

# A Winemaker's Vintage Bordeaux En Primeur 2013

*Photo and Text by Hubert Li*





*New cellar at Chateau Montrose*

It is no secret that the weather conditions have made 2013 a difficult vintage to produce good wines, and as Mr. Robert Parker will not be tasting the wines until the summer, this is a vintage we have to taste for ourselves to find out where the treasures lie, if any, of course.

The 2013 vintage was a wet one by all account. Rain fell almost non-stop throughout the early part of the growing season and also during harvest. Flowering was uneven and so was the harvesting. Although there was no greenness in the wines, concentration was also lacking, with a few exceptions that I will mention later.

This is a vintage where the winemaker's skill can make a huge difference. Factors such as grape

selection, picking date, picking speed, barrel selection and level of extraction are all critical in achieving the balanced wine.

As with share placements in the stock market, you have to support your broker on some hard to move stocks to be allocated the hard to get ones. Accordingly, we will be buying this vintage to secure our future allocation on harder to get wines. If you want to do the same, buy selectively, and we will guarantee your allocation of the same wine for the 2014 vintage.



*Mr. Paul Pontallier talking us through the 2013 vintage at Chateau Margaux.*

## **The Left Bank**

In general, wines from St.Estephe excelled because they had significantly less rain than the rest of the Left Bank, and therefore more concentration and ripeness in the grapes. Wines from Pauillac, St. Julien and Margaux appellations are pure, fresh but often rather soft and acidic as well. These are clearly made for earlier drinking than the 2012 and 2011 vintages.

In such a difficult vintage, the superior terroirs of the first growths really excel. Chateau Margaux has produced a Grand Vin with 94% cabernet sauvignon, 5% cabernet franc and 1% petit verdot,

and no merlot at all, as even the best plots were not up to standard. Despite having no merlot, the wine still has this finesse and softness.

It is often not easy to assess the quality of Chateau Lafite Rothschild during primeurs, but it is much more expressive this year with blackcurrants, the classic Pauillac spice, good concentration and very refined tannins. After all it is situated right at the border between Pauillac and St.Estephe, so it has also benefited from the more favourable weather conditions.



*Wine tasting at Chateau Lafite Rothschild*

It is a joy to visit our good friend Mr. Herve Berland at Chateau Montrose and at the same time to see their new cellar. The architecture is pretty stunning to say the least, and the wines are surprisingly good too! It is very fine, fruity mid-palate following through to a long aftertaste. This is probably the left bank wine of the vintage!

Chateau Calon Segur has made a masculine wine with predominantly cabernet sauvignon. I would rank it as a close second in St. Estephe. The success seems to apply across the whole appellation and

I have no hesitation to recommend Chateau Lafon Rochet as a value pick this year.

Down in Graves, the quality varies greatly from good to disappointing, with Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte really shining above the rest, both for red and white wine.



*Chateau Figeac - wine of the vintage?*



*Wine tasting at Chateau Angelus*

## The Right Bank

The right bank has suffered from the same weather conditions as the left bank, but maybe to a lesser scale. Some chateaux probably harvested a little too early in fear of rot, and therefore less ripe and fruity. The Denis Durantou has once again delivered a stunning Chateau L'Eglise Clinet that has incredible complexity that no others could achieve. This will be a wine of the vintage for sure, but as the production is 40% down from last year, there will not be enough bottles for everyone.

The biggest surprise of the vintage comes from Chateau Figeac. Wine consultant Mr. Michael

Rolland now advises the blending and improvements are clear. This terrior sits in best part of Saint Emilion and Pomerol border (as per Cheval Blanc) and therefore the potential is huge. We look forward to see this wine to continue to improve in quality in future. Among other properties of the right bank, La Conseillante and Clinet have also produced seductive, fine and balanced wines. For the first time ever, Hosanna will not be produced in 2013 as majority of the crop was not up to standard.



*The wine trade shows interest in tasting the 2013 vintage.*

## **Why Buy 2013 Vintage?**

- If you buy one case of the 2013 vintage, we guarantee you one case allocation at first tranche price for the 2014 vintage, hopefully being a great one!
- Large formats age much more slowly, so they can keep for an extra 10-20 years. If 2013 is a special year for you, I would strongly recommend you to buy them at en primeur and have them bottled as large formats, which can be difficult to find on the market after release.
- It would make sense to buy this vintage if release prices are lowest of all back vintages. This vintage will be favoured by hotels and restaurants for early-drinking, as well as for the China market as demand is always high for the “cheapest” available vintage.

## My Recommendations

On the left bank I would prefer wines from St. Estephe where they had less rain than Pauillac, St. Julien and Margaux appellations, and therefore more concentration. A few wines from Graves are well made too.

On the right bank, L'Eglise Clinet has produced a wine with great complexity that nobody else can match. We also see a comeback from Figeac, a pleasant surprise and great achievement from their winemaking team with Michel Rolland as consultant. Angelus is beautiful but not overly powerful, and Clinet would probably be very good value for money.

Dry whites from graves are very good with excellent freshness, richness and acidity, most notably Pape Clement Blanc and Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc.

From what we understand, this en primeur campaign promises to be a quick one with most chateaux releasing within the month of April. For those who have been following our en primeur offers in the past, we guarantee that our prices will be highly competitive as always!

### The Left Bank

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- Lafite Rothschild, Pauillac
- Calon Segur, Saint Estephe
- Cos d'Estournel, Saint Estephe
- Montrose, Saint Estephe
- Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge, Graves
- Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc, Graves
- Pape Clement Blanc, Graves

### The Right Bank

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- Angelus, Saint Emilion
- Clinet, Pomerol
- Figeac, Saint Emilion
- La Conseillante, Pomerol
- L'Eglise Clinet, Pomerol



美酒窖



HONG KONG  
*Wine Vault*