



Château d'Yquem

Bordeaux – Part 3

ON SEPTEMBER 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 third article about our adventure, with the first and second being in the January/February and March/April 2022 issues.

The next day we started with a tour at Château Haut-Bailly which has a new winery with a beautiful forested rooftop somewhat similar to that at Château Cheval Blanc. We tasted the second label La Parde de Haut-Bailly 2016, the Haut-Bailly 2016, and 2008. In addition, we bought an extra bottle of the outstanding 2010 vintage so that people would have an additional experience of another great older vintage.

I believe Haut-Bailly represents one of the greatest values in outstanding Bordeaux wines. The 2008 was from the more classical vintage and is more



The three wines tasted at Château d'Yquem.

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Château Raymond-Lafon

ready to drink than the 2010, which has very primary notes of dark cherry and plum with graphite and earth overtones. It is still youthful and will grow in complexity and enjoyment for many years.

We had a lovely lunch at Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey. We ate outside in the courtyard and although it was slightly chilly, we enjoyed the interval sun and the beautiful architecture from this vantage. The remainder of the afternoon was focused on Sauternes. This is a location south of Bordeaux City which produces the most famous dessert wines in world. Essentially the grapes (Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon) are left on the vines until fully ripened. Then if optimal conditions (high humidity) are present a fungus named Botrytis Cinerea invades the grape skin and reduces the liquid resulting in an incredibly rich and unctuous wine.

Our first winery visit and tasting was after our lunch at Lafaurie-Peyraguey, which was founded in 1618. We tasted the second label La Chapelle de Lafaurie-Peyraguey 2019 and two vintages of Lafaurie-Peyraguey—the 2016 and the dry version of 2019. The 2016 is 93% Semillon, 6% Sauvignon Blanc, and 1% Muscadelle with rich perfume of ripe tropical fruit, honey, peaches, pineapple, and vanilla with great balance between acid and sweet. The 2019 dry version showed a nose of pineapple, honeydew, and grapefruit which counterbalances the sweetness.

Our next stop was at Château Raymond-Lafon. The château was somewhat in need of repairs and updating, but the owner, Pierre Meslier, gave us an unforgettable tour and a great tasting. Prior to purchasing




A forested roof at Château Cheval Blanc.

Ramond-Lafon, Pierre was the managing director for Château d'Yquem. The blend is 80% Semillon and 20% Sauvignon Blanc, averaging 35 years old. We tasted the 2015 vintage and were very impressed.

Our last stop was a very rare treat, as few people visit Château d'Yquem. Arguably one of the, if not the greatest wineries in the world for sure, it produces the greatest dessert wine. We were treated to three perfect 100-point wines—the 2015, 2009, and the immortal 2001. Words never do justice to Château d'Yquem. I must admit I have been spoiled by having had almost all of the greatest vintages dating back to 1893. In fact, my greatest coup was buying the last three cases from the Château of perhaps the greatest d'Yquem ever made—the 1975.

Tasting d'Yquem seems to me as if one has exchanged his or her nasal and oral cavities with younger versions but having retained previously “honed” taste and smell abilities. The tastes and smells generally include orange blossom, honeysuckle, honey, dried apricot, peach, orange and lemon zest, brown sugar, fig, flowers, pineapple, spice, and herbs. Imagine such a symphony of sensations but on steroids. The beauty of tasting this blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes is that while luscious and sweet, it is bolstered by the acidity and is never cloying in taste.

People describe a d'Yquem tasting as “an experience of a lifetime” or “a once in a 100-year event” or “unbelievable”. This wine pairs best with foie gras or as a foil to blue cheese. It is also sensational when sipped with a fresh ripe pear or by itself. If you like yourself do not leave this life without trying Chateau d'Yquem. À Votre Santé! 

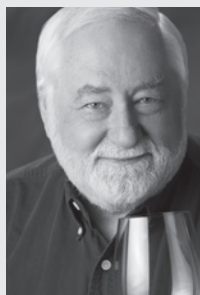


PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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.

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