



Neal Martin's
Wine Journal

wine journal

By Neal Martin – Wine Journal – February, 25th 2014

Pauillac - 2010

There was a stunned silence following a flight of First Growths. It was the kind of silence that falls after witnessing something astonishing. Could this possibly be the greatest young Bordeaux that I have ever tasted, the pinnacle of everything you could wish for? For sure, the bar had been placed extremely high given the context and frankly speaking, I would have felt crushed if they had not delivered anything less than something flirting with perfection. But that is exactly how they performed.

Tasted blind, it was interesting to see Château Mouton-Rothschild attest to the deft hand of winemaker Philippe Dhalluin: a brilliant wine that the Baron himself would have been chuffed about. I just like the way Philippe has just shaved away a little of the ostentation it used to show in the 1990s, counterbalancing its intrinsic showiness with a more class and composure. He should do another victory lap to celebrate the performance of the Le Petit Mouton, its scores out-stripping many of the Grand Cru Classé to the shock of many in the room. The Château Latour did not quite recapture my perfect score from last year - but only by a whisker and this wine *does* tend to close down once in bottle, making it seem more curmudgeonly vis-à-vis its peers. But it will rank as one of the best wines of the modern era. Château Lafite-Rothschild 2010 was just a small step behind those two, but at this ethereal level it makes little difference – you will still adore this wine.

Fortunately, you don't have to re-mortgage your house and sell your beloved pet dog to "Life Sciences" for the privilege of a First Growth. It is a shame that the prohibitive prices means that so few of these bottles will actually be opened and enjoyed for what they are, instead of a symbol of affluence. Instead, why not just buy a bottle of the brilliant Château Batailley, one of the best wines that Philippe Castèja has produced, or the likes of Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Clerc-Milon, Lynch-Bages, Pichon-Baron and Pichon-Lalande. Perhaps the most intriguing wine turned out to be Château Pontet-Canet. Its core of sweetness was quite obvious and distinguished it from its peers. I actually think it's a great wine from Alfred Tesseron and Jean-Michel Comme, but its opulence was not to everyone's taste. These are estates that have been built upon Cabernet Sauvignon since their formation, Cabernet that is pure, regal, structured, mineral-laden and multi-dimensional. The vintage presented the perfect conditions for Cabernet Sauvignon and so it is no surprise that Pauillac flourished.

The question is: are you prepared to shell out for them when older vintages remain freely available on the market?



2010 Château Grand Puy Lacoste 96

Tasted blind at the Southwold Bordeaux 2010 tasting. There is a strong marine influence on the Grand Puy Lacoste 2010: seaweed and brine infused into the black fruit. It is very well defined and focused, building in intensity in the glass. The palate is silky smooth on the entry - very plush and sensual - with a cashmere texture that indicates some beautifully integrated creamy oak. It fans out wonderfully towards the finish, perhaps a little more modern in style than its peers but still beautifully crafted. Tasted January 2014.