

2009 BORDEAUX MAGIC BORDEAUX MUSCLE

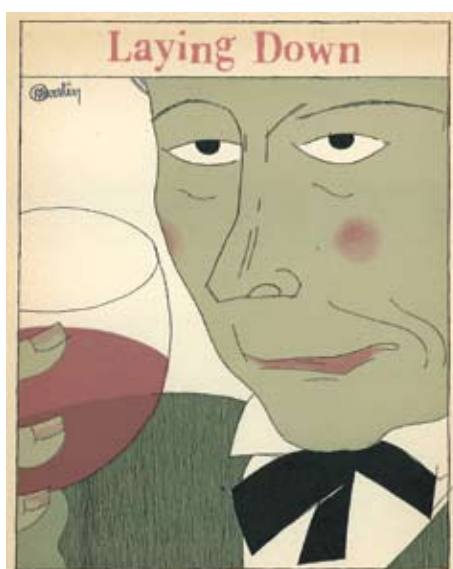
All are agreed that it is a stellar red-wine vintage, but it is far more heterogenous in style than many people realize. Following his annual château tastings, Michael Schuster shares his view of the vintage and recommends the top wines for quality and value. Additional commentary and notes by Michel Bettane and Thierry Desseauve

SUMMING UP THE 2009 VINTAGE

- The best red wines are probably the finest since 1959 or 1961.
- Great wines throughout the region, but Merlot was trickier to get “right” than Cabernet Sauvignon.
- A stylistic conundrum, with a great deal of variation that is not due to winemaking fads.
- High alcohol levels.
- Good, ample dry whites, but not a patch on the previous three vintages.
- Some great Sauternes, but a mixed performance.
- A late-ripening year after very warm and particularly dry conditions.
- Exceptionally healthy fruit.
- Prolonged harvest in perfect weather. No operational difficulties; the challenge was *when* to pick *which* parcels.
- A good-size, current average harvest of 5,745 million hl: 1 percent or so more than 2007 and 2002; 4 percent less than 2005; 14 percent less than 2004.

The growing season: a relatively simple story

Winter/spring The growing season was relatively straightforward: a cold, dry winter and early spring, with plenty of nourishing rainfall in January, April, May, and June to build up moisture reserves in the soil. May was mostly warm and sunny, but hailstorms in the middle of the month damaged vineyards (and therefore yield) in the southern Médoc (Cantenac, Aillac, Labarde), Léognan and the southern Graves, Entre-Deux-Mers, and east and northeast St-Emilion. Flowering was rapid and even, and it was over by mid-June in perfect warm conditions, producing



a large and healthy fruit-set, fat with promise by early July.

Summer Compared with the ten-year average, the months from July through late October were notable for longer actual hours of sunshine, higher mean temperatures (by a couple of degrees, but with fewer August extremes than in 2005 or 2003), and lower rainfall. In fact, both the average minimum and average maximum temperatures were higher than the decade average in every month from March to October. There was, however, just about sufficient moisture to keep most of the vines' thirst slaked, and the lack of August heat spikes meant that there was less “blocking” of

tannin ripening than in 2005. It was a very warm and dry summer but not a stressful one for the vines—unlike 2003 especially, or 2005. There was also no “heat wave” as such, and the nights remained relatively cool, maintaining the acidity in the grapes and allowing the aromas to develop rather than disappear.

Harvest: six weeks of almost uninterrupted blue skies and sunshine. Easy!

Dry-white harvest This took place early in September in perfect conditions.

Sweet-white harvest This also proceeded under cloudless skies, over a remarkably short period. Such abundant and healthy botrytis set in so rapidly after the modest rain on September 19 and 20 that most properties picked the bulk of their grapes as one giant *trie* between September 28 and October 9.

Red-wine harvest If spring and summer seemed to have laid the foundations for a fine vintage, phenolic ripening of the red grapes had in fact been much slower than the fine, warm weather might have suggested, and the red grapes still needed warmth, sunshine, moisture, and time. Nature obliged in each case, with the unusually fine autumn in effect making this the great vintage that it is. First, with just enough mid-September rainfall to get the ripening moving, and then, from the week beginning September 21, with four weeks of unprecedented sunshine, warmth and dryness for the time of year—along with ideally cool nights. The grapes could develop without problem, cold nights and cool mornings keeping the fruit fresh, and daytime temperatures regularly up to 77°F (25°C)—well above the norm—providing ideal conditions for continued ripening. The weather was such that, unusually, at no point did it dictate harvest actions. You could harvest, without pressure, at what you saw as the ideal moment.

And yet...

The “ideal moment” for the different red grape varieties—that point at which, for your wine, there is a perfect coincidence of ideal levels of sugar, acidity, and phenolic maturity—was, it seems in tasting retrospect, not that easy to decide. Many people I talked to said that different parcels, or different combinations of soil and variety, had reacted differently, often unexpectedly, to the particularities of the dry summer. This meant it was a much less easy choice, unconstrained as it was, than it seemed. The welcome but exceptional late September heat meant that Bordeaux, Merlot especially, was experiencing what so much of the New World knows well: rapidly rising sugar levels, but with the ripeness of the skins—aromatic richness of flavor and softening tannin texture—lagging behind the rising potential alcohol and slackening acidity. Not so easy a choice, then. And depending on your decisions, picking ranged from mid-September to late October.

Alcohol levels: an issue? Yes, even if it's not one we can be very precise about

The alcohol levels in the 2009 vintage are high. On the Left Bank, they are typically 13–14%; on the Right Bank, 14–15%, and some well over 15%. It hardly seems credible for claret. But being precise about the effects of high alcohol in wine is about as easy as grasping quicksilver. If I object, sometimes, to high alcohol levels in table wine, it is not principally a health-based or moral objection—not one relating to how much alcohol we absorb per glass or bottle, though that could be a perfectly good reason. No, it is essentially related to taste. Of course, one can have very well-balanced wines that are “high” in alcohol—look at fortified wines—but we “drink” those in a different way from table wines, and because of their particular constitutions, we don't really notice the alcohol as such.

In many high-alcohol table wines (seemingly starting at around 13.5%+), I am often conscious of the alcohol as a warmth, a hardness, a bitterness, or in more extreme cases,

as an overall fierceness. These characteristics are inherent in the nature of alcohol's tastes and, as such, inescapable to a greater or lesser degree. And that degree is very much dependent on the particular makeup of the wine, so it is difficult to generalize. But as a generalization, I prefer it when these sensations are less pronounced; otherwise, I find that they impinge, in an unpleasant way, on my ease of drinking. I say *my* ease of drinking, simply because I am sensitive to them, and I know that as people we differ in our sensitivity to these aspects of wine. But I am certainly not alone in my “tastes.” And one tends to get to like what one is used to, so a younger generation may well find higher-alcohol wines less of an issue than I do because that's what they will tend to have had more of. Or so I imagine.

What is interesting about the alcohol levels in 2009 red Bordeaux (and probably reds from anywhere for that matter) is the thoroughly inconsistent relationship between a given level of alcohol and less-than-pleasant tastes and textures. François Mitjavile's 2009 Tertre Roteboeuf weighs in at 15.6%—bound to be hot, hard, bitter, fierce, one might think. But it's not at all: a gentle warmth, a distinctly mouth-filling character, no more than that. It is a beautifully balanced, beautifully tasting, effortlessly classy wine. Which makes the quicksilver point. And that is why I don't want to say that I object to high-alcohol table wines as such. There are many lovely clarets at 13.5–14.5% in this vintage. Equally, there are many in which, if you are sensitive to the effects I mention, you will taste them. And I mention them in my notes. Any unripeness of tannin and/or any excess extraction of tannins does seem to bring out high alcohol's hot, hard, and bitter aspects. And this was something that you had to be particularly careful about as a winemaker, because the higher the alcohol in your wine, the more easily tannin is extracted. And when you have both high tannin *and* high alcohol, the two start to reinforce each other, which is when you get “hot” and “hard.”

Enough of that now! But I have put the levels of alcohol in the notes where I was given the information.

2009 claret style? A stylistic conundrum: mixed-message answers

For a great red-wine vintage, with good to great wines across the region, there is a surprising variety, even an irregularity, of styles this year. Left Bank Cabernet Sauvignon, in the Médoc especially, seems to have been particularly, and more consistently, successful. Though there are some wonderful Merlot-based wines, it appears to have been trickier to get quite the same perfect balance as regularly as with the best Cabernets, mainly because Merlots ripen earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon. And to have left them to ripen to the same perfection as the best Cabernets would in many cases have meant impossibly high sugar levels or raisiny flavors. This, along with the varied reactions of individual terroirs to the very dry, very warm conditions, and the very different personal decisions on yield, harvest dates, and vinification techniques, account for a very mixed message on style.

(laying down)

Styles vary not only across the region but also within the communes. At a generally high quality level, they range from graceful, supple, fragrant middleweights, via richly ripe, sumptuously textured, aromatically rich and complex beauties—*Bordeaux magic*—to wines that are alcohol potent, forcefully tannic, atypically powerful expressions of claret—*Bordeaux muscle*—and with all the shades between. In my notes, I try to indicate clearly which are which.

Tactile luxury of texture, and power vs richness

So much of what we value in fine red wines is related to their texture, and their exhilarating feel—tactile luxury—is one of the most distinctive and gratifying features of 2009 clarets. This feature, in particular, will mark it out as a truly great vintage—superior, in most cases, to 2005, whose tannins, in many wines, seem not to have been quite as ripe as the seemingly perfect growing conditions promised and which often seem to reflect some of the dryness of the year in an austerity of taste.

In contrast, 2009's most rare and precious gift to its fruit was fully ripe skins and solids that then had a wonderful potential for tactile luxury, if you didn't push their extraction too far—hence such comments as, "I'm obsessed here by extraction. Too much and you lose the wine's, and the year's, identity" (Thomas Duroux, at Palmer); or, "It's easy to lose, to destroy, both the density and the delicacy of the fruit by overextracting it" (Jean Michel Laporte, at La Conseillante). These views are echoed by many winemakers this year. But perhaps the gift was not evenly shared across the region. For what I noticed in many wines with a high proportion of Merlot was power, without the particularly satisfying, easy, caressing richness of texture that there is in so many of the best Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines.

This may be due to the fact that in much of the Merlot, the skins and pips—tannins—were less completely ripe, at similar and higher levels of pulp (sugar) ripeness, than was the case with Left Bank Cabernet Sauvignon. If the wines are impressive, and many are, some come across with a slight hardness, to my palate, where there is force in addition to fineness. This is something to consider, since it is counterintuitive that Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines should be easier in texture than those with a Merlot base.

In the best wines, there is a concentration and density of fruit sweetness without excess, an overall core fleshiness with caressingly fine-textured tannins, a remarkable scope, complexity, and length, plus a delightfully defining freshness of acidity from the cool autumn nights during the prolonged late season.

2009 red-wine quality

The red wines range from good to astonishing, with a fair number of properties, across the region, having produced their finest wines since 1959 or 1961. Yields are mostly much lower than they were in 1982, 1989, or 1990 (vintages with which 2009 is commonly compared), fruit selection is more severe, winemaking techniques are more refined, and of course there were those remarkable weather conditions. No

claret vintage is ever completely homogenous in quality—it is, after all, made by people—but I think the well-made lesser wines are likely to be much more attractive, and sooner, than their still relatively tough 2005 counterparts, the recent "great" vintage with which 2009 is mostly compared. And because of the homogeneity of quality in the best properties, the "second" or "other" wines from these look like being a particularly good hunting ground for bibbers, as distinct from investors. Many of these, like their grand vin counterparts, are among their best ever.

Compared with 2005

It looks as though many 2009s, though by no means all, will outclass their respective 2005s. In particular, their tannins, especially those in Médoc Cabernets, will be more refined, their textures more polished. And there may well be some 2008s that are as good—more elegantly harmonious, at least, if not as powerful—as their respective 2009s.

The communes

The Médoc There is not a lot of point in singling out the communes here, because there are splendid wines up and down the hierarchy in each of them. Across the Médoc, it was perhaps easier to make the "perfect" 2009s, simply because there is a lower proportion of Merlot, and it is therefore less important in the wines' makeup. Indeed, in order to avoid excess "weight," many châteaux opted to include more than usual of the superb, but less sugar-rich, Cabernet Sauvignons in their top blends. Alcohol levels are by no means excessive in many of the wines here. To take just a couple of examples, Pichon Lalande is a "mere" 13%, and Latour 13.7%—modest in the context of the vintage and imperceptible as such. If there is a 2009 "sweet spot," it would have to be Pauillac and St-Julien. But there are plenty of fine St-Estèphes, and Margaux (almost inevitably the least consistent because of its size and great variety of soils) has produced many wonderful wines.

Pessac-Léognan reds Here, too, there are excellent 2009s. But there is often more Merlot to deal with. And something I hadn't noticed as such before—and I don't think it is my imagination—is that there does seem to be a noticeable difference this year between Pessac and Léognan. The Pessac vineyards are all within the Bordeaux conurbation, within the Rocade, the ring road. As a group (the Haut-Brion clutch, Pape Clément, Carmes Haut-Brion), they seem a palpably more powerful and muscular expression of Graves than the Léognan wines to the south, well outside the city proper. Perhaps the overall temperatures remained that bit higher in the city, particularly at night, making for more potent Merlot in particular.

St-Emilion and Pomerol The wide range of alcohol levels notwithstanding, there are gorgeous wines across the Right Bank and many wines with a high proportion of Merlot that combine intensity of flavor with delicacy of touch—mainly the consequence of taste-based winemaking decisions. For

in St-Emilion especially, as usual, so much depends on winemaking stylistic preferences, and as a winemaker you choose between the extremes of late-picked, alcoholic, extracted, raisiny wines (becoming less fashionable?) and more old-fashioned moderation. The limestone-plateau wines seem to be particularly successful as a group: Ausone, Belair, Canon, Clos Fourtet. In Pomerol, too, the plateau wines, from clay and gravel, have produced wines every bit up to the image and potential of the year: Pétrus, Hosanna, Conseillante, L'Eglise-Clinet, Clinet, Clos L'Eglise. And for the first time in many years, both Nenin and Petit Village (owned and managed by Médocains) have made wines that really taste like Pomerol rather than "Right Bank Médocs."

Pessac-Léognan dry whites Good wines, also in a variety of styles. Some are ample, weighty, fulsome; others are lively, elegant middleweights. What they lack, and the comparisons are inevitable, are the fruit concentration, vigor, and aromatic projection of flavors in the 2008, '07, and '06 wines. That said, the top wines will keep—medium term—while most will make attractive early drinking.

Sauternes/Barsac High expectations here, given what seemed to be almost perfect harvest conditions, and fruit in excellent condition, with abundant noble rot. Climens proprietor Bérénice Lurton writes, "2009 Climens is definitely in the ranks of the greatest Climens in history"; and the Meslier proprietors at Raymond Lafon say: "It is at least as good as 1990 and 2003 and brings to mind the magnificent 1893." The musts were very rich, and the wines have the very high sugar levels typical of recent vintages but with a fresh acidity—higher than in 2005 and 2003, mostly lower than in 2007 and 2001. The levels of botrytis, the sugar and acid figures, along with the general euphoria in the region suggest a great, consistent vintage. But my impressions were mixed at the Union des Grand Crus tasting, and at this stage the wines seem less consistent across the board than the 2007s, especially, at the same period. That said, there are some spectacular highlights, at least the equal of 2007 and 2001. The good Barsacs are tight, slender, minerally beauties; the Sauternes are broader and richer in constitution; the best of both communes are surprisingly elegant and fine-boned wines, of remarkable finesse given their sugar richness.

Value; and to buy or not to buy en primeur

The financial-investment market in Bordeaux has its own understandable momentum this year, but even more important is the chance to invest now in future drinking pleasure, for there are exceptional red wines at every level. As I mentioned above, the "second" or "other" wines from the best properties may well offer particularly good drinking value, being, like their grand vin counterparts, among their best ever. The "buy" signs are clear. In this splendid but stylistically varied vintage, be guided by the styles you like, and buy as much as you can afford. Unfortunately, I won't be the only one conveying this simple message.

What about my taste? For those who don't know...

Like all wine commentators, I try to be objective in my descriptions and assessments; but also like all wine commentators, I have preferences for certain styles of wines, and I make these clear in my notes. I can readily admire what I wouldn't necessarily want to have at my own table, but constitutionally I don't like excess, and I feel strongly that winemaking excesses are almost by definition "in poor taste," often just lacking simple common sense. Like most people, I am often impressed by powerful impressions at the tasting bench and by high-quality new oak. But my wife and I do a lot of entertaining—and a lot of wine drinking—and I also recognize that these impressions don't make for ease of drinking, for actual beverage pleasure—at least not for us and many of our guests. And certainly not all the time.

Absolute favorites

There are so many good wines this year that rather than list the names under communes in different categories of price and hierarchy, as in the past, I have simply highlighted them in my notes with an asterisk (*). These are my personal favorites, from a purely "potential drinking pleasure" point of view and irrespective of price—wines whose style suits my palate and I would choose to buy and cellar myself.

The notes

With the exception of some Sauternes, all of these wines were tasted by me from fresh or recent samples, at the châteaux or their offices, in March and April 2010. Michel Bettane and Thierry Deseauve normally tasted at the UGC tastings, except where otherwise indicated.

Where I have the figures, I have indicated: the proportion of the grand vin as a percentage of the total harvest; the overall yield in hectoliters per hectare (hl/ha); the % alcohol by volume; the grams of sugar per liter in Sauternes; and the proportion of the principal grape varieties in the blend (which is why they do not always add up to 100 percent): CS=Cabernet Sauvignon, M=Merlot, MA=Malbec, CF=Cabernet Franc, CA=Carmenère, PV=Petit Verdot; SB=Sauvignon Blanc, SG=Sauvignon Gris, SM=Semillon, MU=Muscadelle.

Samples: With the best will in the world, one is at the mercy of barrel samples, and if they appear not to be representative of the property or vintage, there is rarely time to obtain substitutes. In many cases, these wines are not finally assembled—though it makes no sense for the properties to put forward unrepresentative blends.

Color: This is so consistently dark these days that it is hardly worth mentioning specifically, unless it is atypically weak or inky for the property.

Scores: These are provisional barrel-sample scores—hence the small spread. I generally find that my impressions, when tasting from barrel again a year later or when the wines are bottled, are pretty close.

Crus bourgeois appear with their 2003 classification.

St-Emilions appear with their 2006 classification.

(laying down)

St-Estèphe

MB/TD: The balance of Merlot and Cabernet plantings in this appellation contributed to the overall success of the vintage; and since they were both wonderful, the proportions didn't really matter: the Calon-Ségur blend is 90% Cabernet Sauvignon; Montrose and Cos d'Estournel, 65%. The wines are magnificently structured, with a rare tension for wines that are so high in alcohol (13.5–14.5%), with rich, voluptuous tannins. It seems that they will easily outperform the excellent 2005 vintage.

