

2014 Bordeaux *En Primeur*, © Linden Wilkie

I was in Bordeaux in late March / early April 2015 tasting the 2014 vintage wines from barrel. Here is my report...



The city of Bordeaux at the end of my trip when the weather finally broke. Would the trade have rated the wines a touch higher in this glorious sunshine, rather than the rain and gloom that marked our week? I sometimes wonder.

In Brief – What do I need to know?

2014 wines were of mixed quality. It is not an outstanding vintage like 2010, 2009, 2005, or 2000. Quality is uneven – like 2006, 2004, 2003 and 2001. Outstanding wines worth your attention have been produced. But you have to pick and choose.

A poor summer produced a vintage of unlikely potential, but a long fine autumn produced full phenolic ripeness at some, but not all estates.

The wines are generally, fine, elegant, very fresh in style, moderate in weight (no excess alcohol or glycerin-texture), and juicy-berryish in expression. They are, in a way, very classically 'Bordeaux'.

Whites are very good, and the northern Médoc (St.-Estèphe and Pauillac) fared better than further south.

Prices may not be keen enough to warrant *en primeur* (futures) buying this year. Look carefully at what comparable vintages for a wine you like are selling for in the secondary market before buying. We will watch closely, and if we think the price makes sense and we like the wine we will recommend it when it is offered. Do get in touch to discuss with us what you might like to buy.

Recommendations without reservation

These are the wines that transcend considerations of relative price, and relative merits of the vintage, and simply deserve to be in your cellar. They are, in other words, my absolute picks:

2014 Vieux Château Certan, 96-98

2014 Château Haut-Brion Blanc, 96-98

2014 Château Latour, 96-98 (though this will not be sold *en primeur*)

2014 Pavillon Blanc de Château Margaux, 95-97

2014 Château Lafite-Rothschild, 95-97

2014 Château Montrose, 95-97

Potential Great Values

Here I take price into consideration. At the time of writing, prices for 2014s are only just starting to trickle through, so here I am not making a fine-tuned judgement. Rather, I am listing wines here that really performed superbly well in the vintage, are not likely to be eye-wateringly expensive. In some instances, ironically, it doesn't make sense to buy them *en primeur*, because the cost of storage (in Hong Kong at least) is too high (more on that subject below). In those cases, it may be better to wait a few years, and pay a higher price when they are ready, or close to ready to drink. In other words, I'm recommending you make a note.

2014 Le Clarté de Haut-Brion, 91-93

2014 Château Brane-Cantenac, 91-93

2014 Pavillon Blanc de Château Margaux, 95-97

2014 Alter Ego de Château Palmer, 91-93

2014 Château Pieurée-Lichine, 91-93

2014 Château Clerc Milon, 92-94

2014 Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste, 92-94

2014 Les Pagodes de Cos, 91-93

2014 Château Tronquoy-Lalande, 90-92

2014 Observations

I had the pleasure to spend a few days in Bordeaux, visiting châteaux, as well as the UGC tastings. I tasted about 125 wines – far from comprehensive (I missed Sauternes, most of Pessac-Léognan / Graves, and St.-Emilion, as well as some key estates I would dearly have loved to visit – Ch. Léoville-Las Cases, Haut-Bailly, Pape Clément, Ausone, Lafleur and Petrus were all missed), but enough, I think to get a good sense of the vintage. I spent time too with representatives and owners of châteaux, as well as the dozens of other members of the press and trade you bump into along the way while driving around. I'm grateful to Jay Ginsberg for letting me cut in on two key days he had organized, and to *négociants* Emmanuele Coiffe and Tugdual Iquel for hosting me in the mad rush from château to château.



Left to Right: Finding a chateau can be very difficult – no street address, and often no sign. Here is the only mention of Château L'Eglise-Clinet, right at the chateau, hidden by a hedge and last refreshed it would seem sometime around the time I was born; window at Château Ponet-Canet; scary glass stairs at the winery of Château Pichon-Lalande.

