



THE UNDERGROUND WINELETTER

A Definitive Guide to Fine Wines

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ONE WINEDRINKER'S OPINION

A Case For Old Burgundies?

The attention to well aged red table wine has often been confined to Bordeaux. Renowned tastings have with few exceptions been verticals of one great Bordeaux or another. The "stars" of well publicized auctions have nearly invariably been venerable bottles of Bordeaux from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The only exceptions that come to mind are a few ancient bottles of Burgundy of somewhat questionable authenticity.

Is this emphasis on old Bordeaux fully justified? Perhaps not. Time and again, we are delighted by the vitality and excellence of old bottles of Burgundy. The suspicion approaches a conviction that well made Burgundies from fine properties age just as well as, if not better than, their Bordelais counterparts. Excellent bottles from such great Burgundy vintages

as 1911, 1915, 1919, and 1923 still exist, whereas fully sound bottles of somewhat comparable Bordeaux vintages, such as 1906 and 1920, are unusual indeed.

An interesting case in point is the 1929 vintage, an excellent one in both regions. The climactic conditions were quite similar - good hot summer weather tempered by some rainfall in September. Both areas produced wines of early charm and outstanding quality. The quantity was relatively more abundant in Burgundy than in Bordeaux.

A recent tasting of sixteen 1929 Burgundies was quite illuminating as to the relative longevity of the vintage in the two areas. Whereas all but a very few 1929 Bordeaux are now well past their prime, the Burgundies tasted on this occasion, with only

two exceptions, were not seriously marred by age. Most could not yet even be considered in decline.

We are not stating that this comparison of the 1929 vintage provides a definitive answer to the general question of relative longevity of Bordeaux and Burgundy, but it certainly does seem to legitimize the premise that older Burgundies have been unreasonably ignored.

We certainly look forward to continuing to explore the question by comparing recent and future tastings of the 1945, 1947, and 1949 vintages as well as the 1929, all of which were very fine in both regions.

Edward Lazarus
West Coast Associate Editor

Future issues will feature older Burgundies in Cellar Notes including the above noted 1929 tasting. — Editor



COMING ATTRACTIONS

More 1979 Bordeaux • California Cabernet Sauvignons • California Chardonnays • Distinctive New Wines • More Italian Red Wines • Barrels and Bottles • Selected Tasting Notes • Cork Poppers • Cellar Notes

ABOUT OUR RATING SCALE & QUOTED PRICES

18-20 Outstanding 15-17 Very Good 12-14 Good Under 12 Below Average

Wines are ranked on a 20 point system on the basis of relative merit. Wines with identical rankings are listed in alphabetical order. Rankings are usually made only after several tastings of any particular wine. Wines rated Very Good or better will also be ranked on a six star system corresponding from 15-20 on a 20-point scale. Wines with a 1/2 ranking will receive a + designation. Stars in () indicate potential. Unless otherwise noted, prices quoted are the approximate California suggested retail prices.

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1979 BORDEAUX

“ . . . a “miracle” vintage both as to quality and price.”

The 1979 Bordeaux vintage has been described as the “miracle” vintage. Why? Because no one expected much and it has turned out to be very good. A long, wet winter in Bordeaux turned into a damp spring. This was followed by a good flowering in June and a dry July. August was quite cold as was September. Certainly, this is not the stuff to make a great vintage. Adding to the concerns about quality, the crop was enormous, the biggest since 1934! Given these circumstances, not much was expected, but, surprise! When fermentation was completed, the wines generally had good color, fruit, and balance. Hence, the “miracle”.

In Volume III, Page 82 we reviewed 53 different wines which were tasted in Bordeaux in November. We concluded then that we were quite impressed. Now that the wines have arrived here our conclusion remains valid. We are impressed. In fact, we deem the 1979 to be a “miracle” vintage both as to quality and price. In fact, some of the wines are downright cheap. And, most are really lovely to drink. True, some are on the thin, even scrawny side. And, like every vintage, there are some disappointments, but overall, the vintage is very good. The best wines drink deliciously now, but most will improve. And, while in an absolute sense, we think the vintage produced very few “Outstanding” wines, the range of really top range very good wines (i.e. 16-17) seems remarkable given the enormous size of the crop. For most Châteaux, it may be that the 1979's lack the structure and stamina for the long run. But, on the other hand, a few 1979's will, in fact, prove better than their 1978 counterparts.

The tasting notes and scores which follow reflect no less than eight separate blind tastings. Some wines were tasted as many as six times. In one tasting we matched eight of the best 1978's (see Volume II, Page 88) against their 1979 counterparts. Because of the youthful fruit and the immense charm the 1979's were generally preferred. (As a matter of interest, 1979 Margaux placed first in that tasting closely followed by 1978 Margaux.) However, it should be noted that many of the 1978's have lost their initial youthful appeal and have withdrawn to begin a long period of maturation. Except for occasional tastings this is absolutely no time to be drinking most of the 1978's. On the other hand, some 1979's are nearly irresistible. If you haven't already done so, hopefully these tasting notes will stimulate you to gather up a few bottles and do your own tastings. Not only is it enjoyable and fun, but no winelover should miss buying some of the best 1979 Bordeaux! While the prices shown are generally quite attractive, it should be noted that in most major U.S. markets many of the wines can be purchased for even

less! Adjusted for inflation, prices are not much higher than those of the 1970 vintage after the price collapse caused many of these wines to be “dumped” in the U.S. market at prices of \$5-8 per bottle for many classified growths. Interestingly, this occurred during a period of world-wide recession, a condition that also prevails today. So, for a wide variety of reasons, the 1979 Bordeaux vintage is attractively priced; and, thanks to mother nature, a bountiful crop has turned out to be very good. And, fortunately, after hundreds of years of production, none of the classified growths have started up a program such as “Reserve”, “Limited Bottling”, etc. Of course, California has used this gimmick widely. Compared with many California Cabernets (see Page 112 in this issue), Bordeaux has a price advantage. Who says there's no such thing as a miracle?

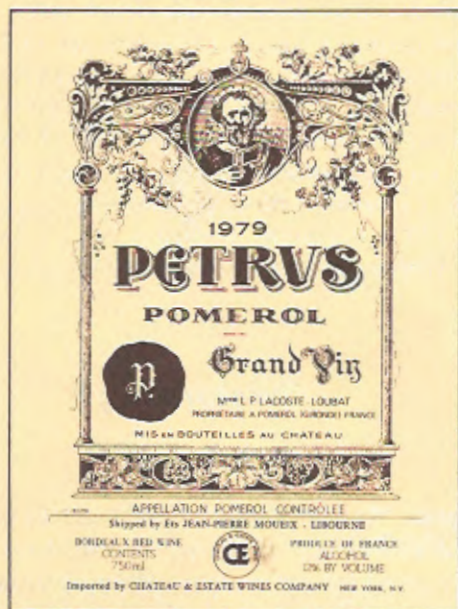
Outstanding

★★★★★

Margaux. Margaux seems to have produced particularly successful wines in 1979 and Château Margaux again has assumed the top position. Make no mistake, this is an impressive wine. Time will tell whether the 1978 or 1979 is better, but one thing is for sure: every Bordeaux lover should have BOTH in the cellar. No question, both are great wines and, perhaps, more importantly, they are tangible evidence that Margaux is back! There is no better vineyard in Bordeaux than Margaux and when the wine us up to potential, it is absolutely superb. The top Margaux vintages of this century (1900, 1953, and 1961) exemplify the power, opulence, balance, flavor, and finesse of Margaux at its best. Unfortunately, in the 1960's the wine lapsed into mediocrity and didn't regain its first growth status until, under new ownership, the superb 1978 was produced. And now the 1979. Compared side by side, the 1979 is more forward. Both are very dark in color. The 1978 has lost some of the opulent perfume of a year ago. It appears a bit leaner. This wine has the same incredible perfume of the 1978 at a similar age—cassis/berry qualities backed by hints of vanilla/sandlewood, and a very slight hint of mint. In the mouth, the wine is simply delicious—rich, full, round, and packed with fruit. The intense flavors are extremely well-balanced and the aftertaste goes on and on and on. At the Château the 1979 is thought to be the better wine. Time will tell. The 1978 may take longer to develop, 10-15 years vs. maybe 7-10 years for this wine. Even so both should be relatively long-lived and provide countless fantastic tasting experiences (19). \$30

★★★★

Pétrus. Again in 1979 Pétrus has made an outstanding wine. But, alas, the price for excellence from this small Pomerol vineyard is dear indeed -- more than twice the price of the even better Margaux! Production in 1979 was above average at 4,500 cases, but the wine shows plenty of depth and stuffing. The color is dark and the nose is deep with fruit and cedar and a hint of chocolate and spice. In the mouth the wine is very flavorful and firmly structured with a long, tannic finish (18). \$70



Very Good

★★★★+

Domaine de Chevalier. This is a marvelous wine that with just a bit more flavor would clearly be outstanding. Wines from this property are stylistic and elegant and this is a very fine example. The color is dark and the nose is very perfumed with fruit/earth and cedar in evidence. In the mouth the wine has nice flavors with cedary/fruity/earthy complexity. Exquisitely balanced, it takes no great genius to tell that this wine will develop superbly with time (17½). \$17

Lafite-Rothschild. The last few vintages (1975, 1976, and 1978) have been most impressive. The 1979 continues the trend. It is a lovely, elegant, finessful wine, but still with good body and very flavorful. At this juncture, it is more restrained and closed in the nose than many of the more precocious 1979's. This should develop with time. The color is dark with a touch of amber at the edge. The nose has a lovely, but somewhat closed, fruity/vanilla/cedary quality with just a trace of coconuts. Delicious to drink with a fruity/cedary complexity, the finish is long and impressive. With a good, firm backbone, the wine has the balance to develop for many years to come and in time could be outstanding (17½). \$35

Latour. Clearly a very successful wine in 1979, yet this Latour doesn't have the exceptional richness for which this property is so famous. The color is dark and the nose has a restrained quality of cassis/berries/cedar. The flavors are deep and the wine has a substantial amount of tannin. On the lean side, many years will be needed for this wine to develop and only time will tell if it will prove truly outstanding. For now, the slight lack of body found in the 1979 gives the 1978 the edge (17½). \$38.

