



Bordeaux 2000: *A Brilliant Vintage*

Since its release, the 2000 clarets have lived up to expectations, says Lim Hwee Peng. Here's why.

It was a great pleasure to partake, for the second time, in the tasting of one of the best clarets to emerge from the millennium. The jolly mood and merry-making among participants from both the trade and serious wine lovers reflected the greatness. "They are so darn good, do remember to spare some for your grandchildren for goodness sake," was the comment which aptly sums up the mood of the appreciative participants.

We are of course, talking about the vintage 2000 Bordeaux. Great vintages from the last millennia were from the years 1990, 1982, 1961 and 1945 and the vintage 2000 is destined to be another milestone in the viticulture and appreciation of classic clarets in the wine world. Most wine critics would even tend to agree that Bordeaux 2000 is not just another vintage; it is one of the best regarded over the last few decades of Bordeaux winemaking history.

Even praises and accolades have been heaped on the young wines from this vintage, way before their release in the open market.

FULL OF CHARACTER

Bordeaux 2000 is illustrious in many aspects; its overall structure such as the fruit ripeness, density, fruit intensity as well as the well-managed tannin levels and texture were both focused and concerted. Do not expect subtlety in flavour in Bordeaux 2000; even after its release in the market in 2003, quality has remained.

Perhaps the most glaring statement made about the exceptional quality of the 2000 vintage was by Château Mouton Rothschild when this first-growth Pauillac winery steered away from tradition by creating an eye-catching contemporary-styled heaving bottling with a special gold leaf of a 'Mouton' engraved on the bottle.

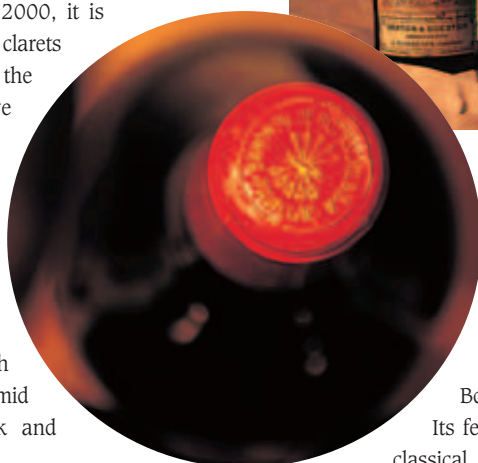
Constant comparisons have been made between the 2000 vintage wines and the much touted 1982 ones over quality and nuances; even the 1990 was compared to the 2000. I must admit that after tasting a wide range of the vintage 2000, it is indeed a different beast – these are serious clarets which have not lost their friendly streak and the results are something which would not have been possible to achieve decades ago.

The quality of the Bordeaux 2000 was a gift from nature as the vintage did not start off on a promising note from a viticultural perspective. Most vineyards were hit by mildew early in the season and many chateaus had to combat the disease. The fungus was subsequently overcome with the aid of the Almighty's generosity in mid season when a small heat wave struck and eradicated the moulds.

On hindsight, many vintners reckon that such hardship experienced early during the vintage resulted in a 'natural' crop reduction method, thus retaining only the healthiest of grapes to survive. The subsequent warm and dry weather which were bestowed on the vineyards for weeks resulted in a distinguished vintage which the Bordeaux vigneron can proudly proclaim to be among the best.

Another key contributing factor to the glorious quality of the Bordeaux 2000 can be explained by the efforts of a new generation of Bordeaux vintners and winemakers. With well-applied newfound technology combined with traditional practices, they produced a well-balanced cepage of classic clarets framed with friendly and ripe fruit nuances. The vintage has spoken loudly and firmly on the potential of this group of successors to the previous generation of Bordeaux vigneron.

Visual from Corndale Consultants



CLASSIC OR CONTEMPORARY CLARET?

Despite the presence of contemporary fruit ripeness and concentration, many argue that Bordeaux 2000 is still very much a classic wine.

Its fermented grape juice also possess an inimitable classical grace and definition, vibrant freshness and liveliness; quintessential traits and styles which can only be replicated in a classic wine-producing region like Bordeaux.

"These wines stood out in their fruit ripeness and enormous structure. They will age gracefully for tens to twenties of years!" says renowned wine connoisseur Dr NK Yong. Not surprisingly, Bordeaux 2000 also stood out due to its power and accessibility despite its youthful age and this is something unnoticeable in previous Bordeaux vintages.

The absolute eminence of this vintage prompted Chateau owners to price their wines in the astronomical range, thereby making claret 2000 one of the priciest wines in the history of Bordeaux wine trading. Even en primeur or future wines, which are generally affordably priced, were not spared for the 2000 batch of clarets. Even at such high prices, en primeur wines are still trading like hotcakes.

