

Ezine Volume 13 Issue 12
25 March 2011 - 31 March 2011

Feature Story

Visiting Bordeaux 2008



The Union des Grand Cru Bordeaux 2008 tasting is one of the largest wine tasting sessions to be held in Singapore. LIM HWEE PENG, CSW braves through 91 Chateaux in three hours to validate the claim of a less than stellar vintage.

Since the brilliant and copious 2005 vintage, some touted 2008 as the third consecutive year that ails the chateaux in Bordeaux; from the lacklustre 2006, challenging weather in 2007, and the equally demanding 2008. Now that the wine is ready to be released, would all the early predictions and comments on Bordeaux 2008 remain valid?

The arrival of Union des Grand Cru Bordeaux 2008 tasting event was timely in investigating the quality of the bottled 2008 clarets. At a mid-week in Conrad Centennial Singapore, with the meticulous organisation of The Wine Review, we took the opportunity to sample various treasured bottles of each chateau from key appellations in verifying the earlier claim.

Generally a vintage that has to cope with challenging weather and potential threat of diseases; much work in the vineyard and sorting table were required for such a demanding vintage. Regarded as a cool and dry vintage that ultimately led to lower yield; nevertheless, 2008 was able to produce red wines with aromatic, freshness and ripeness with delicate to medium-structure. Most critics associate 2008 with its predecessor (2007) or 1998; though some favoured 2008 over 2007.

The Cru Bourgeois wines were exhibiting loads of immediate charm, oozing fruit ripeness and fresh aromatic fragrance on the nose. Chateau Cos Labory and Ormes de Pez displayed the easy yet lovely vintage quality. Those wines were certainly a must-have for wine bars and fine eateries.

The Haut Medoc wine that found favour with my palate was Chateau La Lagune – fresh, fragrant and ripe with a delicate to firm structure; with some aerate time, this beautiful wine will show its true nuances with delicate flavoured dishes, such as Teochew steamed fish.

Of the Left Bank chateaux that I have sampled, Pauillac evidently stood out with its reliability. The various bottles consistently reflect quality akin to its appellations' characteristics, as well as positive nuances of the 2008 vintage; of special mention, Chateau Clerc-Millon, d' Armailhac, Lynch Bages and Pichon Lalande Comtesse.

A handful of Margaux was at the top of its game, two of my favourite were Chateau Lascombes and Prieur Lichine. The former wine exhibited Margaux's elegance yet packed with a subtle punch, while Chateau Prieur Lichine impresses with its contemporary nuances framed in a firmed and classy structure.

A few St Julien stood out, too, though I would bet my dollars on the Bartons and Las Cases, especially Chateau Langoa Barton, which was a gem. Langoa displayed classiness of a quintessential Claret, impressively balanced notes with fresh, aromatic and delicate flavours. This is an elegant and charming wine that emits purity on the palate.

Heading south of Bordeaux to Pessac Leognan, apart from Chateau Pape Clement that seems to garner quite an audience with its contemporary style, the bottles from the other Chateaux were not showing its best at the time of tasting; while at the Right Bank of Dordogne, I was also similarly disappointed with some of its wines, though earlier vintage reports see 2008 as a Merlot-favoured year.

Perhaps some of the wines from St Emilion and Pessac were at a 'sleeping' stage of its evolution?

Nevertheless, in St Emilion, both La Couspaude and Troplong Mondot were singing beautifully with their classy, balanced, fresh yet fleshy wines; although, I personally prefer Troplong as it shows more depth and density in its flavour expression.

Chateau La Conseillant impresses in the Pomerol appellation, with intense aroma and flavours, though on the palate, it offers balanced and freshness. Overall La Conseillant is a wine that is energetic, weighty yet firmly supported by a pleasant structure, with lengthy finish.

(Lim Hwee Peng, CSW is a qualified wine professional with multiple certifications, including accredited International Bordeaux Wine Educator (CIVB), Burgundy Wine Ambassador and Burgundy Wine Educator (BIVB), Napa Valley wine educator (NVV), as well as a Certified Specialist of Wines (SWE). Lim writes for Cuisine & Wine Asia as the Asian voice for wines)