Léoville-Las-Cases. This is surely one of the best wines of the vintage and given its price of ½-⅓ the first growths it is certainly a wine to buy. Having said this, it should come as no surprise. The fact is this property has produced consistently outstanding wines for the past 20 years. Consider: 1961, 1962, 1964, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1978, and 1979 all amongst the very best wines of EVERY very good-great vintage spanning two decades. What is such a surprise is that the price has not advanced more. So enjoy it while you can. This 1979 seems as good at this stage as did the 1978. Only time will tell which is better, but both have outstanding potential. The color is dark and the lovely, deep nose of cassis and cedar is most attractive. Heaps of fruit are backed by good, round flavors showing a cedary complexity. Well-balanced with a nice finish, the wine drinks well now, but has ample tannin/acid to carry it for many years (17½). \$14

Best Buy

Pichon-Lalande. Like the Léoville-Las-Cases, the quality of this wine should come as no surprise. In recent vintages, it too has been producing outstanding wine. The 1978 and the 1979 are virtually in a dead heat. In fact, aside from being just a little lighter this 1979 seems VERY similar to the outstanding 1978 at a similar period in its development. And, like the 1978, the price is a bargain. The color is dark and the nose is immediately impressive. A deeply perfumed, fruity/cherry/plummy quality is backed by hints of cedar and vanilla. Full flavored in the mouth, the balance and aftertaste are likewise impressive. Like so many 1979's this wine is youthfully appealing, but likely will continue to develop for at least 5-6 years (17½). \$13

★★★★

Cos d'Estournel. Confirming our earlier tasting, Cos seems to have made the best Saint-Estèphe. However, this doesn't appear to be the type of vintage that favors the style of Saint-Estèphes. While many Pauillacs, Saint-Juliens, etc., have a lovely fruit and suppleness in 1979, the Saint-Estèphes are lean and austere. Certainly, in

the more successful vintages, Saint-Estèphes have a fullness, even though they are characteristically backward. Because it has this fullness, and a certain suppleness, this Cos is particularly good. The color is dark and the nose has a deeply fruity quality of cherries and vanilla. It is full and rich in the mouth with a fruity/cedary/spicy flavor and a good amount of underlying tannin. This is a wine to lay away for at least 7-8 years (17). \$16

Best Buy

Grand-Puy-Lacoste. Under the ownership of M. Borie of Ducru-Beaucaillou, this fifth growth Pauillac is on the upswing. The 1978 has fine potential, but will require many years of age. This 1979 is more accessible, more immediately satisfying. The color is dark with some amber. The nose has a lovely perfume—cedar, cherries, and a cigar box character. The flavors are delicious—round with fruity/cherry/cedary nuances and a nice finish. With some tannin to lose this should develop well for several years and make a very fine bottle (17). \$12

l'Évangile. Situated between Pétrus and Cheval-Blanc, wines from l'Évangile are usually supple and stylistic. In the better years, they also have a fine depth of flavor. The color of this wine is medium dark and the nose is deeply perfumed with an opulent, spicy/plummy/cedary nose—one of the most incredible wines of the vintage in this respect. In the mouth it is round and supple. Perfectly delicious to drink with fruity/cedary/plummy flavors, it lacks the body and depth of Pétrus, but has immense charm (17). \$17

La Mission-Haut-Brion. Much more rounded than the 1978, this wine is definitely lighter and should mature earlier. The color is dark and the nose shows a deep perfume of cassis/cherry/vanilla and earth with an overall candy-like quality. The wine is quite supple and forward for La Mission with a soft, tannic finish behind the round, fruity/cherry/earthy/cedary flavors. Lacking a bit in body to be outstanding, but it's very fine and one of the clear successes of the vintage (17). \$26

Palmer. Very similar to the 1978, this is a lovely wine, but not as rich and full as the classic wines of 1966, 1970, and 1975. The color is dark and the nose shows the incredible perfume for which Palmer is so famous—fruity/cedary/cassis-like/slightly minty. Similar flavors with a cherry-like fruit are tightly knit in a package that is firm and elegant, yet without harshness or rough edges. Balance is a strong point and the wine finishes well. It should improve for 4-5 years and keep well beyond that (17). \$24

Trotanoy. Usually one of the best Pomerols, year in and year out, this 1979 is true to form. The color is dark with some amber at the edge. The nose is really lovely with a perfumed, fruity/cedary/slightly minty quality. Well-structured, the wine has good, round, fruity/cedary flavors and fine balance. Still youthfully tannic, 4-5 years age should yield a very fine wine (17). \$26

★★+

Branair. This Saint-Julien seems to be making consistently fine wine. This 1979 is a prime example. The color is dark with an amber edge and the nose has a lovely, perfumed, fruity/cassis/cedar quality. In the mouth it is full and tight with cassis/vanilla/cedar nuances. Tannic, the wine needs time to develop, but has excellent potential (16½). \$13

Clos Fourtet. Clos Fourtet seems to be making better wine of late. This seems to be one of the better Saint-Émilions of the vintage. The color is medium dark and the nose exhibits a nice, deeply perfumed quality of cedar and cassis. Similar flavors carry through on the palate and the texture is round and supple. Still with some tannin and acid to lose this should develop nicely for a few years (16½). \$13

Ducru-Beaucaillou. This is a lovely, supple wine with good structure and balance. Not as much depth as the 1978 and not as full as Ducru can be in really outstanding years such as 1970, but still very nice. The color is medium dark and the nose exhibits a finely perfumed quality of fruit, cassis, and cedar. In the mouth there are fruity/berry flavors enhanced by a cedar/vanilla complexity (16½). \$16

Good Buy

Duhart-Milon-Rothschild. Under the ownership of Lafite, this Pauillac has shown much improvement in the 1970's. This 1979 is a fine example. The wine shows breed, style, body, and flavor. The color is dark and the somewhat subdued nose shows fruit and cedar with a hint of mint. There is good fruit in the mouth with a cedary complexity. Tightly knit, the wine has an underlying tannin that will need several years to soften. Time should yield a very fine bottle (16½). \$12

Gruaud-Larose. Gruaud-Larose makes consistently fine wine and this is another example. The color is dark and just now the nose is a bit restrained offering some fruit and cedar. In the mouth the wine begins to open up. There is an excellent depth of flavor with fruity/cedary complexities. Well-balanced, the firm structure of this wine gives the promise of elegance in 6-7 years time and it undoubtedly will keep for many years thereafter (16½). \$22

Haut-Bailly. Seemingly not very well-known in the U.S., this Graves is a winner in 1979. It has a dark color with an amber edge and a lovely, perfumed, cassis nose showing hints of earth, cedar, vanilla, and mint. In the mouth it is rich and supple with a cassis/earthy/chocolate-tinged flavor. With some tannin to lose, the balance and aftertaste are still impressive. Seemingly, this is much better than the rather austere 1978 (16½). \$17

A "Sleeper"

Haut-Batailley. This Pauillac is one of the "sleepers" of the vintage. It will hold its own with many better known names. The color is dark with some amber. The nose has a deep, fruity/cedary/vanilla quality. Well-structured with good flavors, the wine finishes with good length on the palate. Still youthfully tannic, but 4-5 years should round the wine out nicely (16½). \$12

La Lagune. This is a delicious wine. Not quite as full and rich as the very best wines of the vintage, but elegant and complex. The color is dark with some amber at the edge. The nose is lovely--ripe fruit and cedar with an underlying vanilla, cedar, berry quality. It is round and supple with delicious fruit and a cedary complexity. Very nice to drink now, but La Lagune keeps amazingly well. A wine this good is sure to improve and at \$12 it obviously is a value (16½).

Mouton-Rothschild. While this is a very fine wine, it lacks the depth to be outstanding. Even though the 1978 is presently backward and closed-in, it seems to have more potential for development. The 1979 has a dark color and the nose has a nice perfume of fruit and cedar with hints of mint and coconut. In the mouth it has good fruit and nice flavors with a cedary complexity. The tannin will take a number of years to resolve and elegance should be a major virtue (16½). \$32

★★

Haut-Brion. While there have been some rave reviews about this wine, we initially found the dryness a little disturbing when tasted last November in Bordeaux (see Volume III, Page 82). Tasted on four subsequent occasions since, there are still reasons for concern. Two bottles had a toastiness which we attribute to a slight degree of oxidation. Two other bottles showed a definite overripe fruit quality in the nose and taste. The bottles came from different importers, so perhaps we are dealing with bottle variation and maybe there are better bottles. However, the dryness on the finish was very apparent in all the bottles tasted--here and in Bordeaux. Otherwise the wine has a lovely elegance and deeply imbedded flavor. The color is dark and the

nose has a fruity/earthy/tobacco quality. The lovely, fruity/earthy flavors are attractive and the wine is firm with a good, overall balance except for a dusty/dry quality on the aftertaste. Seemingly, this isn't destined to be long-lived and the fuller, richer 1978 seems a better bet (16). \$35

La Conseillante. This is a nice Pomerol. The color is dark and the nose is very complex offering hints of fruit/cedar/earth/vanilla/mint. A few years are needed for the wine to come together, but it should be very fine (16). \$17

La Tour-Haut-Brion. La Mission's "second" wine is very nice, but leaner and more tannic than its big brother. It will need many years to soften. The color is dark. The nose shows a deep, earthy/fruity/cassis quality. Deep flavors of fruit/earth and cedar are backed by a very tannic finish -- fine potential (16). \$16

Lynch-Bages. Not as full as the best wines from this property, the 1979 is, nonetheless, a very good wine. It has a medium dark color showing just a trace of amber at the edge. The nose has a fruity/berry/cedary quality with a faint hint of mint. In the mouth the wine has a nice fruit and balance with hints of cedar. With some tannin/acid to lose, it should improve for 5-7 years (16). \$14

★+

What's Going on at Cheval?

Cheval-Blanc. While this is a very good wine, it is, nonetheless, disappointing for Cheval. The wine simply lacks the depth and richness this property often exhibits. In fact, both the 1978 and 1979 have this same characteristic which certainly gives rise to a few questions. The color is medium dark and the nose exhibits a nice, fruity/earthy/vanilla quality. Medium in body, the berry/vanilla flavors are rather straightforward. Just now the wine has a little bitterness on the finish. Certainly this is a nice, pleasant wine that will benefit from a few years bottle age, but given the outstanding potential of this vineyard and the price it commands, it is disappointing. We can only guess that a large production may be the culprit that denies this wine the depth and stuffing that makes for great wine (15½). \$36

Gazin. This Pomerol is adjacent to Pétrus. So much for that. It's a very good wine, but has very little similarity to its neighbor. The color is medium dark with a ripe fruit nose showing hints of spice/cherries and cedar. There are nice, fruity/cassis/vanilla flavors backed by some tannin. The wine has good structure and should develop well for many years (15½). \$17 Chicago

Nenin. While often disappointing, this 1979 is quite a lovely wine. The color is medium dark and the nose exhibits a perfumed, fruity/cedary/candy-like quality. It has good, fruity flavors with a hint of cedar. Just a little bitterness in the finish but it is still quite nice (15½). \$12

Pape-Clément. This Graves has a dark color with an amber edge and a nicely perfumed, fruity/cassis/cedar/earthy nose. In the mouth it is very nice with round, fruity/cedary/earthy flavors. With some tannin this should improve for a few years (15½). \$16

Pichon-Longueville-Baron. This wine holds promise for the future. The color is dark and the nose has a nice, if somewhat subdued, quality showing fruit and cedar. The wine has good fruit and flavor, but presently is quite harsh and astringent. Wait 5-6 years to see how it develops (15½). \$14

Good Buy

Prieuré-Lichine. This is an early maturing wine that is lovely to drink now and the inexpensive price makes it relatively painless. The color is medium dark and the nose has a lovely, perfumed, fruity/cedary quality. Well-balanced, the wine is supple, round, and quite delicious to drink with a fruity/cedary complexity (15½). \$10



Calon-Ségur. Like Montrose, Calon-Ségur is on the lean side. A little light, but still it is quite attractive showing a lovely, deeply perfumed nose of cherries and cedar. Tannic on the finish, to be sure, but again with some fruitiness showing through. Only time will tell if there's enough fruit (15). \$13

Cantemerle. A touch acidic and on the lean side, this fifth growth is still quite good. The color is medium dark and the nose shows a good perfume with berries and cedar underneath. It is fruity and firm with a nice finish. Typically, this wine is a good keeper and this 1979 should develop well (15). \$14 New York

Haut-Bages-Libéral Rather backward just now, this Pauillac will need some time to develop. The color is dark with some amber at the rim and the nose is rather subdued showing fruit and cedar. Good fruit offsets the rather tannic finish giving promise for the future (15). \$10

