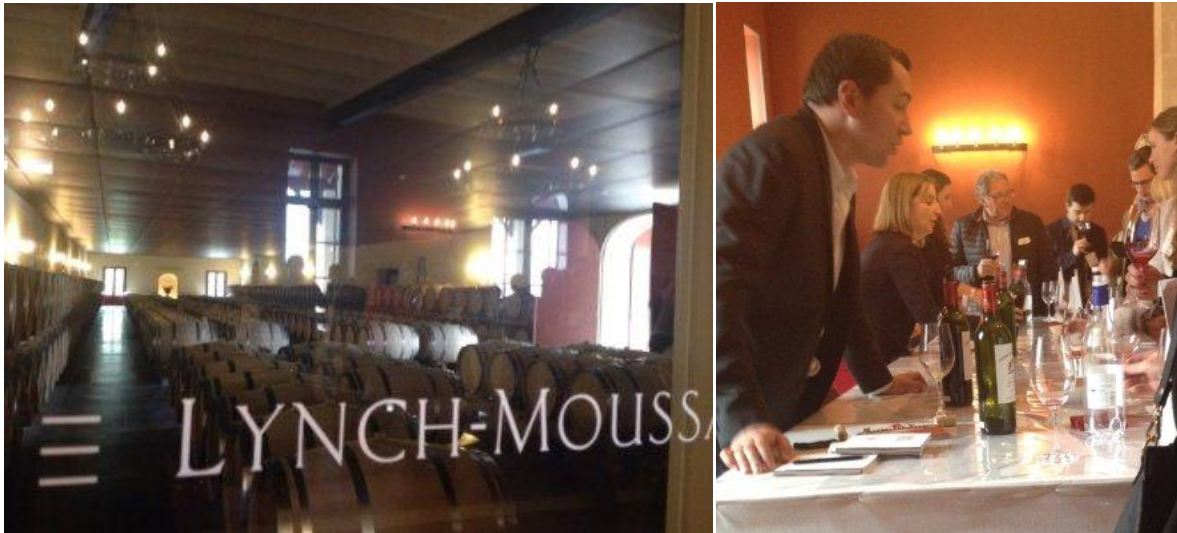
which is not great cause for concern just yet. A fine effort from a great estate.

Chateau Haut-Bages Liberal - The wine is edgy and dark. It's not initially friendly and you wonder. It's like a surly teenager, loads of potential just a bit dumb at the moment. The fruit is there in ample amounts and it will evolve. Muscular and tense, they have gone at it a bit heavy, but I sense it will be a long haul and will come good.

Chateau Lynch-Bages - 69% Cabernet and 75% new oak. This wine is polished and ready for show. Loads of plum and currant fruit, floral and expressive, graphite and stones and pencil wood. Sort of what you would expect really. A job well done.

Chateau Lynch-Moussas - Our hosts went all guns blazing on the oak in 2014. The wine has a toasted spicy character which threw me a bit. I cannot say that I fell in love with this one.

Chateau Pichon-Longueville - 80% Cabernet and 20% Merlot. No messing about here. Great structure, powerful and has a really long finish. A top class wine for the future.



Chateau Lynch-Moussas©Copyright



Appellation - Saint-Estephe

Chateau Cos Labory - A good wine showing lots of stony mineral character and rich fruit.

Chateau Lafon-Rochet - Wow. This is super and ticks all the boxes. Long dark finish.

Chateau Ormes de Pez - This estate has always impressed me and 2014 is no different. The fruit is there with a great colour, density and persistence of flavour.

Chateau de Pez - Another winner from Saint Estephe. The style is softer and rounder than other estates; I suspect higher levels of Merlot, giving a real plummy and fleshy quality.

Chateau Phelan Sugur - This wine, although fine and well made, was somewhat less convincing than others from the appellation.



Appellation - Saint-Julien

The tasting was held at *Chateau Leoville Poyferre*



Leoville Poyferre©Copyright

Chateau Beychevelle - They have gone for a Merlot dominant blend with 51% and 39% Cabernet, the remaining 10% is split evenly between Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. As you would imagine the wine is rich and velvety with plenty of cherry, plum and kirsch flavours. Solid without being a standout.

