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Le Faiseur de Vin

**Imposingly tall and broad**, clad in cowboy boots and fluorescent designer glasses, Olivier Dauga is the antithesis of the old-school, country gent persona of a Bordeaux wine consultant. 'I know I don't fit,' says the Libourne-born 45-year-old. 'But that's okay. Different is good for Bordeaux.'

His entry into the world of wine consultancy was equally unconventional. Dauga trained under the famed professor Emile Peynaud, but not in oenology, like most of his fellow consultants, rather a wine tasting diploma. Thanks to an old connection from his rugby days (he was once a semi-professional player) he found himself technical director at Sociando-Mallet, then Tour de By and Haut Condissas, as well as executive director at La Tour Carnet.

Twelve years later, it was time to do things his way, and with partner Cathy Socasau he set up Le Faiseur de Vin in 2000, consulting for 30 Bordeaux properties. Most of his clients are in the Côtes de Bordeaux, Blaye and Bourg. Is he intentionally shying away from the classed growths? 'Why would I want to be a consultant for the 2% of Bordeaux that is a speculative, fashion-following market?' he bellows. 'Isn't it more important to discover new properties? Or develop old ones and help them grow? People always turn to the 98% that have always been there, that don't change their prices. And everyone should be able to afford good wine.'

The rugby player in him also understands that the biggest team with the most money doesn't always win, so he prides himself on respecting the budget of each client. 'When it comes to making good wine it's always down to terroir, not money,' he says, scornful of others' obsession for 'playing with concentration, oak or *micro-bullage*' to earn points from certain critics.

Dauga admits to being a child at heart, wanting to bring a bit of fun back into Bordeaux. 'Bordeaux is boring: the same bottle, the same label. I want to change that. We have to stop hiding behind tradition – that Bordeaux needs to taste like this or look like that. That's why I don't have a recipe for wine. I may have a big personality, but I don't impose it on the wine. The wine has to represent the persona of the owner, from the look of the label to the taste of the liquid.'

He counts Margaret River as 'the second home in my heart', and says if he had one wish, it would be that Bordeaux was more Australian in mindset – 'more smiling, more simplicity, more honest with each other and our wines... -I'm not odd or marginal in Australia, but in Bordeaux, with my dress and opinions, I'm on my own. I'm a rebel – with a cause.'

Tina Gellie