La Pointe. This Pomerol often exhibits a unique, nutty, sort of peanut butter quality in the nose. Again, it's in evidence in this 1979. The wine has a medium dark color with an orange/amber edge. The fruit and cedar in

the nose have the underlying nuttiness. Quite fruity and very pleasant to drink, but there is some tannin yet to be resolved (15). \$13

Meyney. This Saint-Estèphe has a dark color with some amber at the edge. The nose has a nice, fruity/cedary quality which carries through on the finish. Just now a bit austere and tannic, but time should prove beneficial and round out the rough edges (15). \$14

Montrose. Typically Montrose, this wine is very tannic. Only time will tell if there's enough fruit. It's not a big wine; in fact, on the lean side. The color is dark with some amber. The nose is lovely -- quite perfumed showing fruit and vanilla. There are fruity/cedary flavors and, yes, the tannic finish (15). \$12

Pavie. This Premier Grand Cru Saint-Émilion is very nice, if a little simple. The color is medium dark. The nose is somewhat subdued, but has some underlying fruit and cedar. The fruity/cedary flavors are backed by moderate tannin which will take a few years to soften (15). \$13

Good

Back to the Drawing Board

Brane-Cantenac. Oops, back to the drawing board. The 1978 looked like it might mark the beginning of a new trend for this consistently disappointing second growth Margaux. Wrong. With the 1979 the property lapses right back into mediocrity. It lacks the structure and depth of the 1978 and, again, seems to have picked up a strong herbaceousness. The color is medium dark with a fruity/cedary/spicy/slightly nutty nose. In the mouth it is tannic and lean with a fruity/cherry/cedary flavor backed by a pronounced herbaceousness (14). \$17

Clerc-Milon. While the 1978 vintage of this wine is round, supple, and flavorful, this 1979 lacks depth, body, and complexity. The color is medium dark and the nose is nicely perfumed with fruit and cedar. Similar flavors make the wine pleasant, but it is thin and rather tannic on the finish (14). \$13

Clos Rene. Pleasant and inexpensive, but rarely does Clos Rene make much of a wine. This wine has a medium dark color and a nicely perfumed, cherry nose with a hint of mint. It has fruity/cherry flavors but is on the lean side and quite acidic (14). \$10

Talbot. This Saint-Julien is marred by a slight stemminess in the nose and flavor. Otherwise, the cedary/fruity nose and fruity/vanilla flavors are attractive. With tannin and acid to lose, the wine needs time to develop, but is unlikely to be memorable (14). \$21

Vieux-Château-Certan. This Pomerol has been consistently disappointing in the last few decades. Hopefully it will one day return to the form it showed in the 1940's, but this vintage isn't it. The wine has a medium dark color with an amber edge and a nice, fruity/cherry/cedary nose. In the mouth it is pleasant and supple, rather straightforward, and a little on the thin side (14). \$15

What's all the Fuss About?

Figeac. There have been some glowing reviews of this wine, but after tasting three bottles we gave up trying to find what it was that some retailers and critics like so much. In short, it suffers from a stemmy/vegetative quality in the nose and taste—not awful, but certainly not very attractive either. The color is medium dark with an amber edge; the nose has a fruity/cedary quality with a touch of stemminess. There is good fruit in the mouth, but it too is marred by a stemmy/vegetative character and a slightly bitter finish. While there apparently is a strong following for wines from this property, this 1979 seems one to forget (13). \$17



CALIFORNIA CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Very Good



1978 Buena Vista "Special Selection". This wine has a dark color with a deeply perfumed, ripe fruit/oaky nose and a lovely, deep, ripe fruit flavor. Delicious but very tannic, this Cabernet needs time (16). \$18

1978 Markham "Napa". This wine has a dark color with a lovely, fruity/cedary nose. There is good flavor with a hint of cedar. Firm, yet balanced, this is a nice style Cabernet that should benefit from a few years bottle age (16). \$12.35

1979 Matanzas Creek "Sonoma". (Barrels and Bottles Volume II, Page 31). This estate bottled wine has a dark color with a subdued, fruity/cedary/cherry/plummy nose. Rich, with good fruit, the flavors are full with a nice oak balance. In 3-5 years this should be very nice indeed (16). \$16



1979 Iron Horse. This estate bottled wine has a dark color and a nice, fruity/slightly briary/oaky nose. There is very nice fruit and it is ripe and round with some tannin to lose. There is good flavor and a nice balance—fine style (15½). \$12

1978 Jordan "Alexander Valley". This is Jordan's first Cabernet made exclusively from its own grapes. Is this Jordan's best Cabernet? It seemed to be when tasted just prior to its release for sale. But after tasting and retasting different bottles, there is a definite peppery (i.e. green pepper) quality in the nose and taste. Perhaps there is a lot of bottle variation. Some are more peppery than others, but we could find none that didn't have it. It's still a very good wine, but it would be much better if the pepper quality were more subdued or eliminated. The color is dark with some amber. The nose shows good fruit with some oak and a spicy, peppery quality. In the mouth the wine has good depth and structure with fine fruit balanced by an oaky/vanilla complexity and a slight green pepper flavor (15½). \$16.50



1979 Chappellet "Napa Valley". This wine has a dark color with a subdued, fruity/cedary nose. Not terribly complex, but there is a nice, fruity/vanilla flavor with good backbone and some tannin to lose—Bordeaux like in style (15). \$12.50

1978 Chateau Montelena "Sonoma". This wine has a dark color and a nice, fruity/cherry/oaky nose with a nice, fruity flavor with berry nuances and an underlying oakiness backed by a tannic finish. Not yet together, but seems destined to show considerable improvement with 2-3 more years bottle age (15). \$14

1979 William Hill "Napa Valley". This wine is leaner and more austere than the 1978. The color is dark with just a hint of amber at the edge. The nose shows an intense character of ripe fruit and vanilla. There is good fruit on the palate with an abundance of oaky/vanilla flavors. Lean and tannic, the wine is way too young to drink and lacks the complexity time should bring. Hopefully, the rather pronounced oakiness will moderate with another year or two in the bottle--still a very good, flavorful wine (15). \$16.50

1979 Robert Mondavi "Napa". This wine has a dark color and an amber edge. There is an oaky/fruity nose with a hint of eucalyptus. There is a nice, fruity flavor with noticeable oak and again a hint of eucalyptus. Altogether, a nice wine with good flavor and balance--drink it now and for several years into the future (15). \$12

Good

1979 Hacienda "Sonoma". This wine has a dark color with an oaky/fruity/ripe/grapy/slightly weedy nose. Full, with a fruity/oaky flavor, it is straightforward and tannic, but has lots of depth (14). \$11

1979 McDowell Valley Vineyards "Mendocino". This wine has a dark color and an oaky/weedy/slightly pruny nose with good, fruity flavors. With a firm backbone, there is a hint of weediness. On the lean side, the wine is clean, but lacks character and charm (14). \$8.25

1979 Villa Mt. Eden "Napa". This wine has a dark color and a fruity/oaky/slightly tarry nose with a nice, deep, fruity/oaky flavor. Firm with a tannic finish, it is a little short on the palate (14). \$13



Promises Unfulfilled

1978 Freemark Abbey "Bosche". This wine has a medium dark color with an oaky/slightly raisiny nose. Oaky, dry, and lacking fruit, there is a slightly raisiny/oaky flavor with a short finish. Sadly, this is yet another mediocre wine from what years ago seemed destined to be one of Napa's better vineyards (13). \$12.50

1979 Mt. Veeder "Bernstein Vineyard". This Napa Cabernet has a medium dark color with an amber edge and an oaky/weedy/slightly minty nose with fruity/oaky flavor again showing a slightly minty component. All in all quite pleasant in a full style until the finish. Here a strong bitter character spoils the wine. Unfortunately, this seems to be a characteristic of most wines from this property. Only time will tell if bottle age will help (13). \$13.50

"Reserve" Means Reserve Your Money for Other Uses

1977 Sterling Vineyards "Reserve". Alas, yet another mediocre wine in the grossly overpriced "Reserve", "Special Selection", etc., etc., etc. derby. This Napa Valley estate bottled "Reserve" has a dark color with a ripe fruit/oaky/alcoholic nose and a ripe fruit/oaky/tarry flavor—a harsh, tannic monster devoid of breed or flavor interest. The \$25 price is nothing more than a marketing gimmick (13).

Below Average

1979 Lambert Bridge "Sonoma". This estate bottled wine is medium dark in color with an amber edge. OK so far, but from here it goes downhill. There is a foul, spirity, grassy nose and a vegetative flavor underlying the fruit (8). \$10.75

MORE 1979 RED BURGUNDIES

Outstanding

★★★★

Volnay "Champans" (H. de Montille). This wine gets our vote as the best of the 1979 Montille's. It has more fruit and depth than the others. The color is dark and the nose has a deep, berry-like fruit quality with a lovely, spicy complexity. With deep, rich flavors exhibiting the same berry/spice complexity, the wine finishes long on the palate and has an impressive firmness to the texture. One of the more substantial 1979 Red Burgundies, this is a wine to lay away for 4-5 years (18). \$18



Very Good

★★★

Clos de Vougeot (M. de Gramont). Like this producer's 1978 Clos de Vougeot, this is a lovely wine. Very similar, but perhaps with just a touch more fruit, this is one of the real successes of the variable 1979 vintage. The color is dark with some amber. The nose is deeply perfumed -- fruity/spicy/candy-like with just a hint of smokiness. Similar flavors follow on the palate and the round, soft texture enhances the wine's delicacy. Youthfully appealing, this is a delicious young wine (17). \$40

Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers" (H. Magnien). "Les Cazetiers" deserves to be better known. It is an exceptional vineyard with many fine wines made by a number of different producers. Magnien's wine is an excellent representative of the 1979 vintage -- lacking just a bit in intensity to be outstanding, but still lovely and flavorful. The wine has a medium dark color with an amber edge and a lovely, deeply perfumed, fruity/cherry/smoky/bacon-like nose with good body and a fruity/cherry/spicy/smoky flavor. It finishes long on the palate and is balanced with some tannin and acid to lose. A few years age will yield a lovely bottle (17). \$29.50

★★+

Pommard "Pezerolles" (H. de Montille). Here is a Burgundy with an honest, clean Pinot Noir character. Not big, not rich, not candied, but honest. No doubt this has great appeal for many, but if only the wine had more depth, more stuffing . . . Oh well. The color is medium dark with an amber edge and the nose is subdued with some fruit and spice showing through. Clean and fresh with fruity/spicy flavor, the wine is lean, yet with good flavors and acid to lose. Time should develop more complexity and soften the youthful acidity (16½). \$19

★★

Gevrey-Chambertin "1er Cru" (H. Magnien). Similar to "Les Cazetiers", but lighter, this is also attractive with a medium dark color just amber at the edge and a lovely, perfumed, fruity/berry/spicy nose. With very nice flavor (fruity/spicy), this wine is on the lean side, but flavory with good acid and a nice finish (16). \$24.50

Pommard "Grands-Epenots" (H. de Montille). With a medium dark color showing some amber at the edge, this wine has a deep fruity/spicy nose and clean, fresh, fruity/spicy flavors. Again with a good underlying acidity, several years are needed for this wine to soften (16). \$28

