Bordeaux 2000 - tasting notes

26 Nov 2004 by JR

*[**Update April 2002** - The 2000s are looking even better!*

Having tasted 300 2001s, and waded my way through this hugely variable and by no means entirely satisfactory vintage, I have to say that the 2000s are looking even more delicious. And such 2000s as I had a chance to taste in Bordeaux (Mouton, Latour, Pichon Lalande, Vieux Château Certan, Eglise Clinet and Cheval Blanc - the last of which has firmed up considerably) were streets ahead of their counterparts from the subsequent vintage.

Those to whom points are important should note that I feel very tempted to add a straight point out of 20 across the board to all the marks I awarded a year ago to the 2000s!]

GV means good value
JPM - Jean Pierre Moueix wine
JLT - Jean Luc Thunevin wine

My score out of 20 - is based on a single cask sample in most cases, although some wines were tasted more than once. The wine in the final blend may well taste quite different, both because it has evolved considerably in the barrel and possibly (although one hopes not) because the wine submitted for en primeur sampling came from a single, unrepresentative barrel. At best these scores give a snapshot of relative quality. There is nothing sacrosanct and 100% objective about '17/20ness'. These scores relate simply to a tasting of very young, ambitious red bordeaux.

Wines are listed below by appellation in descending order by score.

Graves

Branon (JLT)
Thunevin moves into the Graves with this 2000 case production. Amazingly deep colour and brulée notes on the nose. Very big, burnt flavours at the start of the palate. This stands out but because of sheer mass rather than because of any sap and liveliness.
My score 16

Villa Bel-Air
Sweet, flattering, round and supple. The usual reliable AXA style.
My score 16

Ch Brown
Very deep colour with some herbaceousness. Sweet underneath but slightly dilute.
My score 14

Ch Haut Bergey
Deep blackish purple. All upfront with a loose, soft hit on the palate which falls away to minimal finish.
My score 14

Margaux

Ch Margaux
Probably THE success of the vintage, made from 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 3% Cabernet France and 7% Petit Verdot which seems to have ripened fully here. Paul Pontallier claims that although this may have elements of 1986 and 1995 in it, this vintage has created a new standard for the property and it is not all hyperbole. The wine is a very, very deep thick crimson brimming with life. The nose is immediately hauntingly subtle with multiple layers of ripe red fruits. What is noticeable is the gentleness of the elegant layers, in sharp contrast to some of the more confected wines of this vintage. The tannins are fully ripe and refreshing rather than painful. There is real lift as the wine warms and beguiles the palate. Real class.

My score 19

Ch Rauzan Ségla
A great success from yields as low as 37 hl/ha. The result of this - and malolactic in 70% new oak? - is a deep and healthy crimson right out to the rim of the glass. Wonderfully aromatic and lively with a lovely silky typically Margaux texture. This wine is not confected, even though there is a very deep undertow of very ripe mulberry fruit and round, appetising tannins. Bravo!
My score 18

Ch Palmer
A very successful wine whose millstone will be to be constantly compared with its neighbour Ch Margaux. Aromatic with still some slight suggestion of toasty oak. Silky, creamy texture and a forceful impression almost of bloodiness. Very slightly brutal, it lacks the polish of Rauzan Ségla and the sheer ethereal lift of Ch Margaux. Some graininess on the end but a very fine Palmer.
My score 17.75

Pavillon Rouge de Ch Margaux
Another stunning success from Paul Pontallier's team, absorbing 50% of the crop. (40% went into the Grand Vin and some merchant somewhere will be selling the remaining 10% as unidentified AC Margaux.) Very gentle and elegant and, as usual, one of the more forward "serious" wines of the Médoc. Silky, subtle nose. Round and apparently lowkey on the palate at first but then it comes back, filling the mouth, with a kick of appetising tannins. An admirable whole, stylistically quite different from the Grand Vin but made of similarly delicate fruit.
My score 17 **GV**

Ch Malescot St Exupéry
Much more classic Margaux than Kirwan where Rolland also has a hand. Attractive, many-layered nose with some spice. Light but real integrity. Nice mid weight, rather old fashioned claret. Good balance if low key.
My score 17

Alter Ego de Palmer
Some traditionalists have been rather snooty about Alter Ego, the new second wine of Ch Palmer, made from 67% (as opposed to 47%) Merlot but it should not be judged on the same plain as a classed growth. It has been styled deliberately to be drunk young, perfect for those charged with buying wine for airlines and filling the cellars of new restaurants with something that will deliver obvious short-term pleasure but still in the Médoc mould. This wine has an excellent colour but all of its charms are upfront. Kerpow! goes that fruit on the front of the palate. The mid palate senses ripe fruit in abundance and, although there are obviously fewer layers and much less obvious tannins than in the Grand Vin, it is priced at about the same price as a lesser classed growth that is not likely to deliver as much pleasure so soon. The most forward wine I tasted in the Médoc. The score reflects its success within the stated (useful) context.
My score 17

