

Wine tasting in Bordeaux (France)

Asher Tishler

The winery tour in Bordeaux during November 2018 included Claudia Maayan-Nevo, Shlomo Yonas, Nurit and Asher Tishler. We visited 18 very high quality wineries in various districts of Bordeaux (Graves, Pessac-Leognan, Saint-Emilion, Sauternes, Margaux, Saint-Estephe, Saint-Julien, Pauillac) and tasted some of their wines.

Visiting the high quality wineries in the region requires pre-arranged meetings, sometimes several months in advance, which may be, sometimes, difficult to secure. The hosts, hospitality and quality of the wineries' presentations and tours during our visits in all of the wineries were first class. Most wineries treated us to a thorough tour in the winery and its facilities, and presented in details their philosophies and activities in the vineyard and the winery. In some of the wineries, the list of wines that we tasted was set in advance and, sometimes, we had to pay a tasting fee (that was set and known in advance). In 5 of the 18 wineries we tasted only one wine, which was somewhat disappointing (particularly since some of us were familiar with the wines of these wineries). Agreeing in advance on the number and type of wines to be tasted is helpful, since it avoids disappointments later on. We were impressed by the complex processes and sophisticated technologies that all of the wineries were using and, at the same time, by their commitment to quality, tradition and consistency. High quality mature wine in these wineries should be purchased in professional wine stores or in other professional outlets (local importers, internet stores, etc.) since almost all of the production of the high quality wineries is pre-sold (sometimes several years) in advance. Several of the wineries that we visited sell some of their wines in the winery's store. The main red varieties of Bordeaux are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, and the main white varieties are Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon.

There are numerous hotels, restaurants and wine stores in the Bordeaux region. We resided at the city of Bordeaux which is surrounded by the region's most famous wine districts and wineries. With a rich historical and architectural heritage, Bordeaux is an exciting and interesting city to visit. It features many attractions, hotels, restaurants and wine stores. Note, however, that visiting the city's new wine museum was a great disappointment (avoid it).

We ranked most of the wines that we tasted as 'very good' or even 'excellent'. Almost all of the high quality wines that we tasted will age and continue to develop, most of them for decades. The evaluation of the wines below is my own, but all four of us had similar views on the majority of the wines that are evaluated below.

Finally, there are numerous sources of information on Bordeaux wines, wineries, history, climate and geography. Wikipedia and the references therein is a good place to start.

Wineries

Liber Pater (Graves)

Cabernet Sauvignon, 2018. (From a barrel). 13% alcohol. Very young wine (only a couple of weeks after the harvest; after alcoholic fermentation; before malolactic fermentation). Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Fresh. Some floral aroma. Some presence of desirable bitterness at the end. Noticeable soft tannins. Nice acidity. Very enjoyable, interesting and promising high quality wine.

Petit Verdot, 2018. (From a barrel). 13% alcohol. Very young wine (only a couple of weeks after the harvest; after alcoholic fermentation; before malolactic fermentation). Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Somewhat spicy. Fresh. Some floral aroma. Some presence of desirable bitterness at the end. Noticeable soft tannins. Nice acidity. Very enjoyable, interesting and promising high quality wine.

Castets, 2018. (From a barrel). 13% alcohol. Very young wine (only a couple of weeks after the harvest; after alcoholic fermentation; before malolactic fermentation). Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Fresh. Some floral aroma. Somewhat feminine. Some presence of desirable bitterness at the end. Noticeable soft tannins. Nice acidity. Very enjoyable, interesting and promising high quality wine.

This is a very small and unusual winery with a production of about 1000 bottles a year. The winery produces very high quality wines (wines are not released to the market in years in which their quality is judged by the winemaker to be insufficiently high). It grows some unusual types of grapes (Castets, for example). Liber Pater's main wine contains about 80% Cabernet Sauvignon; the other 20% include Petit Verdot, Castets, and other types of grapes. The winemaker noted that the property's vineyards are situated on a unique soil that is not prone to (and did not experience) Phylloxera and, hence, he does not use American rootstock for grafting. The price of a bottle of wine of this winery is about 4000 Euro. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Haut Brion (Pessac-Leognan)

