



Château Margaux



Wine Cellar at Château Margaux

Bordeaux – Part 2

ON NOVEMBER 30, 2021, our group of 15 people gathered in Paris to begin a much-anticipated trip to Bordeaux—the first international venture for all of us since the pandemic. This is the second article about our adventure, with the first being in the January/February 2022 issue.

The following day began with a tour of the new cellars at Château Margaux designed by the British architect Norman Foster. The cellars are magisterial and regal in design and just knowing the quality of Château Margaux makes the view of these barrels stretching into the distance seem unreal. We tested the second label, Pavillon Rouge 2010, which is still young and shows blackberry, cassis, leather, plum, cocoa, and spicy overtones. The 2006 Grand Vin shows a great nose of dark and blue fruit, coffee, smoke, and cedar. Our only disappointment was that my dear friend and owner Corrine Mentzelopoulos was not present to meet our group, but a sincere thanks to her for authorizing this visit during harvest.

Our next step was at Château cos d'Estournel

in Saint Estèphe. This fabulous winery has long been one of Bordeaux's finest producers and a favorite of mine. Notwithstanding my unrequited love of the wine, I had never previously visited the estate. The Far Eastern- and Indian-influenced architecture was breathtaking, and I especially remember the wine library. We had lunch at La Maison D'Estournel, a few kilometers from the estate. The food was among the best of the entire week, and we drank copious amounts of the estate's famous white and red wines. What an experience!

On our way "home" we had an appointment with my friend Alfred Tesseron, owner of Château Pontet-Canet in Pauillac. Since assuming its control in 1996, he has made significant changes resulting in Pontet-Canet consistently making some of Bordeaux's finest wine. The vineyards are situated immediately beside Château Mouton Rothschild (First Growth) in Pauillac.

GREEN HARVESTING

Alfred is a strong believer in reducing the vines'

yield through "green harvesting" or voluntarily dropping some of the young grapes to reduce the vines' yields. This, coupled with his decision to move to organic treatment of the vineyard has resulted in finer wines. He was the first Bordeaux producer to move to biodynamic treatment of his vineyards. Essentially this entails everything done in an organic vineyard but working according to phases of the moon and paying closer attention to each of the wines. He uses a special breed of horse, named Shire, which has a compact body with relatively large hooves which results in less soil compaction than other horses or tractors produce when pulling instruments through the vineyards.

One interesting concept from Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian father of biodynamics, is that fertilization of the vine should be accomplished by filling cattle horns with manure and placing them in the ground around the base of the vines. Pontet-Canet also uses amphorae made of concrete for fermentation and aging of the wine. We tasted the 2012 vintage which showed perfume of violet,

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crème de cassis, graphite, blackberry, and cedar. Pat and I were with our son and his wife for dinner at our hotel. After our extravagant and long lunch, a smaller meal was welcomed.

FOOD, WINE, AND LOVELY SETTINGS

The next day we started with a tour and tasting at Château Pape Clement. This château is named for the 13th-century pope who started in Bordeaux, but moved to Avignon in 1308. Pape Clement is owned by Bernard Magrez who owns some 30 châteaux, and we were treated to four: Château Fombrauge 2017 (Saint-Émilion Grand Cru); Château La Tour Carnet (Haut-Médoc); Château

Pape Clement 2010 (Graves); and Clos Haut-Peyraguey 2011 (Sauternes). All the wines were excellent, but the Pape Clement 2010 was exceptional with a nose of cassis, plums, blackberries, spice, and earth.

We had a “picnic” lunch sitting outside on the patio of a local sandwich shop and then headed to Château Les Cames Haut-Brion. The winery is new and built in the shape of a ship. The château is a beautiful building surrounded by vines and would be a lovely place for me to retire (Ha! Ha!). We tasted the second wine, Le C des Carmes Haut-Brion 2016, and the Les Carmes Haut-Brion 2014.

The latter was a dark ruby color with evidence of cassis, dark fruits, and floral scents.

Our final winery stop was at the Domaine de Chevalier. The facilities are beautiful, but the visit was short due to time constraints. We tasted only the 2020 vintage from barrel, but what a wine this will be! We returned to our hotel and changed clothes, and then motored to probably the most historically famous restaurant in the region—The Saint James. This evening was everything a Michelin-star restaurant should be—exquisite food with perfectly matched wines in an attractive setting. À Votre Santé! 🍷



Château Pontet-Canet



Shire horse at work.



Cattle horns for fertilizing.



Alfred Tesseron and Jim Bryant



Château Les Carmes Haut Brion



Château Pape Clement



Château De Chevalier



The Bryants are (from left) Autumn, Jim, Tyson, and Pat.

Barrington resident Jim Bryant is pursuing his passion and love of wine as an international wine consultant.

This follows a 30-year career in senior financial and general management positions at two Fortune 100 companies. He is the owner of James R. Bryant L.L.C.; contact him at profwino@comcast.net.