Ch Prieuré Lichine
A very odd wine. New owners (who have diplomatically not removed the name of the old) have brought in the talented Stéphane Derenoncourt (of la Mondotte etc) to advise on vinification. The result is a curious hybrid of left bank fruit with right bank thrust. The colour is extraordinary deep although the nose is somewhat muffled. The full modern winemaking treatment has been applied (see my Bordeaux diary) and the result is a dramatic wine with no elegance of recognisable Margaux character that I can see. I'm sure it will receive plaudits as it is certainly extremely well crafted, but local character has definitively been lost. The Cabernet Sauvignon was some of the last to be picked in the Médoc.
My score 17-

Marojallia
The second vintage of the Médoc's first "garage wine", made from just 2ha of vines by Murielle Andraud, Jean-Luc Thunevin's wife. The 1999 was like a firebomb lobbed into the salons of traditional Bordeaux by this guerrilla from the other side of the Gironde. Tasted in a line-up of Thunevin right bank wines, this seemed immediately livelier than most with a convincing core of fruit (as one would expect when yields are 20hl/ha, about 40% of the Médoc norm). At first it was round and supple but then dry tannins obtruded on the palate. Surely this amount of concentration works better in vintages much wetter than 2000 and does not always result in a balanced wine. However impressive (and it is more impressive than many other similar wines) I still find it rather a caricature of Margaux.
My score 16.75

Ch Cantenac Brown
Opulent, well-mannered, spicy but with quite marked acidity. Definite Margaux fragrance with some delicacy on the palate. More elegant than many previous vintages. Sleek and not overdone.
My score 16.5+

Ch Monbrison
Very silky and elegant on the palate although tannins obtrude towards the finish. No mistaking this with a fine classed growth but as so often an admirable effort.
My score 16.5

Ch Lascombes
Very good colour, slightly dull nose. Foot-dragging fruit. Clearly there has been lots of work on the maceration in the cellar but there is no lift and the alcohol dominates the finish.
My score 16

Ch Kirwan
Excellent, seductive, explosive "Rolland" (Michel, consultant) nose is followed by a great mass of ripe fruit on the palate. Very Rolland this. Lots of ripe tannins underneath. This is neither very fine nor very Margaux but it is a very well made wine that will give pleasure - Rolland's stated aim. It finishes suddenly, however.
My score 16

Ch Brane Cantenac
Quite aggressive acidity. Light aroma, definitely riper than most Margaux and notable tannins.
My score 16

Ch d'Issan
Light, gentle and dry on the palate with a broad whack of ripe fruit. Pleasant without being a standout.
My score 16

Ch L'Enclos Gallen
A Merlot-dominated attempt at a supercuvée from an enclos in Ch Meyre. Very sweet start and unresolved tough tannins dominate the palate. Ambitious.
My score 15.5

Ch Giscours
Curious combination of relatively light colour and almost overripe nose. Full and rather tarty. Not fine but flattering with definite sweetness.
My score 15.5

Ch du Tertre
Painful acidity on this still slightly gassy wine. Big, rich palate with lots of fruit and chewy tannins. Slightly confected.
My score 15.5

Ch Rauzan Gassies
The vineyards of this disappointing underperformer were notable in late March for their lack of drainage - surely one of several aspects that prevents the second growth from being worthy of its status. That said, this is one of the property's more successful vintages with a very deep colour and a great deal of ripeness, if not quite enough acidity.
My score 15.5

Clos Margalaine
The second wine of Marojallia, if you please, of which 500 cases will be produced. Very big indeed but certainly not recognisable as Margaux. Sweet and thick but without much aroma. Dead end.
My score 15

Ch Ferrière
Recently revived classed growth marked by excessive acidity. Medium weight in the end even though there seems to have been an attempt at burly concentration.