★★+

Nuits-Saint-Georges "Les Hauts Pruliers" (M. de Gramont). Lighter, of course, than the 1978 version of this wine, it still shows the same style and breed. The color is medium dark with an amber edge and the nose shows a lovely perfume of berries and spice with a hint of earth. Lean in style, but flavorful with a berry/spicy/earthy complexity, the wine is youthfully acidic and needs several years to develop, but should be very nice (15½). \$27

Pommard "Les Bertins" (M. de Gramont). Again, here is a lovely, soft wine for early consumption. The color is medium with some amber at the edge. The nose is perfumed and complex showing fruit/spice/vanilla/coconuts with an underlying candy-like quality. It is flavorful with fruity/spicy/vanilla flavors and is well-balanced (15½). \$27

★

Beaune-Epenottes (Domaine Mussy). This wine has a medium dark color with a subdued, fruity/spicy nose and a nice, fruity/spicy flavor. With good balance it is made in a light style which is very pleasant (15). \$24.75

Chambolle-Musigny (M. Clerget). This Burgundy has a medium dark color with an amber edge and a lovely, cherry/spicy/smoky/rose petal nose. With nice fruit there is a spicy complexity and a slight floral quality in a medium-bodied style. Some tannin in the finish should soften nicely with 3-4 years bottle age (15). \$25

Gevrey-Chambertin (H. Magnien). As expected, not as flavorful as this producer's "Les Cazetiers" or "1er Cru", this is still an attractive wine. The color is medium dark with an amber edge and the nose exhibits a nice, spicy, ripe fruit, vanilla quality with a hint of earth. There is a fruity/spicy/vanilla/earthy flavor with tannin and acid to lose -- just a little short on the finish, otherwise very nice (15). \$18

Pommard "Rugiens" (H. de Montille). Although all of Montille's 1979 Pommards are high in acid, this is really tart. Again, it will need some time to develop. The color is medium dark with amber at the edge. The nose is nicely perfumed with fruit and spice. Lean in the mouth, yet with underlying fruit and some spice, the acid really shows through in the finish (15). \$24

Savigny-les-Beaune (Bonnot-Lamblot). This Burgundy has a medium dark color with an amber edge and a lovely, deeply perfumed, berry/spicy nose and a light, very berry-like flavor with hints of vanilla and spice. Nice in a lighter style, the wine is slightly acidic and should round out with a few years bottle age (15). \$14.75

Savigny-les-Beaune "Les Guettes" (M. de Gramont). This wine has good fruit and body for the vintage. The color is medium dark with some orange/amber tones. The nose has an earthy quality with an underlying fruit and spice. The flavors are likewise similar. With some tannin to lose a few years are needed for the wine to soften (15). \$16

Good

Chambolle-Musigny "Amoureuses" (A. Rodet). Too pricy and too little wine seem to characterize the wines from this shipper. This is another. It has a medium-dark color and an over-ripe, plummy/spicy nose with a ripe plum/spicy flavor. With nice balance, it is a rather unusual wine suited best for early consumption in the next few years (14½). \$36



Côte de Beaune "Le Grande Chatelaine" (M. de Gramont). On the light side and slightly acidic, this wine has a nicely perfumed nose of earth/fruit and spice and similar flavors. The color is medium with orange and amber at the edge. Not a wine to keep too long, but it's pleasant and quite inexpensive (14½). \$10

Volney "Taillepieds" (H. de Montille). This Burgundy is quite light. It has a medium dark color with an amber edge and a subdued, fruity/spicy/smoky nose. With clean, fruity/spicy flavors it is clean with good acid and finishes a little short (14½). \$22

Chambolle-Musigny (P. Bertheau). With a medium color this wine has a nice, fruity/spicy nose and a fruity/spicy flavor. In a light style, there is nice balance except for a slight bitterness in the finish (14). \$20

Pommard (Domaine Mussy). This wine has a medium color with an amber edge and a subdued, earthy/plummy/spicy nose and clean, fresh, light, spicy/plummy flavors. Lacking intensity, but still is quite pleasant for near term consumption (14). \$23.50

Volnay "1er Cru" (H. de Montille). Very light and somewhat simple, this is a pleasant, if unexciting, wine. The color is medium dark with some amber. The nose is subdued showing some fruit and spice. The fruity/spicy flavors lack depth and the wine finishes slightly short (14). \$15

Beaune "Les Chouacheaux" (M. de Gramont). Definitely light and acidic, this wine suffers from a lack of body and flavor. The color is medium with amber tones and an orange edge. The nose exhibits a nice, earthy/fruity/spicy quality which follows through on the taste -- drink up (13½). \$18

Beaune "Clos des Mouches" (J. Guillemand). This Burgundy has a medium color with a subdued, vanilla/fruity/spicy nose and a clean, vanilla/fruity/spicy flavor. A bit watery, this is very light and balanced a bit to acid -- drink up (13). \$27

The H. de Montille Volnay "Champans" is imported by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant in Albany, California.



DISTINCTIVE NEW WINES

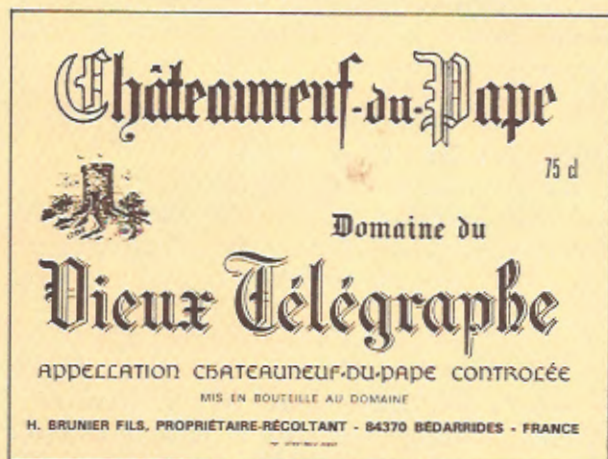
A few delicious wines for summer enjoyment and a few to lay away.

Outstanding

★★★★

1979 Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape (Vieux Télégraphe).

Is this as good as the fabulous 1978? Of course, it depends on your perspective, but both are outstanding. The 1979 is certainly not as intense, but intensity is not everything. The color is dark and the nose has a deeply perfumed, spicy/cherry/vanilla/earthy quality. The wine is concentrated in the mouth with fine balance and tremendous complexity—fruit (berries and cherries with a slight tropical fruit nuance), earth, spice, vanilla, and chocolate. Long on the palate and with a youthful, soft tannin, 3-5 years age should yield a real winner (18). \$11 Chicago



1978 Côte Rotie "La Mouline" (E. Guigal).

Lovers of intense wines can't help but love this. In fact intense may be an understatement! The color is extremely dark, nearly black. The nose is deeply perfumed and complex. Ripe fruit, pepper, earth, green olives, and spices are all in evidence, and, as the wine airs, the complexities become more pronounced. In the mouth the wine is very full and very rich, almost thick, yet with excellent fruit/acid/tannin balance. The flavors are intense: ripe fruit, earth, and spice. Behind lies a massive tannin overlay. This is definitely not a wine for current or intermediate term consumption. In fact, although dry table wine, it should be viewed in much the same way as a 1977 vintage port. Buy it. Put it away and forget it. It should live for decades and prob-

ably won't be approaching maturity for at least 15-20 years (18). \$30 Boston



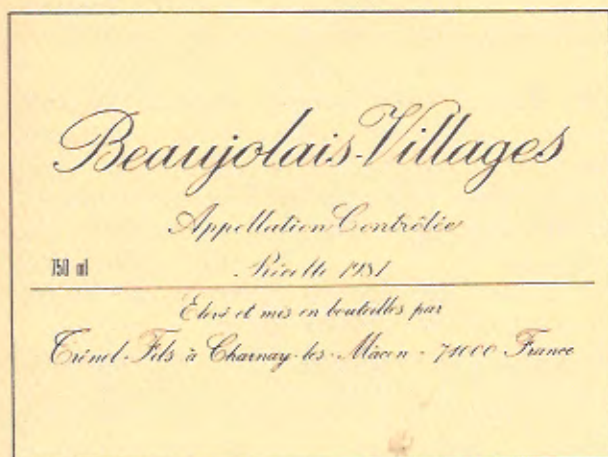
1979 Hermitage Blanc (J. Chave). If you haven't tasted this wine, you've missed a unique experience. Whereas, Chave's red is full and rich, the white is more delicate. Reportedly, the wines are long-lived and develop even more amazing complexities with age. Yet at this time, the wine already has appeal. The color is pale yellow, the nose is complex: fruit (peaches, apricots, and pineapple), earth, spice, and an underlying butteriness. In the mouth the wine is firm, elegant, crisp, and light, yet viscous and flavorful. There is a marriage of intriguing fruit, earth, and spice flavors and a long, lingering finish. If you're serious about wine, this Hermitage Blanc is a must experience (18). \$15



Very Good

★★★

1981 Beaujolais-Villages (Trenel Fils). This may be the finest red wine of all for summer consumption. Served with a slight chill you'll surely need more than one bottle. This wine has a medium dark red color with a lovely, intense, perfumed, grapy/raspberry nose with a light, lovely, grapy/berry flavor. With excellent balance, the wine is soft, fruity, and lip smacking good. In fact, absolutely delicious and with just a touch more flavor it would be outstanding. Still it is irresistible and not to be missed. (17). \$5.75



1979 Clos de la Coulée de Serrant (A. Joly).

From the town of Savennières in the Loire Valley, this is considered to be one of the finest dry, white wines of the region and a lovely wine it is. Production is small, reportedly less than 1500 cases, but it is unique and worth a search. Light straw in color, the nose is clean and fruity with hints of pineapple and spice. Elegant and silky on the palate, it is, at the same time, crisp and delightfully refreshing, offering hints of cinnamon and fruit and a nice, lingering finish (17). \$13 New York



1981 Moulin-A-Vent (Domaine Des Vérillats).

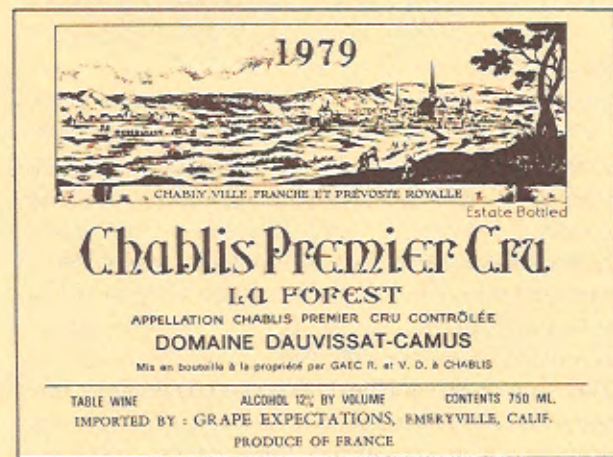
Expectedly, not as light as the Trenel Beaujolais-Villages, this Beaujolais has more body and is equally appealing. The color is red/purple with a beautiful, perfumed, cherry-like nose offering a hint of spice. Loaded with fruit, it is essence of a cherry/berry juice with good acidity, depth, and just a hint of spice--delicious (17). \$9 Chicago



★★+

1979 Chablis "La Forest" (Domaine Dauvissat-Camus).

At times when Chardonnay might seem just a bit overpowering, Chablis (the real thing, not a California jug) is delightful. Again, particularly well-chilled in the summer it is perfect for lunch or dinner with fresh seafood. This Premier Cru is an excellent example. It has a pale yellow gold color and a lovely, perfumed, pineapple/spicy nose with a touch of steeliness. There is a clean, light, pineapple/spicy flavor which is round and elegant. In short, it is a lovely, dry, fruity wine which is very easy to drink. Delicious now and also has the potential to improve for several years (16½). \$11.50. The "Les Preuses" from this producer is similar, but a bit more subdued (16). \$14.50. While the "Les Clos" seems a little leaner and needs another year or two bottle age (15½). \$14.50



More Serious Beaujolais?

