

Dauga of Bordeaux

9 Jan 2009 by Richard Hemming

As we plunge into the tasting necessary to complete our forthcoming detailed survey of 2007 burgundies, here's a follow-up to yesterday's round up of notes on some of Bordeaux's more affordable bottles.

Fill a private dining room with fine wine, fine food and fine-tuned palates and a convivial atmosphere is bound to follow. So it was at Richard Corrigan's new Mayfair restaurant last November, when a gaggle of wine writers assembled over dinner to taste eight different Bordeaux wines made in consultation with Olivier Dauga.

Dauga himself is the embodiment of joviality, sporting an eccentrically flared shirt collar and speaking in an equally broad French accent. His resumé is hardly conventional either: he began his career as a semi-pro rugby player and dabbled in varied jobs before finding himself working at Ch Sociando Mallet in the 1990s as a trainee, thanks to a rugby connection. From there he moved through the ranks, becoming executive director at Ch La Tour Carnet before founding his own consulting company in 2000. His clients now include (as well as those whose wines are described below) Ch Sérilhan in St-Estèphe and Ch Caronne Ste Gemme of the Haut-Médoc.

His other achievements include a raft of groan-worthy double-act banter, which we witnessed between himself and his attendant colleagues from the châteaux where he consults, just before the wines were served alongside a fine menu of ox tongue, poached pheasant and cheese. From then on the evening jollied along like an especially indulgent parlour game.

The line-up of wines was very enjoyable, and full notes follow below. Dauga's philosophy of consulting is not to impose his own style but rather to craft the best wine he can alongside the vision of the producers themselves. This results in a whole host of different styles, rather than the particular recognisability that someone like Michel Rolland might be said to impose. The unifying factor might instead be said to be quality ? although there were clearly some that impressed more than others.

Ch. Roques Mauriac - 2007 - Bordeaux Blanc - 15.5 - Drink now
60% Sémillon. Very correct and textured, pleasantly refined, although quite neutral flavours. 12% (RH)
£6 EWGA 01524 737100

Les Baronnets du Ch. Bellevue Gazin - 2005 - Côtes de Blaye - 15.5 - Drink now
70% Merlot, 15% Malbec, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot. Sweet and ripe fruit ? lots of simple upfront raspberry flavour but no depth or length. (RH)
£10 Cellar door only +33 557420200

Élément de Ch. Civrac - 2007 - Côtes de Bourg - 16.5 - Drink now

100% Merlot, but made in the style of Pinot Noir. Strawberry, slight stalk tones, definite earthy and gamey character. Certainly akin to Beaune with smoke, light body, and light tannin. In fact, this is so Pinot-esque in style they had difficulty in achieving the Côtes de Bourg classification, the powers that be claiming it was too atypical to carry the appellation. Easy-going but absolutely spot-on and decidedly better than many low-priced Merlots or Pinots, offering a very decent level of complexity. 11.5% (RH)
£6.99 www.civrac.com <http://www.civrac.com/> , New Claret LLP 07866 591675

Ch. Bellevue Gazin - 2005 - Côtes de Blaye - 16 - Drink now
Liquorice, dark cake mix and cassis with some cedar and spice. Rather floral and charming. Dry, medium tannin, very supple, well-balanced, lots of chocolate/mocha; seasoned and savoury with a certain aniseed or boot polish tone, but a touch of bitterness at the end. (RH)
£15 Cellar door only +33 557420200

Damnation de Ch. Roque Mauriac - 2005 - Bordeaux - 16.5 - Drink 2008-18
85% Cabernet Franc, 15% Merlot. Soft but pronounced aromas. Cedar, pencil, plum, cassis, velvet smoothness. Burst of flavour on the tongue with structure, firmness, dark fruit, burnt currant, meat juice and mint. Very moreish, scented whilst maintaining an austere and classically European stance. 13.5% (RH)
£15.99 www.virginwines.com <http://www.virginwines.com/>

Ch. La Grevette Lacombe - 2007 - Médoc - 15.5 - Drink 2008-10
Very distinct ripe sweet oak with fruitcake and icing. Cinnamon sweetness and ripe, red juicy fruit. Pinch of woodspice and aromatic. Very enticing nose, the oak is far from shy but it works for its style: all sweetness and sawdust ? it really does smell of barrels. Dry, medium tannin ? quite simple length. Concentrated and pure. (RH)
£12 Cellar door only +33 556415691

Ch. Civrac - 2006 - Côtes de Bourg - 15 - Drink now
Subtle and soft, black fruit, elegant and gentle on the nose. Quite quiet. On the palate there is ripe soft fruit, very light body and incredibly tame tannin. Somewhat ordinary. (RH)
£10.90 www.civrac.com <http://www.civrac.com/> New Claret LLP 07866 591675

Ch. Tour St. Vincent - 2005 - Médoc - 16.5 - Drink 2012-22
Very ornate fruit, but not too showy ? ripe, earthy and a palatable funkiness. The new oak lends a spiced tone, like bouquet garni. Fleshy and sweet on the palate with vibrant blueberry and well-hung gamey flavours. (RH)
£10 Cellar door only +33 556415691