My score 14.5

Ch Labégorce
Attractive if light frangrance. Slightly unripe notes and high acidity. Very tart finish.
My score 14.5

Ch La Gurgue
Very light nose and rather dull with a sweet start. This one could do with more acidity!
My score 14

Ch Durfort-Vivens
Light nose and gentle fruit. Worthy but not exciting. Slightly flabby.
My score 14

Ch d'Angludet
Simple, jammy nose and then light but smooth. Neither intense nor fragrant.
My score 14

Pauillac

Ch Lafite
Upliftingly polished, lively and pure. Very Lafite but with the ripe overlay of the vintage. Deep purple right out to the rim. Nose deeply buried but intriguing. Very correct, almost to brutality. Lots of deep, ripe tannins. Very much made for the long term, with much more weight than many another Lafite at this early stage. For the moment the finish is distinctly dry but neat and convincingly set for the long term in view of the concentration of fruit. This vintage is unusually high in Cabernet Sauvignon, mellowed by only 7% Merlot.
My score 18.5

Ch Mouton Rothschild
Very much a product of the Mouton team's determination to make relatively tough wines for the long term. Clearly first growth quality on the nose, heavily shrouded in ambition. It hits the palate with as much subtlety as a karate kick with lots of neat, ripe opulent fruit before a welter of tannins kick in. Muted and well balanced relative to what has become typical for the right bank. Good length. Cabernet Sauvignon 86%, Merlot 14%
My score 18.5

Ch Pichon Longueville (Baron) **GV**
Very deep purple. Toasty rich topnotes on a thoroughly glossy package of very ripe fruit. Good combination of liveliness and concentration. Full, sweet and succulent. Could only be faulted for being a bit too perfectly assembled - in fact that sweetness could win it a few blind tastings in its time. Made, like Ch Lynch Bages, by the talented Daniel Lhose who, unlike the Cazes family, still also works for AXA Millésimes.
My score 18.5

Ch Latour
Spice and opulence on top of vigour. Very, very fresh, frank fruit lurks beneath inky structure with quite a bit of expensive oak in evidence. Very marked acidity (Frederic Engerer reports that it is an extraordinary level, more than 4 g/l in 2000) and tannins. Quite a different structure from traditional Latour with powerful attack and maybe not quite as much hidden in reserve.
My score 18.25

Ch Lynch Bages
A fitting welcome back to the family property for Jean Michel Cazes on his retirement from directing the AXA Millésimes empire. Spicy, full and attention-grabbing. Chewy but confident, chunky mouthful with even a hint of dark rum. As with so many other Pauillacs, my only hint of doubt is whether there really is enough sold core hidden underneath all that colour, acidity, tannin and alcohol for the very long term.
My score 18

Ch Duhart Milon **GV**

Excellent colour and heady, sumptuously ripe nose. Rich and mouthfilling. Very ripe and opulent. Neat, refreshing tannins. The dry finish does not mar the wine but gives vigour. This wine should last just as long as Mouton's stablemates but is rich enough to be broachable earlier.
My score 17.5

Ch Haut Batailley **GV**
Almost black. Very floral aromatic nose. Easy supple texture with lively chewy tannins and lots of acidity. Sappy wine with appetising lift and considerable ripeness. Likely to be good value.
My score 17

Ch Carruades Lafite
Extremely deep crimson. Round, gentle initial impression on the nose is followed by an almost jagged amalgam of alcohol and tannins. Definitely unformed full bodied, still crude mouthful that has fewer layers than its big brother and should provide forceful relatively early drinking. Lafite refinement is not a strong characteristic. Cabernet Sauvignon 51%, Merlot 42%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 1%
My score 17

Les Forts de Latour
Very rich, autumnal nose. Already quite evolved and come hither. Rich black fruit scents give the impression of gentleness over inky depths. Quite dramatic with a silky texture and unusual charm for Les Forts at this stage. Quite a stylistic change. Perhaps very slightly lacking concentration, it contains the latest picked Cabernet Sauvignon grapes on the estate.
My score 17

Ch Grand Puy Ducasse **GV**
Not especially aromatic. Very loose, gentle structure with some quirky flavours. Easy palate before some neat tannins. With a little more intensity this would be great wine.
My score 17

Ch Clerc Milon
Gentle, flattering nose. Quite dry and taut with some spine and power. Slightly too dead on the finish to be truly refreshing, but set for the long term like all the wines from the Mouton stable.
My score 17

Grand Puy Lacoste
Good lively, savoury tannins. Very chewy, lively and powerful. Sweeter, fuller than its stablemate Haut Batailley with distinctly pruney notes.
My score 17

Ch Haut Bages Liberal
Lively aromatic nose and notably rich palate entry. Only just enough acidity to keep the wine balanced. Tannins slightly too intrusive. Not the weight of Grand Puy Ducasse but - just- in balance.
My score 16.5