The Bordelais are very good at presenting a positive spin on a vintage. Why wouldn't they be? The key idea presented was that this was a potentially very poor vintage (lackluster summer) saved by a beautiful autumn. Generally speaking this was true it seems. A majority of the wines I tasted had achieved phenolic ripeness – absolutely essential to the chance for any real sense of balance between sweet and savoury elements when the wine becomes ready to drink. (A significant minority of wines tasted did not achieve this ripeness, and I'll come to that shortly). If you are looking for wines with bold rich flavours, abundant mid-palate glycerin / fat, and just bursting with exuberant opulent fruit, you will not find it. The closest thing I found to an exception to that rule was St.-Estèphe, the star appellation in 2014. On the other hand, if you are looking for wines that emphasize qualities where Bordeaux can really, truly, shine and other warmer regions struggle, then 2014 is a great year in which to pick and choose. Many châteaux pointed to the long hang time (125 days in some cases between flowering and harvest), complex phenolic development, elegance, and moderate alcohol.



Top: winery at Château Pichon Longueville Baron – early morning starts on the road; below, one of the slopes at Château Lafite-Rothschild – grey soil and grey skies made it feel like we had arrived on the moon.

I count myself as being pre-disposed to that style. It's what first attracted me to Bordeaux wines.

For reds then, this is a connoisseurs' vintage. The best wines will show great complexity, detail, freshness and precision, pleasing the senses while never overwhelming them with excess richness and alcohol. It appeals in a way that the best of 2008, 2004, and 2001 did, and perhaps 1988, 1985, 1978, 1966, and 1955 before that – though those wines were made with a different stamp to these. Intrinsic freshness is better preserved today, yields are in check, and tannin extraction is better managed, amongst other considerations.

The style? In a word: juicy. Over and over again I wrote about very fresh berry aromas and flavours, detailed, with super freshness of acidity. Fruitiness and elegance is there, and the best wines have great layering, detail and complexity. Words virtually absent from my notes are: glycerin, fat, exuberance, etc. No blockbusters, though one of two in St.-Estèphe come closest.

But be careful, it is a vintage for picking and choosing. Some wines were not sufficiently ripe to warrant your attention at this stage. Some will turn out excessively green smelling and tasting when mature in bottle, and others will sit right on the cusp. 2014s have more concentration and are better made than 1978s, but that is the vintage I think of most historically. I like the best of the '78s (though many have been declining for a long time now). It was another of those years pulled out of a hat at the last minute – a poor summer saved by a very fine autumn.

For whites, I think I can be less equivocal. I really wish, in hindsight, that I'd tasted more whites, because without exception every white I tasted was somewhere between very good and flat out fantastic. The superstar whites are made in small quantities, so that should probably be a focus for 2014 buying.

If you are looking for 'knock out' reds like we saw in 2010, 2009 and 2005, mostly you won't find them. 2014 is not that vintage. But there is much to like, and if you like the style I described (as I do) then take a closer look...



Clockwise from top left: tasting at Château Lafite-Rothschild; tasting at Château Pichon Longueville Baron; gold cart transfer at Château Mouton-Rothschild, and the tasting at Mouton.

The rise of second wines – take note

In the last few years if you were driving around Bordeaux looking for landmarks to guide you as the rental car satnav told you once again to drive – seemingly – between two rows of vines and then “make a legal u-turn where possible”, the most notable thing you would see peering toward the horizons was cranes. Bordeaux has become a giant building site, as many châteaux have sought to invest during a decade that saw soaring Bordeaux prices. Châteaux visits have become as much a tour of contemporary architecture as of sober 19th and 18th century masonry. Some of it is hidden, Bond villain-style, beneath the colonnades and porticos, and in other cases it stands proud and juxtaposed, like the recent additions to the Louvre.

But this is only the most obvious of recent investments. At the top estates, the most tangible change (after improved viticulture, grape sorting, and winemaking) has been the introduction of a distinct two-tier label system for the wine.

While the first growths – and Léoville-Las-Cases – have had proper second tier wines for many decades, this was the exception to the rule. Most estates made one wine – the so-called *Grand Vin* – and if they made a second wine labeled by the estate (rather than sold off to the trade anonymously), it was 10% or so of the crop, depending on the vintage – a label into which to tip below par wine.

Who today recalls La Réserve du Général from Château Palmer? Anyone? Why would you? And yet, I suspect that quite a few drinkers of fine Bordeaux have heard of Alter Ego de Palmer. In marketing speak, it has been ‘re-positioned’, and the name is a clever one. It implies ‘another face’ of Palmer, an alternative expression of the *terroir*, rather than a bargain also-ran bottling; a second *label* you will hear, not a second *wine*.