Château Le Boscq Cru Bourgeois – 15/15.5+ (65% CS, 10% PV, 25% M)

MS: Very ripe blackberry nose, quite marked minerality, too; well balanced in a fairly powerful way, with firm St-Estèphe tannins, a lively acidity, and plenty of fruit behind; long and juicy, but certainly in a fairly solid, chewy style; typical, muscular, St-Estèphe; a satisfying fruit bomb but not without finesse, and with very good, sweet fruit and fragrance persistence. 2014–22+. **15/15.5+**

Château Calon-Ségur 3ème Cru – 18

(58% harvest; 90% CS, 7% M, 3% PV)

MB/TD: Like Pontet-Canet, Calon-Ségur opted for purity and elegance of texture with a higher proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon, which has given the wine great momentum. Never before have they used such a high proportion of Cabernet (90%), and not for at least 50 years has the wine been so complete and refined. One of the highlights of the vintage. **19**

MS: Dumb, but mineral and blackcurrant nose; taut, elegant, very finely tannic, fairly concentrated wine without being particularly dense; very ripe but very fresh and vital in fruit; complex, close-knit, markedly mineral in aromas, long and graceful to taste, with lovely, fresh, scented length. A fine Calon, packed yet elegant. **16.5/17+**

Château Clauzet – 15.5

MB/TD: The Baron Velge and his team chose elegant extraction here. The 2009 is refined and subtle, with nice flavors of black fruit and a soft finish. **15.5**

Château Cos d'Estournel 2ème Cru – 18?

(56% harvest; 65% CS, 33% M, 2% CF)

MB/TD: This massive wine is the only one that our team found extremely difficult to score. We find ourselves in unknown territory here because of the unique style of this vintage. The unusually high alcohol and the flamboyant flavors (Jean-Guillaume Prats called them “baroque”) set it completely apart from the others. But the perfect way in which it was vinified leaves no doubt. It would therefore be easy to brush it aside as not belonging in the Médoc, but we wouldn't do that, knowing the power of the terroir always comes through with age, no matter what choices the winemaker made. But we have a hard time imagining how the terroir

will express itself in 30 years. Pagodes de Cos, the “other” wine from the château, which has the added benefit of some sumptuous Cabernet Sauvignon, seems to be even more anchored in the terroir, and may be even more intellectually satisfying, despite slightly harder tannins. Depending on the day, **16–19**

MS: Dense, raisiny ripe fruit to smell; powerful, muscular wine with a mass of fruit, alcohol, extract, and tannin—huge and forceful. Abundant, dry, slightly raisiny fruit, the refreshing vitality gone, and a slightly fierce presence instead; long and complex in the mouth, spicy, potent, and persistent. New World comes to Bordeaux, with a considerable tenacity of flavor, and a marked bitter-chocolate finish. Jean-Guillaume Prats agrees that it will be controversial and argues that “the issue is a stylistic one, not a quality one.” I'm not at all sure you can really separate the two. It is very good of its type, I acknowledge, and that is how I have scored it. But that type is almost unrecognizable as claret as most of us know it (have known it?). I can't see this ever being pleasurable for a palate like mine... It raises the issue, stuck with scores as we are, of quite how to mark such a wine. What are we marking for? One mark for power to impress: 20/20? One mark for drinkability: 14/20? And a third for investment potential? Oh, and possibly one for claret “typicity”? It certainly draws attention to itself, and perhaps that is a large part of its point. 2025–50+. **17.5/18**

Château Cos d'Estournel Pagodes de Cos – 15.5/16

(44% harvest; 69% CS, 30% M)

MS: Dense, currently wood-dominated on the nose, but clearly very ripe fruit behind; rich, generous, powerful wine with abundant tannin that is well masked by the fruit matter and not astringent or excessive; that said, a faintly raisiny warmth of flavor, moderate complexity, but considerable power in the Bordeaux context; very good, slightly bitter, raisiny fruit persistence. Tiring! Like the Cos itself, good—of its type; but you have to like that type, where a touch of alcohol fierceness, hardness, burn is almost inescapable. 2017–30. **15.5/16**

Château Cos Labory 5ème Cru – 16.5

MB/TD: A powerful wine, very ripe, very full, a little less complex on the finish than some others at this blind tasting, but with all the usual straightforward qualities of this great wine and the assurance of a reasonable price in this exceptional vintage. **16.5**

Château Le Crock Cru Bourgeois – 15/15.5

(55% CS, 30% M, 6% CF, 6% PV)

MS: A lovely, perfumed, persistent, and particularly refined nose of blackberry and mineral; crisp acidity defining a very ripe fruit on a mineral medium-weight wine; a sweet, quite dense fruit within the firm St-Estèphe tannin, but lovely matter behind

it, and good fruit length, too; excellent Le Crock, one of the best ever. 2015–25. **15/15.5**

Château Haut-Marbuzet Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel – 17

MB/TD: Delicate and fresh, Haut-Marbuzet is a sure bet in 2009, refined and incredibly delicious. **17**

Château Lafon-Rochet 4ème Cru – 17.5

MB/TD: Slightly reduced on the nose, powerful, balanced, and harmonious on the mid-palate, with typical Pauillac notes of cedar, great future. A little hint of stress in the tannins, slightly angular. **17.5**

Château Meyney – 16.5

MB/TD: More dense than Haut-Marbuzet, which came just before it in our tasting, with powerful tannins, this is a big wine. A great wine that could be drunk in a few years but that our grandchildren would also be able to drink happily... if there's any left. **16.5**

Château Montrose 2ème Cru – 18.5

(72% harvest; 65% CS, 29% M, 5% CF, 1% PV)

MB/TD: A grand Montrose, the biggest, most structured since 1970, but with more confident flavors, pure, strict, and better defined, also bringing to mind the sumptuous 2003, though a little less flamboyant. The finish is incomparable, not always easy to comprehend due to tight tannins and those metallic notes, similar to Latour, on the finish. Long cellaring will do it justice. **19**

MS: Closed to smell, but a fine, ripe blackberry-and-blackcurrant background; immediately full and warmly mouth-filling, harmonious, with a very firm but very fine-grained tannin; a nice freshness, too; long and powerful to taste, with a clear, freshly ripe fruit core, very long across the palate: density, matter, and great persistence. Finish also a touch hot and bitter, if you are sensitive to that. Gravel-backed elegance, along with 2009 power and force, though without heaviness. A deeper, ampler, sweeter, more velvety, and more powerful impression than its still-splendid 2008, which is an easier, fresher, more precise wine. 2022–40+. **17.5/18+**

La Dame de Montrose – 15/15.5+

(28% harvest; 82% M, 18% CS)

MS: Fresh, ripe cassis to smell; full, powerful, and finely tannic around a flowing central core; ripe, spicy, warm, generous, and fleshy for a second wine, with a clear mineral background, and a good, firm, fruit-cored length. Power and weight, but not “bulk,” come to mind. Will be very satisfying as a weightier style of second wine. 2014–22. **15/15.5+**

Château Les Ormes de Pez Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel – 16.5

(54% CS, 37% M, 7% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: A huge success, offering all the

power of the vintage but also the elegant texture of the tannins that we have never experienced until now, tannins that are particularly well integrated into the texture. Highly recommended. **17.5**

MS: Dense, slightly raw, oaky nose; medium-to full-bodied, concentrated wine with a clear St-Estèphe sinew, but no coarseness, and a very fresh delineation; most attractive, ripe fruit heart, elegant for its appellation and level, long and fine across the palate, quite rich and plush within the frame, and with excellent fruit persistence. Very nice indeed. 2014–22. **15+/15.5**

Château de Pez Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel – 16.5

(50% CS, 42% M, 5% PV, 3% CF)

MB/TD: This marks the triumphant return of this property to the highest ranks of the appellation, on the same level as many of the crus classés of the sector. A great nose and palate, with stunningly noble aromas, bringing to mind those of a great Pauillac, with a long, harmonious, fresh finish that will recall the wonderful minty quality of the 1955 and 1961. **18**

MS: Dense, mineral, and faintly animal nose; rich, moderately concentrated, firmly but finely tannic wine; a marked minerality here, behind a lovely core sweetness of fruit, a sweetness rendered particularly toothsome by its freshness of acidity; elegant, ripe, mineral, with a fine, attractively chewy St-Estèphe sinew and good length. 2014–22+. **15/15.5+**

Château Phélan-Ségur Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel – 17.5

MB/TD: A classic expression of the vintage and of the winery, with a great core and perfectly integrated tannins, wonderful length, and lots of class, without being ostentatious. Highly recommended. **17.5**

Château Tronquoy Lalande Cru Bourgeois – 15/15+

(62% harvest; 51% M, 42% CS, 7% PV)

MS: Ripe red fruit and marked gravel to smell; firmly tannic, but not coarsely so, plus a fresh acidity; dense, ripe red fruit, moderate complexity and length across the palate, good mineral and fruit persistence—quite powerful to finish. Should make a very satisfying Cru Bourgeois in eight years or so. Solid wine, plenty of matter, good length. 2017–25. **15/15+**

Pauillac

MB/TD: The wines of Pauillac convey the monumental character of the vintage without losing sight of their traditional style, thanks to the location of the vineyards and the dedication of the winemakers. Our team of tasters loved the wines as a whole but did have a slight preference for the ones with a higher proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon, the king of the rich gravel-and-clay soils of the appellation.

Château d'Armailhac 5ème Cru – 17

(60% CS, 24% M, 14% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: The most complete wine Armailhac has made recently, it has more graphite notes than Clerc Milon and is a little less full-bodied, but there's more elegance in the tension of the wine and the way it lingers on the palate. A great future ahead. **18**

MS: Fragrant, blackberry nose; moderately, but nicely concentrated, medium-full wine with a fine-grained tannin and a fresh acidity; fresh, sweetly ripe, savory flavor of some complexity and good length; polished, fine-textured, refined, and aromatic, but without quite the excitement I had expected this year, especially after the past three vintages here. 2017–30. **15.5/16.5**

Château Batailley 5ème Cru – 18.5

MB/TD: A wonderful Pauillac, exemplary in its character and build in a vintage that is off the charts. Noble flavors of prune and cedar, ultra-refined tannins, a bright future. **18.5**

Château Clerc Milon 5ème Cru – 17

(50% CS, 44% M, 4% CF, 1% PV, 1% CA)

MB/TD: One sample was tired, another tasted at the property was perfect: wonderful depth, smooth and velvety, a collector's wine; perfectly balanced flavors and tannins; a precise expression of this exceptional vintage. **18**

MS: Fine, sweet (Merlot) black- and blueberry fruit—scented and lightly mineral; nicely balanced medium-full wine, moderately concentrated, with a lively defining acidity and a moderate, fine-grained tannin; ripe, sweet, fresh, and supple to taste, long and graceful, with a particularly pleasing juicy quality rather than a grand impression; as so often, a little more flesh (all that Merlot) than the d'Armailhac at a similar quality level. 2017–30. **15.5/16.5**

Château Croizet-Bages 5ème Cru – 18

MB/TD: This is a beautiful Pauillac: complete, with noble notes of cedar and graphite; wonderful substance, balanced tannins, perfectly mastered vinification, showing the spectacular progress of the winery. The terroir is starting to show through, and this may be the best wine from the tiny village of Bages. **18**

Château Duhart-Milon 4ème Cru – 17

(63% CS, 37% M)

MB/TD: Much more vinosity and sparkle than Carruades, a bit less pure finesse—but we prefer the balance here, which expresses with force and personality their superb terroir in this great vintage. **18**

MS: Gravel and minerals on the nose, but ripe, discreet blackcurrant, too; softly rich, supple middleweight, with a fresh acidity and finely dry tannin; ripe and fleshy, a slightly “fluid” character by comparison with the best 2009s, an easygoing, flowing, sunny personality, but also with a fine, discreet pebbly aromatic character, too; gently

complex, nice aromatic length, and excellent fruit persistence. Given its recent form, I had expected a bit more depth; nonetheless, a very good, if not stunning, Duhart. 2017–30. **16/16.5**

Château Grand-Puy Ducasse 5ème Cru – 18

MB/TD: A great wine showing all facets of the property and the vintage, in a classic and polished style that will please wine lovers: loads of cedar and tobacco, wonderful mouthfeel, clean on the finish. By far the best wine they have ever made, and a true Pauillac. **18**

Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste 5ème Cru – 17.5

(80% CS, 18% M, 2% CF)

MB/TD: An excellent Pauillac, elegant and sober, with a clearly defined texture and firm but not overpowering tannins; a classic that never goes out of style. But does it have all the grandeur of the vintage? We asked ourselves the question but didn't find the answer. **17.5**

MS: Nothing showy on the nose, but a ripe, restrained, finely gravelly fruit; wonderfully balanced, nicely concentrated, rich middleweight, very refinedly tannic, fleshy and supple, yet fresh and precise, too; long, easy, fully ripe Cabernet richness to taste; subtle and complex, generous in juicy ripe fruit and aroma, racy, refreshing, and Médoc minerally behind the delicious juiciness. Ease, harmony, and great length of gentle Cabernet fruit and gravel aromas. Superb, fully ripe, and joyously fresh GPL, probably the best since 1961. Should be accessible early and age beautifully, gracefully. Not big, but a perfect, effortless expression of claret, and of Pauillac. 2017–35+. **17/17.5+**

Château Haut-Bages Libéral 5ème Cru – 15.5/16

(70% CS, 30% M)

MS: Very ripe fruit on the nose; a rich middleweight with a firmly present tannin and the year's fresh acidity; a fine, plump fruit core, warm, fresh, lively, and very nicely defined; moderately complex, even, fine, gravelly, and with excellent black-fruit length. A slight Pauillac sinew, but a very nice Haut-Bages. 2017–25+. **15.5/16**

Château Haut-Batailley 5ème Cru – 16

(78% CS, 20% M, 2% CF)

MB/TD: Pretty notes of cedar. Less vinosity than most of the other fifth growths—the winemaker chose suppleness and pleasant fruit, but it doesn't have the nobility and complexity of Pontet-Canet, which is made in a similar style. **16.5**

MS: A clear “pebbly” character and a very nice, gentle cassis on the nose—should make a lovely bouquet; beautifully balanced, fairly concentrated (for the cru) middleweight; an excellent balance of ripe fruit to fresh acidity, and gentle tannin; generous, harmonious, easy, classy expression of HB; long, ripe, gently dense, flowing cassis fruit, with dry

(laying down)

Médoc gravel aromas and fine length. A most complete Haut-Batailley. 2014–24. **16/16+**

Château Lacoste Borie - 15/15+

(70%, 28%, 2% CF)

MS: Light, slightly lean impression on an overall mineral nose; very pretty wine, fresh, supple, moderately concentrated, and gently tannic; a soft, ripe, juicy fruit, with nice length across the palate and on the finish. An uncomplicatedly delicious second wine, likely to be good value. Drink early. **15/15+**

Château Lafite Rothschild 1er Cru - 19

(under 50% harvest; 82.5% CS, 17% M, 0.5% PV)

MB/TD: This property has rarely produced such a massive wine, all the while preserving its noble texture and, above all, its ability to explode on the palate with force and distinction, just at the moment when you thought it was finished. Sadly, only a few lucky people will have the opportunity to experience this wine. **19.5**

MS: Softly ripe, fragrant raspberry and blackberry fruit; more Merlot plum than Cabernet cassis at the moment; a beautifully balanced, rich, elegant combination of power and delicacy—that is, very Lafite! Almost juicily sweet and deceptively easy to taste, but with a subtle, clear, intense, and persistent aromatic presence, very mineral, very mouth-coating; great length across the palate, with an understated, effortless richness and terrific, gently fragrant persistence. An almost Burgundian transparency of flavor, with a marked, fine sweetness and minerality on the finish, where the presence of the very fine tannins makes itself felt. Long, fine, graceful, and complete in an understated way. Most individual, distinctly Lafite. Likely to be accessible relatively early. 2024–50. **18.5/19.5**

Les Carruades de Lafite - 16

(50% harvest; 51% CS, 42% M, 5% CS, 2% PV)

MB/TD: Supple texture, ripe grape flavors, not overextracted; very pleasant, but the wine certainly doesn't measure up to some of its equals in St-Julien or Margaux. **16.5**

MS: Gentle, ripe-fruit-and-mineral nose; nicely balanced, moderately dense wine, with a modest but fine-textured tannin and fresh acidity; easy, juicy, ripe blackberry and raspberry fruit, moderately long in the mouth, quite fluidly Merlot in character, but not weak, and with a crisp, fresh, red-fruit finish. A very attractive Carruades, without being a grand second wine. 2012–20. **15/15.5**

Château Latour 1er Cru - 19.5

(38% harvest; 91.3% CS, 8.7% M)

MB/TD: Colossal structure, the tannins in proportion to the wine; slightly less immediately refined than Lafite, immense and rigorous, still very, very young; in short, this is exactly what we love and would expect from Latour in this exceptional vintage. But who in “old Europe” will be able to afford it? **19.5**

MS: Very mineral, very dense on the nose; rich, ample, broad-shouldered, yet so finely cut, with a super-fine tannin of wonderful texture and a fresh acidity; luxuriously compact wine; the classic “dry yet fully ripe” flavors of the best claret, packed with mineral aromas, deep, ripe, black-fruit sweet, baritone sonorous, an essence of Pauillac, but without a hint of excess. Long and resonant, with both fruit and aromas effortlessly saturating the palate—such a light touch for such power—plush and fine, density without force, a remarkable, persistent, inner energy and terrific length. A perfect, effortlessly harmonious performance: a very great Latour. More density and matter than '82, for example. Magnificent, a clear candidate for perfection. 2022–50. **20**

Les Forts de Latour - 17.5

(46% harvest; 65% CS, 32% M, 2% PV, 1% CF)

MB/TD: Without doubt the most vinous, most structured, most finely sculpted of the “other” wines in this vintage, benefiting from some extraordinary Merlot that was left out of the grand vin: amazingly precise vinification. A magnificent wine that remarkably expresses this great terroir and will be a great consolation to those who don't have access to the grand vin. **18.5**

MS: Dense, ripe fruit on the nose, so refined already just to smell; beautifully balanced, rich, dense, harmonious wine, fresh and very finely tannic; graceful, rich in ripe but easygoing, gravel-suffused black fruit; long, polished, complex, complete, and with superb length; like Latour itself, very aromatic alongside the fruit. Absolutely lovely Forts de Latour, all gentle power and refinement. 2018–30+. **16.5/17+**

Pauillac de Latour - 15.5/16

(16% harvest; 54% CS, 46% M)

MS: Dense, ripe black fruit, with a clear “Latour” minerality; full, concentrated, beautifully balanced third wine, fresh and fine textured; intense and packed with ripe black fruit, remarkable complexity for the level, and with very good length. A greatly satisfying third wine that, if you can procure it, should be good value. 2016–25+. **15.5/16**

Château Lynch-Bages 5ème Cru - 17.5

(68% harvest; 76% CS, 18% M, 4% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: This barrel sample was a bit tired, not really right, but others show the true substance of the wine, with splendid notes of cedar and a majestic texture. It needs a few more months for the power of the wine to become more integrated. **17.5** or more