Ch Pichon Lalande
Seductively perfumed as usual although lurking in all the ripe fruit is a definitely green, vegetal tone too. The palate is most conscious of some green, unripe tannins and the overall impression is of a particularly obdurate wine informed by coolness rather than warmth. This impression was so out of character for Pichon Lalande that I tasted another sample which was just the same. The 2000 blend contains an unusually high proportion of Petit Verdot, 10%, with 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot and 6% Cabernet Franc. Is all that Petit Verdot the culprit?
My score 16.5

Ch Pontet Canet
Amazingly deep colour but not much nonse. Altogether much stronger on texture than flavour. Chewy end, hollow. Over extracted?
My score 16

Ch Haut Bages Averous

Very good colour. Full and sweet - very slightly too sweet? - with some of the same sorts of spices that characterise Lynch Bages.
My score 16

Ch d'Armailhac
Spicy, gentle, full amd mouth-filling though a little too ripe to be refreshing. Extremely supple on the palate and then very dry tannins at the end. Cab Sauv 58, Merlot 42 (Cab Franc disappointing in 2000).
My score 16

Ch Lynch Moussas
Green, unripe notes on the nose then rather obviously sweet and spicy. Not the most noble Pauillac available, though it is difficult to find any seriously poor Pauillac 2000.
My score 15.5

Ch Croizet Bages
Supple texture but relatively simple flavours.
My score 15.5

Pauillac de Ch Latour
Latour's third wine, of which nearly 4,000 cases will be made in 2000. Quite impressively deep purple, reduced on the day of tasting. Relatively light but still with some of Latour's spice.
My score 15

Pessac Léognan

Ch La Mission Haut Brion
Brilliant deep purple. Many, many layers of sumptuously ripe fruit. Real broad opulence with some edges of sultry smoke. Velvet start with inky ripe tannins creeping up only from behind. Not overpoweringly alcoholic, despite all that ripeness. A triumph. According to Jean-Bernard Delmas, this wine's special quality comes simply from the sheer quality of the exceptionally healthy fruit. 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, 48% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc.
My score 18.5

Ch Haut Brion
Refined, tautly wound wine that was very embryonic when tasted at the end of March (much more so than La Mission). Lots of alcohol and ripeness hidden underneath quite inky tannins which are apparently lower by analysis than La Missions but which taste more obtrusive because Haut Brion's fruit is much more severe and subtle for the moment. Mineral and meaty for the moment. 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 51% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc.
My score 18

Haut Brion Blanc
For the moment this unformed but potentially great white bordeaux is simply a pineapple-scented rich, round semi-ferment. More weight and evolution than Laville Haut Brion so far.
My score 17

Ch Smith Haut Lafitte
Very deep colour. Quite round and full. Alluring and dense though with relatively dry tannins at the end. This wine may take quite a time to evolve.
My score 17

Ch Pape Clément
Very deep crimson. Scrumptious full, rich, deep ripe flavours. Slightly dusty tannins with a definitely grainy finish. Chewy, crunchy wine.
My score 17

Bahans Haut Brion **GV**
Real mineral savour and attack; so much more penetrable than its big brother Ch Haut Brion. Already relatively round and supple, offering Haut Brion's special flavours up for early consumption. Only 31% Cabernet Sauvignon with 45%

Merlot and 24% Cabernet Franc.
My score 17

Ch La Tour Haut Brion
Real cassis spine to this wine made from a 4ha enclave within La Mission, despite its relatively high proportion (53%) of Merlot. There's an edge of overripe pruniness and some brulé character but on the palate there is good liveliness. Much more tannin than Bahans, for example. Well structured.
My score 17

Ch Larrivet Haut Brion
Very mouthfilling and attractively balanced with crisp raciness. Not big - especially bearing in mind that this is a Rolland wine - but very well balanced.
My score 16.5

Ch Poumey
Straightforward refreshing wine from the Pape Clément team. Lively fruit before a kick of appetising tannins. Lightish.
My score 15

Ch Chapelle La Mission
A very pale shadow of La Mission. Deep coloured and slightly inky with rather dry overtones of woodshavings (because of its 13% Cabernet Franc?). Easy attack on the palate. Obviously ripe but relativley light with quite soft tannins.
My score 15

Ch Carmes Haut Brion
Relatively deep colour. Lively, appetising nose and far too sweet and sickly on the palate followed by extremely hard tannins. By no means balanced at the moment. Very dry end.
My score 14

Pomerol

Ch Lafleur
Excellent colour. Great richness underneath with surprisingly flirtatious aromas. Lively, seductive, long maceration flavours. Glossy. kirsch-soaked fruit. Massive spread over the palate. Slightly furry tannins creep in at the end of the palate but a savoury hit overall. To combine such ripeness with being appetising and lively is quite a feat. Hints of yeast extract at the end. Very, very interesting. There's just so much there! Long, quite beefy. Big and brooding but also scrummy and convincing.
My score 19

