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**Bordeaux and the 2005 vintage
Should one laugh or should one cry...**

From Wolfgang Faßbender

The small estates are suffering most from the crisis in Bordeaux. Even an outstanding vintage is currently of not much use to the producers in the marginal appellations.

„It is expensive to produce a good wine“. Armand Schuster de Ballwil sighs. „And now, where there is increasing progress overall, we are running into problems.“ The wine producer, who speaks German fluently, was speaking at a tasting day, representing the Syndicat Viticole Régional des AOC Bordeaux et Bordeaux Supérieur. Almost a hundred bottles of the so-called “minor Bordeaux” have been set up here for the journalists who have travelled from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The mood of those responsible is sombre. Those wine producers who cannot rely on prestigious titles nor on top Parker ratings are currently a worried group, their discussions centred on constantly declining prices per barrel and on emergency distillation. And this in spite of the fact that many of the estates have just produced the best wines ever in their history: the 2005 vintage is an exceptional vintage across the board, not just at the top of the pile.



The 2005 vintage –hardly any one-hit wonders

Petit Verdot and more...

However, when comparing barrel samples of the current vintage with more mature bottled samples, it quickly becomes clear that estates that also produced good wines in 2004, 2003 or 2002 have a definite advantage. There are not a lot of one-hit wonders around in 2005. At the same time, and flying in the face of what resources nature provided, a number of producers have managed to produce liquids with unripe tannins and tart, tough tannins from this auspicious vintage. Not all of the winemakers at the Petit Crus appear to have heard yet that must weight and physiological ripeness are not identical. On the other hand, the team at Château Micalet in the Haut-Médoc knows what it is doing, and this is evident in exemplary manner. Owner Denis Fédieu, who produces an organic blend from a part of his crop, provided rarities dating back to 1975 for our déjeuner, at the same time providing evidence that even a Cru Artisan can mature magnificently. This was particularly true for a single varietal 1998 vintage Petit Verdot. This wine was matured exclusively in new oak barrels, and presented itself as a

tremendously fresh, juicy wine that was exceptionally elegant and invigorating. This was topped only by a fabulous 1982 Micalet, which showed not the slightest sign of being tired.



Barrel cellar at Château Citran

Concentration or Saignée

Of course, even the Crus Artisans do not have a ready solution for the crisis, in particular with regard to the German market. „Very difficult“ is the only standard answer, „most decisions are based on price“. Any significant price increases can perhaps only be afforded by the Crus Bourgeois, and even then only the best-known ones. „It is a fact“, according to Christian Schätzle, who hails from the Kaiserstuhl region in Baden/Germany, and is director of production at Château Citran, „that there is simply too much wine being produced in Bordeaux“. A brief but noticeable crisis, resulting in a rapid decrease in the availability of wine, appears to be the best option for him. „The alternative is that a number of producers may be forced to give up, that really don't need to give up.“ Unusually for the region, spokespeople at Château Citran admit openly that the must concentrator is occasionally put to use in the cellar. „However, not so in 2005“, says Schätzle, „the alcohol was at the upper limit already“. The alternative was to employ the Saignée procedure, and this, more or less as a by-product, resulted in an exceptionally classy rosé: very briefly matured in barrique, part of the wine underwent malo-lactic fermentation, powerful and juicy. Of course, this is one possible vision for the Bordeaux of the future.

Close on 300 wines were tasted in the region at the end of April 2006. However, in some cases the samples had been bottled up to four weeks previously, and this is one of the reasons why the following list must be seen as one of cautious estimates. The list reflects only the best wines tasted in the various appellations, it is by no means a complete list.

AOC Bordeaux/Bordeaux Supérieur

Domaine de Courteillac
Château Darzac (?)
Château Lartean
Château Penin (!)
Château Pey la Tour (!)

Château Mousseyron
Château Séguin (!)
Château Recougne

AOC Médoc

Château Béjac-Romelys (!)
Château Garance Haut-Grénat
Château Cantegric

AOC Haut Médoc

Château Micalet, Cuvée Bio (!)
Château Moutte Blanc „Marguerite“
Château Haut Bréga
Château d’Osmond

AOC Margaux

Château des Trois Chardons

AOC Pauillac

Château Béhère

AOC Saint-Estèphe

Château La Peyre

AOC Blaye/Premières Côtes de Blaye

Château Dubraud, Grand Vin (!)
Château La Raz Caman
Château Cap Saint-Martin
Château des Bertrands, Nectar (!)

AOC Côtes de Bourg

Clos Alphonse Dubreuil
Château Fougas Maldoror
Château Martinat, Cuvée Epicurée

AOC Canon-Fronsac

Château Cassagne Haut-Canon La Truffière (!)
Château Canon Précresse

AOC Fronsac

Château Les Trois Croix

AOC Lalande de Pomerol

Château La Croix Bellevue

AOC Saint-Géorges

Château Saint-André Corbin (?)

AOC Puisseguin-Saint-Émilion

Château Lanbersac, Cuvée Louisa Lecoester

AOC Montagne Saint-Émilion

Vieux Château Palon (!)

AOC Saint-Émilion Grand Cru

Château Vieux Larmande (!)
Château Pontet-Fumet (!)

Château Lavallade
Château Mangot (!)
Château La Rose Côtes Rol

...and finally the **Crus Bourgeois**

Château Citran (!)
Château Picard
Château Moulin à Vent
Château Liversan (!)
Château du Moulin Rouge
Château Bessan-Ségur (!)
Château Le Pey
Château Cissac
Château Lalande (!)
Château des Cabans (!)
Château Donissan
Château Tronquoy-Lalande (!)

...and right at the end the **sweet dessert wines:**

Château du Cros (Loupiac) (!)
Château La Rame (Sainte-Croix du Mont) (!)
Château Laville (Sauternes) (!)
Château Majoureau (Côtes de Bordeaux)

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