The tasting portfolio at Clarence Dillon – Château Haut-Brion; Château La Mission Haut-Brion, Château Quintus, including reds, whites, and second wines.

The strategy is no different to the way the luxury fashion industry positions its different collections: think Giorgio Armani, Emporio Armani, Collezioni Armani, etc. I am perhaps stretching the point, but it is a useful analogy to understanding what is going on.

Take Château Pichon Longueville Baron, for example. It used to make a small amount of a second wine called Les Tourelles de Longueville. It still does. But today, the *grand vin* is made solely from the best *terroir* they have. That means that certain parcels only go into Les Tourelles, and never the *grand vin* even though they are entitled to. They have now introduced another ‘second label’ called Les Griffons de Pichon Baron, selected from *terroir* at the estate that is very close to the *terroir* of the *grand vin* – deep gravels. All three wines – Pichon, Tourelles, and Griffons – come from vineyards that are entitled to, and used to make up, Pauillac 2nd growth status Château Pichon Longueville Baron.

All this is to say that second wines, ahem, second *labels*, make up a big percentage – perhaps half – of the wine production in the top echelons of Bordeaux. As quality issues have improved overall, that means two things: first, the potential quality of the *grands vins* (top labels) of quality-minded estates has never been better. Wine is made in the vineyard, it is true – it is an agricultural product after all – but this dramatically increased level of selection means that vintage-for-vintage, like-for-like, the *potential* quality of these top wines has never been higher. It makes a difference, especially in less than stellar vintages. Secondly, second labels are now treated very seriously by the top estates, and make up so much of the wine. Have you tried them?

It struck me especially on this Bordeaux trip, just how many wines I really liked that were second labels. On many occasions, stylistically, they are the kind of Bordeaux I would prefer to drink – a bit lighter, brighter, and more refreshing, and with aromatics that come singing early – no need to stare at a wall of wooden boxes and wish you had something to drink today.

Disclosure, and other caveats

While on this trip, I was invited to, and accepted hospitality – I stayed two nights at Château Pichon Longueville Baron, was hosted to dinner there one night, I also had dinner at Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste, and lunch at Château Pontet-Canet. I’m grateful to those who provided this hospitality – it not only made the trip far more pleasurable, it also enabled me to learn more about Bordeaux. I did not receive any gifts, payments, or inducements of any kind. All my tasting notes below are my honest assessments of the wines I tasted in the glass.

On that subject, you should know something else quite important about tasting *en primeur*. For a start, it is quite difficult. The wines don’t taste quite as settled and sorted as they do when they have had time in the bottle. Related to that, the wine we taste is a made up blend prepared by the châteaux for wine professionals to taste. At the present time, the 2014 wines are all in barrel. Some barrels are new, some are old, they contain wines from different plots and vineyards, and different grape varieties. So what do we actually taste when we say “tasted from barrel”? We taste a blend made by the château in question. It is up to the château to prepare what they might consider a “representative sample”. For example, a proportionate blend from different plots, grape varieties, and old and new oak barrels. In other words, a wine that would be similar to the final blend made for bottling. Some château interpret these things differently – for example, very literally, or for example, by *interpretation*. That might mean blending differently at different points in time. It is potentially controversial.

Related to that point, a LOT happens to the wine between now and when YOU get to taste it. Some wines that show awkwardly may blossom in that time, some wines are handled better than others. We can only assess what we taste today. It's one reason why traditionally critics have given score ranges rather than scores (as I have done below).

That said, reputations are at stake, and very few châteaux are sloppy in the handling of wines, and any châteaux systematically trying to deceive merchants and critics by presenting 'super' samples would make themselves the subject of scandal in the wine media. Generally, in other words, it works.

Think of all the reports you read on these wines then as the earliest possible 'snapshot' of the wine. We are tasting the 'infant' wine, trying to predict the 'adult' version we will ultimately drink.



Tasting at Château Latour, tasting at Château Ducru-Beaucaillou

***En Primeur*, or wait?**

That is why you really have two questions – what to buy, and when. Traditionally, the *en primeur* system was a way of evening out financial risks and rewards. Châteaux sell to negociants, negociants sell to all their domestic and international markets, and in those markets the merchants sell to customers. The châteaux, of course, want the best price they can get (away with), but also need to free up working capital by selling the wine. Ultimately the customer takes on some of the risk and provides capital back to châteaux by buying the wine while it is still in barrel. The customer takes the risk that the wine will turn out to be of the quality they expect, and paying so early, deserves a very incentivizing price to do so.