Vieux Château Certan
Miraculously pure and frank. Beautifully balanced, wonderfully fine, intense nose, round with hints of chocolate but clearly all made with minimal intervention in appetising contrast to the overworked confections made by so many others on the right bank today. Real charm and roundness but without any sacrifice to concentration or interest. Brilliant in every way.
My score 19

Ch Pétrus
Darkest crimson. Much sweeter and more florally gamey than Lafleur. Simpler, more 'spkiey' chewy notes. Massive wine in which you can still taste some oak and toast. Great, great concentration
My score 18.5

Le Pin
Exceptionally deep colour. Sumptuous, satiny, sinewy: definitely a Hollywood star of the '30s in some pretty smart underwear chosen by her publicist. But then again the undertow is meaty and savoury, more tweedy and swashbuckling. Opulent, heady wine that demands to be noticed. More than a hint of macerated black cherries. This will presumably take on fat in the precious few barrels that are now full of it.
My score 18?5

Ch L'Evangile
Very dark crimson. Scented, vibrant with mulberry-flavoured super-ripe fruit but sufficient acidity and very fine tannins so overall a lovely, seductive mouthful. Tannins bite just on the end of the palate.
My score 18-

Ch Trotanoy
Very very deep blackish crimson, hidden nose with just a hint of leafiness. Big, black, inky, brooding monster. Mineral layers. Lots of no-compromise future here. A big bruiser. This should make old bones. Quite convincing in a mineral, cordite sort of way. Refreshing tannins (in contrast to dead ones) are certainly present.
My score 17.5

Ch Certan de May
Lovely creamy open texture in marked contrast to the fashionably ambitious, tense style current in Pomerol today. Lovely opulence and balance on the palate with both prunes and chocolate. Caressing gentleness but convincing tannic undertow.
My score 17.5

Ch L'Eglise Clinet
A brooding half-formed monster. Very deep colour. Not opulent at all but savoury and deep. Extremely ambitious and extremely distinctive. Serious spread of black fruit flavours across the palate, suggestion of licorice. Then tarry, dryish tannins. Long term wine.
My score 17

Ch Nenin
This seems to the vintage when the new Delon (Las Cases) ownership and the team really make a difference. Amazingly deep colour and rather hidden nose. Plummy, exotic and headily sweet. Slightly dry finish but very glamorous wine overall. Much more exciting than the 1999.
My score 17

Ch Rouget
Showing the strides that have been made at this small property next to Eglise Clinet. Sweet, quite subtle start, powerful, full and charming. Slightly dry tannins at the end but well priced.
My score 17

Clos L'Eglise
Another Rolland product, 1000 cases this time of 60% Merlot and 40% Cabernet Franc grown between Chx Clinet and Eglise Clinet. Sumptuous if still quite impenetrable nose. Very much more approachable than Eglise Clinet at this stage and with more structure than Clinet, scented and built almost like a Domaine Leroy burgundy.
My score 17

Ch La Fleur Pétrus
Deep, dark crimson. Attractive life on the aroma. Meaty, bloody style of Pomerol. Muted rather than massive. No tricks. Slightly edgy tannins. Very chunky and correct. Slightly furry end.
My score 17

Ch Hosanna
Very deep and thick. Colour all the way out to the rim. Quite a strut on the nose, then tea and macerated cherries. Lots of personality and lots of tannins but good fruit on the mid palate too. Sweet and reasonably supple for this point in its life. Silky, shiny, rich. Glamorous.
My score 17

Ch Bon Pasteur
Heady, silky, then oaky nose. Very competent winemaking, chewy end and attractive freshness lifts extremely ripe fruit. Notes of torréfaction. Very modern style but set for the long term.
My score 17-

Ch La Conseillante
Exotic topnotes on a certain woodiness. Tough tannins; less creamy and soft than usual.

My score 17-

My score 16.5
La Petite Eglise
Ch Beauregard
Ch Latour á Pomerol
Ch La Croix du Casse
Fugue de Nenin
Ch Petit Village

My score 16
Ch La Fleur de Gay
Ch La Grave (á Pomerol)
Ch Clinet
Clos du Clocher
Ch Montviel

My score 15.5
Ch La Croix du Gay

My score 15
Ch Lagrange
Ch Bonalgue
Clos Rená
Ch La Croix
Ch Mazeyres
Ch de Sales
Ch Gazin

My score 14.5
Dom Trigant de Boisset (new 2nd wine of La Grave)

My score 14
Ch Beau Soleil
Ch Vieux Maillet
Ch Bellegrave
Ch Cabanne
Ch le Moulin

Lalande de Pomerol

My score 16
Ch La Chénade
La Fleur de Boüard (made by Angélus owner)
Le Plus de la Fleur de Boüard (ditto, special selection)

My score 15.5
Ch La Sergue

My score 14.5
La Fleur de St Georges (second wine of La Fleur de Boüard - this is getting silly!)

