

## Bordeaux 2007 - the best wines...

12 Apr 2008 by FT

See hundreds of tasting notes with scores and suggested drinking dates [here](#).

What an extraordinary year! Having hundreds of samples of young 2007 Bordeaux earlier this week was too good to believe. Along with hundreds of other wine commentators and wine merchants I spent a long week in Bordeaux as usual in search of some of the world's most exciting agencies. Tim, by the way, had found a grape of soft, gentle like Pinot which struggled to make much impact on the palate. (However, I went from tasting lots to whites however, the order most producers of both colours prefer). It was difficult not to be struck by how much more gaps the whites had - particularly but not exclusively the sweet whites for which 2007 was such a good year, even if without perhaps the finesse of the 2006.

But when I think about the all-important reds, I find it difficult to think of areas I had I absolutely had to try. And when you are told even at a first growth such as Château Margaux that you could think about drinking the grand vin almost straight away, then it is difficult to see why wine collectors who already own much older wines would be keen to fork out first growth prices for the 2007s - especially in currencies such as the pound and the dollar that have lost so much value against the euro.

Bordeaux, as I explained last week, 2007 was such a difficult vintage. The cost of making was high in terms of manpower in the vineyard, Fumigations, conventional practices, and those who could afford it have selected only relatively small volumes for their grand vin. The last time so little Château Pétrier was produced, for example, was in the severely frost 1981 vintage. As at the highly successful Château Haut-Bonnet, only a third of production, the product of the very best plots, went into the grand vin at Château Margaux. This very damp summer favoured well-drained soils which in general make greater rather than clay. At Château Margaux they sold off a full 80% of production in bulk. I saw owner Corinne Métais announce as her director of winemaking Paul Fosséville criticised this figure.

So, unfortunately, I fear that the producers of Bordeaux's top wines will not reduce their prices to reflect the shortcomings of the 2007 vintage so much as we wine lovers would like - particularly in view of the fact that they are proving such hopes on emerging wine markets, especially in Asia. I found few producers who were not thoroughly and personally committed with the intricacies of China's burgeoning love affair with the wine.

The fact that there is no established tradition of buying wine en primeur in China, and that import taxes are now prohibitively high in so many new markets, particularly in the whole growing middle class in many hopes are proved, did not seem to diminish the 'hype' given indeed in most Bordeaux eyes whenever they mentioned Asia. But I fear that experienced buyers and tasters of red Bordeaux may well find the 2007 prices laughable when they are announced. I would not like to be responsible for selling large quantities of these wines, although if were a Bordeaux merchant I would be missing the significance of the number eight in China, and wanting very general buyers for the forthcoming vintage in Bordeaux in 2008 to be valued highly whatever the quality, so they should perhaps think twice about producing their allocations of 2008 by drinking the 2007s.

To judge from the Sunday flight from Geneva to Bordeaux at the beginning of previous week, as usual overloaded with Britain's fine wine merchants, there was no shortage of interest in this unusual vintage in the UK trade, even if that interest may turn out to be more academic than commercial. But I heard fewer American accents than usual in Bordeaux this year, and did not see any more Asian buyers than in the last few years. (Perhaps they were hidden away in specially luxurious quarters being opened for the grand and casual.)

I would say that the top wines of 2007 will be of most interest to those for whom money is no object and who feel that they must drink Bordeaux at all costs - which indeed does hold down to Chinese plutocrats. The best examples of 2007s from a rank of two down should be of interest to others, who need to fly easily drinkable, therefore preferably early-maturing, versions of smart names. And for the same reason, the vintage is perfect for restaurants without the space and budget to mature wine for the decades that some of Bordeaux's more typical vintages require.

The Merlot and the Cabernets had particularly different characters in 2007, with the Cabernets in general missing the much weaker Merlot. This often meant that second wines were even more different from their grands vins than usual. I have noted some of the most successful in my list, although these juicy little numbers are for drinking very young indeed. Cabernet Franc played a particularly important part in many wines such as Chateau Blanc, Haut-Bonnet and du Tertre.

Many of the less successful wines seemed to have a streak of green, underpinned to them even though acid levels were generally low. Those who succeeded tended to be those who picked out individual underripe berries. Example had two sorting tables after de-stemming, outside in the strong sunlight so that the sorters could pick out the merest tint of green.

As for the all-important first growths, it was interesting to see which seemed best suited to the particular qualities of 2007. Colour nowadays always makes a very fine wine, but I found the avarencent style of 2007 particularly hard to reconcile with my conception of that great, long-lived growth, whereas it seemed to suit my vision of the fragrant, more delicate Ch. Margaux particularly well. One might have thought that the fragility of 2007 that would have suited Lafite better than Mouton, but Mouton in reality on a hill thanks to the efforts of winemaker Philippe Dufour whereas Lafite seemed a bit too serious.

I have listed all those wines I gave a score of at least 17.5 out of 20 (although only sweet whites got more than 16) but there was no shortage of wines I thought worthy of 17 and, if the prices are not too high, I could recommend them for delicious, uncomplicated short-term drinking. I have also cited three second wines that should provide particularly good early drinking.

Top scoring 2007s

SWEET WHITES

Ch. Figeac

Ch Réserve

Ch Raymond-Lafite  
Ch Clos Haut-Peyraguey

Ch Closart

Ch Doye-Dalme

Ch Coust

Ch Rabaud-Promis

Ch de Fargues 2007

Ch Lamoignon-Guigard 2007

DRY WHITES

Ch Haut-Bon Blanc

Pouillon Blanc de Ch Margaux

Ch Lantès Haut-Bon

Ch Marzac Lagravère

REDS

Ch Haut-Bon

Ch Moulin-Rothschild

Ch Margaux

Ch Lascour

Ch Lafleur

Ch Cheval Blanc

Ch Péras

Ch l'Evangile

SUPERIOR SECOND WINES

La Pinte Cheval

La Pinte Moulin

See hundreds of tasting notes with scores and suggested drinking dates [here](#).