MS: Dense, crisp, mineral, ripe red- and blackcurrant fruit on the nose, complex and aromatic; rich, compact wine, firm in tannin, firm in acidity, around a juicily ripe, red- and blackcurrant fruit; a pure, taut, firmer style within the vintage; long and juicy and subtle within the Pauillac muscle, but without coarseness, and with fine aromatic and fruit

length. Here, again, that fine, concentrated fruit core of the best 2009s. A fine, fairly long-term Lynch-Bages. 2022–40. **17/17.5**

Echo de Lynch - 15/15+

(72% CS, 17% M, 11% CF)

MS: Dense, closed, freshly ripe blackcurrant and mineral nose; very nicely balanced, very Cabernet wine; a fine concentration of pure, crisp, blackcurrant fruit, within a moderate, firm, dry tannin; crisply fruity, mineral-tinged, and with very nice fruit persistence. Quite a serious Echo. Appetizing but firm, will need 3–5 years. 2013–23. **15/15+**

Château Lynch-Moussas 5ème Cru - 17

MB/TD: The color is a little less intense than Croizet, anise fragrance, a soft Pauillac; velvety, suave, linear, but all in all, the tannins are a little less elegant than in other wines from the area. **17**

Château Mouton Rothschild 1er Cru - 19

(88% CS, 12% M)

MB/TD: Definitely the most complete Mouton since 1949, with all the refinement of modern vinification. Commendable from beginning to end, despite the massive tannins. What a joy to experience all of these first growths at the top of their game—though it is frustrating that the prices they will fetch put them out of reach for most European wine lovers. **19.5**

MS: Seductive, blackcurrant Cabernet on the nose; beautifully balanced, richly supple wine, with a fresh acidity and an especially fine tannin; ripe, savory blackcurrant Cabernet flavor, long and subtle across the palate, discreet, elegant, polished, understated; long and graceful, gently spicy and scented, with no overextraction, a particularly juicy complexity, and lovely, fragrant, fruit length. A very beautiful rather than a powerful expression of Mouton (its more feminine side?), without quite the density I might have expected in this particular year. Succulently lovely, though. 2020–40+. **18.5/19?**

Le Petit Mouton - 16.5

(63% CS, 22% M, 15% CF)

MB/TD: Very pretty on the nose, wonderfully elegant tannins despite the magnitude of the vintage, though it does fall victim to the success of the fifth growths made by Mouton, which possess a bit more vinosity and tension in their youth than this wine does. **17.5**

MS: Ripe, blackberry fruit to the fore, and light wood cedar to smell; medium-full, supple, fresh, and lightly tannic; an easy, savory wine, with its style clearly dominated by a flowing Merlot rather than a Cabernet Sauvignon grip; moderate complexity, nice, light, juicy quality, and medium length. With its high proportion of Merlot, and quite a lot of young vines in the blend, this is a very different wine from the impressive 2008, which is almost pure Cabernet Sauvignon

(94%). Interestingly, while Petit Mouton is usually served after d'Armailhac and Clerc Milon, just before Mouton itself, this year it was offered first. One can see why. Pleading rather than special. 2013–20. **15.5/16?**

Château Pédesclaux – 16.5/17

MB/TD: Super-ripe black fruit explodes from the glass. Wonderfully smooth on the palate, round, well-balanced, with nice acidity. The tannins are perceptible but perfectly integrated into this balanced wine. A new direction for this property, which was bought just a few months ago by Monsieur Lorenzetti, president of the Racing rugby team, who already owns Château Lilian-Ladouys. **16.5/17**

Château Pibran Cru Bourgeois – 15/15.5+

(56% harvest; 60% CS, 40% M)

MS: Freshly ripe, intense blackcurrant nose, subtle gravel behind; very nicely balanced, crisply rich, vital middleweight, with a very restrained tannin; a nice mid-palate complexity and excellent cassis fruit length. Fresh, complete Pibran. 2014–20+. **15/15.5+**

Château Pichon-Longueville Baron 2ème Cru – 18

(45% harvest; 66% CS, 33% M)

MB/TD: Beautiful color, but the wine isn't quite in place yet: the volume on the palate is immense, but the Merlot is weighing down the wine now and hiding the usual minerality found in this terroir. The *élevage* should be followed closely, since, given the dimension of the wine, it should come together nicely. **17.5+**

MS: Dense, ripe blackberry/blackcurrant and subtle, mineral nose; promises a wonderful cassis bouquet! Great scope and range just to smell. Beautifully balanced, supple yet fresh, rich and finely tannic wine, an effortless, grand-scale balance; sweetly ripe fruit, fresh definition, no hard edges; long, close-wrought, gravelly, mouth-coating, gently spicy, resonantly aromatic. A very fine, aristocratic Baron, with great fruit and mineral length. Probably its finest wine for a couple of generations. 2020–40+. **18/18.5**

Tourelles de Longueville – 15/15+

(33% harvest; 60% M, 25% CS, 15% CF)

MS: Sweet but freshly ripe blackberry fruit nose, where you notice the new wood just a touch; very nicely balanced, quite concentrated middleweight; overall supple, but with a very gentle, dry tannin; ripe yet fresh, moderately complex, spicy, easy, and accessible without being simple, and with good, scented, fruit length; very nice lesser Pauillac—with all the fruit of the year, but the lesser structure to make it attractive early. 2012–18. **15/15+**

Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande 2ème Cru – 17.5/18

(37% harvest; 75% CS, 20% M, 5% PV)

MB/TD: Exceptionally refined wine, powerful,

with subtle flavors, long tannins—definitely one of the best wines of the past 30 years from this property. **17.5/18**

MS: Rich, blackcurrant, Cabernet nose; nicely but not excessively concentrated middleweight, generous, fleshy, fresh; a very fine-grained tannin around an abundantly, juicily, freshly ripe blackcurrant fruit; long, velvety, gracious, and subtly mouth-coating, with a fine gravel scent behind the ripe fruit and great length on the finish—as in the best of these wines, an extraordinary fruit length alongside the aromas. Tasty yet restrained splendor. 2020–35+. **17.5/18**

Réserve de la Comtesse – 16/16.5+

(50% harvest; 53% CS, 38% M, 9% CF)

MS: A spicy, blackcurrant fruit on the nose; very nicely balanced, elegant middleweight with a fine-grained, light, dry tannin; vivid, freshly ripe fruit flavor, crisp and sweet and long; a fine, firm, linear claret with remarkable length for a second wine, which suggests a fine, long aging curve. Wonderful freshness, definition, and persistence, doubtless due in large measure to the fact that all the vividly fragrant Cabernet Franc went into this. Lovely! 2017–30. **16/16.5+**

Château Pontet-Canet 5ème Cru – 18

(70% harvest; 65% CS, 30% M, 4% CF, 1% PV)

MB/TD: The property has opted for purity and elegance over massive structure in this vintage, and it was an excellent choice. Our entire team was enamored with the natural aromas and the superlative finesse of its tannins. A very complete wine, and a perfect example of the customary triumph of David over Goliath. **19**

MS: A very ripe, jellied, blackberry, sweet Merlot fruit to smell, with Cabernet spice as well; rich and fresh, beautifully balanced in the characteristic style of the year; very finely tannic texture and lively acidity; a delicious mass of sweet core fruit, generous, fleshy, vivid, long across the palate, with a refined Pauillac tannin and muscle—a gentle muscle—and with excellent length of fruit and gently mineral aromas. Very fine, complete Pontet-Canet. 2020–35+. **17/17.5+**

St-Julien

MB/TD: We were delighted by the overall quality in this appellation, and it's with a bit of regret that, through the 20-point system, we are obliged to create a hierarchy of the wines. Power, concentration without heaviness, graceful and elegant tannins—it's all there, in every wine, even the second wines, or as they are now being called, the "other" wines.

Château Beychevelle 4ème Cru – 16.5

(50% harvest; 46% CS, 44% M, 6% CF, 4% PV)

MB/TD: Starts out with some very pretty oak: not super-concentrated given the year, but with a wonderfully refined texture and fresh tannins, this is elegant Cabernet harvested at perfect ripeness, long,

distinguished, harmonious, but not quite as good as the very best of the second growths. **17**

MS: Mineral and fresh, ripe-fruit nose; very nicely balanced, elegant, supple wine, moderately concentrated, with fine, gentle tannin and fresh acidity; ripe, easy, juicy, and fragrant St-Julien, very Beychevelle; gentle complexity, good sweet fruit, light minerality and sweet, cedary length. Complete, restrained, and quietly classy. Classic, easy, gratifying-without-being-grand Beychevelle. Will be nice early on because it has such a graceful, easygoing personality. Perfect, lighter-style claret. 2015–25+. **16/16+**

Château Branaire 4ème Cru – 17.5

(65% CS, 28% M, 4% PV, 3% CF)

MB/TD: The most well behaved of all the St-Julien wines we tasted, offering great substance and perfectly controlled tannins and great aromatic diversity. A great wine in this great vintage. **18**

MS: A fine, fruit-packed nose of ripe blackberry and mineral; very nicely balanced indeed. Rich, with a fairly firm but beautifully textured tannin alongside the year's fresh acidity; lovely concentration, long, ripe, dry and gravelly, complex and generous—classic, harmonious, middleweight claret; a restrained power with a great tenacity of flavor and excellent length. A joyous fruit mass at its heart, yet all the elegance of fine St-Julien. A beauty; a very complete Branaire. 2018–30+. **16.5/17**

Château Ducru-Beaucaillou 2ème Cru – 18.5

(85% CS, 15% M)

MB/TD: There is no doubt that this is the best wine they've made in the past 50 years, and it's one of the *chefs d'oeuvres* of the vintage: its harmonious power and refined fragrance and the taffeta-like quality of the tannins can serve as an example for Cabernet Sauvignons the world over. **19.5**

MS: I was disappointed in this the first time around (and the wine was guaranteed as its final assembly) so retasted a week later. Very mineral to smell; gentle, persistent, ripe fruit; elegantly concentrated middleweight wine, harmonious and very finely balanced, with a delicately dry tannin and fresh acidity; sweet fruit and subtle minerality in flavor, restrained, gentlemanly, poised, and complex, with the usual quiet class and very refined tannin texture; long in the mouth, with a prolonged fruit and aroma persistence. A quiet power in effect and a lovely, warm, fragrantly sweet length. Will keep for ages but likely to be accessible relatively early. Not a showy opulence and not as rich as many—everything sotto voce—but all the text is there; a persistent and complete presence. 2018–35+. **17.5/18**

La Croix de Beaucaillou – 18

MB/TD: This "other" wine from Beaucaillou is very impressive this year, with a super-rich core and precisely, skillfully extracted

(laying down)

tannins. The wine is distinguished, with the ability to age as well as the grand vin. **18**

Château Gloria Cru Bourgeois – 15+/15.5

(61% CS, 27% M, 6% CF, 6% PV)

MS: Dense nose, oak- and mineral-marked for the present; very nice balance of fruit to fine tannin and fresh acidity; fresh, fully ripe mineral-tinged red fruit in flavor, with moderate complexity, fairly firm tannin on the finish, and good fruit length. A bit on the stern side, and will need six years at least, but a very satisfying Gloria. 2015–25. **15+/15.5**

Château Gruaud-Larose 2ème Cru – 17.5

(68% CS, 32% M)

MB/TD: Black color, surprisingly fresh fragrance, wonderfully formal texture, and a perfect balance between the regal body and harmonious underlying tannin; great length. Without a doubt, one of the top wines of the Médoc. **19**

MS: Deepish purple—not that saturated. Fine, moderately intense nose, quite minerally; this is a medium-full, moderately concentrated wine, with fine tannin and fresh acidity—all the hallmarks of 2009, that is, except density. Fresh, vital, juicy, and fine rather than particularly rich, with a nice length in the mouth, quite aromatic, a touch of herbaceousness, and good, light length. Good wine, yes, but underperforming for a second growth, especially in this vintage. All that said, it will probably be very fair value. 2020–35. **16/16+?**

Château Lagrange 4ème Cru – 17.5

(73% CS, 27% M)

MB/TD: Great anise fragrance, very noble, very St-Julien, magnificently rich texture, distinguished cedar and black-truffle tannins, bringing to mind certain wines from Clos du Marquis. Perfect balance—a *grand vin*. **18.5**

MS: Crisply minerally, blackcurrant Cabernet to smell; rich, vivid, elegant wine, a nicely concentrated, finely tannic middleweight balance, dense yet not heavy; sweetly ripe yet fresh in flavor, long and classy to taste, long and aromatic to finish. There is a sweetness and gentleness of tannin here that makes for a lovely texture and a particularly refined expression of Lagrange, where, in the past, there has always been abundant fruit but tannins perhaps lacking a little in finesse. A wonderfully polished Lagrange—a tribute to both Marcel Ducasse's two decades of groundwork and now Bruno Eynard's additional fine-tuning. 2018–30. **16.5/17+**

Fiefs de Lagrange – 15/15.5+

(57% CS, 35% M, 8% PV)

MS: Dense, crisply ripe fruit and mineral nose; rich and crisp, generous and long; another particularly satisfying second wine, with a gentle dry tannin, lovely ripe fruit, and notable aromatic complexity, finesse, and length at the level. Complete Fiefs, which

will make a most satisfying mature wine. 2015–25. **15/15.5+**

Château Langoa Barton 3ème Cru – 17.5

(54% CS, 34% M, 12% CF)

MB/TD: Noticeable oak; classic prune, blueberry, and cedar on the nose, with wonderful length on the finish. **18.5**

MS: Lovely, oak cedar-tinged sweet fruit on the nose; elegantly balanced, rich middleweight, vital in acidity, finely but firmly tannic; typical, currently slightly austere, linear style, with plenty of ripe red fruit, moderate complexity, and good light length. 2018–30. **15.5/16+**

Château Léoville Barton 2ème Cru – 18

(77% CS, 23% M)

MB/TD: Huge substance, dense texture, noble tannins, and amazing length on the palate; will continue its prodigious evolution over the next 30 years! **19**

MS: Softly sweet blackberry nose; a generous constitution: rich core, fine, firm tannins, fresh acidity; ripe and fleshy blackberry/blackcurrant fruit to taste; vibrant, gently complex, easy, abundant, satisfying wine; a gratifying, classic St-Julien. Sweet and juicy, long and refined, too, with excellent, gently scented length. Perhaps not the absolute scope of the top second-growth St-Julien, but this will make a gorgeous glass of mature claret. 2020–40. **17/17.5+**

Château Léoville-Las-Cases 2ème Cru – 19

(76% CS, 15% M, 9% CF)

MB/TD: Another masterpiece. All the power of the vintage combined with the complexity and subtlety of this amazing terroir have given birth to a *grand vin*—from the focused aromas, to the purity of the tannins. Bravo! **19.5**

MS: Fine, dense, complex nose of ripe fruit and gravel; a grand-scale constitution, rich, generous, fresh, very finely tannic, a superb balance; a really rich ripeness of fruit, beautifully defined freshness, and a great concentration of aromas especially; a wonderful, velvety, mouth-coating quality, great complexity and tenacity of flavor and tremendous persistence of the subtly sweet fruit and St-Julien mineral aromas. An effortless baritone presence: first-growth quality. 2022–40+. **18.5/19**

Le Clos du Marquis – 17

(70% CS, 20% M, 8% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: Here is another “other” wine that is surely capable of competing with the grands vins of the appellation; wonderfully stylish black-fruit fragrance, magnificently civilized texture; the finish is tight but not harsh. **18**

MS: Dense, mineral, lightly oak-cedar nose; nicely balanced middleweight, fresh, finely tannic, with a generous, crisp, lightly gravelly red-fruit flavor; a nice, fat, and velvety '09 texture, and good, light length, but perhaps lacking a bit of scope and complexity in the context of the vintage? 2014–24. **15.5/16**

Château Léoville Poyferré 2ème Cru – 18

(60% CS, 29% M, 6% PV, 5% CF)

MB/TD: This wine isn't the model of perfection that is Gruaud; it offers the same massive substance as Barton, but with tannins that are currently a bit rougher, and it seems to be slightly overextracted. It has a great future, though. With a wine of this caliber, we'll naturally need to retaste it in a year. **18.5**

MS: A seductively perfumed nose of sweet, ripe blackberry and cassis; beautifully balanced wine, concentrated, elegant, discreet, and fresh, with its usual particularly fine-textured but long-term tannin; lovely ripeness of core fruit, gently spicy flavor, long in the mouth, very finely gravelly, marked complexity; aromatic, aristocratic, and very long to finish. 2020–40+. **17.5/18+**

Moulin Riche – 15.5/16.5

(65% CS, 28% M, 7% PV)

MS: A striking nose of sweetly ripe, mineral-backed blackberries; very nicely balanced middleweight, with a good concentration and very fine though moderately long-term tannin; a notable sweetness of mineral-marked fruit with a lovely freshness; elegant, richly textured wine with lovely length. A particularly polished Moulin Riche—most likely the best yet. 2018–28. **15.5/16.5**

Le Petit Lion – 16/16.5

(71% M, 29% CS)

MS: The “new” second wine of Léoville-Las-Cases, from young vines in the great clos vineyard. The first vintage, just released, was the 2007. Intense, slightly roasted fruit, blackberry, mulberry; beautifully balanced richness here; breadth, ease, velvet core, fresh ripeness allied to fine but not excessive concentration, light tannin, matter without excess. Long, refined, finely gravelly, and elegant; gently resonant in the mouth, with real class and great persistence—a lovely St-Julien in its own right. 4,000 cases of delicious, Merlot-based succulence. And accessible early. 2015–25. **16/16.5**

Château St-Pierre 4ème Cru – 17

(55% harvest; 81% CS, 19% M)

MB/TD: The wine's core seems to have more density than Beychevelle or Talbot, with a bit more vitality in the tannins. It is less aromatically refined, however, than the great second growths. It will certainly be a great buy, though, since the wine has depth, allure, and the huge structure of the vintage. **17.5**

MS: Dense oak, mineral, and ripe black fruit on the nose; lovely balance in a full, rich style, an elegantly concentrated, very nicely textured middleweight, with a fresh acidity and a firm but unobtrusive tannin; plenty of matter, no asperity, easy, effortless, restrained ripe-dry claret flavor, gravel-marked behind the fruit; understated, complex, and with great, freshly defined fruit length. Even, harmonious, very fine St-Pierre. 2018–30. **16.5/17**

Château Talbot 4ème Cru - 16.5

(65% CS, 30% M, 5% PV)

MB/TD: By far the most elegant and, above all, the most focused of recent Talbot wines; seriously built, harmonious, long, and distinguished. **17**

MS: Mineral and ripe, black-fruit nose; a very nice, balanced Talbot—one of the best for a long time; a rich, fleshy, yet well-defined middleweight, with abundant fruit and very soft tannin; long and even and quite complex to taste, with the plump, smooth-textured, ripe fruit defined by a nice freshness plus a gentle pebbliness and finishing with wonderful length of fruit and subtle spice. Richly fruity rather than fine, but I think this will be absolutely delicious relatively early. Stéphane Derenoncourt's influence is clear here, and his style of vinification seems to suit Talbot's particular, round and fruity style of claret. 2016-30. **16/16.5**

Margaux

MB/TD: A memorable vintage for an appellation that has all too often fallen victim to unpredictable weather, keeping it from producing perfect fruit. In 2009, it's all there: fine tannins and a suave texture that is unique among the other wines of this perfectly ripe vintage. All of this without taking into account the spectacular improvements made by a few of the cru classé and cru bourgeois winemakers who are finally working with the same precision as their colleagues in St-Julien. The most exciting 2009s of the Médoc will come from these producers.