My score 14
Ch Les Cruzelles

St Emilion

Ch Ausone

Alain Vauthier is really getting into his stride now. Amazingly black colour. This is really knife-edge wine. At first I thought the edge of torréfaction with burnt, almost putrid, fruits lingering underneath might be just too much but the gentle, insinuating quality of the fruit on the palate won me over and convinced me this could be a great Ausone of the old school. He says this is the richest vintage ever for Ausone. Full, round with definite lift (if one can lift a monster). There are aspects of garagism about the winemaking and a very slight dryness at the end but the track record of the terroir convinces me this will make delicious old bones.

My score 18.5

Ch Canon La Gaffelière

Devoted owner Stephan von Nieppberg believes this is the best vintage yet of this heavy hitting St Emilion. Very sweet and scented yet with quite enough life to stop it being over the top. It coats the palate with insistent tannins and good acidity underneath. The wine is made up of 55% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc (which reached record ripeness levels of 13.5-14.25% alcohol in St Emilion in 2000) and a little Cabernet Sauvignon. Chapeau!

My score 18

Ch Cheval Blanc

This is a quite extraordinary wine. I have a personal fondness for the subtle, fragrant style of Cheval Blanc and admiration for the team there. When I smelt and first tasted this wine I was completely overwhelmed. The depth of both colour and aroma; the layers and layers of powerfully opulent fruit; the "cashmere" tannins caressing the palate; the way the tannins crept up on me, convincing me that there were quite enough of them to keep the wine going for many a year. This was a wine I was ready to give the highest points to, so supple and gorgeous after all the naked ambition I had been tasting elsewhere on the right bank. Only one thing let it down and concerns me about the wine's future: the wine may have caressed the middle palate but the finish was worryingly short. The wine seemed to stop dead in its tracks. I do hope I'm wrong and that this will eventually deliver as much as it initially promises. I look forward very much to retasting it further on in its evolution.

My score 18

La Mondotte

The jewel in the Nieppberg crown. Very deep crimson and the look of shiny velvet. Still some oak on the nose before a dramatic, explosive palate which is so intense it is almost painful. It's the likely timescale of evolution than differentiates this wine from Canon La Gaffelière rather than the flavour.

My score 18

Ch Tertre Roteboeuf

Very deep and glossy. Muted nose but very intense eldeberry flavours on the palate. Concentrated, rich and round. Promises considerable evolution.

My score 17.5

Ch Pavie Macquin

Headily seductive on the nose. Very, very dense and compelling because sweet and velvety right to the end, with ripe tannins in evidence only then. A sterling effort from Stéphane Derenoncourt.

My score 17.5

Ch Troplong Mondot

The trademark black colour and pruney nose combined with satin smoothness. Full and arresting. Massive impact on the palate. Sweet at first, chewy at the end but should meld together eventually.

My score 17.5

Petit Cheval

This is a terribly clever wine, almost more like classical Cheval Blanc than the Grand Vin. It is not big or powerful but has marvellous fragrance reminiscent of very ripe raspberries. Tannins sneaked up on a harmonious palate. At first I thought it might be too soft but actually I think this will be the most delicious drink in just a few years. Very clever winemaking.

My score 17+

Clos de l'Oratoire

Another von Nieppberh/Derenoncourt production and more pushy than Canon La Gaffelière. Very very full and rich and

supple. Quite flattering but with sharp acidity. It positively massages the palate and has more than a hint of black cherries about it. Just slightly short.
My score 17

Ch Andréas
A Thunevin confection of new oak and 1.5 ha of Merlot that is drier (in the sense of the opposite of sweet) than most and therefore more appetising. Quite a statement with notable acidity and tannins.
My score 17

Ch Canon
This is the product of the same management team as at Rauzan Séglas and the winemaking input of Michel Rolland. As much as 72% Merlot went into the final wine, more than ever before, and the result is a mildly decadent blend of toast, yeast extract that is sweet and round, though arguably expresses winemaking more than the old character of the (pre TCA infection in the cellar) vineyard.
My score 17

Ch Fonplégade
Scented, full with evidence of pretty rather than strained winemaking. A wine with a true beginning, middle and end. Tannins comme il faut.
My score 17