Tasting (and drinking) the 1981 Beaujolais is a real pleasure. The wines are tasty, easy to drink and appreciate. Clearly 1981 is a very successful year. The wines of Georges Duboeuf are amongst the best. The commune wines have distinctive personalities. All are heavier and fuller than the lighter, less complicated Beaujolais Villages. In this respect, they are perhaps more serious, and they are more expensive. Whether they are better is a matter of personal taste. Those who prefer more body will like them better. For refreshing, gulping wine, the Beaujolais Villages may be preferred. Of the commune wines of Duboeuf, the **Chiroubles**, **Chiroubles "Chateau de Javernand"**, **Juliénas**, **Fluerie "Chateau Des Duits"**, and **Moulin-A-Vent "Domaine De La Tour Du Bief"**, all are particularly good, but the latter two are real standouts. The **Fluerie "Chateau Des Duits"** has a deeply perfumed, fresh, berry/cherry nose with just a trace of herbaceousness. It is full with good body and round, berry-like flavors (16½). \$10. The **Moulin-A-Vent "Domaine De La Tour Du Bief"** is similar, but not quite as full and a little firmer with more crispness in the finish (16½). \$9.75. Both are delicious!

1981 Chateau St. Jean "Petite Etoile" Fumé Blanc. This vineyard seems to consistently produce Chateau St. Jean's most delicate, crisp, stylistic Fumé Blanc. This current vintage is a fine example. It has a pale yellow color and a lovely, perfumed, fruity nose with a hint of grassiness. There is a round, fruity flavor again with a hint of grassiness. With good acid, the finish is clean, crisp, and fruity making the wine an excellent accompaniment to food. This and the super 1981 Sauvignon Blanc from St. Clement (see Volume III, Page 100) are two of the best (16½). \$10.25

1978 Volnay-Santenots-du-Milieu "Tête de Cuvée (Comptes Lafon). As we taste hundreds of 1979 Burgundies after tasting nearly 400 different 1978 Burgundies, the lightness of the 1979 vintage is readily apparent. When a late arrival 1978 like this comes along, the richness of the 1978 vintage is obvious. This wine has a dark color with an amber edge and a deeply perfumed, earthy/vanilla/plummy/spicy nose. In the mouth, it has good body and flavor with fruity/earthy/spicy complexity and a long, tannic finish. A wine to keep for 7-8 years, this is one to cellar (16½). \$22



1981 Beaujolais Villages (Georges Duboeuf). May be a little fuller than Trelen's Beaujolais Villages, this wine is otherwise very similar. The color is medium dark

red and it exhibits the lovely, fresh, cherry/berry nose that is so attractive in young Beaujolais. It is round in the mouth with fresh, clean, berry flavors and finishes clean, crisp, and fresh. An irresistible wine (16). \$6

1978 Côte Rotie "La Landonne" (E. Guigal). Like Guigal's 1978 "La Mouline" this is a massive wine, yet it has some questionable qualities. Yes, it is equally dark, as rich, and seemingly well-balanced yet the fruit has a definite over-ripe quality and, more importantly, there is a slight caramel quality in the nose and flavor which may denote an oxidation problem. If so, the aging potential is obviously questionable and again like the "La Mouline" the wine will need decades. This is sure to be controversial (16). \$30 Boston

1981 Fetzer "Lake County" Muscat Canelli. Here's another lovely summer wine. The Trelen Beaujolais lightly chilled with a simple breast of chicken lightly grilled and this wine well-chilled for dessert with fresh peaches, berries, melon, etc., etc. should be close to heaven! The color is pale yellow and the fresh, grapy aroma follows through on the palate with a clean, fresh, crisp, grapy flavor. Light, delicious, slightly sweet, this is a delicate wine which is easy to drink. Delicious, but do not keep more than 6 months (16). \$6.50

1979 Hermitage "Le Meal" (H. Sorrel). This wine has a dark color with a lovely, fruity nose with an intense chocolate quality and hints of pepper and earth. There is good depth of flavor--fruity/chocolate and hints of earth and spice. There is some tannin and acid, and it's slightly bitter but with nice balance and should be ready in 3-4 years (16). \$23.50



1980 Bourgogne "La Digoine" (de Villaine). From the property of one of the co-owners of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, here is a wine with an honest Pinot Noir quality at a bargain price. It has a medium color with an amber edge and a perfumed, berry/plummy nose with a hint of vanilla and spice. There is a lovely, delicate, plummy/berry flavor again with a kiss of vanilla and spice. A delightful wine which tastes just like you'd expect from the bouquet. Light to be sure, but balanced with just a slight trace of tannin and acid. Drink now and for 1-2 years (15). \$6.95

1981 Georges Duboeuf Gamay Beaujolais "North Coast". While this wine is not as attractive as Duboeuf's Beaujolais, it is a fine example of how experience can be applied to produce a better product in California. Most California Gamay Beaujolais is pretty mediocre. This is one of the best. Produced using 50% whole

berry fermentation and a blend of 50% North Coast Gamay Beaujolais, 40% Napa Gamay, and 10% Petite Sirah, it is a great improvement over last year's effort which was nice, but too light and watery. If Duboeuf can continue to improve this wine each year, in time he should own the market. As might be expected, it is very French-like. The color is medium dark red and the nose exhibits a lovely deep berry fruit and just a trace of stemminess. There is good balance and fullness in the mouth with berry-like flavors rendered in a style a bit heavier than a Beaujolais Villages, but otherwise very similar. In summary, a very nice style in a type of wine that has been too long absent from the California scene (15). \$6

The 1979 Chateauneuf-du-Pape (Vieux Télégraphe) is imported by AHD Associates, Inc., Grosse Pointe, Michigan and Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Albany, California. The 1978 Côte Rotie "La Mouline" (E. Guigal) is imported by Classic Wine Imports in Boston. Warren B. Strauss in Chicago and New York and Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant in Albany, California import the 1979 Hermitage Blanc (J. Chave).

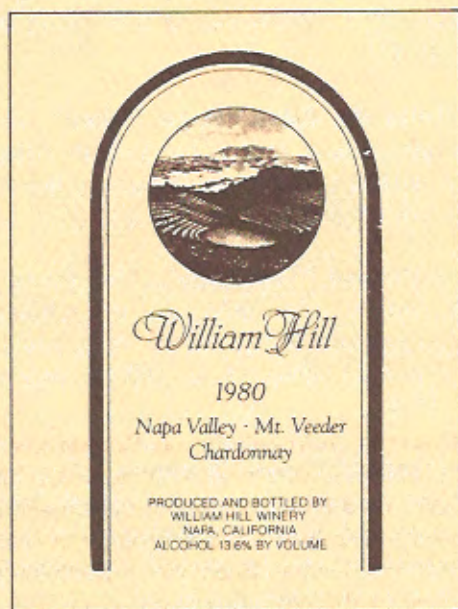


CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAYS

Outstanding



1980 William Hill "Napa Valley". This is a really impressive wine. Only the second Chardonnay produced by William Hill, but this winery is rapidly establishing itself as one of the state's premier Chardonnay producers. This wine has a medium yellow gold color and an intensely perfumed, spicy/fruity nose. Full, rich, round, very Burgundian flavors coat the mouth. The finish goes on and on, yet is backed by a good, crisp acidity which gives the wine structure and the potential to develop in the bottle for a few years (18). \$16.50



Very Good



1980 Flora Springs "Special Select". This wine was barrel fermented and shows the buttery richness that this can produce. It has a light medium yellow/gold color and a lovely, fruity/buttery/pineapple/tropical fruit/vanilla nose. There is good structure and balance with full, round, rich, buttery, complex flavors (17). \$16

1979 Mayacamas "California". Just now this wine is rather restrained. Given 3-4 years bottle age this will likely prove to be outstanding. It has a light yellow gold color with a lovely, perfumed, apple-like/vanilla nose. There is a closed-in, very nice flavor showing fruit and vanilla. With good acid, this is a clean, fresh wine of fine structure and style (17). \$15.75

1980 Stag's Leap "Napa Valley". This is one of Stag's Leap's nicest Chardonnays to date. It is elegant, yet crisp and delicate, yet flavorful. This combination of qualities is generally difficult to find in California Chardonnay. The color is light yellow gold and the wine has a lovely, fruity/apple-like nose tinged with vanilla and just a touch of lemon. The flavors are similarly complex and the wine is elegant, yet finishes crisp. It should age well for a few years, but presently has a youthful freshness which renders it most attractive (17). \$13.50

★ ★ +

1980 Chalone Vineyard. The Chalone Chardonnays are made in a big style. Maybe a function of youth, but there is a hotness in the finish that is somewhat disturbing. Nonetheless, the wine is attractive with a light yellow gold color and a lovely, deeply perfumed, fruity/vanilla/oaky nose with good fruit and round, deep, rich, vanilla and fruit flavors (16½). \$17

1980 Chateau St. Jean "Robert Young Vineyard". This is one of the more delicate Chardonnays from this vineyard and it needs a bit more time to come together. It has a pale yellow gold color and a nice, fruity/floral/apple-like/vanilla nose. In the mouth, there is a clean, fresh, fruity/apple-like/vanilla flavor that is quite appealing. Like other "Robert Young" bottlings, it has style and finesse (16½). \$18

1979 Mount Eden Vineyards "Santa Cruz Mountain". This winery usually produces one of California's best Chardonnays. This wine is a bit more toasty than some, but is still very appealing. It has a yellow gold color and a nicely perfumed, fruity/toasty/spicy nose with a nice, spicy/fruity flavor. The wine has a good finish and good acid and needs some time to round out. With a year or two in the bottle this should be even better (16½). \$16

★ ★

1980 Frey "Mendocino". This is a lovely Chardonnay and the \$8 price is a bargain. The only bad thing is that only 199 cases were produced. So it will be difficult to find, but worth a search. The color is medium yellow gold and the nose shows a lovely perfume of apple, vanilla, and spice. The flavors are round and fruity with a vanilla complexity. Probably at its best for early consumption, this is a nice style Chardonnay (16).