Haut Brion, 2011. 13.5% alcohol. About 450 Euro. 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 19% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Fresh. A desirable bitterness at the end. Noticeable soft tannins. Very nice acidity. A slight feel of saltiness at the end. Drink now (or better in 3-5 years) up to 30 (or more) years. Very enjoyable. Exceptional wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful structure and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Clos Fourtet (Saint-Emilion)

Clos Fourtet, 2016. 14.5% alcohol. 80 Euro. 90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Young wine. Nice acidity. Soft tannins. Long finish. Drink in 5-6 years up to 30 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Troplong Mondot (Saint-Emilion)

Mondot, 2012. 13.5% alcohol. 38 Euro. Full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Somewhat closed. Soft tannins. Long finish. Drink in 2-10 years. Very good wine.

Troplong Mondot, 2013. 14% alcohol. 100 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 4-20 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Troplong Mondot, 2012. 14% alcohol. 100 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-25 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine.

Troplong Mondot, 2011. 14.5% alcohol. 100 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Some floral aroma. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-20 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Tropelong Mondot, 2004. 14% alcohol. 130 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. At or just after the peak. Drink now up to 5 (possibly more) years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Canon (Saint-Emilion)

Canon, 2016. 14% alcohol. 120 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Very young. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-25 (or more) years. Excellent wine.

Canon, 2007. 14% alcohol. 80 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Dry. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 5 (possibly more) years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Guiraud (Sauternes)

Petit Guiraud, 2016. 13.5% alcohol. Dessert wine. 26 Euro. Less than full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Light wine. Nice (not too much) sweetness. Drink now up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Chateau Guiraud, 2009. 13.5% alcohol. Dessert wine. 70 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Nice (not too much) sweetness. Drink now up to 20 (possibly more) years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Excellent restaurant in the winery. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Suduiraut (Sauternes)

Chateau Suduiraut, 2006. 14% alcohol. Dessert wine. 50 Euro. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Nice (not too much) sweetness. Long finish. Drink now up to 20 (possibly more) years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau d'Yquem (Sauternes)

Y, 2016. 14.5% alcohol. 140 Euro. Dry white wine (7 grams of sugar in one liter). About 75% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Semillon. Close to full body. Complex. Balanced. Long finish. Smooth wine. Dry. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Chateau d'Yquem, 2015. 14% alcohol. 350 Euro. Dessert wine. About 75% Semillon, 25% Sauvignon Blanc. Dessert wine (144 grams of sugar in one liter). Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Fresh. Smooth. Right light sweetness. Lingering finish. Silky. Drink now up to 40 (or more) years. Excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Very impressive facilities and chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Margaux (Margaux)

Pavillon Rouge, 2009. 13.5% alcohol. 250 Euro. The winery's second wine. 67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Very nice finish. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 15 years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Very impressive facilities and chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Mouton Rothschild (Pauillac)

Chateau d'armilhac, 2011. 13.5% alcohol. 50 Euro. 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot. Close to full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Desired bitterness at the end. Feminine. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Chateau Clerc Milon, 2014. 13.5% alcohol. 60 Euro. 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot, 1% Carmenere. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very nice finish. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 15 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Chateau Mouton Rothschild, 2012. 13% alcohol. 500 Euro. 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 5 up to 30 (or more) years. Excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Very impressive facilities and chateau. Great hospitality. The winery's museum exhibits exceptionally rare items of art, presents wine through art, and displays the labels of Mouton Rothschild's wine, from 1945 until today, created by Picasso, Miro, Chagall, Dali, Warhol, Kandinsky, Agam and other prominent artists. Visiting the museum, for about 1.5 hours, is a must. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Rauzan-Segla (Margaux)

Segla, 2013. 13.5% alcohol. 25 Euro. 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 43% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot. Close to full body. Complex. Balanced. Fresh. Fairly elegant. Nice acidity. Soft tannins. Some desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Segla, 2014. 13.5% alcohol. 25 Euro. 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 43% Merlot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fresh. Fairly elegant. Nice acidity. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10-15 years. Very good wine (better than the 2013).