Château d'Angludet Cru Bourgeois - 16/16.5

(50% CS, 38% M, 12% PV)

MS: Ripe, spicy, gravel-marked, blackberry nose; a fine concentration of dark, ripe, cassis fruit, and very refined tannin; long, crisply juicy, quite complex, and with lovely, scented length; you notice the fine, dry tannins on the finish. Will need time but should be very good. 2018-28. **16/16.5**

Château Boyd-Cantenac 3ème Cru - 16.5/17

MB/TD: Tight, linear, and deep on the nose. Fresh and elegant in the mouth, with nice fruit, length, and a slightly spicy finish. Nice tannins. **16.5/17**

Château Brane-Cantenac 2ème Cru - 17

(37% harvest; 53% CS, 40% M, 7% CF)

MB/TD: A fine and harmonious wine, with subtle but charming floral notes. Supple and tender, but it seems to be lacking a bit of energy and substance for it to rank with the best. **17**

MS: Restrained Cabernet cassis, a profound impression on the nose; a lovely Brane balance: rich, supple, yet fresh, with a particularly fine-grained tannin and a fine concentration; long, graceful, ripe cassis-colored wine, gently complex, long across the palate; typical Margaux in its proportions and style, very Cabernet Sauvignon in its

blackcurrant fruit flavor. This has all the fleshiness (lovely Merlot) of the best of the vintage and a fine, warm, spicy length. Very nice indeed. 2020-30+. **16.5/17**

Château Cantenac-Brown 3ème Cru - 18

MB/TD: Here we have the long-awaited stylistic evolution toward more finesse and sophistication in the barrel aging without overpowering the substance of the wine. The wine gives the impression of great style—velvety, complex, refined, very long, very Margaux. **18**

Château Dauzac - 17.5

MB/TD: Excellent quality, perfect balance between ripeness, acidity, and finesse. Everything we expect from a great Margaux: pleasant tannins, long, in the same vein as previous years, but with the added dimension of this great vintage. **17.5**

Château Desmirail - 17.5

MB/TD: This wine has much more conviction and personality on both nose and palate, and in the relationship between the texture and the tannins, than in the past. It's linear and vinous while respecting the classic style that their fans love. **17.5**

Château Durfort-Vivens 2ème Cru - 17

(74% CS, 21% M, 5% CF)

MB/TD: The best wine made here in the past 30 years, and finally a wine worthy of a second growth. Aristocratic notes of flowers and spice on the nose; fresh but ripe. A dense structure; tight, spicy tannins; complex, with lots of Cabernet Sauvignon character and great personality. **18**

MS: Closed but very ripe to smell; elegantly balanced in Gonzague Lurton's very slightly austere style: crisp, finely tannic, close-grained, complex, and linear; clear Margaux proportions—not "big," that is, but fine, long in the mouth, very minerally behind the delicate, transparent fruit; very ripe but not sweet or thick; subtle, long, fine-textured without being silky or unctuous, and very aromatic to finish. Harmonious, even, complete Durfort—a combination of gentle power and restraint. The best wine since Gonzague took over nearly 20 years ago. 2017-30. **16/16.5+**

Château des Eyrins - 17

MB/TD: The first wine vinified by the new owners—Xavier and Julie Gonet-Médeville—this has the same sense of style as their other wines from Champagne and Bordeaux. Beautiful color, noble notes of black fruit, perfectly balanced tannin extraction, distinguished flavors on the palate, setting a great example from the start. A great Margaux. **17**

Château Ferrière 3ème Cru - 15.5/16

(40% harvest; 68% CS, 35% M, 5% CF)

MS: Very ripe red and black fruit to smell; well-balanced, nicely concentrated

middleweight, taut and finely tannic; even and harmonious on the palate; a long, crisply sweet combination of mineral and freshly ripe fruit; complex, with an abundance of aromas and with excellent length. A fine, taut, aromatic Margaux. 2017-30. **15.5/16**

Château Giscours 3ème Cru - 17

(53% CS, 40% M, 7% CF)

MB/TD: Wonderful vinosity and depth of texture, definitely the richest of the Margaux wines presented for tasting but possibly a bit less refined than some of the others. Harmonious tannins—not a hint of the animal notes sometimes detected in the past—and a great future. A perfect Giscours. **18**

MS: Dense and minerally to smell, with just a touch of Cabernet Franc herbaceousness/spice/cedar; a refined middleweight wine, fresh, moderately concentrated, and with very refined tannins; sweetly ripe, nicely padded, very graceful in style, subtly complex, and with first-rate length. A sweetly stylish and very Margaux Giscours. 2018-30. **16/16.5+**

Château d'Issan 3ème Cru - 17

(52% harvest; 60% CS, 40% M)

MB/TD: Silky and velvety, the wine is broad, with unctuous fruit on the palate, meaty and very round. Lots of promise. **17**

MS: A nose of ripe cassis and oak cedar; a beautifully balanced, rich, fleshy middleweight, with a very fine tannin; a blackberry-jelly fruit core, subtly juicy, gently spicy, with a nice Cabernet complexity alongside the Merlot flesh; long and graceful, very Margaux in its delicacy and fineness, with a lovely, long, fragrant finish. Fine, long-term d'Issan. 2017-30. **16.5/17**

Château Kirwan 3ème Cru - 16.5

MB/TD: Vigorous, generous texture, great acidity, still a bit wild and robust. It has everything it needs for a long life but is lacking the transcendent finesse of some of the other wines from the area. **16.5**

Château Labégorce - 16.5

MB/TD: A nice, full wine, ample, with firm but far-from-austere tannins and a great future—definitely their best wine of late. It just needs a bit more charm. **16.5**

Château Lascombes - 18.5

MB/TD: A noble and distinguished nose of blueberry and violet; perfect ripeness, superbly suave tannins, long on the palate—a truly great Margaux. Impossible to understand why some find it too "modern." **18.5**

Château Malescot St-Exupéry 3ème Cru - 17.5

MB/TD: Deeply colored and dense; vinous, deep, but still a bit rigid and tight; similar in style to Ferrière, but with more force and opulence. **17.5**

(laying down)

Château Margaux 1er Cru – 19.5+

(36% harvest; 87% CS, 9% M, 2% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: The day we tasted this, it completely changed our idea of the most perfect wine on Earth. The sublime 87% Cabernet gives the impression of lightness in density, a transcendent finesse that sets it apart from all of the other great wines of the vintage. The tannins are so well integrated that we asked ourselves how the wine stays together! The best Margaux of all time has just been born; it will certainly span two generations. It seems we have another 1900. **20**

MS: Ripe blackcurrant Cabernet and marked Médoc gravel aromas; persistent, beguiling, and very mineral to smell; immediate impression of velvet texture, a beautifully, delicately rich Margaux, with tannins of such finesse they are almost imperceptible; sweet, generous, purringly resonant to taste; ample, scented, and refined; a mouth-filling purity here, density and delicacy within a fabulously caressing texture, and with a hugely persistent mouth-coating film of subtle aromas and great sweetness of fruit. An effortless tenacity of flavor, intensity without force—quintessential Margaux! Endlessly graceful, scented length. A magnificently beautiful expression of Margaux. 2020–40+. **19/20**

Pavillon Rouge du Château Margaux – 17.5

(67% CS, 29% M, 4% PV)

MB/TD: The wine has the added benefit of truly wonderful Merlot grapes, and we arrive at an unparalleled quality of lively substance and stylish flavor. But Alter Ego can be fresher and more sensual. For those who cannot afford the grand vin (99.99% of the population), Pavillon Rouge is more than a consolation prize. **18**

MS: Gently scented, subtle, ripe fruit and minerals on the nose; beautifully balanced middleweight wine, with a lovely core of fruit, a very refined tannin, and a fresh acidity; sweetly, juicily, classily ripe; complex, intense in flavor, sweet, pure, scented, and with a marked minerality; vivid, gently classy, beautifully sustained along the palate, and very persistent in aftertaste. By some way, the finest Pavillon yet. 2015–25+. **16.5/17**

Pavillon Blanc du Château Margaux – 18.5

(32% harvest; 100% SB)

MB/TD: 2009 was Château Margaux's year. Never has the white achieved such harmony, such refined flavors, and above all, such a close correlation with the red. The most impressive of all the 2009 whites we tasted (Haut-Brion included). **19.5**

MS: Fine, fresh, cedary, ripe guava-and-gooseberry nose; beautifully balanced wine, with a lovely length of ripe, juicy guava and gooseberry Sauvignon flavors; intense, vital, aromatically complex, and with great length. A more elegant, restrained balance than recently, with under 14% rather than over 15% alcohol. 2012–20+. **17.5/18**

Château Marquis d'Alesme Becker 3ème Cru – 16.5

MB/TD: The small proportion of Cabernet Franc makes the wine a little different than Labégorce, which is vinified by the same team; it has a bit more freshness and subtlety in the tannins, with the same fullness. The style of the property is starting to take shape, but it's still got a little way to go. **16.5**

Château Marquis de Terme 4ème Cru – 18

MB/TD: Ludovic David has caused a stylistic revolution here. Nicely oaked, perfectly ripe grapes, noble and deep fruit, great vinosity (which isn't all that common in Margaux), and nice length. One of the best wines of the appellation. **18**

Château Palmer 3ème Cru – 19

(50% harvest; 41% CS, 52% M, 7% PV)

MB/TD: After a few vintages that showed a pronounced Cabernet personality, this winery has reintegrated the legendary qualities of its Merlot. We admire the incredibly silky texture and harmony of the wine, despite its monumental character. But the sublime purity of Château Margaux seems out of reach. This is certainly the best wine made here since 1961—and the birth of a mythic wine, with a little something more than the almost-perfect 2005. **19**

MS: Dense, mineral, and freshly ripe blackcurrant nose; what a balance: rich, pulpily, gently fleshy wine, with a wonderfully flattering, silky, Merlot texture, superbly elegant concentration, imperceptibly fresh definition, and super-fine tannins; rich yet restrained; deep, sweet, long, pure, beautifully fruit-cored, thoroughbred feel; so easy yet so complete; a complex chord, with a wonderful range of harmonics; the perfect image of Palmer; effortless, gentle density, real Cab presence on the finish, freshly ripe blackcurrant, gently spicy, with a superb fruit and gentle aromatic-spice persistence. Difficult to think of a finer Palmer since the '61. An outstanding performance, and an undoubted star of the vintage. Hope they don't use too much oak on that fabulous texture. 2018–40. **19/19.5**

Château Palmer Alter Ego – 17.5

(49% CS, 51% M)

MB/TD: This wine is a little gem in this new category of "other" wines, not to be confused with "second" wines. Exquisite blueberry and black fruit on the nose, the mouthfeel just as superb, with great length. The wine is far ahead of the others in terms of finesse, without lacking in volume. We were even more impressed by this than by the Pavillon Rouge, which is by any measure exceptional. **18**

MS: Soft, freshly sweet nose; medium-full, concentrated, fruit core within a very fine, graceful tannin; supple yet fresh, beautifully defined; mineral-backed, ripe blackberry fruit, long in flavor, and with a lovely complexity for the second wine; very

Margaux, lovely length. Quite delicious, will make an early-drinkable wine, but a beautiful mature bottle. 2016–28. **16/16.5+**

Château Prieuré-Lichine 4ème Cru – 17.5

MB/TD: Noble and elegant on the nose, harmonious texture, wonderful length; one of the most complete wines of recent history, but with a bit less energy than Durfort, which was tasted before it in our blind tasting. **17.5**

Château Rauzan-Gassies 2ème Cru – 17

MB/TD: Dense and seriously built wine, precisely defined substance and tannins; still a bit too rigid to achieve the highest levels, but straightforward, not overripe, solid, and sure to age well. **17**

Château Rauzan-Ségla 2ème Cru – 17.5

(45% harvest; 58% CS, 42% M)

MB/TD: Combining a broad, aromatic palate with a very fine tannic grain, this is more harmonious at this stage than its neighbor Gassies. **18**

MS: Tight, ripe fruit and marked mineral/gravel on the nose; very nicely balanced, finely tannic middleweight wine, fresh in acidity, with a good concentration, but remaining very Margaux in proportions; a pure, transparent flavor, ripe without being overly so, quite powerful yet delicate at the same time; dark fruit, marked gravel, easy texture, long and fine; excellent, warm, spicy aromatic persistence. Fine Margaux, fine Rauzan-Ségla. 2018–35. **16.5/17**

Château Siran – 17

MB/TD: The wine has rediscovered its native Margaux finesse, its aromatic purity, and its ingratiating qualities on the palate. This isn't the fleshiest wine of the vintage, but we like its precision and its naturalness. **17**

Château du Tertre 5ème Cru – 16

(55% CS, 22% M, 15% CF, 8% PV)

MB/TD: Pretty but complex fruit, an unctuous and easygoing character; long, but the finish lacks determination, energy, and personality, at least at the highest level. **16**

MS: Ripe, roasted fruit on the nose—sweet Cabernet; very nicely balanced, rich, and fleshy middleweight, fresh in acidity, very fine in tannin; long, velvety, juicy-cored, sweetly ripe fruit to taste, quite floral, very fine gravel aromas, alongside the lightly dry tannin on the finish. Excellent fruit length. Typical du Tertre: up-front, fleshy, forward, round character. 2015–25. **15.5/16**

Listrac

Château Clarke – NS

MB/TD: The fruit in this wine is clearly perfectly ripe, even if the samples we tasted had a touch of oxidation and did not fully reflect what the final wine will be. **NS**

Moulis

Château Branas Grand-Poujeaux – 16.5

MB/TD: Full-bodied, linear; the wood is

perfectly adapted to the terroir; imposing tannins. A great wine, serious, balanced—currently one of the five best wines in the Listrac-Moulis sector. **16.5**

Chasse-Spleen Cru Bourgeois - 15.5/16.5
(50% CS, 43% M, 7% PV)

MS: Cassis Cabernet and slightly milky oak on the nose; fresh, firm middleweight of moderate concentration; crisply ripe fruit, but quite a chewy Chasse-Spleen, crisp and chewy at once, with moderate complexity and length. Will require time. Not bad, but not up to the best of the year for its level. 2017–27. **15.5/16.5**

Château Poujeaux Cru Bourgeois - 16.5
(51% CS, 41% M, 4% CF, 4% PV)

MB/TD: Noble notes of red fruit, mostly cassis; this barrel sample is very precise in its balance, texture and terroir, combining aromatic finesse and structure with a harmony that is exactly what we expect from this property. It's been quite a while since they've made a wine this good. **17**

MS: A classy nose of fine, ripe plum and mineral fruit; very nicely balanced, rich middleweight, with a fine, dry tannin and fresh acidity; harmonious, no excess; generous, ripe fruit within a very ripe tannin texture; a most attractive, gentle fleshiness, combined with ripeness, subtle minerality, and fresh definition; quite complex, and with very good length. Great success. A fine, refined, and complete Poujeaux. Going from strength to strength under the new owners, the Cuveliers of Clos Fourtet, and with Stéphane Derenoncourt advising. 2015–25+. **15.5/16+**

Haut-Médoc

MB/TD: Along with Listrac and Moulis, this area has always maintained a high level of quality and reasonable prices. The grapes harvested were perfect, which translated into wines that show the best of what this great vintage has to offer.

Château Belgrave 5ème Cru - 16.5

MB/TD: A beautiful 2009: perfectly ripe grapes, wonderfully enveloping substance, the alcohol is there, but the wine isn't heavy at all, rich flavors, a touch of chocolate, great length on the palate but lacking a little something that would set it apart from its colleagues. **16.5**

Château Camensac 5ème Cru - 16

MB/TD: A touch of anise, tight, not as full on the attack as La Tour Carnet, the tannins are a bit drier. The wine is powerful, with good energy, but for the time being is a little plain compared to others. **16**

Château Cantemerle 5ème Cru - 16.5

MB/TD: The most powerful Cantemerle of recent memory, with a really nice texture. A great 2009, which will develop more

personality within the year, as is often the case with this wine. **16.5**

Château Charmail - 15/15.5

MS: Inky purple; strongly ripe, almost slightly raisiny character on the nose; concentrated, very ripe black fruit, minerally underneath; rich, warm, powerful, and finely tannic; very warm, fulsome ripe fruit, almost sweet; you feel the alcoholic weight, but the wine is not hard or hot. Long to taste, long, and warm to finish with that slightly "raisiny" character to the tannins clear; very good, sweet fruit length. May well close up and harden. Likely always to be a bit bluff and muscular, though not coarse. Impressive, but atypical. 2015–25. **15/15.5**

Château Clément-Pichon - 17

MB/TD: Even though the price has yet to be announced, this will certainly be one of the best buys in the Haut-Médoc if the prices remain in the same range. The texture is refined and subtle, and the tannin extraction exemplary. A flavorful and fresh wine. **17**

Château La Lagune 3ème Cru - 17

(50% harvest; 60% CS, 25% M, 15% PV)

MB/TD: Beautiful color; ample, rich, and generous; noble 2009 aromas (anise, prunes, blueberry, chocolate), nice tannins, and sultry texture, thanks to the high proportion of Petit Verdot. **17.5**

MS: Dense blend of Merlot mulberry and mineral to smell; beautifully balanced, fresh, elegant middleweight wine, very fine tannins, fresh acidity, excellent proportions; sweetly ripe, effortless, silky fruit, both deliciously ripe and tastily vital at once; long across the palate, long and faintly warm to finish, with excellent fruit length and light, mineral aromas. Very nicely crafted, elegant, relatively supple, and refined La Lagune. 2018–30+. **16.5/17**

Château Sociando-Mallet - 16

(55% CS, 40% M, 5% CF)

MB/TD: Delicate and straightforward nose, hints of cassis, good depth, suave on the palate, with nice fruit, smooth, with serious, firm tannins on the finish. **16**

MS: Fine nose of concentrated, ripe red and black fruit, very mineral; lovely balance, an elegant, moderately concentrated middleweight, with fine tannin and no asperity; fresh and with a juicily ripe raspberry and blackcurrant fruit, not that concentrated, but classy and refined, long and even, gently aromatic and complex, with a lovely Médoc gravel element and excellent length. A beautiful, flowing, refreshing, complete claret, with plenty to offer; an easy, refined beverage, not massive, but effortless and very good. A very natural feel to this, should be most gratifying. 2017–30. **16/16.5+**

Château La Tour Carnet - 17.5

MB/TD: A bit more sophisticated than Belgrave, with a great nose of blueberry,

plum, and some seriously elegant oak (which hasn't always been the case); class, finesse, breadth, and length—nothing seems to be missing. **17.5**

Médoc

MB/TD: The northern part of the peninsula, like the south, had an exceptional vintage, leading to unprecedented levels of ripeness for Cabernet and Merlot, on the condition that they were harvested at the right time. Not every winery did so, but even slightly underripe, the aromatics of the grapes can be appreciated by all. A few properties outdid themselves, producing by far the best wines they've ever made, as weighty as they are charming, with particularly good Merlot, benefiting from the limestone soils that cover much of the appellation.