★ +

1980 Kenwood "Beltane Ranch". This Sonoma wine has a light yellow gold color and a nicely perfumed, fruity/peachy/vanilla nose with clean, fruity/peachy/vanilla flavor in a firm, crisp style (15½). \$15

★

1980 Chateau Ste. Michelle "Washington State". This wine was put in one of our tastings as a "ringer" and it was so attractive as to be of interest. It has a pale gold color and a clean, fresh, fruity nose with a hint of vanilla. There is a clean, fresh, fruity flavor in a crisp, lighter style—an easy to drink wine for early consumption (15). \$10

1980 Jekel "Private Reserve". This wine has a light yellow gold color and a fruity/oaky/slightly citric

nose with an oaky/fruity/citric flavor. Rather straightforward, but with good richness, it is attractive (15). \$14.50

1980 Roudon-Smith "Mendocino". This wine has a light yellow gold color and a perfumed nose with hints of spearmint and pine, unusual but attractive. There is a clean, fresh flavor, nice fruit, and good acid (15). \$11.50

Good

1980 Dolan "Mendocino". Here is a big wine with a light yellow gold color and an oaky/toasty nose with a woody/oaky/fruity flavor. Full in the mouth, it is very flavorful, but it seems a little flat and finishes a little short (14). \$11.95

1980 Iron Horse "Barrel Fermented". This wine has a light yellow gold color and an oaky/fruity/apricot nose with a clean, fresh, fruity/vanilla/slightly herbal flavor. Lacking the richness normally associated with barrel fermented Chardonnay, it is backward and subdued and needs a year or two in the bottle (14). \$10.75

1980 Mill Creek "Sonoma". This estate bottled wine has a pale yellow gold color and a nicely perfumed, fruity/floral/oaky nose with a clean, fresh, fruity/oaky flavor. Just a little bitterness in the finish detracts from the fresh, light style (14). \$10.50

1980 Robert Mondavi "Napa Valley". Curiously, this wine is marred by a herbaceous quality. It has a light yellow gold color and a fruity/slightly herbaceous/apricot nose with some vanilla. There is a full, clean, nicely balanced flavor of fruit and vanilla, again with a touch of herbaceousness and a slight bitterness on the finish that should round out with time (14). \$14

1980 Villa Mt. Eden "Napa Valley". This wine has a light yellow gold color and an oaky/fruity/slightly metallic nose with a fruity/oaky flavor. Clean and flavorful, it finishes well (14). \$13.50

1981 Callaway "Temecula". This estate bottled wine has a light yellow gold color and a fruity/floral/green apple nose with a clean, fresh, fruity flavor. There is a slight bitterness, but still it is very pleasant (13½). \$8.50

1980 Danfield Creek "Sonoma". This wine has a light yellow gold color and a fruity/slightly herbaceous nose with a fruity/herbaceous flavor showing some vanilla. Not varietal, more like Sauvignon Blanc, but it is light and pleasant (13). \$6

1979 Charles Lefranc "San Benito County".

This wine has a pale yellow gold color and a perfumed, peachy/apricot nose with a hint of vanilla. With clean, fresh, fruity flavor there is an almost sweet finish (13). \$7

1979 Simi "Mendocino". This wine has a light yellow gold color and a musty/oaky nose with clean, oaky/fruity flavor. It is pleasant and straightforward (13). \$11

1980 Stevenot "Northern California". This wine has a medium yellow gold color and an oaky/fruity nose with a hint of peaches. There is a full, rich, oaky/fruity flavor. Straightforward, it is a little flat (13). \$8

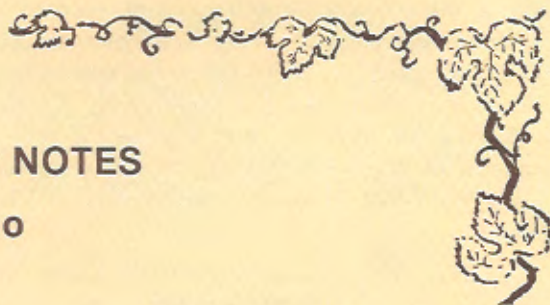
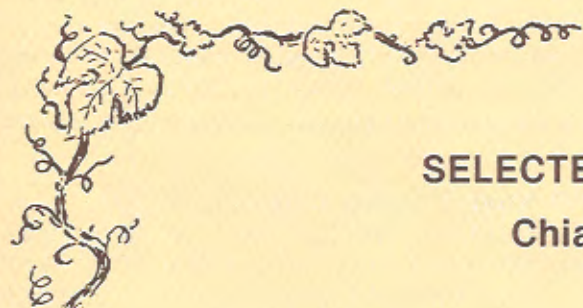
Four Strikes and You're Out!

1979 Roudon-Smith "Edna Valley, Fourth Bottling". This wine has a light yellow gold color and a slight sulphur (SO₂), fruity/oaky nose with a hint of butterscotch. There is an oaky/fruity/butterscotch flavor with a straightforward character. The other bottlings have seemed better, although the wine is apparently supposed to be the same with bottlings designated to indicate release dates (12). \$10.50

Below Average

1979 Liberty School "California". This wine has a light yellow gold color and a grassy/slightly oxidized nose with a full, oaky/fruity flavor. It is slightly flat and not too attractive. Not one of the better efforts from Caymus's second label (11). \$7

1979 Mark West Vineyards "Russian River Valley". This estate bottled wine has a light yellow gold color and an H₂S nose. Slightly petillant there is an oaky/fruity flavor. Well, at least there's something for the (can you believe it?) \$13.95 price (11).



SELECTED TASTING NOTES

Chianti Classico

This marks our inaugural article on Italian wines. Wines were purchased from retailers all across the U.S. In most instances, these retailers "specialize" in Italian wines. Indeed, the range of wines both by type, vintage, and producer is astounding. In particular, there is a lot of Italian red wine for sale and the vintages span a range of 20 years or more. Of the vast array of Italian red wine available in the marketplace, Chianti seems not only to be one of the most price worthy wines, but one of the best wines period, i.e. in terms of absolute quality with no regard for price. The sad fact is that many of the very pricy, i.e. \$20-60 Barbarescos, Brunellos, Barolos, etc., simply are not worth the money when compared with fine California or French wine (this will be reviewed in detail in an upcoming issue).

Chianti is an example of how Italian red wines have improved in the past 20 years. In Burton Anderson's book Vino The Wines and Winemakers of Italy he quotes the following passage from Professors M. A. Amerine and V.D. Singleton in their book Wine: An Introduction for Americans, first published in 1965:

Thus, in summary, the wines of Italy are made from small vineyard holdings in mountainous areas of promiscuous culture, and the many untrained winemakers use rather primitive techniques. The wines do not enjoy sufficient distribution among critical consumers either inside or outside Italy to force an improvement in the quality. The average Italian consumer is not critical of the quality of his wines.

No doubt many winedrinkers recall tasting Italian wines that might be a part of the above description (inexpensive, poor quality Chianti in attractive wicker covered bottles is a prime example of early efforts to penetrate the large U.S. market). However, in 1963 laws were passed to control name and origin. Now more than 200 zones have met 'denominazione de origine controllata' standards for their wines of "particular reputation and worth". These regulations, generally abbreviated as DOC, are similar to the appellation controlée laws of France. Chianti is the largest DOC district in Italy. Its more than one million acres contain some 150,000 acres of vineyards and nearly 7,000 registered growers producing grapes for more than 100 million liters of DOC Chianti annually. The Chianti most familiar in the U.S. market is Classico. The Classico zone covers 200,000 acres with six other DOC Chianti zones surrounding it. Classico is one of two consortiums, the other being Putto, organized in the 1920's to prevent wine fraud resulting from wines outside Chianti being labeled and sold as Chianti. Classico wines have a lower maximum yield of grapes and a 12% minimum alcohol content vs. 11.5% for other Chianti. Riserva wines must be aged for more than 3 years and have at least 12.5% alcohol. The Putto consortium has set standards equal to Chianti Classico's.

Thus, even though Chianti has a long history, today the district is considered to be in a state of flux. New vineyards, new producers, and fresh ideas abound. Hence, the wines are improving. And, because of the historical perception of Chianti as inexpensive wine to be drunk young, the marketplace has tended to keep the price of Chianti down. Consequently, Chianti, as it evolves and improves, can represent a very good value to the consumer. Tasting notes on a representative sampling of currently available Chianti Classico follow:

Very Good

★★★

1971 Riserva (Castello di Cacchiano). This Chianti has a medium dark color with orange tones and an orange/amber edge. There is a lovely, ripe, fruity nose with a hint of cedar. With lovely flavor and balance, this wine is quite delicious with a very nice finish (17). \$7.95

★★+

1967 (Antinori). With a medium color and a slight amber edge, this wine has a lovely, fruity/cedary nose with a hint of earth and mushrooms—very attractive. Soft, round, elegant, with very nice balance and a good finish. There is a lovely, cherry-like flavor with hints of cedar and earth (16½). \$31.80 (Magnum)

1978 (Castello di Cacchiano). This wine has a dark color with an amber edge and a deep, raspberry/truffle/hint of raisin nose. Very complex, there is good, deep flavor—fruity/cedar/woody—and nice balance with some tannin to lose. Very fine, this wine needs 3-5 years (16½). \$4.95

★★

1969 (D. Fossi). With a medium dark color this wine has a deep, fruity/earthy nose. Medium bodied with soft, fruity/earthy/cedary/spicy flavors, it is round and quite delicious with a nice finish (16). \$7.95

1978 (Capannelle). With a medium dark color there is a lovely, intense, raspberry/cedary nose with raspberry/cedary flavor. Delicious with nice balance and good fruit, this is a light-bodied wine and will be early maturing (16). \$9.95

1964 (Antinori). This wine has a medium color with an orange/amber rim and an earthy/cedary/slightly minty nose. There are cedary/woody flavors which are clean, soft, round, and exhibit good length on the palate (16). \$37 (Magnum)

1971 Riserva "Poggio" (Monsanto). With a medium red color and orange/amber edge this wine has a spicy/peppery/fruity nose. The clean, fruity/wood/cedary flavors are youthfully zesty and quite nice. Balanced a bit to acid, the wine has a nice, clean finish (16). \$12.50

1977 Riserva Ducale (Ruffino). This wine has a medium red color and an amber edge. There is an earthy/green olive/cherry/woody nose. Very flavorful—cedar/earthy—the wine is balanced to acid and needs a few years (16). \$7.89

★+

1959 (D. Fossi). This wine has a medium dark color with an orange amber rim. There is a deep, cherry/earthy/cedary nose and soft, round, cherry pit and cedar flavor. Drying out just a bit, but it's still lovely (15½). \$14.95

1975 Riserva (Capannelle). This wine has a medium color with a brown/amber edge and a lovely, deep, fruity/earthy/cedary nose. With good fruit and depth, this is very full for Chianti. With tannin to lose there is good acid and the wine should be layed down for a few years (15½). \$14.95

1970 Riserva "Poggio" (Monsanto). With a medium dark color and amber edge, this wine has a deep, woody nose. There is good underlying fruit and woody/cherry flavors showing depth. Tannic, rather harsh just now, this wine is still youthful (15½). \$13.95



1978 (Fattoria Casa Sola). This wine has a medium color with some orange tones and an amber edge. There is a lovely, deep, perfumed, walnuts and plums nose. With earthy, plum-like flavor it is fresh, clean, and balanced to acid. Probably best to drink now and over the next few years—good buy (15). \$4.99

1958 (D. Fossi). This wine has a medium color with an orange/amber rim and an earthy/cherry/cedary nose. There are soft, cedary/earthy/cherry flavors that finish dry (15). \$14.95

1975 Riserva Ducale (Ruffino). With a medium brick color this wine has a lovely, woody/cedary/cherry nose with soft, fruity/cherry/woody flavors. It is delicate with nice fruit; lean, and balanced to acid (15). \$7.49

1978 (Villa Casa Nuove). This wine has a medium color with an amber edge and a fruity/earthy/woody nose. It is very pleasant with a fruity/woody flavor and a good finish (15). \$6

Good

1977 (Antinori). This wine has a medium dark color showing an orange/amber edge and a fruity, perfumed, ripe fruit nose with a slightly herbal undertone. With very pleasant flavor, it is balanced a bit to acid and has a slightly short finish (14). \$8

1975 Riserva (Beccari). This wine has a medium light red brick color with an earthy/fruity/slightly caramel nose. It is clean, dry, balanced to acid, and a little short on fruit but still pleasant (14). \$6.25

