

La Fleur d'Or 2005 Sauternes

23 Dec 2008 by Jancis Robinson

From \$14.99 a half.

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The other day I was at one of our regular blind tastings at Buckingham Palace (if you're going to drop a name, it may as well be a recognisable one, I always say) and I was particularly struck by one of the wines in the line-up of sweet wines. The dozen samples included Ch Suduiraut 2004, Ch Climens 2003, Ch de Fargues 2001 and the stunning Huet, Cuvée Constance 2002 Vouvray (from \$150 a half-litre in the US) but my third favourite for current drinking (after the Climens and the Constance) was Bill Blatch's blend **La Fleur d'Or 2005 Sauternes**. It has the tang of a botrytised wine with real freshness and excitement though no shortage of luscious sweetness and admirable persistence. Clearly this is a charming wine to be drunk now rather than cellared for a while, as Suduiraut 2004 and Fargues 2001 should be, for example, but this is the season for sweet wine drinking, folks, and here is a great-value example.

Bill Blatch of Bordeaux négociant Vintex is one of the most popular figures on the Bordeaux landscape. He has effectively taken over from the late Peter Allen Sichel the task of reporting in comprehensive detail on each Bordeaux vintage (put Blatch in the search box top right of this page). He also works extremely hard at all levels of the Bordeaux trade – putting on particularly useful tastings of hand-picked wines from less glamorous appellations as well as from the easily identifiable big names during the primeurs season that takes place in Bordeaux each spring (though possibly not spring 2009...?)

One of his great loves is top-quality sweet white Bordeaux, so often overlooked by the mainstream wine trade, and he has seen it as his duty to correct any false impressions of vintages along the way. I asked him for the background to La Fleur d'Or, a wine much less well known in the UK than in the US, and here's his reply:

'I spend quite a lot of time on it and it's nice when it gets noticed! This is a generic Sauternes that I started in 1995. While doing my rounds in Sauternes, I was finding good little batches of really good wines, either from lesser producers or from crus classés where there was a row of barrels or a small tank of something that hadn't quite made it into the Grand Vin. It became too itchy and bitsy to bottle these up individually, so we started blending them all together, drank a large glass of it to think of the name, and here we are today with something of a brand! I don't work to a spec of sweetness, acidity, etc, just insist on creaming off the best of the rest, and it comes out as it comes out. The 2005 is 13.5% alcohol and 112 g/l residual sugar. Everything totally botrytised of course.'

So there you have it, delicious leftovers. What could be more appropriate for drinking on 26 Dec?

The UK importer is Berkman Wine Cellars who report that it is available retail at Vicki's Wine Merchants of Chobham, Oliver Wines of Lewes and Taste Fine Wines of Huddersfield.

It is pretty well distributed in the US – although wine-searcher.com cited far more US stockists a week ago than it does today, which is perhaps a good sign that people really are starting to drink sweet wines at last.

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