Goulée - 16

(80% CS, 20% M)

MB/TD: Very appealing aromas, and wonderfully managed tannins, in the same style as previous vintages, which remain a reference point in the Médoc appellation. **17**

MS: Made by the Cos d'Estournel team. Very woody at present—oak aromas completely mask the fruit on the nose; rich and powerful to taste, a New World character with a richly ripe fruit, and a wood-tannin texture that is not excessive, given the 50% new oak; very ripe black-berry and bitter-chocolate flavor of modest complexity: long, even, and potent, though not fierce, and with good fruit length. Very good, in its particular style, but probably a tiring prospect to drink. 2013–20+. **15/15.5+**

Haut Condissas - 17

MB/TD: Rich, seductive, elegant, and long. A beautiful, fine tannin around the dark fruit, and altogether a brilliant success. **17**

Château Potensac - 17

(48% M, 38% CS, 14% CF)

MB/TD: Amazing density and firmness, but far from austere; it seems as though this might be the best wine the appellation has seen in five years. **18**

MS: Closed, but clearly fat at its core; quite dense, gently gravelly; beautifully balanced wine, a rich middleweight with super-fine tannin and lovely, defining freshness; long in the mouth, gently gravelly behind the crisply but very ripe fruit; a very fine Potensac. 2015–25. **15.5/16+**

Château Preuillac - 15

MB/TD: A dense wine with powerful tannins, long and stylish, with a generosity on the finish, thanks to the very ripe fruit. The grapes at Preuillac give a wine for laying down, and after a few more years in bottle this will be generous and smooth. **15**

Château Rollan de By - 16.5

MB/TD: Serious, round, generous, and moreish, with excellent fruit. **16.5**

(laying down)

Château La Tour de By - 16.5

MB/TD: By far the best wine produced here in a generation. Wonderfully noble fragrance (red fruit, spice, tobacco), perfect balance, distinguished tannins, and great length. The best terroir in the appellation is finally expressing itself to the fullest. **16.5**

Pessac-Léognan and Graves

MB/TD: The appellation has cause to celebrate due to the rare coincidence that the reds and the whites have achieved the same heights in the same vintage, and for 2009 they are at the highest level imaginable! The whites benefited from cool summer nights as well as the hot days, which made for rich, aromatic grapes. Vinification techniques get better every year, and are now at a level that it would be nice to see in other regions. Sometimes the wines lack a bit of acidity or concentration, but the balance of the best wines is admirable. The reds are naturally restrained compared to the wines of the Médoc, but the wines finish with the harmonious tannins and rich substance worthy of a great vintage.

Pessac-Léognan Blanc

Domaine de Chevalier Cru Classé - 18.5

(85% SB, 15% SM)

MB/TD: A miracle of nobility and aromatic complexity, with notes of apricots and white and yellow fruit, mind-blowing tension and purity on the palate, and above all a fabulous grace, harmony, and detail for this wine that normally plays hide-and-seek with us at this age. **19.5**

MS: Very grapefruit and guava nose; medium-full, moderately concentrated wine with a lively acidity; dry, lightly aromatic, relatively delicate flavor, keen, citrusy, long, but no great volume; lovely ripe fruit, considerable finesse, delicate complexity, long in the mouth, long to finish. But all on a restrained scale and lacking the projection and intensity of 2008, for example. 2018-30? **17/17.5**

Château Couhins Cru Classé - 16

MB/TD: Aromatic, generous, and quite long. The *bâtonnage* is masking for the moment the wine's eventual shape, but the character of the vintage is clearly there, and the white seems even richer in personality than the red. **16**

Château de Fieuzal Cru Classé - 17

(70% SB, 30% SM)

MB/TD: Another remarkable wine, full and fresh with a classic fragrance, reminiscent of the best wines of the late 1980s. **17.5**

MS: Pale gold; fresh, aromatic guava and new oak; elegantly balanced middleweight; fairly crisp, moderately concentrated; a fine vitality defining delicate citrus Sauvignon and guava Semillon flavors, lightly aromatic, vital and racy, and with good, light length. Good prospects if it is as good in bottle. **16/16.5**

Château Haut-Brion 1er Cru - 18/18.5

(62% SB, 38% SM)

MB/TD: The extra amount of Sauvignon was perfect for this vintage, giving more body and aromatic potential to Haut-Brion in comparison to La Mission. Sensational freshness and energy on the finish. **18.5**

MS: Pale lemon; very refined, lemony Sauvignon nose; classically elegant proportions with adequate acidity; ripely dry, long, warm, complex, and gently racy; a supple, gracious, almost fleshy wine, subtly mineral, warm and mouth-filling; excellent length. More power, if less density, than the La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc. 2018-28+. **18/18.5**

Château Haut-Brion Clarté Haut-Brion - 17

(84% SM, 16% SB)

MB/TD: Clarté is made from the young vines of both Haut-Brion and Mission and from part of the grapes that don't make it into the blend for the grands vins. The result is amazing, with intense aromatics and an almost Burgundian quality in the richness of the wine, the oak, and the texture. **18**

MS: This is the second wine of both properties blended. From 1990 it was known as Les Plantiers du Haut Brion, but from 2009 it will be renamed La Clarté de Haut-Brion. Pale gold, very grapefruit Sauvignony to smell at the moment; nicely balanced, moderately concentrated, supple yet fresh middleweight; light, fresh, aromatic Sauvignon-dominated flavor for the moment (but this will surely fatten from the high proportion of Semillon), long and ripe and graceful, easy and refined; quite complex and with excellent length. Should drink well young but keep and develop for a decade or so. It will be a fraction of the price of the grands vins, though that may be no small fraction this year! 2012-20. **16/16.5**

Château La Mission Haut-Brion Cru Classé - 18

(84% SM, 16% SB)

MB/TD: Goodbye, Laville; hello, Mission. Prince Robert of Luxembourg decided with this 2009 to clarify the lineup of white wines, with the introduction of Clarté Haut-Brion that we have just described. From now on, the wines from the old terroir of Laville have been integrated into La Mission, but rest assured that the style of the wines hasn't changed. The exceptional volume on the palate pays homage to the greatness of the vintage, and the finish is still loaded with style. **18**

MS: Pale greeny gold; dense, lemon and mineral nose; rich but with a good, fresh acidity; vivid, concentrated flavor, intense, savory, powerful; long and energetic in the mouth, long and warm to finish; generous, ripe, ample, satisfying. 2018-30+. **17.5/18**

Château La Louvière Blanc - 15.5

(100% SB)

MS: Pale lemon; fine, gently aromatic guava

Sauvignon; crisply juicy middleweight, lovely ripe and juicy acidity; nice length, aroma, finesse; overall, a fine, early-drinking, refreshing balance, with moderate complexity and good, light length. A gentle, relatively short-term expression of the cru, which will give plenty of easy pleasure early on. 2011-15. **15.5**

Château Malartic Lagravière Blanc Cru

Classé - 16/16.5+

(80% SV, 20% SM)

MS: Pale lemon; light guava-and-mineral Sauvignon, persistent, subtly aromatic; very nicely balanced, freshly aromatic, juicily ripe middleweight wine; appetizingly fresh, well-sustained flavors, good aromatic projection and tenacity for the year, and excellent length; not big but complete. An excellent '09, 2012-18+. **16/16.5+**

Château Olivier Cru Classé - 17

MB/TD: Pure, fat, harmonious, stylish, seductive, but classy, confirming the excellent quality of the property. **17**

Château Pape Clément - 17

(48% SV, 40% SM, 6% MU, 6% SG)

MB/TD: Extremely ripe, rich, unctuous, and complex, but the oak is overpowering at the moment. As with the red, we know that this is just temporary. **17.5**

MS: Pale, turbid lemon; light, fresh, mineral, aromatic nose, with its Semillon fat clear, its Sauvignon aromas muted; fairly rich, supple middleweight, with a good acidity for the year; plenty of ripe melon and guava fruit, long and quite fleshy, attractively aromatic, nice length to finish; quite powerful but not hot. Will drink well early and likely keep and develop, too. 2014-22+. **16.5/17**

Château Smith Haut Lafitte - 17.5

(90% SB, 5% SG, 5% SM)

MB/TD: Super-smooth, amazingly generous length on the palate; the grapes have a Muscat-like quality (maybe due to the amount of Sauvignon Gris). Truly unique in its style—magnificent! **18**

MS: Mute nose, lightly grapefruity; understated, moderately concentrated wine, with a nice vigor behind the ripe fruit; quite generous for the year; dry, juicy, clear minerality, nicely sustained across the palate and with good length. Stylish, complex, elegant cru classé white Graves, very good for the vintage. Early pleasure, but the excellent acidity should allow it to develop for a decade at least. 2012-20. **16.5/17**

Pessac-Léognan Rouge

Château Brown - 16

MB/TD: Beautifully deep, silky, and full. Remarkably ripe fruit, focused length. **16**

Château Bouscaut Cru Classé - 17

MB/TD: Nicely ripened grapes, round, full, balanced, warm—a nice beginning. **17**

Château Carbonnieux Cru Classé - 17.5

MB/TD: Wonderful color. Perfectly representative of the appellation—nervous despite a dense, full texture, complex and spicy tannins, and lots of style. **17.5**

Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion - 17

(55% M, 30% CF, 15% CS)

MB/TD: A pretty, elegant nose; licorice, prune, cherry, and spice; sumptuous texture and length; a remarkable wine with a great future. **17.5**

MS: Muted ripe fruit, gentle, scented; very full-bodied, quite powerful, finely tannic—but firmly so, too; warm, sweet-fruited, fullish, but fresh; long across the palate, both sweetly ripe, and very faintly alcohol-bitter, too; long and mouth-coating; the Merlot dominance shows in its power and weight this year; plenty of slightly bitter-chocolate flavor, long across the palate, and long to finish, with the slightly warm, coating effect of highish alcohol. Sweet, opulent, quite powerful—very different from a few years ago. Long-term Carmes, a *vin de garde*, probably needing at least ten years. Good in its more powerful style. 2020–35. **16+/16.5**

Domaine de Chevalier Cru Classé - 18

MB/TD: A very pretty blue-black color. Perfectly ripe grapes, one of the smoothest and most complete wines ever produced by this famous property; great length and perfectly loyal to the appellation's spirit. **18**

Château de Fieuzal Cru Classé - 17

(55% CS, 40% M, 5% CF)

MB/TD: The long-awaited return to the top of the appellation; remarkable texture, long, complex, and distinguished. **18**

MS: Inky purple; dense, mineral, and ripe black-fruit nose; a rather tannic and muscular interpretation of the terroir; quite concentrated, with its ripe fruit core and gentle freshness somewhat dominated by its tannic sinew; good, light, scented length. A very late harvest here, the Cabernets finishing on October 24. And you taste the alcoholic warmth, as well as the sweet ripeness, a touch hot and Right Bank in character. The finesse of the terroir is there, and there is a fine, delicate fruit, too, but I think the structure will always dominate somewhat. 2020–30? **15.5/16?**

Château Haut-Bailly Cru Classé - 16.5

(50% harvest; 60% CS, 37% M, 3% CF)

MB/TD: As is often the case, this wine isn't fully formed and homogenous at this stage, offering noble notes of cherry and plum, showing a rich and velvety texture, but missing the assurance on the finish that it will certainly have in six months. Comparisons between the samples presented and the wine straight from the barrel were enlightening. We can't express just how much these primeur tastings go against all common sense! **17** (for the time being)

MS: Very ripe fruit—raspberry, blackcurrant,

and mineral, too; rich, very nicely balanced, relatively full and fleshy middleweight, with a very fine-grained, but present tannin; juicy ripeness within the finely firm structure; long, minerally, warm, and with fine, scented, gently fruity, sweet length. A fairly weighty Haut-Bailly but retaining its usual elegance and finesse as well. 2018–30. **16/16.5+**

Château Haut-Brion 1er Cru - 19.5

(56% harvest; 46% M, 40% CS, 14% CF)

MB/TD: A giant, the intensity of the tannins breaking all records. A concentrated 2009, absolutely unique in its genre; the foundation is monumentally noble, but it requires patience to experience the true joys of the wine. **19.5**

MS: Very fat, very refined, very ripe blackberry to smell, with its characteristic background minerality; a rich, powerful wine, fruit and gravel aroma packed within a very firmly but very finely tannic frame; grape essence within a tannic grip. Deep, dense, resonant, blackberry fruit, with the Haut-Brion refinement, complexity, and drama there behind the up-front weight; great length across the palate, and terrific aromatic saturation and persistence on the finish. Hugely impressive, imposing, powerful. And it will doubtless make a great bottle in the long term—needing 15–20 years, I should think. But I have a personal preference for the gentler 2008, where I can actually taste the fruit, subtlety, and terroir more clearly... 2025–50. **19/19.5**

La Chapelle de La Mission - 15.5/16

(46% CS, 44% M, 10% CF)

MS: On the nose, the rich, faintly roasted character that one gets in very ripe vintages ('82/'89) but minerality as well; full, weighty, mouth-filling wine, with very firm tannins; sweet, ripe, blackberry fruit; rich, warm, ripe, and mouth-filling, alcoholic warmth up-front and on the finish, moderate complexity and good length—warm and spicy. Large-scale Chapelle de La Mission. Fairly long term—10 years plus? 2020–30. **15.5/16**

Château Haut-Brion Le Clarence de Haut-Brion - 17.5

(41% harvest; 46% M, 39% CS, 13% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: For us, this is the most amazing of the "other" wines of this vintage, with all the nobility, texture, and originality of the grand vin but a bit more accessible. Required drinking for all great connoisseurs. **18.5**

MS: Dense and fat to smell, with a pronounced mineral element; a rich, powerful, tannic wine; an immediate mass in the mouth, with a very juicy blackcurrant character to the fruit; rich, warm, tannic, but finely so; warm, powerful fruit, something slightly southern hemisphere about this in character; long in the mouth, even, spicy fruit, fleshy, ample, powerful, and very long and slightly warm to finish, with a touch of bitterness. One wouldn't guess this was a "second wine"! Impressive Clarence.

Certainly the opposite end of the spectrum in power and style from the more aromatic complexity and restraint of the 2008s. It will benefit from time: 10 years minimum? 2020–30+. **16.5/17**

Château La Mission Haut-Brion Cru Classé - 18.5+

(50% harvest; 47% CS, 47% M, 6% CF)

MB/TD: Sumptuously full, substantial body but with the signature tannins that are always perfectly polite, with seductive fruit and a wonderful generosity on the palate that makes it even more open and appealing than Haut-Brion. **18.5**

MS: Dense, fat, rich, and soft—you smell the flesh and the weight even before tasting, but there is a clear gravel element as well; supremely elegant immediate impression—concentration, fresh definition, very fine-grained tannins, great tenacity of flavor; ripe fruit impressions dominate, with a slightly bitter, black, tarry character; very mouth-coating, very long to finish. A powerful presence of generosity, amplitude, power, alcoholic weight, grand-scale completeness—along with a touch of hot-climate warmth. Very impressive, slightly exhausting! 2022–40+. **18.5/19**

Château Larrivet Haut-Brion - 17.5

MB/TD: Very flavorful, ripe, long; wonderfully underscored by the tannins. The wine was very well constructed and reveals the greatness of the vintage—a real leap in quality for this property. This wine is at the level of a cru classé. **17.5**

Château LaTour-Martillac Cru Classé - 18

MB/TD: Wonderfully harmonious texture—the tannins are already perfectly integrated; a magnificent finish, with notes of spice and a salty minerality that is typical of Léognan. This is the most seductive and complete wine from this property that we have ever tasted this early on. **18**

Château La Louvière Cru Classé - 15.5/16

(67% CS, 27% M, 6% PV)

MS: Ripe fruit and mineral nose; nicely balanced, medium-full wine, classic Graves balance of moderate weight and relative delicacy; nicely judged, relatively supple, delicate but dry tannin; gentle, sweet fruit of moderate complexity, gentle minerality and good, sweet, light fruit length. A very nice, relatively early-drinking Graves. 2013–23. **15.5/16**

Château Malartic Lagravière Cru Classé - 17

(55% CS, 38% M, 5% CF, 2% PV)

MB/TD: Yet another very complete wine; very big but perfectly harmonious, with lots of momentum and style, perfectly respectful of its terroir. **18**

MS: Nicely balanced middleweight with firm tannins and a fresh acidity. A good moderate (Graves) concentration, with very nice purity of ripe, mineral-backed cassis fruit and a

(laying down)

gentle complexity; fresh and juicy, with a long, fruit-emphatic finish. Stylish Malartic, needing 6–8 years. 2017–25. **16/16.5**

Château Olivier Cru Classé – 17

MB/TD: This property continues to improve its reds. This sample is well-defined on the nose, with a classic, spicy character, but unusual in its power and the richness of texture. **17**

Château Pape Clément Cru Classé – 17

(60% CS, 40% M)

MB/TD: Super-ripe, meaty, deeply colored and rich. The oak seems to be all over the place, but experience shows us that it never betrays the substance of the terroir. This is a result of the practice of choosing a barrel sample that will please the largest number of people—something this famous property hardly needs to do. **17.5**

MS: Dense, ripe fruit on the nose; raw blackcurrant with a hint of sweet cassis, already; and clear gravel behind. The new oak is almost imperceptible, despite being at 100%. Rich, powerful, tannic wine—well balanced in its rather massive style, with an abundance of rich, sweetly ripe fruit, slightly bitter-tinged behind the very firm but very fine tannins; long in flavor, with a marked roasted spiciness and a long, almost peppery length. Despite the alcohol not being that high (for 2009 claret), you—or, rather, I—do notice the alcoholic warmth here all the time, on the attack, across the palate, on the finish. Potent and impressive of its type. Will it mellow? It will surely take a while! 2020–35+. **16.5/17**

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Cru Classé – 17.5

(64% CS, 30% M, 5% CF, 1% PV)

MB/TD: Sumptuous texture, perfectly ripened grapes, completely harmonious core, with irreproachable honesty and purity—in short, the richest, most accomplished red wine from this property in a long time, and one of the highlights of the vintage. **18.5**

MS: Dense, ripe blackberry/cassis fruit and clear, gravel aromas; nicely balanced, classic, restrained Graves proportions: medium-full, relatively supple, very finely tannic; long and elegant and even across the palate, ripe fruit, freshness, light oak, light gravel, very scented and fragrant Pessac-Léognan, with a gentle fruit persistence. A lovely, fresh, juicy quality, no excess structure, complete and fine—a classy middleweight. 2016–26. **16/16.5**

St-Emilion

MB/TD: In an appellation as vast as St-Emilion, we found the situation to be more heterogenous than in Pomerol, its slightly smaller neighbor. Though some 2009s are the best we've seen in 20 years of primeur tastings, others seem to be quite uneven at this stage, suffering from unbalanced sensations of poorly integrated alcohol. On the other hand, some of the wines with the highest alcohol levels were

among the most harmonious and balanced of our tastings.