Moulin St George
This is the 8-ha property owned and run by Alain Vauthier just next door to Ausone. I tasted this blend of 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 10% Petit Verdot just after a vast range of Jean-Luc Thunevin and Gerard Perse wines and found it notably more refreshing than many of them. The heady flavours of superripe mulberries were indeed flattering but there was sufficient savour and acidity to keep the palate interested and no dry tannins.
My score 17

Ch Magdeleine
Relatively light crimson and some warm terroir flavours at last! Light, gentle and completely natural. Chewy, correct, old-fashined tannins. Appetising, not at all sweet; slightly dry at the end for the moment. Very correct, not massive - in fact almost caricature old fashioned St Emilion. I must confess that I might not have given it quite such a high mark were my system not overloaded by sweetened up modern monsters.
My score 17

Ch Clos des Jacobins
Hubert de Bouard of Angelus did not make this wine but selected what went into it for the new parfumier owner and has done a pretty good job. This is well balanced and relatively appetising.
My score 17-

Ch Fombrauge
Very dramatic colour. Concentrated, round with an edge of new oak (50% was used) but all in balance. Quite sweet and an edge of burnt fruit but relatively gentle. I preferred this to the special selection named after the new owner of Pape Clément fame, Magrez-Fombrauge.
My score 17-

My score 16.5
Ch La Dominique
Ch Barde Haut
Ch La Gomerie
Ch Sansonnet

My score 16
Ch Figeac
Ch Angélus
Clos Fourtet
Ch l'Hermitage
Ch Valandraud

Ch St Brice (JPM)
Ch Gracia
Ch Grands Champs, Cuvée Christophe
Ch Grand Corbin Despagne
Ch Quinault L'Enclos
Ch La Serre
Ch Bellevue
Ch Berliquet
Ch Haut Troquard La Grace Dieu (JPM)
Ch Balestard La Tonnelle
Ch Saintayme
Ch Lusseau
Ch Lynsolence
Ch La Gaffelière

My score 15.5
Ch Monbousquet
Ch FaugeGres
Ch Pavie Decesse

My score 15
Ch Fleur de Jaugue 15+
Ch Pavie
Virginie de Valandraud
Ch Larmande
Ch Grandes Murailles
Ch Pierre de Lune
Ch Bellefont Belcier
Ch Jacques Blanc, Cuvée l'Apogée (JLT)
Ch Beauséjour Bécot
Ch Moulin du Cadet (JPM)
Ch Corbin
Fer de Cheval Noir
Ch Ferrand Lartigue
Ch La Clusière
Ch La Couspade
Ch Magrex Fombrauge
Ch Péby Faugères
Ch Franc Mayne
Clos Dubreuil
Ch Fonroque (JPM)
Ch Cantenac 15-

My score 14.5
Ch Grand Pontet
Axelle de Valandraud

My score 14
Ch Guadet St Julien
Clos St Martin
Ch La Tour Figeac
Ch Tour du Pin Figeac
Ch Larcis Ducasse
Ch Haut Sarpe
Ch La Commanderie
Côte de Balau
Ch Cadet Piola
Ch Faurie de Souchard

Ch Jaugue Blanc
Ch Cap de Mourlin
Ch Badon-Thunevin (JLT)
Ch Petit Fombrauge

My score 13
Ch Petit Faurie de Soutard

My score 12
Ch d'Assault

St Georges St Emilion

My score 15
Ch Griffe Cap d'Or (JLT)

Montagne St Emilion

My score 14
Ch Teyssier
Ch Coucy Maurèze

Puisseguin St Emilion

My score 14
Ch Le Bernat

My score 13
Ch La Mauriane

St Estèphe

Ch Cos d'Estournel
Wonderfully deep, glossy purple. Supple, silky smooth on the nose. Long and rich with very attractive balance. Tannins noticeably ripe and fresh. Lovely effortlessly velvety texture quite different from some of the more forced efforts in recent vintages.
My score 18+

Ch Calon Ségur **GV**
A very fine 2000 from this property. Amazing black colour is followed by a full, frank nose with the arresting clean frankness of Lafite's. Lots of neat but not drying tannins after layers of ripe fruit. All in excellent balance with a savoury but gentle end. This is made up of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc with a quarter of the wine given malolactic in barrel - an ideal proportion perhaps?
My score 18+

Ch Montrose
Lost of smudgy purple. Cool aromas. Not at all forced. A confident wine made for the long term, somewhat in the mould of a muted Mouton. It would be easy to overlook this wine but it's all in balance.
My score 17.5

Ch Cos Labory
Particularly opulent yet appetising nose although the tannins are currently rather jagged. A good testament to the vintage however from this relatively modest property.
My score 17