Chateau Branaire-Ducru - 65% Cabernet, 27%Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc. Decent, plush tannins, approachable and fine.

Chateau Lagrange - The nose is leafy and full of fresh blackcurrant aromas. 76% Cabernet. I found this one to be a bit of a blockbuster. Full and powerful, it will need time to show some actual nuances.

Chateau Leoville Barton - Showing real purity and strength. The wine is more Pauillac than Saint-Julien. A very long dense profile with years ahead of it. This will be an exciting wine.

Chateau Leoville Poyferre - 60% Cabernet and 40% Merlot. This wine is straightforward, but in the best sense. It's pure, pleasingly approachable already with the Merlot giving softness. Perfect earthy undertones give it just enough complexity.

Chateau Talbot - Unfortunately I didn't get to taste Ducru Beaucaillou (one of my all time favourite wines) but Chateau Talbot was, for me, the best of the Saint Julien wines that we did sample. Excellent balance with a very attractive savoury and spice element (reminiscent of tea cake). The nose is rich and floral and the palate has ample depth to deliver for many years.



Used Glassware©Copyright



Appellation - Margaux

The tasting took place in *Chateau Dauzac*

Chateau Angludet - Oak really began to feature in the wines of this classic appellation. Angludet has produced a great wine in 2014 with lots of savoury and metallic oaky notes on the nose. This will settle in time and certainly add character to the wine.

Chateau Brane-Cantenac - A similar story but perhaps more elegant. Blackcurrant fruit mingled with nervy green and spiced oak. One for the future.

Chateau Cantenac-Brown - A very impressive wine again with resonating oak. The fruit is dark and bitter and contrasts perfectly with a sweet liquorice finish and plenty of alcohol.

Chateau Dauzac - Loads of blackcurrant fruit here with a cooling and clean minty freshness coming through. The palate is well balanced with a classic earthy element. This has the taste of the appellation and will be a good buy.

Chateau Giscours - Good without being overly impressive. Just a well made wine from a very respectable estate.

Chateau Kirwan - Kirwan have come out on top in 2014. The wine exudes power and presence. It has a great structure and already tastes complete. Lots of dark black fruits, firm tannins and a long warm finish.

Chateau Labegorce - One of my absolute favourites of the appellation. The nose has a wafting sweet cinnamon spice with bundles of ripe black fruits. Firm, balanced, lingering.

Chateau Marquis de Terme - Classic and very good. Always a great effort.

Chateau Monbrison - 72% Cabernet and 28% Merlot. The wine is very drinkable and tasty even in this young raw state. Perhaps not for the long term but will develop into a lovely short to medium term wine.

Chateau Rauzan-Gassies - Well balanced with dark liquorice and berry flavours. Worth a punt.

Chateau Rauzan-Segla - Rich yet approachable sooner. A lighter, softer style than most from the region. A very nice wine.

Chateau Du Tertre - Disappointing vegetal cabbage nose initially. The wine is decent on the palate and has plenty of nice fruit. Considering the other quality available from Margaux in 2014, it would not be on my hit list.



Margaux Vines and Sky©Copyright



Appellations - Saint Emilion & Pomerol

The Saint Emilion tasting took place in *Chateau Clos Fourtet* while the Pomerol tasting was held at *Chateau Petit-Village*

Chateau Balestard La Tonnelle - Wonderful nose. The palate is ripe with great acidity and poise. A lovely one.

Chateau Berliquet - Disappointing

Chateau Beau - Sejour Becot - A good effort and will deliver in a few years.

Chateau Canon-la-Gaffeliere - 55% Merlot, 37% Cabernet Franc and 8% Cabernet Sauvignon. Canon-La-Gaffeliere is a shining example of the best that 2014 has to offer. An excellent wine with pitch perfect fruit and a long satisfying finish.