Château Angélus 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 17.5/18

(60% M, 40% CF)

MB/TD: Amazingly harmonious, with pure, ripe fruit, exceptionally silky tannins, and restrained length. A magnificent style, not at all flamboyant. 2009 Angélus is one of the biggest success stories of the appellation and of the Right Bank in general. **18.5/19**

MS: Dense oak and black-cherry-fruit nose; nicely balanced in its oaky, muscular style; rich and juicy, pure in black cherry fruit, with a nice freshness, moderate complexity, and good length. A quite chewy, long-term texture and a touch hot and bitter from the alcohol. Needs at least a decade. Certainly a very good Angélus. 2020–30+. **16.5/17**

Château L'Arrosée Grand Cru Classé – 17

(44% M, 28% CF, 28% CS)

MB/TD: L'Arrosée made a fresh, svelte wine that is more expressive in its length and depth than in its foundation. As a whole, it is elegant and stylish. **17/17.5**

MS: Moderate color; fine, gentle, scented nose, subtle minerality, and freshly ripe, soft red fruit; very finely tannic, moderately concentrated, fresh middleweight—lovely, delicate balance; sweet, supple, graceful, refined. Very Burgundian in style, all delicacy, transparency, freshness, perfume; nice tenacity in the mouth, followed by a long, gently warm, fruit- and fragrance-infused aftertaste. Accessible, harmonious, a beauty in its style. An easy delight to drink, and a wonderful contrast to so much of what is made in St-Emilion today. Refreshing in more ways than one! Just lovely. 2015–25+. **16.5/17+**

Château Ausone 1er Grand Cru Classé A – 19+

(68% harvest; 55% CF, 45% M)

MB/TD: Splendidly honest in its composition; the core is taffeta-like and perfectly balanced. As usual, this is an absolutely impeccable Ausone, but this regularity makes the success of this vintage a little less exciting than that of Cheval Blanc and Pétrus. **19**

MS: Dense, closed, mineral-imbued black-cherry nose; beautifully cut, rich, vigorous, finely tannic wine—a first-rate, long-term balance. Firm-fleshed yet plush core, and here you really feel the texture of the best 2009s—generous and satiny, with great vitality, too. Classic, close-grained flavors: sweet, vividly fresh, very discreetly powerful, its limestone minerality subtle yet marked; packed with refined fruit, very aromatic, effortlessly purring length across the palate, with a seamlessly scented aftertaste of terrific length. An intense yet utterly effortless fruit presence from start to finish. Classic, fine, grand Ausone—not a stitch out of place. Long-term finesse; exhaustingly good. 2024–50+. **19/19.5**

La Chapelle d'Ausone – 17/17.5

(70% M, 30% CF)

MS: Very refined nose: soft, easy, gentle, black cherry and mineral. Beautifully balanced, rich middleweight with a very nice vitality and very fine, quite long-term tannin; deliciously sweet fruit, long, graceful, complex, and refined, with excellent fragrant fruit persistence. A very fine second wine. 2018–30. **17/17.5**

Château Beau-Séjour Bécot 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 18/18.5

MB/TD: Quite oaky, but with wonderfully rich volume and perfectly ripe fruit. Indisputable potential. **18/18.5**

Château Beauséjour Héritiers Duffau-Lagarrosse 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 18

MB/TD: In handing over the reins to Nicolas Thienpont and Stéphane Derenoncourt, this splendidly located winery's choice paid off: beautiful, pure notes of fresh red fruit, svelte but intense, long and profound. **18**

Château Belair-Monage 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 16.5/17

MS: Muted nose, a light combination of ripe fruit and minerality; very supple, lightly fleshy middleweight, with a fine, dry tannin; elegantly understated wine, very limestone plateau in character—gently, sweetly ripe in flavor, long and refined across the palate, a lovely combination of subtle limestone minerality and pure, transparent-textured, delicate sweetness, and appetizing freshness; long and fruit-fragrant finish. A delightful, complete, stylish, lighter style of St-Emilion. Classy, restrained, fine; intense and delicate at once. 2016–26+. **16.5/17**

Château Bellevue Grand Cru Classé – 17.5

(100% M)

MB/TD: A beautiful wine from an ideally located vineyard: wonderfully elegant style, very harmonious, silken tannins, unctuous and rich, a truly noble wine. **18/18.5**

MS: Sweetly ripe cherry fruit to smell; full-bodied, nicely concentrated wine with a fine, firm, mildly oak-dry tannin; great purity of sweet fruit within the moderately tannic frame, and a nice, gentle, fruit-fragrant persistence. Refined and delicious. 2017–27. **16/16.5+**

Château Canon 1er Grand Cru Classé – 17/17.5

(60% harvest; 75% M, 25% CF)

MB/TD: Wonderfully fresh, powerful but elegant tannins, lovely spice, brilliant length. A magnificently balanced wine that truly shines aromatically. **17/17.5**

MS: Dense, new-oak and black-fruit ripe nose; a beautifully balanced wine, rich yet restrained, a fleshy core, a fresh acidity, and a very fine, soft, restrained tannin; sweet, elegant, juicy; a texture that has a delicious thickness without excess, gentle generosity (quite fat for a plateau wine), but flattering

rather than tiring to the palate; ripe, complex, gently spicy, and capped off with lovely, sweet, gentle length. A very fine Canon, a great success; another 2009 that must be the best for 50 years. 2018–30. **17/17.5**

Château Canon-la-Gaffelière Grand Cru

Classé – 17.5

(55% M, 35%CF, 10% CS)

MB/TD: Generous body, perfectly ripened fruit, unctuous, with remarkably elegant tannins and good length. **18**

MS: The immediate fresh, spicy, individual raspberry scent of Cabernet Franc—alongside the “dry” new-oak presence; concentrated, fairly full-bodied wine, well balanced in its clear (but not excessive), new-wave, tannin-dry style. Dense and structured, with an abundance of sweet, fleshy fruit; long, gently complex, aromatic and racy, with an intensely sweet length. Faint but not distracting alcoholic warmth. Classy, if rather like a huge liquid bonbon. Large-scale Canon-la-Gaffelière, which will need a decade at least to relax and mellow. 2020–35+. **16.5/17**

Château Capet-Guillet – 16

MB/TD: This property, very well located at the foot of the St-Emilion hillside, was recently purchased by Advini (Jeanjean-Laroche). Stéphane Derenoncourt consults here and helps make a rich, full, and deep wine, representative of the potential of this terroir neighboring Lassègue. **16**

Château Cheval Blanc 1er Grand Cru Classé A – 19

(50% harvest; 60% M, 40% CF)

MB/TD: Arguably the best Cheval Blanc since 1998 and one of the future legendary wines from the property. At this level, no other wine is showing such an amazing combination of silkiness and vivacity. The tannins are extraordinary. As a whole, the wine is svelte and elegant, with remarkably refined texture; intense, with powerful depth. **19.5**

MS: Very ripe, roasted black fruit on the nose, but without excess, overripeness, or raisin character; rich, concentrated, dense, and tannic wine, with a vital “red fruit” acidity defining and giving relief to the fruit mass; black-fruit ripeness, with a dense mineral core, framed by fine, firm tannin, very long and complex across the palate, great clinging persistence on the finish. A Cheval of great density and a clear but utterly refined masculine style. If there is a similar ripeness to 1990 and 1998, there is a less immediately seductive, fleshy sensuality; instead, we have more matter, more structure, and more long-term promise. Effortlessly compact. Very fine, long-term Cheval, with great scope, presence, length, and prospects. Will need 15 years plus. 2025–50. **18.5/19+**

Le Petit Cheval – 17

(15% harvest; 65% CF, 35% M)

MB/TD: Marvelously elegant tannins. The

wine is long, svelte, bright, and very silky; it is exactly what a grand vin should be. One of the best Petit Chevals ever made. **17/17.5**

MS: Rich black-cherry fruit, gravelly behind; a beautifully balanced, fruit-packed pillow of a wine, with clear but very refined tannin; generous, seductive, long, plump, fleshy, graceful; and so fragrantly fresh from all that Cabernet Franc; a flavor that is very ripe, fine, and subtle, but also mineral-marked, and with a tannin that is firm but well covered and with lovely, spicy length. A complete and impressive Petit Cheval. Will need 6–8 years. 2016–30. **16.5/17**

Clos des Baies Grand Cru – 16.5

MB/TD: The young and very talented technical director at Château Ausone has produced this cuvée since 2008 from a family vineyard at the foot of St-Emilion. The first vintage was promising, and this one confirms the brilliance of this winemaker. With great elegance, super-fine tannin, fresh but soft fruit, and great, savory length, this Clos des Baies really must be discovered. **16.5**

Clos Fourtet 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 17.5

(88% M, 8% CS, 4% CF)

MB/TD: Chocolaty and rich, perfectly ripened fruit; flavorful, deep, intensely structured, and generous. Brilliant. **17.5/18**

MS: Dense, mineral, and roasted, ripe nose; full, finely concentrated, fine tannin texture; rich and elegant, gentle, suave, refined; fresh and harmonious, with a lovely plateau-limestone purity; ripe, lightly roasted fruit, long, pure, graceful, transparent. Not a big wine, but complete and very much of its place; fresh, mineral, long, and subtle. No excess warmth or extract, just complete and natural. Most attractive, gently spicy plateau St-Emilion. 2018–30. **16.5/17**

Château La Couspaude Grand Cru Classé – 16.5

MB/TD: Fresh and subtle on the palate, the wine is silky, with fresh red fruit, depth, and harmony. The wine is quite typical of the new style of this winery, which is perfectly located on a limestone plateau, this year’s wine perfectly corresponding to the potential of the terroir. **16.5**

Château Dassault Grand Cru Classé – 17/17.5

MB/TD: Wonderful length, full but deep, with notes of fruit and spice; intense and voluminous. The property’s best vintage yet, despite the damaging hailstorm in the spring. **17/17.5**

Château Faugères – 17/17.5

MB/TD: This is a brilliant success from Château Faugères, with even silkier tannins than last year, while the almost overripe black fruit remains the signature of the winery. The wine is incredibly rich, intense, and firm, with an expressive freshness on the finish. **17/17.5**

Château Faurie de Souchard Grand Cru Classé – 16.5

MB/TD: The wine is full, dense, and solid, with remarkably elegant tannins and wonderful focus. By far the best wine ever made here. **16.5**

Château Figeac 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 17

(M, CF, and CS in equal proportions)

MB/TD: Distinguished, elegant, and linear, but the wine has energy and great length. A truly noble wine. **17/17.5**

MS: The characteristic slightly herbaceous edge of Cabernet Sauvignon there to smell, but dense and fine; fairly rich, full, relatively supple medium-weight, with a fine-grained tannin (though currently a bit oak-dry) and a lively acidity; ripe, red-fruit flavor, a gently fleshy core within the fine tannin, more fragrance than density; quite complex and with fine, scented length. A rather restrained performance within the vintage but good all the same. 2018–30+. **16.5/17?**

Château Fleur Cardinale Grand Cru Classé – 17/17.5

MB/TD: Perfectly made, avoiding the heaviness that many St-Emilions are showing: a fat, intense, and rich wine with generous fruit, smooth length, and an underlying minty freshness on the finish. **17/17.5**

Château Fonroque Grand Cru Classé – 16.5

MB/TD: This is the best wine we’ve ever tasted from this property, which is improving every year: nice, spicy concentration, appealing fruit, very silky texture with wonderful freshness on the finish. **16.5**

Château Franc Mayne Grand Cru Classé – 17

MB/TD: Dark color; aromas of red-fruit sorbet; elegant and silky texture, fresh on the finish, very refined. The best Franc Mayne in recent history. **17**

Château La Gaffelière 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 17/17.5

MB/TD: Pure with great length, restrained, but with significant finesse and elegance. A true aristocrat. **17/17.5**

La Gomerie – 17.5/18

MB/TD: The Bécot brothers have produced a wine of great length that is very deep, supple, and velvety, without any heaviness, despite its exceptional ripeness. **17.5/18**

Château Grand Corbin-Despaigne Grand Cru Classé – 16.5

MB/TD: Fragrant and spicy on the nose, full and dense on the palate, powerful but with amazing length. **16.5**

Château Grand Mayne Grand Cru Classé – 16.5

MB/TD: This is another beautiful wine that is linear and deep; truly intense. The fruit is a bit jammy, but it has potential. **16.5**

(laying down)

Clos des Jacobins Grand Cru Classé – 17

MB/TD: A noble and suave wine, with a fragrance of pure fruit; the core is underlined by a silky tannic structure; brilliant. 17

Château Jean Faure – 16/16.5

MB/TD: A nose of black fruit and floral notes, elegant and fresh on the palate; well made in the style of the sector of Cheval Blanc. 16/16.5

Château Larcis Ducasse Grand Cru Classé – 17/17.5

MB/TD: Well balanced, silky, and long, with super-fresh red fruit and energetic length. Spicy, persistent character. 17/17.5

Château Laroze Grand Cru Classé – 16.5/17

MB/TD: This cru classé, located between Libourne and St-Emilion, has been organic for several years now. Hubert de Boüard consults here, keeping a pure, unadorned style, while softening the hard edges of the wine that was sometimes a bit short on the palate. This vintage is remarkable: wonderfully fresh, long, distinguished, harmonious, and deep. 16.5/17

Château Lassègue – 17

MB/TD: Undoubtedly the best vintage ever produced at the property. Beautifully deep and focused fragrance. The wine is intense and generous, showing notes of slightly jammy black fruit, but it has energy, combining strength with substance. The terroir of the *côte* reveals its true potential. The alcohol of the vintage is evident, but the wine is neither rustic nor heavy. 17

Château Magdelaine 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 15.5/16+

MS: Concentrated, soft, sweet nose—blackberry and mineral; nicely balanced, relatively supple wine of moderate concentration, with a fine, dry tannin; ripe, sweet, fresh, pure in fruit, warm and generous, without being large-scale; quite long and graceful to taste, without being particularly showy; good, sweet length. A stylish medium-weight, if not a grand Magdelaine. 2016–24+. 15.5/16+

Château Monbousquet Grand Cru Classé – 18

MB/TD: Powerful and supremely smooth at the same time, this is a “prize-winning” Monbousquet: fresh, ripe fruit, harmonious length, brilliant. 18

La Mondotte – 18.5

(80% M, 20% CF)

MB/TD: This cult wine, made by Stéphane Derenoncourt is one of the greatest successes on the Right Bank in this exceptional vintage. To its customary breadth, depth, and length, it adds an elegance and a purity of texture that is unparalleled. This is certainly the most beautiful vintage ever produced by this high-quality property and one of the most

winning wines of the year. 19.5

MS: Inky black/red; incredibly exuberant ripe fruit nose—sweet, oak vanilla-y; a wine of great concentration but no excess, finely, firmly tannic; very old-vine flavor, an impressive mass of fruit in the mouth, warm, sweet, powerful without being heavy; a fine, vital freshness defining all that matter, long and chewy in the mouth, but without coarseness, and long, sweet, warm, and scented to finish. The acceptable face of the extreme new wave, without the raisiny character on many of the oaky, low-yield, super-ripe wines. Powerful all the same—you have to like the style, and it’s not for me. But impossible not to be impressed. 2022–40. 17/17.5+

Château Moulin St-Georges Grand Cru – 16.5 (80% M, 20% CF)

MB/TD: Very pretty notes of fresh red fruit, wonderfully elegant tannins, full-bodied length: a complete and distinguished wine. 17

MS: Softly sweet, plummy Merlot nose; a medium-weight wine of moderate concentration, a lively, defining acidity, and very fine, light tannin; long, vital, fresh, black-fruit flavor; fragrant, gently minerally, and with very good, scented length; an overall silky feel and a lovely example. 2015–25. 16/16+

Château Pavie 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 18 (70% M, 20% CF, 10% CS)

MB/TD: Without trying to prove its superiority, the wine shows beautiful balance, almost like a patriarch, self-assured, with a noble character and almost perfect balance: harmonious and pure, fine-grained tannins, suave and brilliant on the finish, aristocratically refined. 18.5

MS: Ripe fruit and raisiny character, too, also the strong impression of dry, new oak—like being in a new-barrel *chai*; full-bodied, concentrated, dryly tannic wine, with a spicity, dried fruit at its heart; intense, pure, bitter-black flavor of considerable tenacity, with a delicate fruit persistence that whispers the quality of its terroir and what might be, but whose voice, for the moment, is largely masked by the style of winemaking. What comes across is a pure, bittersweet flavor, warm, astringent, more like an alcohol spirit. Concentrated, low-yield droplets of faintly raisiny fruit, long, pure, and powerful. But to me it also tastes withered and old before its time, with none of the freshness, fruit glow, juiciness, and bloom of youth it should have. As usual, it will divide tasters and drinkers, and it clearly isn’t for me. Good of its type, yes... but perhaps I’m not really the person to judge. 17/17.5?

Château Pavie Decesse Grand Cru Classé – 15.5/16?

(90% M, 10% CF)

MS: Raisiny ripe fruit to smell, not unpleasant, but lacking sap/juice/moisture; full-bodied,

concentrated in its own odd way, firmly, dryly, woodily tannic; a bitter, ripe flavor here, a clear purity, and even a delicacy of fruit at its heart, but very dried by a marked new-wood astringency, leaving one’s gums stripped of lubricant, and a dry astringency as the final impression, rather than a refreshing, beverage juiciness of fruit. No idea when this will mellow—if ever. Not for me. 2020+. 15.5/16?