Ch Les Ormes de Pez
Attractive ripeness and topnotes of spice. Round and full. Well balanced though essentially lowkey.
My score 16+

Ch Lafon Rochet
Arresting meaty nose with hints of foxgloves and yeast extract. Tannins just a bit too pronounced and tough for this wine to show the lovely balance of the most successful wines of the commune. Relatively simple palate.
My score 16

Ch Phélan Ségur
A sort of floral ink at present. Not the deepest of colours. Slightly tart and definitely taut, but is there enough fruit underneath for a glorious future?
My score 16

Ch Valrose
The harvest at this small, new property of Jean Michel Arcaute's was very late apparently. The wine is certainly relatively sweet but not overdone with a good kick of acidity and tannin at the end of the palate.
My score 16

Ch de Marbuzet
Very rich aroma of ripe mulberries. Extremely flattering. Slightly inky finish but overall a good effort.
My score 16

Ch Petit Bocq
Sweet and relatively simple. A very sweet start gives way to quite robust tannins. Respectable for the money.
My score 15

Pagodes de Cos
Aromatic but slightly lean, thin and low key. Big gap between this and Cos itself.
My score 15

Ch de Pez
Very chewy indeed and slightly inky. Hint of violets under all that tannin.
My score 15

Ch Le Bosq
Slightly soapy cru bourgeois, easy drinking, not overdone but no great distinction.
My score 14.5

Ch Haut Marbuzet
Rich hit on the palate though light on subtlety. Could do with more lift and acidity.
My score 14.5

Ch Haut Beauséjour
Very cool and correct but slightly heartless. This is the second wine of Roederer's Ch de Pez.
My score 14

St Julien

Ch Léoville Barton
Lovely racy, heart-lifting scent. Intriguing topnotes and seductive ripenss within an utterly correct corset of savoury tannins. Very good balance. This is subtle, classic claret that manages to be both definitive and delicate. A great example of a property whose style has very gradually evolved to keep pace with modern tastes within the traditional mould rather than suddenly adopted a new style and strategy.
My score 18

Ch Léoville Las Cases
A torpedo of a wine. Very very deep blackish purple. Explosive, almost smoky nose. So concentrated it is almost painful to taste at this stage. The acidity is extemely high, the tannins still rude. This is a statement of a different sort and could hardly be more different from Léoville Barton. I ask Jean-Hubert Delon whether he used his famous concentrator at all? "Pratiquement pas" is his answer. 77% Cabernet sauvignon, 9% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc. 60% new oak. 45 hl/ha.
My score 17.75

Ch Ducru Beaucaillou
Correct deep crimson. Clean (strange that that word keeps cropping up this vintage) with savour and punch. Full bodied, no compromises, very very youthful. Gentle and mouthfilling. Lively sappy tannins/ Dry finish.
My score 17.5

Ch Gruaud Larose
Full and splendid spicy nose. Some of the heaviest tannins of the appellation - quite brave in view of current fashion. The fruit currently seems a little overwhelmed by these inky tannins. Definitely made for the long term.
My score 17

Ch Lagrange **GV**
Very high proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon for Lagrange (counter the current trend in the Médoc): 76%. Toasty topnote, reminiscent of toasted bread rather than toasted oak. Then very silky, full and lively. Quite gentle. Pretty good.
My score 17

Clos du Marquis **GV**
Very deep purple. Lovely and mouthfiling after a clean, almost floral aroma. Flattering, exciting and well balanced. Slightly dry tannins at the end but utterly classic. Could be good value depending on the final price for this wine from specific parcels within the Delon of Léoville Las Cases St Julien holdings.
My score 17

Ch Léoville Poyferré
Very respectable and certainly much better value than Las Cases. A certain element of fireworks on the nose and good satiny texture. Not the most concentrated Médoc but fine and elegant. For the long term.
My score 17

Ch Talbot **GV**
Deep purple. Voluptuous nose. Very neat. Tannins at present a little tough and drying but well made and representative of the vintage. Needs considerable time.
My score 17-

Ch Beychevelle
Scented and impressive. Silky texture. Very good balance. Not a big, intense wine but very pretty and sophisticated. Just a hint of herbaceousness but definite lift.
My score 16.5

Ch Langoa Barton
Lowkey satiny nose. Very gentle palate entry with tannins just sneaking up from behind. For the moment a distinctly low key offering overshadowed by its stablemate.
My score 16.5

Ch Branaire
Very good colour, silky and scented but an odd oak chip smell (not that I am suggesting for a moment it was caused by oak chips). Full but chunky with rather rustic tannins.
My score 16