



Written by
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Bordeaux primeurs tastings shrunk



29 January 2016 See the latest news on this issue in [this thread](#) on our forum.

12 January 2016 Results of the 1,185 responses to our poll are published in [Consumers prefer commentators to taste blind](#).

21 December 2015 We launched a [poll](#) to discover how you feel about blind tasting.

17 December 2015 President of the Union des Grands Crus Olivier Bernard of Domaine de Chevalier has just sent this message to us wine writers:

For over 40 years, the Union des Grands Crus has presented recent vintages of great Bordeaux wines produced by their members. Our programmes have constantly evolved over the years in keeping with our desire to provide the best possible events.

After much thought, we have decided to give a new impetus to en primeur week in Bordeaux, although our goal remains the same: to improve your tasting comfort.

We have decided to present the 2015 vintage as follows:

1- The programme:

a. A conference on the 2015 vintage given by the Faculty of Oenology will take place on the afternoon of Monday the 4th of April in the Sauternes appellation, as well as the traditional tasting at classified growth châteaux in Sauternes and Barsac. Of course, we will meet for the usual Welcome Dinner for Journalists on Monday the 4th at Château de Fieuzal and, for those who wish, we will be glad to provide accommodation in a château or hotel.

b. In order to provide optimum tasting conditions, we decided to choose a single, large, conveniently located, well-lit, and functional venue this year. The new stadium (Stade de Bordeaux) best met these specifications. The stadium enables you to taste wines from the 2015 vintage in one location on Tuesday the 5th and Wednesday the 6th of April 2016 (in the past, this was spread over 25 different sites and 5 days).

-> Tuesday, the 5th of April: estates in the Graves, Pessac-Léognan, Saint-Émilion, and Pomerol appellations, as well as Sauternes and Barsac, will be pouring their wines at a sit-down tasting from 9 am to 1.30 pm. A buffet lunch with the château owners will be available starting at 12 noon.

-> The same schedule is planned for Wednesday, the 6th, when people will be able to taste wines from the Médoc. Furthermore, Sauternes and Barsac will once again be offered for those who did not have time to taste them the day before.

-> In light of the lunches attended by château owners and journalists on Tuesday and Wednesday, we will not be organising a closing dinner this year.

c. We remind you that wines can also be sampled at the usual 'stand-up' tastings for the trade that will take place in châteaux in the various appellations on the 5th, 6th, and 7th of April.

d. We would like to add that this year's programme will also include a new 'VIP Silent Tasting' area for all our wines. This will feature the customary stand-up format in the presence of the château owners all day long on Monday, the 4th of April at the Stadium. This tasting is specifically aimed at distributors who must register beforehand and reserve a time slot. Attendance will be subject to availability. On request, we will also be glad to welcome journalists who wish to take part.

2- Format of Tuesday and Wednesday tastings:

In order to provide the same conditions for tasting wines en primeur, whether it be a UGCB member or not, we will no longer be offering blind tastings. We believe this is more equitable for our estates because it avoids using two methods we feel are too far apart.

I wanted to share these changes with you and to point out that this new format will be evaluated during the second quarter of 2016. This will enable us to make any necessary adjustments in 2017.

Thank you for confidence and your interest in tasting our wines.

I do not think this will be well received.

In the past we had a full week to cover the hundreds of wines available to taste. Even taking the well over 120 wines of the UGC members alone, we were able to spread our tastings over four mornings and one Monday afternoon, leaving four afternoons for château visits. In this new system, we are supposed to cram them in to two short morning sessions. This seems crazy to me. Surely the effect will be to make our tasting less and not more accurate?

Besides, I really don't think a football stadium on the distant outskirts of the city (pictured) is likely to have a particularly conducive atmosphere for wine tasting, however new it is and however much it cost.

But the change I most resent is that the UGC will no longer sanction blind tasting. I'm sure there has been lobbying from the shrinking but much-appreciated majority who do not insist on our visiting them to taste at the château. They presumably think that we penalise wines tasted blind. But this proposed change robs us of a major aspect of these primeurs tastings. I have discussed it with Michel Bettane, who said he would no longer participate in the UGC tastings if blind tasting (which he requested originally, I believe) were no longer permitted. Presumably all this will drive more and more media tasters into the hands of the large négociants who organise primeurs tastings in parallel with the UGC ones. Is this really what the UGC wants, I wonder?

Perhaps it is no coincidence that these changes, unlikely to be welcomed with open arms, are being proposed for a vintage about which there has been as much hype as the 2015?