Château Pavie Macquin 1er Grand Cru Classé B – 18/18.5

MB/TD: Subtle and profound, very distinguished, wonderfully fine texture. Intense but quite harmonious, not at all heavy: the Thienpont/Derenoncourt team expertly avoided the pitfalls of the vintage. 18/18.5

Château Petit Gravet – 17.5/18

MB/TD: Made from 80% Cabernet Franc, this is a wine that stands out among all other St-Emilions. Magnificent freshness and length, showing notes of bright red fruit. It is remarkably long on the palate—one of the best wines of the appellation this year. 17.5/18

Château La Serre Grand Cru Classé – 15.5/16

MS: Persistent nose of sweetly ripe black fruit and gentle new oak; fresh, elegant, medium-weight balance, with a very light tannin; like the nose, a sweetly ripe, classic, flowing, and easy St-Emilion flavor; fresh, pure, subtly minerally, gently juicy; fine without being particularly complex, but very drinkable, and with good, fragrant length. Very nice indeed. 2014–22+. 15.5/16

Château Soutard Grand Cru Classé – 17/17.5

MB/TD: Linear, fine, long, and elegant, the wine is a symbol of both Soutard and the overall success of the vineyards located on St-Emilion’s limestone plateau. The fruit on the nose has remarkable focus. 17/17.5

Château Tertre Roteboeuf Grand Cru – 18.5+ (85% M, 15% CF)

MB/TD: The alcohol level on this wine is high, at over 15%, but it is energetic and profoundly elegant. Ample and long on the palate, it finishes with notes of ripe, full fruit. 18.5

MS: Black-red; intense, dense, roasted fruit to smell, with a touch of game; powerful and yet refined, finely tannic, very rich, very concentrated, yet without any asperity or excess weight whatsoever. At 15.6% alcohol, this has a remarkable balance: a little warmth, yes, but nothing tiring, no bitterness, no hardness, no burn. It’s all in the balance of constituents. Very sweet in fruit, but a wonderfully grand impression of overall balance; harmonious, complex, and fine, retaining its characteristic “Burgundian” transparency and finesse—and the alcohol notwithstanding, with no feeling of excess or weight at all. Effortless, subtle, complex,

mouth-coating, and very long in ripe, sweet perfume to finish. Extraordinary and individual. Expressive of the year, the cru, and François Mitjavile's gifted winemaking skills. 2018-40+. **18.5/19**

Château La Tour Figeac Grand Cru Classé - 16/16.5

(78% M, 22% CF)

MS: Lovely nose, sweet, pure, ripe black cherry—yet fresh, too; very nicely balanced, warm, rich, firmly but finely tannic wine; generous in fruit, ample and ripe, broad, with a gently muscular flesh, moderate complexity, and excellent fruit length—the typically attractive, up-front, immediate, appealing juiciness that has been the basic style of this fine St-Emilion for over a decade now, under owner Otto Rettenmaier's direction. Needs a while to soften, but these drink well young and are starting to show that they age well, too. 2017-30. **16/16.5**

Château Tour du Pin Grand Cru Classé - 16/16.5

(80% M, 20% CF)

MS: Restrained nose of freshly ripe fruit, very mineral; beautifully balanced, fresh, supple, concentrated wine, present but fine tannins; deliciously rich, flowing, supple fruit, warm, gently spicy, old-vine (35 years old) flavor, gently complex, long and fine in the mouth, and with very fine length on the finish. Densely juicy but without any excess or coarseness, and with no trace of excess sweetness or the fashionable overripeness. An easy, smiling St-Emilion, made by the Cheval Blanc team. Absolutely lovely wine. 2016-26. **16/16.5**

Château Troplong Mondot 1er Grand Cru Classé B - 17/17.5

(90% M, 5% CF, 5% CS)

MB/TD: Deep, opaque color, lovely expression of ripe black fruit on the nose (prunes); rich, generous, and intense, hot—which unfortunately restricts the freshness on the finish. **17/17.5**

MS: Densely ripe blackberry and blueberry fruit; rich, ample, very well constituted wine with a generous, fleshy core and a refined, non-excessive tannin texture; ripe, juicy flavor with a clear St-Emilion delicacy; long, pure, and subtle alongside the seductive juiciness of fruit; blackberry and cassis sweet, delicate, refined, transparent, fresh. You accept the slight wood dryness as part of the style, since it doesn't really get in the way, and the core fruit is so beautiful. A long, sweet, warm, fruit-fragrant finish. Lovely Troplong, its alcohol weight notwithstanding. 2018-40. **17/17.5**

Château Trottevieille 1er Grand Cru Classé B - 17

MB/TD: Hard hit by the hailstorm in the spring, Trottevieille has made a very nice wine, svelte, long, refined, and elegant, but in limited quantities. **17**

Château Valandraud Grand Cru - 18.5

(80% M, 20% CF)

MB/TD: Valandraud has a dazzling, silky character, underscored by surprisingly elegant tannins. Amazing, pure-fruit expression; the wine is long, intense, and absolutely brilliant. We've never tasted a better Valandraud. **19**

MS: Subtle, black-cherry nose; a rich and concentrated wine, but in an effortless way; medium-full, fresh, and very finely tannic; dense in flavor without being in any way thick; warm, glowingly ripe, fragrant, black-cherry sweetness, a lovely ripeness and freshness of fruit at once; long and close-grained, with an almost imperceptible tannin texture and great, gentle tenacity of flavor, filmily mouth-coating, and with a prolonged, perfumed farewell. A beauty in every sense. The fine palate and gentle winemaking hand of Murielle Thunevin are clear here. Accessible early, but so well balanced that it should keep very well. 2016-30. **18/18.5**

Château Villemaurine Grand Cru Classé - 17.5

MB/TD: Recently taken over by Justin Onclin and advised by consultant Stéphane Derenoncourt, this winery demonstrates, in this great vintage, the sophistication of its wonderful, limestone terroir. The wine is bursting with fragrance, pure and fresh red fruit, and a long, drawn-out finish, without being overblown, deep and focused. **17.5**

Pomerol

MB/TD: The overall quality of Pomerol is remarkable, and many wines—most of the top wineries included—have, at this point, made the greatest wines in their recent histories. It will be, of course, necessary to reevaluate them after bottling. Though the wines are ample and sometimes quite full-bodied, they are also powerfully structured, but with remarkable freshness—in short, they are perfectly balanced.

Château Beaugard - 17

(80% M, 20% CF)

MB/TD: The wine is svelte, with extremely fine tannins, length, and persistence; unctuous but lively on the palate. Brilliant. **17/17.5**

MS: Dense ripe fruit and subtle mineral behind; rich, velvety wine, with a fine fruit cushion, a gentle, dry tannin, and the year's freshness; rich, ripe, spicy middleweight, sweet yet fresh, generous without heaviness, fragrant, long to taste, with a clear Bordeaux minerality behind the generous fruit, and with lovely length. A fairly sumptuous Beaugard. Classic Pomerol. 2016-30. **16.5/17**

Château Le Bon Pasteur - 17

(80% M, 20% CF)

MB/TD: Linear and fruit-forward, with notes of violet, the wine is appealing and complex and elegant on the palate. The alcohol and the richness are perfectly balanced by the

freshness of the tannins. **17.5**

MS: Ripe, plummy, natural black-cherry and mineral nose; nicely balanced, medium-full wine, finely if dryly tannic, with a nice but not excessive concentration, and a fresh acidity; long and quite racy to taste, well sustained across the palate, gently spicy, sweetly ripe, black-cherry and oak-vanilla flavors; a nice mouth-filling fragrance, a gentle minerality, and a long, gently sweet, perfumed finish. Very nice. 2018-30. **16.5/17**

Château Certan Marzelle - 16/16.5

MS: Sweet, ripe fruit to smell; elegantly balanced, fresh, medium-bodied wine, with a fine, dry tannin; a freshly ripe, sweet flavor of great charm and finesse, scented, subtle, feminine, refined; nice length in the mouth, flowing and gracious, and with good, scented length. 2015-25+. **16/16.5**

Château Clinet - 17/17.5

(85% M, 12% CS, 3% CF)

MB/TD: A solid wine, with a broad structure but not lacking finesse; well-defined tannins, spicy length, great potential, confirming that this estate is in fine form. **17/17.5**

MS: Lovely, stylish, plummy, roasted, ripe fruit to smell; rich, concentrated, fresh and finely tannic wine, with that wonderful image of Pomerol flavor: sweet, smooth, violet fragrant; an intense fruit core of great perfume, great purity, great finesse, and lovely fruit length. Clinet is not assembled until much later, and the sample I tasted a week later was noticeably more muscular, still with that lovely core fruit, but a much firmer surround. Full of promise, though. 2020-35. **17/17.5**

Clos du Clocher - 16.5

MB/TD: Wonderfully full-bodied, with pleasingly spicy, ripe tannins, and great structure. As the wine matures, the style will become more refined, and this will be an excellent wine. **16.5**

Château La Conseillante - 18

(90% harvest; 81% M, 19% CF)

MB/TD: Garnet color; young, fresh fruit, showing notes of cassis and red fruit; pure, long, refined, with elegant tannins. Very promising. **18**

MS: On the nose, dense, ripe blackberry and mineral fruit, with a touch of roasted character and exotic spice, very persistent; concentrated, moderately rich middleweight, fresh in acidity, very fine in tannin, with a most beautiful maturity of fruit; pure, ripe, cherry-sweet and fragrant to taste; long and clinging without any heaviness; both density and delicacy, a distinguished, subtle, complex wine, with a gorgeous core and lovely scented length. 2020-35+. **17.5/18.5**

Clos L'Eglise - 17/17.5

MS: A sweet, black-cherry-and-cassis nose; beautifully balanced wine, rich in fruit, with a very fine, firm tannin and no excess extract

(laying down)

or musculature; a striking fruit core here, pure, intense, racy, sweet, and fragrant; subtly minerally behind the fruit and with lovely, scented length. Fine Pomerol, notably harmonious, and with a particularly appetizing freshness. 2018–35. **17/17.5**

Château L'Eglise-Clinet - 19

(85% M, 15% CF)

MB/TD: Denis Durantou's legendary wine doesn't disappoint in this already legendary vintage. The wine is serious but also ethereal and taut, with amazing depth and incredible potential. Certainly one of the best wines of the year. **19.5**

MS: Gently roasted nose, ripe black cherry and mineral; rich and restrained at once; fairly full, elegantly concentrated, very finely textured, noticeably fresh and moderately tannic wine; a deliciously sweet fruit that is energetic, thoroughbred, racy, fragrant; power without any feeling of force, warmly, delicately mouth-coating, subtly minerally, with a long and splendidly perfumed, sweet aftertaste. A richly imposing Pomerol of remarkable freshness and great persistence. 2020–40. **18/18.5**

La Petite Eglise - 15.5/16

(100% M)

MS: Mid-purple; soft, ripe, plummy fruit, lightly minerally, very pretty nose! Nicely balanced middleweight, generous in freshly plummy fruit, particularly refined in tannin; deliciously ripe, cherry flavor, fresh, silky-textured, delicately oaky, with a fine Pomerol fragrance and lovely length. A classy, graceful, particularly successful La Petite Eglise. 2015–25. **15.5/16**

Château l'Evangile - 18

(70% harvest; 95% M, 5% CF)

MB/TD: Made from 95% Merlot, this wine is rich, ample, fairly alcoholic but not heavy; deep and full-bodied on the palate, with a pure fruit finish. **18/18.5**

MS: Scented nose, with an impression of ample fruit; rich, full-bodied Pomerol with a vivid acidity and firm tannic structure; to taste, an exotic, spice-tinged, sweet black-cherry fruit, pure, fragrant, and fine; with a vibrant, vivid quality and excellent scented length. This is a wine packed with flavor, where the combination of high alcohol, high tannin, and high acidity all reinforce each other to make for powerful, sinewy, slightly severe style; there is no asperity in the texture, but it is a firm, long-term Evangile to put away for 12–15 years. 2025–40. **17.5/18.5**

La Fleur de Gay - 17.5

MB/TD: Rich, spicy blackberry on the nose; the mouth is succulent and unctuous, with intense fruit. The wine is wonderfully expansive with superb texture. **17.5**

Château Le Gay - 19

MB/TD: Structured, profound, and dense. Lacking the extreme precision of its neighbor

La Fleur, and slightly less complete than Pétrus, but with similar characteristics and a remarkably sumptuous core. **19**

Château Gazin - 15.5/16.5

(90% M, 7% CS, 3% CF)

MS: Black fruit and minerals nose, "creamy"; rich, fresh, well-padded middleweight, with a nice, unaggressive tannin, an attractively supple texture, and a fruit core that is dense and pure and long. Medium to long term. 2016–30. **15.5/16.5**

Château La Grave - 15.5/16

MS: Freshly, grappily ripe nose, with a mineral tinge; supple, fresh, medium-weight wine with a light, dry tannin; like the nose, a light, grapey flavor, of moderate complexity, gently minerally; lacking the weight of the richer styles of the vintage, but very *digeste*, and with a nice, gentle, vitally fruity length. 2015–25. **15.5/16**

Château Hosanna - 17.5/18

MS: Freshly ripe, minerally nose; very nicely balanced, rich medium-weight, wine with a firm but very fine-grained tannin; deep and sweet and generous in its medium-bodied style; long, warm, exotic spiced flavor, with a delightful fleshy texture; long and sweet and fragrantly complex in the mouth; juicily rich, finely mineral infused, amply textured, and with excellent length. A powerful yet refined and complete Hosanna. Delicious! 2020–35+. **17.5/18**

Château Lafleur - 18.5

(66% harvest; 53% CF, 47% M)

MB/TD: A blend of 53% Cabernet Franc and 47% Merlot, the wine is immensely pure, with elegant length stylishly displaying the exceptional freshness of Cabernet Franc. The wine is already quite complex and wonderfully long on the palate. **19.5**

MS: Ample ripe fruit to smell, black cherry, mineral, roasted warmth, and new oak; rich, generous, fleshy wine, finely, firmly tannic; deep in warm ripe black fruit, long and powerful to taste, clear mineral aromas, a touch of warmth and faint bitterness, long across the palate—tenacious, mouth-coating, almost a slightly peppery character, subtly refined fruit within the firm frame, and very long to finish, with an almost bittersweet persistence. Powerful, though without coarseness, but a wine one feels will need to be tamed by time. Very different from the effortlessly graceful, mesmerizing, and perfumed delicacy of the 2008. The 2009 is wilder in personality, big, structured and muscular alongside its refinement. At least 15 years in bottle required. 2025–40. **17.5/18**

Château La Fleur-Pétrus - 17

MB/TD: One of the great wines from the Moueix portfolio (who, all in all, was very successful in this vintage). The wine is linear and straightforward, long but not heavy, very well balanced. **17.5**

MS: Sweet and crisply ripe to smell; freshly rich middleweight wine with a fine tannin; but long and ripe and refined flavor; warm, dense, gently fleshy, quite complex and tenacious across the palate, particularly crisp and pristine in taste, rather than dense or fat; but juicy, aromatic, complete, and with good, light length. A fine rather than a great La Fleur-Pétrus. 2018–30. **16.5/17+**

Château Latour à Pomerol - 16.5/16.5+

MS: Rich middleweight wine, gently muscular in style, with a firm but fine-grained tannin around a moderately concentrated fruit; pure and juicy in flavor, without being particularly fleshy, but long, ripe, gently rich, spicy, and complex; fresh and vital and with a long, lively, violet-scented finish. Fine, taut, well-defined rather than particularly fleshy Pomerol. Very nice but will need a bit of time. 2017–30. **16.5/16.5+**

Château Nenin - 17/17.5

(80% M, 20% CF)

MS: Dense, ripe black- and blueberry fruit to smell; rich, elegant, fresh balance, a good concentration and very fine tannins; long, elegant, and even in the mouth, a real Pomerol "flesh" at last, a very fine caramel-and-vanilla backdrop to its characteristic slight sternness, and excellent aromatic length. Fine, complete Nenin—the best for a very long time. 2018–35. **17/17.5?**

Château Montviel - 17

MB/TD: Already quite pleasant; a fragrance of blackberry and sweet spices; on the palate the tannins are juicy and well proportioned, with a wonderfully refined texture and great length. By far the best Montviel ever. **17**

Château Petit Village - 17.5

(75% M, 17% CS, 8% CF)

MB/TD: By far the biggest success in the recent history of this property. Unparalleled silkiness, and remarkably full on the palate. Certainly one of the stars of the vintage. **19**

MS: Sweet, black-cherry nose; a rich, supple, moderately tannic wine with a delicious ripeness of fruit, a fine fragrance, and a fleshy texture. Warm, harmonious, complete, quite complex, and with excellent length. Quite stylish and classy—a proper Pomerol again! 2016–26+. **16/16.5**

Pétrus - 19.5

MB/TD: This Pétrus will be, without a doubt, one of the greatest ever. The wine displays the habitual but unparalleled round, silky texture of Pétrus, but also has amazing power and depth. This combination of strength and softness gives the wine a unique personality that will continue to improve as the wine ages. **19.5/20**

MS: Very dense and persistent mineral and blackberry ripe fruit; a rich, elegant aristocratic balance, fresh in acidity, and with a very fine-textured tannin; sweet in flavor, a striking combination of fruit density, spice,

and minerality, wonderfully fresh, long, and elegant; tenaciously mouth-coating but transparently pure, too, with terrific aromatic persistence. An effortless richness; a truly beautiful, most individual Pétrus. 2025–50. **19/19.5**

Le Pin – 18

MB/TD: This is a truly great Le Pin, though without its usual flamboyance: the wine shines instead for its fresh flavors, its ultra-fine tannins, and its distinguished length. Very sophisticated. **18.5**

MS: Spicily ripe black-fruit nose; richly packed, beautifully balanced, medium- to full-bodied wine, fresh in acidity, finely tannic; deep, freshly ripe black-cherry fruit, long, penetrating, intense, spicy; a close-grained, quietly showy, understated juiciness and a splendid length of ripe fruit and gentle mineral aromas; plush yet firm, long and beautifully defined by its vital acidity, and with great length. Elegance, freshness, poise, persistence. Natural and with nothing overdone. 2020–40. **17/17.5+**

Château Plince – 15/15.5

MS: Ripe, gently oaky nose; medium-bodied, moderately concentrated wine, currently marked by its oak tannin, but with a fresh, sweetly ripe flavor and good, sweet fruit persistence. Pretty lesser, lighter Pomerol. 2013–20+. **15/15.5**

Château La Pointe – 17/17.5

MB/TD: The new owners of this vast holding (considering the size of Pomerol!) have employed Hubert de Boüard to advise them. The results are immediately apparent, and the wine definitely bears the Boüard signature: huge nose of black fruit and chocolate, suave and unctuous on the palate, long and harmonious. **16.5/17**

Château Providence – 17+/17.5

MS: Sweet and freshly ripe to smell; plush and fresh middleweight balance, with a fine, dry tannin frame; juicily ripe fruit, with a marked spiciness and distinct warmth—long and complex and vividly spicy flavor; a distinctive combination of ripeness and freshness; quite powerful, but discreet at the same time; a fine, fragrant finish. Delightful fruit but quite a firm frame; will need time. 2019–30+. **17+/17.5**

Château Rouget – 17

MB/TD: Loaded with fruit, this wine is a real charmer; its velvety, smooth texture just adds to the pleasure. The density of the wine is perfectly balanced by the freshness of the tannins. **17**

Château Trotanoy – 18/18.5+

MS: Dense, sweet, freshly ripe fruit to smell; rich, middleweight wine with a finely firm tannin and fresh acidity; ripe, fresh, tenacious blackberry-sweet flavor, spicy, generous, long, and sapid—overall, a firmish, slightly

austere style, complex and well sustained across the palate; plenty of that blackberry-ripe flavor, warm, complex, mouth-coating, and with a fine, freshly, juicily sweet, spicy length. A very fine, firm, long-term Trotanoy. 2015–40. **18/18.5+**

Vieux Château Certan – 18.5

(84% M, 8% CF, 8% CS)

MB/TD: Wonderfully refined texture, superb attack, suave and satiny, opening up with a soft touch, elegant and silky with notes of violets and fresh black fruit. Made from 84% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc, and 8% Cabernet Sauvignon, the tannins are savory and persistent. **18.5**

MS: (Alexandre emphasized that the 2009 VCC was not yet assembled, so this is an approximate blend.) Subtly ripe nose, restrained, mineral-tinged, plummy Merlot; fairly full-bodied, elegantly balanced, plush, and finely tannic wine; a long, rich, complex blend of ripe fruit and minerality, density and class; packed with flavor, effortlessly mouth-filling, and, like the best of the 2009s, with a wonderful freshness. Great, fruit-fragrant, mineral-tinged length. A velvety, complete VCC. 2020–40. **18/18.5**

Château Vray Croix de Gay – 17

MB/TD: This wine, from a splendid terroir, is truly establishing itself with this vintage. Solid, deep, and long, showing refined tannins with silky, focused length. **17**

Other Right Bank wines

MB/TD: Glorious vintages like 2009 can sometimes be better for the big guys than the small ones. That is not the case this year, where good winemakers in appellations of the Côtes or Entre-Deux-Mers with excellent grapes were truly able to demonstrate their talents. We found many harmonious, full-bodied wines that weren't simply copies of the grands crus (overextracted, super-oaky). On the contrary, there are some beautiful wines, fruit-forward, rich, and succulent.