1973 Riserva Ducale (Ruffino). This wine has a medium color with a cedary/earthy/berry nose. With cedary/earthy flavor it is drying out a bit but is still nice—drink up (14). \$11.95

1975 Riserva (San Felice). With a medium light brick red color, this wine has an old, earthy, tea leaves nose with a hint of cherries. There is a cherry-like flavor. It is lean, yet soft, with an acidic finish (14). \$6.25

1979 (Villa Casa Nuove). With a medium dark color and amber edge this wine has a toasty/fruity/woody nose with a fresh, fruity flavor that has a hint of cedar. Balanced to acid and a little short on flavor, this seems best for early consumption (13). \$4

1977 Riserva (Monsanto). This wine has a medium red color with an orange amber rim. It has a caramelized, ripe fruit/woody nose and a fruity/woody/spicy flavor. Balanced to acid, the wine is pleasant, but shows signs of early senility (13). \$7

1979 (A. Gaggelli). This wine has a medium color with an amber edge and a toasty/fruity nose. Thin and tart with an acidic flavor there is no depth and it's lacking in structure (12). \$4

Below Average

1978 (A. Fattorie-I. Olena). With a medium color and an orange/amber edge, this wine has a pungent, petroleum/shellac nose. Thin and tart, there is a dry flavor which is lacking in fruit and is acidic (11). \$3.69

1978 (Casavecchia de Nittardi). This wine has a medium color with an orange/amber edge. There is a slightly toasty, H₂S nose and a mature, toasty flavor. With some fruit, the wine is acidic and not very interesting (11). \$3.99

BARRELS AND BOTTLES

Some Notes on Burgundy

While in Burgundy last November, we had an opportunity to taste a fair number of the 1980 and 1981 White Burgundies and some 1979 and 1980 Red Burgundies. Generally, we were favorably impressed. There will be some fine 1980 White Burgundies, while the 1981's may be somewhat similar to the 1978's, lighter perhaps but harmonious and well-balanced. The 1979 Red Burgundies have been previously discussed (see

Volume III, Page 61, Page 87 and Page 114 in this issue). Suffice to say that the 1979 wines of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti should rank at the top with the best wines of the vintage, but prices are high, roughly equivalent to the 1978's. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the 1980 Red Burgundies from the top producers such as Cheillon, Jayer, Romanée-Conti, etc. They should be quite nice. Overall, 1980 is probably

not much of a vintage for Red Burgundy, but careful selection will likely result in some very nice wines. Finally, we were impressed by the wines of Leroy. Owned solely by Madame Lalou Bize-Leroy, co-owner of the *Domaine de la Romanée-Conti*, Leroy may have the largest collection of Red Burgundy in the world. Madame Lalou Bize-Leroy closely supervises every aspect of the company's operations. The wines are carefully selected and generally are long-lived, classical Burgundies. The range of older vintages is remarkable. In recent years, the wines have begun to trickle into the U.S. and promise to become better known as they become more widely available here. As the estimated retail prices (imported by Wilson-Daniels, St. Helena, Calif.) attest, they are not inexpensive. Indeed, the price of some is downright extravagant. However, the best of them are nothing short of remarkable. Perfection and near perfection in Red Burgundy is never cheap.

White Burgundy

Jobard

1980 Meursault "Charmes". Lovely wine. Fruity/spicy nose. Good fruit and nice flavor. Fine balance.

1980 Meursault "Genevrières". Good fruit. Very nice flavor. Light, but good style.

1980 Meursault "Poruzots". Very good color. Lovely, perfumed, fruity nose. Nice flavor with good balance. Good aftertaste.

1981 Meursault "Charmes". Pale yellow gold color. Light, fruity nose. Citric flavors. Good style.

Michelot

1980 Meursault "Genevrières". Light yellow gold color and a clean, fruity/spicy nose. Good flavor. Spicy. Lean in a good style.

1980 Meursault "Clos St. Felix". Light yellow gold color and a lovely, fruity nose with some spiciness. Nice flavor. Medium body. Good acidity.

1981 Meursault "Charmes". Light yellow color and a fruity/spicy nose. Good fruit, nice flavor, and good balance.

1981 Meursault "Genevrières". Light yellow gold color and a fruity/tropical fruit/spicy nose. Good fruit and acid. Excellent potential.

1981 Meursault "Clos de Cromins". Light yellow

color. Nice, fruity/almond/banana nose. Good acidity, depth, and flavor. Fine potential.

Coche-Dury

1980 Bourgogne Blanc. Pale yellow color. Lovely nose—honey and fruit. Good flavor. Very nice.

1980 Meursault "Charmes". Pale yellow gold color and a fruity/spicy nose. Full with good flavor and depth. Fine style. Vanilla-tinged finish.

1980 Meursault "Casse-Tete". Pale yellow gold color. Lovely, vanilla, fruity, spicy/hint of honey nose. Lovely fruit. Clean, fresh vanilla flavor.

1980 Meursault "Perrier". Pale yellow gold color. Subdued nose. Nice fruit. Good, spicy complexity. A little austere. Should develop.

1980 Meursault. Light yellow gold color. Lovely, fruity, honied nose with a kiss of vanilla. Very good fruit. Good depth and balance, Shows good promise.

1980 Meursault "Ruchots". Pale yellow gold color. Lovely, honey/vanilla, spicy nose. Clean, fresh, fruity/spicy flavors. Nice finish.

1981 Meursault. Light yellow color. Pineapple nose. Good fruit and balance. Good potential.

Domaine de la Romanée-Conti

1979 Montrachet. Made from very ripe grapes. Yellow gold color. Lovely, intense, botrytis/fruity/slightly toasty nose. Very full, rich, and concentrated. Fruity/spicy/buttery flavor. Long on the palate.

Red Burgundy

Chevillon

1980 Nuits-Saint-Georges "La Perrière". Medium dark color. Good body. Good depth. Spicy. Long on the palate.

1980 Nuits-Saint-Georges "Les St. George". Medium dark color. Lovely, perfumed nose. Deep flavors. Tannic. Fine potential.

1980 Nuits-Saint-Georges "Vaucrains". Medium dark color. Lovely nose, Velvety, marvelous balance with deep flavor. Delicious wine. Fine potential.

1980 Nuits-Saint-Georges Village. Medium color. Light, but with a lovely berry flavor. Some smokiness and spice on the nose and palate.

Domaine de la Romanée-Conti

1980 Échezeaux. Dark color and a lovely, spicy/fruity nose. Good depth. Lovely flavor. Will make a fine bottle.

1980 Grands-Échezeaux. Dark color. Great, perfumed nose. Lots of depth and character with good backbone.

1980 Romanée-Saint-Vivant. Medium dark color. Ripe fruit nose. Lighter, stylistic, and nice.

1980 Richebourg. Lovely, deep nose and lovely fruit in a good style. Elegant yet with depth.

1980 La Tâche. Dark color. Lovely, perfumed nose—fruity/spicy. Good depth. Very fruity flavor. Elegant yet well structured.

1980 Romanée-Conti. Medium dark color. Lovely, spicy/bacon/fruity nose. Good depth. Very, very nice.

1979 Échezeaux. Dark color. Lovely, perfumed, fruity/spicy nose. Elegant, very flavorful, with fruity/spicy flavor. Good depth. Firm backbone. Very, very good.

1979 Grands-Échezeaux. Dark color. Restrained nose. More backward than the Échezeaux. Excellent flavor. Full. Good fruit. Lovely balance.

1979 Romanée-Saint-Vivant. Medium dark color. Ripe, fruity/spicy nose with a hint of coconuts. Exotic, lovely, fruity flavor. Spicy. Elegant. Very nice.

1979 Richebourg. Dark color. Lovely nose, but a little subdued. Magnificent, vanilla-tinged/spicy flavor. Great elegance. Superb style. Long lasting finish showing excellent balance. Potentially a great wine.

1979 La Tâche. Medium dark color. Intensely perfumed nose of cherries and spice with some vanilla. Great flavor—cherries/spice/hint of vanilla/some smokiness. Tannic. Firm acidity. Long finish. A great success. Will be a keeper.

1979 Romanée-Conti. Medium dark color. Lovely, intensely perfumed nose—fruity/spicy. Medium bodied. Very finessful. Elegant. Great promise.

Henri Jayer

1980 Vosne-Romanée. Medium dark color. Cherry/vanilla nose. Fruity with nice balance and good depth.

1980 Nuits-Saint-George "Meurgers". Medium dark color with a fruity/woody/spicy nose. Good fruit and depth. Tannic. Good potential.

1980 Vosne-Romanée "Beaumonts". Medium dark color with a cherry/vanilla/raspberry nose. Intense, cherry/raspberry flavor. Good depth and balance.

1980 Vosne-Romanée "Les Brules". Medium dark color. Lovely, fruity/spicy nose. Lots of fruit. Good depth. Fine potential.

1980 Vosne-Romanée "Cros Parantoux". Medium dark color. Fruity/spicy/vanilla nose. Good fruit and extract with a raspberry flavor. A little harsh and backward, yet with good promise.

1980 Échezeaux. Dark color. Intense, fruity/cherry/spicy nose. Loads of fruit. Good depth. Long on the palate. Tannic finish.

1980 Richebourg. Medium dark color. Lovely, deep, fruity/berry/spicy nose. Lovely fruit with a promise of elegance.

Leroy

1976 Auxey-Duresses. Dark color with an amber edge. Ripe fruit, almost prune-like/earthy nose. Very ripe fruit flavor with a hint of earth. Rough and tannic—way too young to drink. \$23.50 (estimated)

1970 Auxey-Duresses. Medium orange red color. Subdued, fruity/tea leaves/hint of spice nose. Light. Lovely. Elegant. Hint of spice. Nice balance. \$35 (estimated)

1978 Savigny-les-Beaune "Les Serpentières". Dark color with a deep nose—raspberries/plum/spice. Deep, plummy/fruity flavor with a hint of spice. Good depth. Nice balance. Long finish. Quite impressive. \$32 (estimated)

1976 Savigny-les-Beaune "Les Serpentières." Medium dark color with a hint of orange. Ripe, fruity/spicy nose. Ripe fruit flavor. Tannic with some spice in the finish. \$32 (estimated)

1973 Savigny-les-Beaune "Les Serpentières". Medium reddish orange color with an orange amber edge. Earthy/smoky/charcoal/plum-like nose. Lovely, light strawberry flavor with some earth and smoke. Light, with elegance. Very nice for current consumption \$30 (estimated)

1972 Savigny-les-Beaune "Les Serpenteries". Dark color with an amber edge. Deep nose – plummy/fruity/smoky/spicy/truffle-like. Big, full, intense flavors – plum/fruit/earth/spice. Good balance. Needs time but has great potential. Very impressive. \$35 (estimated)

1971 Savigny-les-Beaune "Les Serpenteries". Medium dark color with an orange toned amber rim. Perfumed, fruity, spicy/smoky nose. Medium body. Lovely, fruity/spicy/plummy/smoky flavors. Well balanced. Long finish. Very fine. \$40 (estimated)

1964 Volnay "Champans". Medium dark color, orange tones, and an orange amber rim. Deep, fruity/plummy nose with a hint of tea leaves and spice. Medium bodied. Elegant. Plummy/spicy/hint of earth flavors. Long finish. Very nice. \$75 (estimated)