There has been a feeling – rightly in my view – that the system has broken down because that compact has been broken by greedy pricing *en primeur*. In many instances recently we have seen prices go *down* after the wine is in the market in bottle. The customer has lost out. That is, in part, because of a lot of speculative buying by customers. The balance between customers buying for future consumption and customers buying for future profits shifted dramatically toward the latter in the past decade.

So the golden question is now this: should I buy 2014s *en primeur*, or wait until they are in bottle in the market (2016-2018), or much much later when the wines are mature and ready to drink.

Generally Bordeaux wines are made in good quantities, and – especially if you are a little patient – you can find later what you want, even many years later when the wines are ready to drink. Generally, of course, at that time the wines are more expensive.

From a financial point of view, the price for wine *en primeur* should seem like a very good deal compared to vintages of similar quality that are already in bottle on the market. If not, unless you are speculating (and 2014 is not that sort of vintage), then wait.

But there are four others reasons to buy *en primeur*, that I can think of for the 2014s:

1. You want formats other than 750ml bottles. It's great to have half bottles, magnums, and larger formats in the cellar. Buying *en primeur*, you can specify the format you want in many instances.
2. The wine is in low production volumes.
3. You have very high standards for provenance: buying *en primeur* ensures you are getting authentic wine, stored in cellar conditions of your choosing. Nothing beats the assurance of having been in control of this from the start.
4. It's actually a very good time to work out what you want from a given vintage – all the critic's reports come out, your head is filled with information on the vintage, and all the offers come out to compare. Your mind is focused, you buy the wines, and can then forget about them. A lot of people buy this way, and after a few years, start to be able to draw down from a very good cellar.

Pomerol

A bit patchy on the whole. This is the appellation where I encountered the most problems with greenness. But as with any commune, there are exceptions. Indeed, Vieux Châteaux Certan was my wine of the vintage. Cellar-worthy wines with clear expression of terroir were made at Certan de May, Clinet, La Conseillante, L'Évangile and Trotanoy.

2014 Château Beauregard

Semi-clear; attractive fine berry nose, ripe with a touch of florals and a touch of wet earth; juicy, intense and direct on the palate, good fruit, quite tannic. Attractive if not especially complex.

89-91

2014 Château Le Bon Pasteur

Semi-clear; fruit, fragrant nose, touch of spice; lovely purity of fruit, tannins are fine and ripe but intensely grippy disrupting the sense of flow. Very clean, immaculate and intense.

89-91+

2014 Château Bourgneuf

Semi-clear, crimson rim; dark fruit on the nose, a touch floral, a sweet charred/smoky note in the background; some nice dark fruit, fresh acidity, lacks some fruit generosity, the tannins being a touch coarse and grippy. The wine remains transparent however. Decent.

87-89

2014 Château La Cabanne

Semi-clear; fragrant ripe fruit nose; succulent, intense berry fruit, a touch of vanilla, long and lively and very good acidity, good intensity. Very nice wine. Undoubtedly a bargain for this quality.

90-92

2014 Château Certan de May

Semi-clear; lovely perfume, ripe fruit, spice – clearly some extra oomph; lovely fruit and freshness with a gently caressing ripe texture, this seems to have captured the vintage's positives – good tension, freshness, juiciness – but also with sufficient plumpness and ripeness. Nice complexity. Fine tannins and good flow and balance. This is very good, one of my Pomerol picks.

92-94

2014 Château Chenade

Denis Durantou (of Ch. L'Eglise-Clinet) portfolio

Lalande de Pomerol, 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc

Juicy and delicious with a gently herbal note. Soft and delicious.

88-90

2014 Château Clinet

90% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Cabernet Franc

Semi-opaque; ripe fruit with some floral lift; ripe, juicy, mulberry fruit, red cherry, a touch of spice, and also a hint of peppery coolness in the background on the nose; lovely fruit, and nice elegance on the palate, raspberries and cherries, fine juicy-grainy tannins with a morish sapid texture and juicy fruitiness. Long finish. Very nice.

92-94

2014 Château La Conseillante

78% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc

Fine, semi-clear; lovely floral nose, very fresh and expressive; very fine, juicy, elegant weight, nice inner-mouth aromatics, there is some grip, but the tannins are ripe, sapid, and there is good complexity. A very fine, classical La Conseillante. Recommended.