Château de Chambrun Le Bourg Lalande de Pomerol – 16/16.5

MB/TD: With more freshness than the *cuvée classique*, this property, recently taken over by Sylvio Denz (Château Faugères), made a wine with intense notes of black fruit. It is deep, long on the palate, with a firm structure, and perfectly ripe. **16/16.5**

Château La Fleur de Boüard Lalande de Pomerol – 17

MB/TD: This is a wine with fresh tannins that are silky, spicy, and quite powerful. The oak is well integrated, and we loved the fragrance of violets, which will evolve into the notes of black truffle that are so sought after in this area. **17**

Le Défi de Fontenil Fronsac – 18

MB/TD: Certainly the best wine made by the Rolland family this year. Magnificently full

and rich, with remarkably refined tannins and a harmonious, fruit-filled finish. **18**

Château Haut-Carles Fronsac – 17

MB/TD: Wonderfully refined texture, superb attack, suave and almost meaty, developing a soft texture; elegant and silky, with notes of violets and fresh red fruit. **17**

Domaine de l'A Côtes de Castillon – 17

MB/TD: The wine shows dazzlingly focused fruit and silky tannins; it is delicate and deep, intense and subtle. It is unquestionably the best wine they have made since Stéphane Derenoncourt took over. Splendidly long. **17**

Château d'Aiguilhe Côtes de Castillon – 17

MB/TD: Deep and intense. The wine is generous, with wonderful style. It definitely has elegance and texture, but it's also amazingly rich. **17**

Château Gigault Cuvée Viva Premières Côtes de Blaye – 15.5/15

MB/TD: Deep, long, and firm, with remarkably intense freshness and length, certainly one of the most aristocratic expressions of the wines from the Côtes. **15.5/16**

Bad Boy Bordeaux – 17

MB/TD: The grapes came from both Compassant and Haut-Mazeris in Fronsac. Jean-Luc Thunevin's Bad Boy is a brilliant success in this vintage: ample, fleshy, harmonious, long, and fruity—quite simply, a great wine. **17**

Château Tour de Sarraill Bordeaux – 16

MB/TD: Located between Libourne and Bordeaux, this winery's 15ha (37 acres) are on clayish limestone soils with full southern exposition, and the 2009 was one of the best wines in its category. Well-defined tannins, with notes of blackberry and spice; this wine is wonderfully fleshy. The finish is flavorful, with hints of licorice. Made in tandem by Bernard Pujol and Hubert de Boüard, this is one of the most reasonably priced wines of the vintage—and one of our favorites. Buy it in magnum. **16**

Château Hostens-Picant Lucullus Ste-Foy Bordeaux – 15

MB/TD: More spicy and intense than the regular bottling, but with good balance and fine tannins. More complete than previously, and the best wine ever made here. **15**

Roc de Cambes Côtes de Bourg – 16/16.5+ (75% M, 20% CS, 5% MA)

MS: Roasted nose, fat, and ripe; beautifully balanced, rich, generous, finely tannic, ample wine; sweet yet fresh to taste, perfectly textured, with very gentle tannin; quite powerful, long, warm, mouth-coating, gently spicy, with great finesse and terrific persistence. A lovely and complete wine, with remarkable depth for the cru. 2015–25. **16/16.5+**

(laying down)

Sauternes/Barsac

MB/TD: Never in our early tastings have we found such quality and consistency from appellation to appellation. The richness, the intensity, but also the charming aromatics of the vintage place it in a class of its own. The sweet wines of the right bank of the Garonne clearly benefited from the same weather, and it will be fascinating to discover the best wines when we taste them again in a year.

Château d'Arche 2ème Cru Sauternes – 14.5/15

MS: Pale lemon; fresh to smell; moderately concentrated, medium-full wine; intensely sweet, with a nice lemon and mineral flavor but limited complexity and length. Not bad, not special. Nice in a lighter style for the year. 2013–25. **14.5/15**

Château Bastor-Lamontagne Preignac – 15/15.5

MS: Pale gold; light lemon and mineral nose; a moderately concentrated lightweight, rich, medium-sweet, and fresh, with a gentle minerality, limited complexity, and good, light, length. A very pretty, pleasing, lighter style, complete at the level and very nice. 2014–25. **15/15.5**

Château Broustet 2ème Cru Barsac – 14.5+/15

MS: Light; wax-and-honey nose; nicely balanced, lemony middleweight of moderate concentration; very sweet, taut, linear-tight Barsac style; a nice tenacity of flavor and good length. 2014–24. **14.5+/15**

Château Caillou 2ème Cru Barsac – 14.5/15

MS: Pale lemon; lightly mineral nose; elegantly balanced, very rich, but with adequate, fresh, balancing acidity; intensely sweet, unctuously textured wine, of moderate complexity, with a fine lemon and mineral flavor, but a very high sugar level impression, and good length. Not heavy because of the acidity, but a thimbleful wine nonetheless. On the verge of sticky. 2013–25. **14.5/15**

Château Climens 1er Cru Barsac – 18.5/20

MS: Various lots ranging from the moderately sweet, delicate, and fine, to the intensely sweet, very rich, and very complex. Bérénice Lurton's view is: "2009 Climens is definitely in the ranks of the greatest Climens in history." It will doubtless be excellent, though in quite what way we shall have to wait and see. **18.5/20**

Château Clos Haut-Peyraguey 1er Cru Bommès – 17.5

MB/TD: Classic Haut-Bommès, with more freshness than others; notes of citrus and white fruit, precisely defined flavors and sweetness; extremely long, elegant, condensed, just a touch of oak for now. **18.5**
MS: Pale orange-gold; a strong combination of honey and coconutty oak on the nose; a

medium-full wine; nicely concentrated, elegantly balanced wine, indeed rather less hefty than usual; very sweet, quite complex, and with good, light length. 2016–30. **16/16.5**

Château Coutet 1er Cru Barsac – 18.5

MB/TD: Broad, generous, long, quite sweet. The wine is complete. For the time being, it is too rich and too sweet for it to show all the nuances of its origins, but it clearly has a great future ahead. **18**

MS: Pale gold; refined, fresh, limestone-mineral nose; beautifully balanced, rich, and elegant wine; very sweet, but not excessively so; a fine vitality, with a lovely impression of freshness behind the high level of sugar; very mineral, very botrytis-complex, very long, linear, harmonious, and complete. A superb example of both Coutet and of Barsac. Probably finer than its 2001. 2016–35+. **18/19+**

Château Doisy-Daëne 2ème Cru Barsac – 16.5

MB/TD: Remarkably subtle; the wine has perfectly preserved the fresh flavors of the grapes; very long, pure, and refined without being overly sweet. Currently, we are more impressed by the technical aspects of the wine than by its expression of the terroir, but its purity will guarantee that the terroir will eventually shine through in a few years' time. **17**

MS: Pale lemon; fine, light, honey-and-mineral nose; a nicely balanced, concentrated middleweight, with a lively defining acidity; intensely sweet, lemony, slender yet rich, too; classy, refined, and with excellent length. A fine, long-term prospect, and this is a wine that normally ages very gracefully. 2016–30. **16/16.5+**

Château Doisy-Védrines 2ème Cru Barsac – 15.5/16

MS: Pale lemon-gold; gently honeyed richness on the nose; fullish, rich, fleshy expression of 2009; intensely sweet, mineral-infused, moderately complex if with clear botrytis spice, and good rather than great length. 2015–30. **15.5/16**

Château de Fargues Sauternes – 18

MB/TD: Sumptuous nose, typical of a vintage with the maximum botrytis possible; a bit of caramelization brings to mind the best of the 2003s; splendid substance, the acidity perfectly balancing the sweetness; the wine is delightfully captivating. **18**

MS: Mid-gold; intense citrus and honey nose, with a strong impression of complex botrytis spice; very rich but beautifully balanced, elegantly concentrated and vital wine; an intensely sweet, most beautifully defined richness; intense, succulent, wonderfully fresh and energetic; an impressive spectrum of aromas and flavors, subtle complexity, and lovely aromatic persistence. A great de Fargues. 2017–40+. **17.5/18.5**

Château Filhot 2ème Cru Sauternes – 17

MB/TD: A perfect sample of this wine: aromatically rich, with botrytized fruit (apricot and white peach), but also the touch of lanolin that is its signature. Very persistent and really superb. **17**

Château Guiraud 1er Cru Sauternes – 18

MB/TD: Wonderful aromas of noble rot, with a slight hint of Muscat; monumental sweetness, sticky and unctuous texture, great finesse: a terrific success. **18.5**

MS: Mid-gold; quite oaky on the nose, and you can smell the Sauvignon Blanc freshness; intensely sweet, finely concentrated and with a vivid acidity; a long, fine, racy flavor, quite complex and aromatic, and with good length. **16.5/17+**

Château Les Justices – 18

MB/TD: A light color, with hints of green; wonderful citrus notes; classic Preignac fruit, incredibly rich for this winery, perfect fusion of alcohol and sweetness, wonderful length on the palate, with a very long life ahead. Reminiscent of the 1949 Gilette, the previous generation of this family. **18**

Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey 1er Cru Bommès – 18.5

MB/TD: A bit more golden in color than others, but with hints of green; wonderful nose of noble rot; candied and generous on the palate, the perfect example of a great 2009, with the opulence typical of this property. **18.5**

MS: Mid-gold; fresh and mineral to smell; very nicely balanced, rich yet fine-boned elegance, silky textured, and with a marked, liqueur-like character, Sauternes richness but no excess weight, with a clear botrytis complexity and spice, long and even to taste, and with excellent fruit length. For the second year running, a very fine, complete Lafaurie. 2017–35+. **18/19**

Château Lamothe 2ème Cru Sauternes – 17

MB/TD: For the first time in several years, this showed no whiff of chlorine, but rather the body and texture of really good Sauternes, with great length and a great future. **16.5**

Château Lamothe-Guignard 2ème Cru Sauternes – 17

MB/TD: Very "roasted" on the nose, with the aromas of apricot confit typical of the vintage, and even a touch of caramel—a sign of full botrytis. Very syrupy but refined, and certainly the finest wine produced here. **17**

Château de Malle 2ème Cru Preignac – 15/16

MS: Pale lemon; closed, lightly mineral nose; nicely balanced medium-weight Sauternes. Intensely sweet but fresh and lemony, too; pure and lively lemon-and-mineral flavor, with a clear, gentle, botrytis spice complexity. Nice length in the mouth; nice, sweetly aromatic length on the finish. Typically well-

made, pure, fresh, middle-rank Sauternes. 2014–25+. **15/16**

Château de Myrat 2ème Cru Barsac – 15.5

MB/TD: Remarkable aromas of white fruits, with superb intensity of “roasted” grapes. A well-harvested wine, elegant, rich, and with great length. As so often, this is unbeatable value and the kind of Barsac we love. **17**

MS: Pale gold; light honey-and-mineral nose; a richly sweet, lemony middleweight of a fair concentration, modest complexity, and good, medium length. **14/14.5**

Château Nairac 2ème Cru Barsac – 18.5

MB/TD: The richness, splendor, and typical Barsac vitality of this wine indicates that we are among the best here, with an unending finish, underscored by a hint of saltiness. This is splendid! **18.5**

MS: Intense mineral-and-citrus nose, taut and persistent to smell; almost painfully sweet and concentrated, but with a most vigorous defining acidity; very liquorous lemon and barley-sugar base, long, complex, and botrytis spicy; a remarkable impression of freshness, given the level of sugar, and with a very long, botrytis-spice packed finish. A super-rich but perfectly balanced Nairac. 2018–40+. **18/18.5**

Château Rabaud-Promis 1er Cru Bommes – 17

MB/TD: Rich, unctuous, perfect noble rot; it hasn't yet developed the nuances of its neighbors but has the advantage of a bit more oak; quite seductive in its balance between power and fruit. A wonderfully elegant wine with a great future. **17.5**

MS: Orange-gold; dumb on the nose; rich and full and relatively supple in the year; very ripe, juicy fruit character, opulent in style for '09, quite complex, but perhaps lacking the fresh definition of the top first growths in this year; good, light length, but with a finish not the equal of the attack. 2016–30+. **16/17?**

Château Raymond-Lafon Sauternes – 18

MB/TD: On the same level as the best first growths, the wine is splendid, as it always is in a great vintage, and it possibly has even more grandeur and harmony than in previous great vintages. Sauternes in all its glory, and a long life ahead. **19**

MS: Rich, lemony nose, both liqueur and freshness; a very nicely balanced, rich, fresh middleweight, intensely sweet, long, and vital; a beautifully stylish, clean, pure, botrytis-complex wine with fine length. Seems disgraceful that it wasn't voted into the Union des Grands Crus. 2016–30. **17/17+**

Château Rayne-Vigneau 1er Cru Bommes – 17.5

MB/TD: This property is now back among the ranks of the best Sauternes producers, with a seamless transition from the former winemaking team to the new one. The wine

is the definition of greatness in this vintage, closer in style to the citrus notes of Clos Haut-Peyraguey than to the noble rot of Lafaurie. Despite its linear richness, the harmony of the sweetness is exemplary. It's the richest, most focused and complete wine of recent vintages. **18**

MS: Mid-gold; quite rich and full and with good defining acidity; good flavor and length but just lacking the concentration, raciness, and class that would put it in the very top rank, which is where it should be, given its quite magnificent terroir. 2017–30. **16.5/17**

Château Rieussec 1er Cru Fargues – 19

MB/TD: A monster in a vintage of giants! Huge, but harmonious in its monumentality, with just the right touch of oak, but obviously this amount of complexity needs a few additional months in barrel to overcome the dominating sweetness. **18.5**

MS: Bright, greeny gold; spicy, citrus, and noble-rot complexity on the nose; a rich, ample wine, with a fine, defining acidity; a little touched by its new wood currently; intensely sweet, long, exciting, and complex to taste. A beautifully sustained flavor—rich, taut, complex, and vigorous; great generosity, but entirely without heaviness or excess, and with a splendid, powerfully aromatic finish. A most complete and classy aristocrat. 2017–40+. **18.5/19.5**

Château Romer-du-Hayot 2ème Cru Fargues – 16.5

MB/TD: A real revolution here! Graceful musky notes of fresh Sauvignon over a base of apricot and white fruit from the nobly rotten Semillon, albeit with less energy and power than the Nairac, which immediately preceded it in our tasting. At last a wine from this property that is worthy of its classification and the vintage. **16.5**

Château Sigalas-Rabaud 1er Cru Bommes – 17.5

MB/TD: An absolute Haut-Sauternes classic, powerful and complex, refined, with wonderfully rich concentration; reaches new heights, with huge aging potential. **18.5**

MS: Pale lemon-gold; elegantly balanced, moderately concentrated, and with a fresh acidity; sweet, moderately complex wine, quite juicy, pure, characteristically mineral, and with good, if somewhat light, length. Seems to lack a little of the class of the best of this year. 2015–30. **16.5/17**

Château Suduiraut 1er Cru Preignac – 19

MB/TD: As in the 2008 vintage, this wine is close to perfection, with a heavenly, fruit-filled bouquet. It seems to combine everything that Sauternes and Barsac have to offer in one wine. Will it be equal to the legendary 1899 and 1928? We'll bet on it! **19**

MS: Mid-gold; dense, citrus and botrytis spice to smell; beautifully balanced, remarkably effortless, elegantly concentrated middleweight Sauternes; very sweet, yet so

fresh. Complex, charged with savor, long and fine; absolutely without excess or heaviness. Incredibly light on its toes, given its sweetness, and with terrific persistence of delicately spicy fruit. Recalls the 2001, but this seems more subtle, less weighty. A reference wine—fabulous Suduiraut. 2016–40+. **18.5/19+**

Château La Tour Blanche 1er Cru Bommes – 18.5

MB/TD: Possibly our favorite wine tasted on the day. Above and beyond its prodigiously rich sweetness and its perfect balance, it is developing an aromatic charm and finesse that have no equal. It's practically at the same level of purity and brilliance as Yquem. **19**

MS: Mid-gold; dense coconut and citrus to smell; rich, unctuous, concentrated yet remarkably elegant Sauternes. Intensely sweet, vivid, and racy complex, with a particularly fine freshness and definition. Long to taste; long and complete and consistent to finish. A very fine Sauternes; a very fine La Tour Blanche. 2018–30+. **18/19+**

Château d'Yquem 1er Cru Supérieur Sauternes – 20

MB/TD: We know that some people have been bothered by the change in the style of wine here since 2004—and we feel sorry for them! How can you not be humbled in admiration before the tour de force that is represented in the perfect sensations of an immensely rich fruit and an almost crystalline purity of texture, recalling the greatest Rieslings of the Saar or the Rhine? Hats off to the winemaking team! **20**

MS: Mid-gold; intense, beautifully clear-cut nose of honey, subtle new oak, raisins—intense and persistent. Very rich, very sweet, and vital in its supporting acidity; liqueur-like in its concentration and viscosity of texture, yet completely without heaviness; and behind the sugar, an exceptionally energetic raciness, a constant underlying frisson of energy within the enveloping, silky coating. Pure honey, raisin, gently citrusy orange and tangerine base flavors enlivened by the exotic spice and complexity of botrytis; enormously tenacious flavor as one explores it, keeps it, lets it rest on the palate. An exceptionally refined and delicate richness and a presence, as an aftertaste, that can be measured in minutes. The richest, sweetest, most succulent Yquem I have tasted, in my view, finer than the 1990, richer than the 1989, more fine-spun than the 2003—all comparisons made by the château. Whether it will measure up to the 2001, it will be interesting to see; for the moment it seems more obviously opulent, less taut, more liqueur-like in texture, though time in barrel will give it even more complexity, definition, and resonance. A wonderful expression of Sauternes, which will be a delight from the moment it is bottled, I should imagine. 2018–50+. **19.5/20?** ■