1964 Volnay "Clos des Chênes". Medium dark color with orange tones and an amber rim. Deep fruity/plummy nose with a hint of spice. Slight toasty, hint of earth flavor. Deep fruit. Plummy, almost jam-like. Excellent balance and a nice finish. \$75 (estimated)

1964 Volnay "Santenots". Medium orange red color with an amber rim. Lovely, perfumed, complex, fruity/spicy/melon-like nose—really extraordinary. Lovely, elegant, fruity/spicy flavors. Medium body. Soft. Long finish. Very, very nice. \$75 (estimated)

1964 Pommard "Epenots". Medium dark reddish orange color with an amber edge. Nice, fruity/earthy nose showing a hint of spice. Lovely, fruity, plummy flavor. Good depth. Spicy. Soft. Round. Long finish. \$90 (estimated)

1964 Pommard "Grands Epenots". Dark color with orange tones and an amber edge. Deep, plummy/spicy/hint of earth nose. Really extraordinary, deep fruit flavor. A mouthful. Great balance. Long on the palate. First rate. Classic. \$90 (estimated)

1964 Pommard "Rugiens". Dark color with a hint of orange and an amber rim. Lovely, fruity, plummy, hint of earth and tea leaves nose. Deeply embedded flavor. Excellent fruit. Nice balance. Still a little tannic. Very nice. \$90 (estimated)

1964 Grands-Échezeaux. Medium dark orange/red color with an amber rim. A little closed-in. A hint of earth but with some underlying fruitiness and some spice. Backward with good fruit. Tannic. Needs lots of time. \$110 (estimated)

1964 Chambolle-Musigny "Les Charmes". Medium orange/red color with an amber edge. Intensely perfumed, fruity/spicy/smoky nose. Nice fruit with

great elegance. Good structure. Some acid. Superb with a long finish. May be at its peak. \$115 (estimated)

1964 Chambolle-Musigny "Les Amoureuses". Medium dark orange/red color with an amber edge. Fresh, deep, fruity/plummy nose with a hint of spice. Great fruit. Superb balance. Full, yet elegant. Intense flavors. A great wine. \$115 (estimated)

1972 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Dark color with an amber edge. Plum-pit/earthy nose with a hint of spice. Good, plummy/fruit flavor with good body. Acidity showing through a bit. Needs time. \$75 (estimated)

1971 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Dark color with an amber edge. An intense essence of plums, cassis, spice, and earth. Great complexity with full, rich, plummy flavors showing some spice and a hint of earth. Great depth. Tannin to lose. Outstanding wine. \$89 (estimated)

1970 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Medium dark orange/amber color. Perfumed, fruity/woody/earthy nose. Light, delicate, soft flavors. A bit on the thin side, but pleasant \$70 (estimated)

1969 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Dark color with an amber edge and a hint of orange. Amazingly youthful, deep, fruity/grapy nose showing a hint of spice. Deep, fruity, full flavors. Youthfully tannic. Needs time. Outstanding potential. \$90 (estimated)

1967 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Medium dark orange/red color with a ripe fruit nose—raisiny but with an underlying freshness. Hint of spice. Good, ripe fruit flavor. Medium body. Rather harsh. Needs a few more years \$70 (estimated)

1966 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Dark color with an amber edge. Closed-in nose that develops and blossoms with air. Deep flavors—plums/cherries/spice/earth. Great style and fruit. Long finish. Firm. Great structure. Long life ahead. \$99 (estimated)

1962 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Medium dark color with an orange/red color and an amber edge. Lovely, fresh, flowery, plummy/spicy nose. Delicate. Lovely fruit—plummy/spicy flavor. Excellent. Perfect to drink now. Outstanding wine. \$120 (estimated)

1961 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers." Dark color with orange/red tones and an amber edge. Deep, fruity/plummy/spicy, earthy nose with intense, complex, unbelievably great flavors. Plummy/spicy/hint of vanilla. Great balance with tannin yet to lose. Will improve. Absolutely magnificent wine. \$128 (estimated)

1959 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Unbelievable dark color with an amber edge. Deep, fruity/plum pit/earthy /truffle-like/spicy nose. Great complexity. Great intense flavor and depth. Very long finish. Impeccable balance. Harmonious. Superlative wine. \$149 (estimated)

1957 Gevrey-Chambertin "Les Cazetiers". Dark color with a slight amber tone and an orange amber rim. Deeply perfumed nose—plums, spice, and earth. Lovely flavor with great fruit and complex components of earth and spice. Great flavor. Some acid showing through. Still outstanding. \$135 (estimated)

1955 Chambertin. Medium dark red/orange color with an amber edge. Lovely, intensely perfumed, plummy, vanilla, woody, cedar/spice nose. Good flavor with some acid showing through. Very nice. \$195 (estimated)

1959 Chambertin. Dark orange/red color with an amber edge. Lovely, perfumed, fruity/spicy/floral/rose petal nose. Great elegance, yet very full of flavor. Great depth. Long on the palate. Velvety. Very fine. At its peak. \$185 (estimated)



Cellar Notes

The Great 1961 Bordeaux Vintage

Generally 1961 is compared with 1929 and 1945 as the greatest Bordeaux vintage of this century. As with all very great vintages, nature effected a reduction of the crop when rains during flowering washed away the pollen. Then came an August drought and a very warm September which brought the very small grapes to full maturity. The vintage began on September 27 and a very small harvest resulted.

Now just over 20 years old, the 1961 vintage gives promise that it may be the very best Bordeaux vintage of this century. To test this thesis, Bipin Desai arranged a 1961 tasting of unsurpassed magnitude. Very simply, it was the greatest tasting of these wines ever done anywhere in the world! Moreover, in all respects, wines, setting, organization, food, etc. it was the greatest tasting any of us have ever attended (a feeling echoed by English wine authority Harry Waugh, who was the honored guest). Bipin's comments on the background and organization of the event follow. Thereafter, the tasting notes and scores on the wines of Graves are listed along with comments on how these particular bottles compared with others tasted previously. Wines from the Haut-Medoc, Margaux, Pauillac, Pomerol, Saint-Émilion, St. Estèphe, Saint-Julien and Sauternes will appear in subsequent issues.

There is no better way to answer these questions than to gather together people who are knowledgeable and devoted to serious wines and taste the largest

meaningful collection of the 1961 Chateaux. There has never been a tasting of this magnitude before.

By October, 1981, I was still 30 wines short of my goal of 130 Chateaux for the projected tasting. A good many of the missing wines were Pomerols. I was on the phone or sending telexes to wine trade people and collectors all over the world, Chicago, Boston, New York, England and France as well as California.

By January 15, 1982, there were 131 Chateaux collected. Except for 7, I had 2 bottles of each or, in a few cases, a magnum. This meant about 255 bottles or close to 22 cases. The physical task was enormous. I had to assemble the bottles after retrieving most of them from my cellar. I had to pack them for the tasting according to regions, tasting sessions and flights.

The goal of the tasting: To explore the question: Is the vintage '61 truly as great as it is reputed to be? For a truly great vintage 20 years is the time when the wine begins to reach maturity—though the great first growths may not yet be ready to drink. The year 1982 marks that 20 year period. Another question: Which Chateaux looks promising in terms of current drinking and in terms of laying down, and which Chateaux are passe?

Organization

In January, 1981, as if all the stars were in the right place, the event ran like clockwork.

The tasting was held in Beverly Hills at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in the Champagne Room, a fairly large hall with plenty of space for the tasters. The tasters were seated facing each other in a large rectangle created by joining 4 long tables. There was ample room for the wines and the buffet. The lighting was excellent.

The Beverly Wilshire provided the necessary vast number of glasses, approximately 1200, and the decanters. The wines were served blind. They were first decanted and then poured in equal amounts into 32 glasses. The bottles were uncorked and decanted immediately prior to each flight. A typical flight consisted of about 7 wines. The glasses were all marked numerically in the order in which they were served. The wines in a flight were delivered to each taster at intervals of 2 to 3 minutes.

There were two bottles of most of the wines. To take account of the possible bottle variation, wine from the same bottle was served to alternate tasters (differentiated for the convenience of the waiters by red and green colors). In case of big variation, the tasters getting wine from the bad bottle could share the better wine with their neighbors. (This happened very seldom.)

No glasses were removed until the end of each session. Everyone had an opportunity to re-taste the previous wines. Each session had 5 flights and lasted approximately 3 hours. After each flight was tasted and scored, the identity of the wine was disclosed and discussion followed.

The food was superb and varied. The menu changed at each session. Meats, poultry, stews, warm dishes, cold dishes, the food blended beautifully with the wines served.

Graves

★★(★)

Haut-Brion. Dark color, amber edge. Fruity/earthy nose. Good depth. Finessful. Nice Fruit. Good balance. Fruity/earthy flavor. Tannin to lose. Nice style, but not as distinctive as previous bottles which can be ★★(★).

★★

De Fieuzal. Dark color, amber edge. Ripe, fruity/earthy nose. Ripe fruit flavor. Some earthiness. Round. Supple. Some cherry flavors in the finish. Very, very nice. Ready. No previous tasting notes.

★★

Haut-Bailly. Dark color, amber edge. Earthy/fruity/cedary nose. Full. Fruity/earthy flavor. Good depth. Quite tannic. Very nice wine. Needs time. No previous tasting notes.

★★

La Tour-Haut-Brion. Dark color, amber edge. Fruity, cinnamon/earthy nose. Very nice flavor. Ripe fruit. Round. Earthy. Very pleasing. Nice finish. Tannin to lose. No previous tasting notes.

★★

Pape-Clément. Medium dark color, amber edge. Nice, perfumed, fruity/earthy nose. Good fruit. Earthy nuances. Round. Supple. Nice finish. Quite ready. A little light and more forward than some previous bottles which can be ★★.

★★

Smith-Haut-Lafitte. Dark color, orange amber edge. Fruity/earthy nose. Round. Soft. Supple. Good fruit/touch of earthiness. Nice finish. No previous tasting notes.

★

Carbonnieux. Dark color, amber edge. Deep nose—fruity/earthy. Good fruit and depth. Ripe. Round. Earthy. Good balance. Long finish. Some tannin to lose. No previous tasting notes.

★

Domaine de Chevalier. Dark color, amber edge. Beautiful, perfumed nose. Cherries and hints of spice and cedar. Nice fruit. Supple. Earthy nuances. Just a little bit dry, and lacking a little in depth. Previously the wine has seemed more flavory and rated ★★.

★

La Carnes-Haut-Brion. Medium dark color, orange amber edge. Earthy nose. Some fruit and a touch of coffee bean. Soft. Round. Supple. Elegant. Showing age, but still lovely. No previous tasting notes.

★

La Mission-Haut-Brion. Dark color, amber edge. Subdued nose. Nice, pleasant. Full, but straightforward. Some fruit. Nice flavor, some tannin and acid to lose. Slightly dry finish. Not showing well. Rather dumb. A disappointment. Has been better and can be ★★(★).

Bouscaut. Dark color, herbal/earthy nose. Scrawny. Taut. Thin. Acidic. Not much flavor. Weak wine. No future. The least attractive Graves of the tasting. No previous tasting notes.

Larrivet-Haut-Brion. Dark color, amber edge. Earthy/tobacco-like nose. Balanced a bit to acid. Straightforward. Lacks complexity. No previous tasting notes.

Malartic-Lagravière. Dark color, amber edge. Nice, fruity, cherry nose—woody, earthy. Good fruit and depth of flavor, but quite tannic and acidic and lacking balance. No previous tasting notes.