



Wine

IN THE PANTHEON:The elegant Château Pichon-Longueville is a Second Growth Pauillac in Bordeaux, today making very powerful — and expensive — wines. But there are thousands of other red Bordeaux costing a fraction of the price that can give pleasure to any wine lover.
MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE



Sept. 17, 2007, 4:12PM

WINE

The everyday man's Bordeaux

Inexpensive yet pleasurable reds hail from premier region

By MICHAEL LONSFORD

Copyright 2007 Houston Chronicle

The history of wine in France is fascinating. The Romans made wine there 2,000 years ago. The papacy moved from Rome to Avignon in the 14th century, giving rise to the regional wine Châteauneuf-du-Pape ("the pope's new house"). In the late 1700s, the French Revolution destabilized the Catholic church's vineyard holdings, especially in Burgundy.

And in 1855 the Bordeaux Classification came about, and it's still relevant today.

There's been another revolution in Bordeaux, though. Beginning with all the hype and hoopla over the 1982 vintage, winemaking has undergone a sea change. Grapes are being picked later and later, riper and riper. Vinification has changed, too. Today one method called micro-oxygenization runs air through the wine, resulting in more unctuous, juicier and more immediately enjoyable wines.

Nothing wrong with that, of course, but now many red Bordeaux taste the same as a cabernet or merlot from California or Australia. Too many have lost their souls.

And what a pity. The descriptors of classic Bordeaux — pencil-lead, tobacco, leather, cedar — used to mean something. Twenty-five years ago, at some wonderful blind tastings, people would argue whether Glass 6 was Pauillac or St. Julien, and many would guess correctly, knowing the Pauillac parameters. I would venture that today those tasters wouldn't have a clue, because the wines taste too much alike.

Of course, today those 61 Classified Growths — as well as upstart *garagiste* wines such as Valandraud and Le Pin — are so expensive it's a moot point.

But there are thousands of other red Bordeaux out there. They may not be as good as a Classified Growth, but they don't cost three, four or five figures, either. Some of these petit château wines also hark back to the "old" days, when Bordeaux tasted like Bordeaux.

Many come from outlying regions, such as Entre-Deux-Mers and Lussac St. Emilion. Some are labeled simply "Haut-Médoc."



And some come from the Côtes de Castillon, an ancient winegrowing region east of the city of Bordeaux, where serviceable vintages are made. The area is named for the commune of Castillon-de-Bataille. It was there in 1453 that the Hundred Years War came to a close when the French defeated the English army under the command of John Talbot.

Yep, the same Talbot who owned the future Third Growth Château Talbot in the commune of St. Julien in Bordeaux.

There's that wine-and-history connection again.

michael.lonsford@chron.com

Source: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/life/food/wine/5139589.html>

IN THE WINE CART

These relatively inexpensive red Bordeaux come from a variety of wholesalers. Prices are approximate retail.

Reds:

2002 Château de Cruzeau (Graves) - * * * 1/2 - a bit light, but fair fruit and a nice smoky quality; was probably better a year ago; \$24.

2003 Château Ballan-Larquette (Bordeaux) - * * * - fair fruit, a little astringent in the finish; decant an hour before serving; \$12.

2004 Château La Croix Lartigue (Côtes de Castillon) - * * * - good structure here, but the wine is still young; decant an hour before serving; \$18.

2002 Château Larose-Trintaudon (Haut-Médoc) - * * * 1/2 - one of the most ubiquitous Bordeaux brands; a simple, supple, tasty red, not tannic at all; \$16.

2004 Château d'Aiguilhe (Côtes de Castillon) - * * * (1/2) - nice wine, just young; pretty fair fruit, some leather and cedar, and a touch smoky; \$24.

2003 Château Manoir du Gravoux "La Violette" - * * * 1/2 - pencil lead, a hint of cedar and blueberry; a little tannic, needs food to show best; decant half an hour before serving; \$19.

2003 Mouton-Cadet (rouge, Bordeaux) - * * * - simple red Bordeaux, another big brand, very consistent vintage to vintage; \$10.

2003 Château Le Grand Clotte (Lussac St. Emilion) - * * * 1/2 - soft, fruity, pleasant; \$17.

2004 Haut-Médoc du Haut-Beyzac (Haut-Médoc) - * * * 1/2 - fine plum-cherry flavors, a bit tannic in the finish; decant half an hour before serving; \$14.50.



2003 Château Ampelia (Côtes de Castillon) - * * * 1/2 - fair wine, with some cedar, cherry notes; a little astringent in the finish; \$22.50.

Whites

2004 Mouton Cadet (blanc, Bordeaux) - * * - light gold color, may be a year too old but still pleasant; quite ripe, soft, figgy flavor, definitely a semillon-based wine; \$10.

2005 Château Tour de Mirambeau (Entre Deux Mers) - * * * - very light, pleasant; good acid, fairly zippy, although predominantly semillon; \$16.

...

* * * * * Outstanding

* * * * Fine

* * * Good

* * Fair

*Poor

() indicates ageability

Source: http://www.chron.com/CDA/archives/archive.mpl?id=2007_4425442