93-95

2014 Duo de Conseillante

90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

2nd wine of Château La Conseillante. 400 cases.

Fine, clear ruby, crimson edge; lovely nose, fresh, floral, expressive; juicy, fresh, light but lovely flavor, finely and gently grippy texture. Very transparent, refined and elegant 2nd wine.

89-91

2014 Château La Croix de Gay

Deep, sweet candied fruit nose; there is an odd plastic note in the flavor, and a hint of grubbiness. Nice juicy fruit. Hard to judge.

86-88?

2014 Château Les Cruzelles

Denis Durantou (of Ch. L'Eglise-Clinet) portfolio

Lalande de Pomerol. 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

Semi-clear; cool, fresh nose, touch herbal; focused, ripe fruit, creamy middle, sticky ripe tannins, very nice fruit expression, very grippy tannin.

89-91

2014 Château L'Eglise-Clinet

Denis Durantou (of Ch. L'Eglise-Clinet) portfolio

90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

Semi-clear; ripe, but rather mute right now on the nose, a touch of vanilla oak to the fore; very good, dark cherry and plum fruit, concentrated, fine, some nice tension, ample fruit, firm, grippy, highly structured, a touch of cocoa in the finish. The acidity keeps it buoyant. All the right material and intensity and ripeness, my reservation is a question mark over the level of extraction – it might be just a touch too much.

91-93?

2014 La Petite Eglise

Second wine of Ch. L'Eglise-Clinet. 100% Merlot

Fine, semi-clear; cool, gently herbal nose; lovely freshness and savouriness, some minerality. Quite long, very nice.

89-91

2014 Château L'Evangile

Semi-opaque; fragrant, fresh and floral on the nose – really nicely aromatic and detailed; ripe, layered texture, quite dark fruit, silky mouthfeel – very fine tannin and fresh juicy acidity. This is wonderfully supple. Dark cherry with nice freshness. Very nice – a real success for L'Evangile.

93-95

2014 Château La Fleur-Pétrus

Semi-clear; quite a cool juicy-beetrooty nose; good fruit amplitude and layering in the texture, cool, with beetroot notes, mulberry flavor, tannins and acidity are a touch pinched and cool on the finish, fruit flows nicely through to a juicy finish. Decent, but the green edge problematic.

88-90?

2014 Château Gazin

Semi-opaque; a touch of reduction mars the nose today; dark fruit on the palate, quite tannic, very grippy, dark plum, cherry fruit. A bit over-extracted perhaps? In any case, will need cellaring.

88-90?

2014 Château La Grave

Semi-clear; some fragrant raspberry, mulberry, also capsicum, mineral, earth and flowers – cool and complex on the nose; nice sweetness of juicy fresh berry fruit, flowers in the mid-palate, real freshness in the acidity, grippy fruit tannins. Just-ripe. Quite a nice long finish. The slight green edge will put some off.

87-89

2014 Château Hosanna

Semi-clear; sweet and savoury nose, fresh, herbal; plump dark fruit, fresh acidity, a hint of cool capsicum and lefty greenness, but the tannins taste and feel phenolically just-ripe. More ample in the mid-palate fruit than some of the others at the Moueix tasting, but the coolness is there.

88-90

2014 Château Lafleur-Gazin

Semi-opaque, vibrant crimson rim; distinctly capsicum predominant on the nose, herbal, with red and black fruit, some perfume in the background; attractive bright berry fruit

on the palate, but also a distinct fragrance of capsicum and celery. Finishes a touch dry, but not over-extracted. I find the green edge off-putting.

84-86

2014 Château Latour à Pomerol

Semi-clear; cool crunchy nose, capsicum, fragrant fruit, fresh, a touch of licorice; supple fruit, mouthfilling, cool expression, fresh acidity, a touch of capsicum, touch of licorice, fine fruit-covered tannins. Nice.

90-92

2014 Château Petit Village

Semi-clear; a plummy sweet nose, immediately perfumed; this is well made, showing attractive plummy/cherry fruit, a fine, elegant style, tight structure. Good.

90-92

2014 Le Jardin de Petit Village

2nd wine of Ch Petit Village

Fresh, slightly leafy merlot nose; firm, ripe, somewhat monolithic palate, some fragrance on the finish.