Wine Craft

BORDEAUX 2000

Pricing aside, the Bordeaux 2000 has a yet another impressive characteristic not found in other distinguished vintages of the past: the 2000 vintage is not a year that favours either the left or right bank, it is a vintage which was generous to almost all Bordeaux

grape varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon, the signature left bank varietal, Cabernet France, as well as the much mellow and fleshy Merlot, which is of the Saint Emillion and Pomerol grape varietal.

Revisiting Bordeaux 2000 was an enlightening experience for me, especially when other lesser growth wines were sampled in addition to the top growth ones. In my humble opinion, here are some wines which have impressed during my tasting sessions. These wines are showing very well now, and can be enjoyed on its own or when partnered with fine cuisine. In a nutshell, almost all the wines listed below can and will go the distance in their cellaring potential.

FIRST GROWTHS

- Château Margaux
- Château Haut Brion
- Château Latour
- Château Mouton Rothschild
- Château Lafite Rothschild

CRUS BOURGEOIS & SAINT-ESTÈPHE

- Château D'Aguilhe
- Château Haut Marbuzet
- Château Sociando Mallet
- Château Montrose
- Château Cos D'Estournel

PAUILLAC, SAINT-JULIEN, MARGAUX & GRAVES

- Reserve de la Comtesse
- Les Forts Latour
- Château Pontet Canet
- Château Lynch Bages
- Château Pichon Longueville Baron
- Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande
- Château Leoville Poyferre
- Château Langoa Barton
- Château Gruaud-Larose
- Château Leoville Barton



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- Château Palmer
- Domaine de Chevalier
- Château Pape Clement

SAUTERNES

- Château Guiraud
- Château Coutet

SAINT-EMILION, LANLANDE DE POMEROL & POMEROL

- Domaine de Chevalier Blanc
- Château La Fleur de Bouard
- La Plus de la Fleur
- Château Angelus
- Château Figecac
- Château L'Eglise Clinet
- Château Cheval Blanc
- Château Ausone

SATISFYING YOUR TASTE BUDS

If the top Bordeaux chateaus of the Pauillac appellation are beyond your reach, fret not. Look beyond those top growth wines and you'd discover a sea of alternatives which will equally stun your palate with superb quality and affordable pricing.

Personally, before purchasing Bordeaux 2000, I would recommend that one's cellar requirements, personal preference and budgets are first examined before embarking on that buying spree at the friendly cellar store nearby. If you can lay your hands on some impressive cru bourgeois and second labels, store them for the short-term if you so desire but most are ready for immediate gratification.

Certain lesser growth clarets are also approachable now with mid-term cellaring potential. If coughing up between S\$600 and S\$700 for a bottle of top growth is only a drop in the ocean for you, then don't hesitate to purchase the premier Bordeaux 2000 wines

for both long-term cellaring and investment purposes.

Do not overlook the Bordeaux Blanc and Sauterne wines from the millennium range as well; though few were tasted and reviewed, they can equally impress with remarkable quality.

If you think the high pricing is unreasonable for the Bordeaux 2000, there are alternative clarets from other vintages available in the market at only a fraction of the cost. For example, some of the more matured vintages like the 1982 and 1990 Bordeaux rouge welcome buyers with open arms at a lower cost. If your preference is for youthful clarets, then do not neglect other vintages from this new millennia as well.

The Bordeaux 2000 is definitely a vintage of exceptional quality; be adventurous and enjoy your journey in uncovering the gems in this magical wine world. Take your time to snoop around and your search will not be in vain for that favoured bottle to surface. Enjoy.

Visual from Comdale Consultants



ALTERNATIVE CLARETS OF THE NEW MILLENNIA TO TRY

In terms of popularity, the Bordeaux 2000 still has an upper hand, with investors and serious wine lovers flocking to snap up these bottles. How about other vintages? In terms of quality, the 2001 and 2002 vintages were rated between 'good' to 'very good' and 2003 is the hottest vintage experienced by Bordeaux vigneron as these are wines with huge ripeness with immediate appeal. Unfortunately, because of the abundant sunshine bestowed upon this vintage, the wines clearly lacked acidity to provide the much needed balance which distinguished the claret from other Bordeaux blended wines.

The upcoming 2004 vintage is being proclaimed as a classic vintage with wine flavours which are more traditional in structure and less upfront as compared to previous years. Many buyers are expecting lower prices for this latest vintage of clarets because of the huge crop in 2004.

From an investment perspective, the 2000 is still the best bet, followed by 2001 and 2002 which are rated as 'good buys'. Meanwhile the 2003 claret is great for short-term indulgence. Serious Bordeaux wine lovers will enjoy the quality of 2004, if the initial waves of en primeur reports are anything to go by.