

Wine Chat

WITH OLIVIER DAUGA

BY JENNIFER ROWE

Former rugby player and now international wine consultant, Olivier Dauga can always be found cheerful and upbeat. Similar to his bold fashion style, his consulting methods are unconventional. He doesn't dictate but instead cultivates his clients, and works from their point-of-view so they develop their wine's individual style and taste profile. He also helps them to promote that style by teaching them how to communicate in a competitive market.

Dauga's 25-30 clients are mostly family owned wineries in and around Bordeaux, France. He will tell you he is not an oenologist, but rather a *Faiseur de Vin*, hence the name of his company which translates to The Maker of Wine.

During the fall harvest Dauga traveled by car visiting clients, guiding them in producing the highest quality, drinkable wines possible. France's agriculture ministry reports Bordeaux's 2014 wine grape harvest is estimated at 52% larger than 2013, which were the regions lowest since 1991. As the frenzy of the harvest slowed, Dauga disclosed insight into his work one afternoon in Bordeaux, the central location for Le Faiseur de Vin.

SBJ: What are your thoughts on the 2014 harvest? What are some of the positives and negatives you saw?

OD: It was a year marked by large atmospheric disturbances. The negative – rain and hail in July and cold weather in August; the positive – a fantastic September with record heat and cool nights that allowed the tannins to mature. We began the harvest with beautiful ripe grapes. September saved the 2014 vintage!



SBJ: How do you feel this harvest differs from last year?

OD: The weather was different last year, especially during the month of September it was humid and rainy. Throughout 2013 there was heat and humidity that forced us to rapidly pick the grapes before full maturity.

SBJ: Overall what can consumers expect from the 2014 Bordeaux harvest?

OD: The 2014 wines will offer good value. The wines are being produced from quality fruit, and will offer elegance and finesse.

SBJ: How did you get started in wines?

OD: I fell into it baby! I come from a family of winemakers and I represent the seventh generation. My maternal grandfather owns a property in Véraac in Bordeaux.

SBJ: How long have you been a wine consultant?

OD: After studying oenology and a few years studying in the famous Châteaux in Bordeaux, I decided to become a wine consultant. In 2000 I created my company Le Faiseur de Vin.

SBJ: Is there a particular type of winery, vineyard or winemaker you enjoy working with?

OD: I have no admiration in particular. All the winemakers are admirable. I only have a preference for winemakers from the base without large means [of money] but a full passion for their work.

SBJ: Which grape variety do you enjoy working with most?

OD: Malbec is a very interesting variety. It

is round, supple with spice, peppery, black fruit and fits easily anywhere. Grenache is wonderful but very sensitive. It gives very complex wines with strong tannins but very delicate.

SBJ: Is there a special technique you follow when blending?

OD: It's not a matter of technique, it's mostly a lot of memory and sensitivity to succeed in creating the best possible wine. One of my favorites is Château Les Eyrins 2010 – it's 65% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot and 10% petit verdot. I discovered the magic of blending in Cognac where I used to be a home distiller with the Martell Company before becoming a winemaker. It was also during this time that I discovered how to use my senses (nose and mouth!)

SBJ: Are you embracing technology and its advances in wine production, or do you prefer past methods?

OD: The technical advances are needed. All of our technologies are based on past methods and thanks to technology we have more quality wines that meet consumers' expectations. We must move forward and as we progress show respect to the vines, the winemakers, our standard traditions and our environment.

SBJ: Where would you like to consult next? Country? Area?

OD: In the USA, especially Oregon or New York State, and of course, Australia.

To learn more about Olivier Dauga go to www.olivierdauga.com.