Rauzan-Segla, 2010. 14% alcohol. 120 Euro. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 25-30 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine

Rauzan-Segla, 2006. 13% alcohol. 80 Euro. 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 44% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Very noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 20 (or more) years. Very good wine

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Impressive chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Cos d'Esturnel (Saint-Estephe)

Les Pagodas de Cos, 2011. 13.5% alcohol. 43 Euro. 70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Sangiovese. Full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Cos D'Estournel, 2011. 13.5% alcohol. 135 Euro. 32% Merlot, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot. Full body. Fairly powerful. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Sharp. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 30 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Cos D'Estournel, 2008. 13.5% alcohol. 150 Euro. 32% Merlot, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot. Full body. Fairly powerful. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 5 years up to 30 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Cos D'Estournel, 2003. 13.5% alcohol. 250 Euro. 32% Merlot, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Over the peak. Drink now up to 5-10 years. Very good wine.

Cos D'Estournel, 2002. 13.5% alcohol. 150 Euro. 32% Merlot, 36% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Cos D'Estournel Blanc, 2015. 13% alcohol. 126 Euro. 80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Semillon. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Very dry. Drink now up to 10 (possibly more) years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Impressive chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Montrose (Saint-Estephe)

Chateau Tronquoy-Lalande, 2011. 13% alcohol. 30 Euro. 47% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Merlot, 11% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Very soft tannins. Drink now up to 20 years. Very good wine.

La Dame de Montrose, 2011. 13% alcohol. 40 Euro. 72% Merlot, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Desirable bitterness at the end. Noticeable soft tannins. Drink now up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Chateau Montrose, 2011. 13% alcohol. 140 Euro. 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petit Verdot. Full body. Powerful. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Lingering finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-5 years up to 30 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Impressive chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Lafite Rothschild (Pauillac)

Chateau Lafitte, 2007. 12.5% alcohol. 800 Euro. 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Very elegant. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. A slight feel of saltiness at the end. Drink now (better in 4-6 years) up to 30 (or more) years. Very good wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Impressive chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Leoville Barton (Saint-Julien)

Langoa Barton, 2017. 13% alcohol. 30 Euro. 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc. Close to full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Very soft tannins. Nice finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-3 years up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Leoville Barton, 2017. 13% alcohol. 60 Euro. 93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 5 up to 30 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Latour (Pauillac)

Pauillac, 2014. 13% alcohol. 70-100 Euro. 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 43% Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Close to full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Elegant. Very soft tannins. Nice finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Les Forts de Latour, 2012. 13% alcohol. 150-250 Euro. 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3 years up to 30 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Grand Vin de Chateau Latour, 2008. 13.5% alcohol. 550-600 Euro. 91.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7.5% Merlot, 0.5% Petit Verdot, 0.5% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Lingering finish. Slight floral aroma. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 5 years up to 30 (or more) years. Excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Impressive chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Pichon-Longueville Baron (Pauillac)

Pichon Baron, 2015. 13.5% alcohol. 150 Euro. 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Sharp. Elegant. Soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 30 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine.

Pichon Baron, 2014. 13.5% alcohol. 118 Euro. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot. Full body. Fairly powerful. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 4-5 years up to 30 years. Very good wine.

Pichon Baron, 2010. 13.5% alcohol. 225 Euro. 79% Cabernet Sauvignon, 21% Merlot. Full body. Powerful. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Lingering finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-4 years up to 30 (or more) years. Excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Impressive chateau. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.

Chateau Leoville Poyferre (Saint-Julien)

Leoville Poyferre, 2012. 13% alcohol. 80 Euro. 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Very soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now (better in 2-3 years) up to 20 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Leoville Poyferre, 2011. 13.5% alcohol. 85 Euro. 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 6% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-3 years up to 30 (or more) years. Very good wine.

Leoville Poyferre, 2010. 14% alcohol. 176 Euro. 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Somewhat closed. Very noticeable soft tannins. Long finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 4-6 years up to 30 (or more) years. Very good to excellent wine.

The winery resides in a beautiful area and produces very high quality wines. Great hospitality. Visiting this winery (only with appointment) is highly recommended.