Chateau Cap de Mourlin - Some green unripe and bitter flavours in here. They have not hit the nail on the head.

Chateau La Couspaude - The aroma of this wine is unusual and not in a particularly good way. The palate is dry and overall the wine fails to deliver.

Chateau Dassault - A really nice wine with rich floral aromas. The palate is dry with lots of plums and fig in the finish.

Chateau La Dominique - Not a bad wine. Plenty of positives just not a star.

Chateau Clos Fourtet - A solid wine that delivers on all levels. Again not the pick of the bunch but with enough of everything to age well. Will it be worth the price? Let's wait and see.

Chateau Franc Mayne - 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc. The wine displays a ripe sweetness on the nose. The palate has firm grippy tannins. The oak is standing out at the moment but it's not a problem. The finish is warm and spicy. If this wine is keenly priced it would be a good purchase.

Chateau La Gaffeliere - "Difficult" is a word that stands out in my notes. It is extremely extracted. This has given the wine an almost bitter hawthorn and sloe berry taste. There are touches of green fruit in there also. The oak has given it coffee notes. Where are the ripe sweet fruit flavours and velvety tannins? The finish is long and I suspect the wine will come around with aging. A gamble.



Chateau Clos Fourtet©Copyright

Chateau Grand Mayne - Nice nose of raspberry, plums and oak. A good wine that I would buy.

Chateau Larcis Ducasse - Tannic and dark but with enough of everything to see it through. This one gets a yes.

Chateau Larmande - Touch of cabbage on the nose. Surely that will settle in time and the wine is not bad on the palate. A bit underwhelming.

Chateau Pavie Macquin - A good wine. Lots of potential. But the price will determine its quality level. If it's expensive then it won't be worth it.

Chateau La Tour Figeac - Surprisingly there were little hints of unripe fruit in here also but this is still very good with a plummy soft character.

Chateau Troplong Mondot - Very rich and dense. Tannic and firm. Black cherry and plums on the palate with spice and cocoa. Very Good.

Chateau Villemaurine - Oak on the nose. The palate has a round creamy texture with warming spices. Pleasant.



The Pour with Pavie Macquin©Copyright



Appellation - Pomerol

Chateau Beauregard - Wonderful fragrant nose of sweet plums. The palate is inky and dark with a good structure. Very tight but will soften and age well.

Chateau Le Bon Pasteur - This was one of the better wines in the Pomerol stall. Although softer than some, the balance of quality fruit, tannin and acidity are very evident. Perhaps not for the long term but fine nonetheless.

Chateau La Cabanne - The nose has distinct woodland aromas. The palate is very tight and dry with touches of green fruit and bitterness.

Chateau Clinet - The nose is truly lovely with fragrant Christmas cake spices and dried fruit. The tannins are firm yet ripe. It tastes less ripe than it smells, as though some grapes were slightly under-ripe. And although that is not on everyone's wish list, it is attractive here as a counter balance to the sweet spiced nose. I liked it, and feel it is a very good wine.

Chateau La Croix de Gay - with 98% Merlot and 2% Cabernet Franc there is no beating around the bush with this. The nose exudes hawthorn, kirsch and plums. The palate has dense chewy prunes, eau de vie and violet flavours. A top class wine (if you like Merlot).

Chateau Gazin - The nose was not so inviting and a bit funky. The palate is muscular and meaty with strength and depth. In time perhaps the fruit will shine through.

Chateau Petit-Village - The first thing I noticed was the super colour. Most en primeur wines have a great colour anyway but the 2014 from Petit-Village was striking. A lovely Merlot nose of fragrant plummy fruit with touches of prune, kirsch, liquorice and thorny wood. Very promising.



Conclusion: Bordeaux 2014 is a moderate to good vintage and I feel will be remembered as a return to form. The wines if keenly priced will help Bordeaux to regain a good position after the greedy price hikes of 2009 and 2010 and the fairly average and even poor vintages of 2012 and 2013. There are certainly some wines among what we tasted that I will strongly consider buying.