87-89

2014 Château Plince

Semi-clear; quite a floral, expressive nose, attractive and perfumed; red and black fruit on the palate, a touch of licorice, spice, juicy, almost crunchy acidity. Just-ripe – perhaps just a touch underripe in the bitter-edged tannins. I would wait to see this in bottle a couple of years before buying.

87-89?

2014 Château La Pointe

Deep, glossy appearance; candied dark berries; plush, ripe dark berry fruit, nice depth, fairly straightforward appealing flavor. Oaky.

88-90

2014 Château Trotanoy

Semi-clear; lovely fine nose, subtle and reserved, dark fruit, plums, nice perfume and complexity; classic Trotanoy – tightly-wound, lotso f energy, fine, elegant, palate-coating fruit, fine acidity, velvet texture, juicy sapid tannins, lots of grip here, but fine-textured and the wine does not shut down along the palate. Will drink well in 10+ years.

92-94

2014 Vieux Château Certan

80% Merlot, 19% Cabernet Franc, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon

Fine, semi-clear; lovely fragrance, perfumed and beguiling, Musigny-like; succulent, pure, very expressive, aromatic, buoyant and transparent, very long and fine, supremely elegant. A total joy to taste. Completely seamless. My wine of the vintage, as it turned out.

96-98

2014 Château Les Vieux Ormes

Lalande de Pomerol

Fine, semi-clear; attractive fresh plumd on the nose, a touch of complexity showing, a hint of spice; fresh fruit, ripe, fine abundant grippy tannins. Texture and flavor remind me of Pommard (clay-rich soils). Nice freshness and energy on the finish. Age 5+ years.

89-91

St.-Emilion

I didn't really taste enough here to comment on the commune. I liked Ch. Quintus, which is part of the Clarence Dillon (Haut-Brion) stable. I was underwhelmed by Cheval Blanc, though I really liked their second wine this year. Probably the best value here will be Ch. Belair-Monange, especially if you are a fan of classic Magdeleine.

2014 Château Belair-Monange

St.-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé

Semi-clear; fine, perfumed nose, gently fruity, understated; lovely airy, pretty expression, perfumed, reminds me of classic Magdeleine, fine-boned structure, oak distinguishable in the aromatics on the finish. Attractive overall, for mid+ term ageing.

91-93

2014 Château Cheval Blanc

St.-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé A

55% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Franc

Semi-clear, crimson rim; very fine nose, darker fruit, quite reserved; fine structure, tannins are slightly dry though, very nice fruit. Will need time. Showing awkwardly, I'm not sure about the flow. This year I'd buy the Petit Cheval and just wait and see on this wine.

92-94?

2014 Petit Cheval

2nd wine of Château Cheval Blanc, St.-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé A

52% Merlot, 48% Cabernet Franc

Semi-clear; nice and floral and fresh on the nose – lovely expression; attractive flavor, hints of spice and florals, nice sapid texture, good fruit, supple extract over fine, light tannins. Really lovely Petit Cheval.

91-93

2014 Château Puy-Blanquet

St.-Emilion Grand Cru

Semi-clear, crimson rim; fresh juicy lifted nose, confit raspberries and black berries, a very fruity, expressive aroma, a touch floral; very juicy, almost 'crunchy' fruit, supple tannin, a touch 'pinched'.

87-89

2014 Château Quintus

St.-Emilion Grand Cru

I remember with fondness drinking Château Tertre Daugay, which was always an old fashioned (in a good way), inexpensive St.-Emilion grand cru that was pretty reliable, if not ever remarkable. It held up well to cellaring though, with vintages tasted back to the '60s almost always being at least 'good'. Domaine Clarence Dillon – owners of Châteaux Haut-Brion and La Mission Haut-Brion acquired it in 2011 and renamed it Château Quintus (referring to it being their fifth property in the portfolio). As one would expect, enormous efforts have been made since acquisition, and it was really gratifying to taste this sample of '14 – the best Quintus yet, and the best wine I have tasted from this property stretching back decades.

Semi-clear with a very crimson rim; lovely nose, aromatic – showing in particular the lifted scent of Cabernet Franc (31% of the blend with Merlot), clearly ripe, but not

overripe, very expressive, some licorice, plum, a hint of pepper coolness – lovely nose; ripe, fairly intense plummy fruit, a touch of spice, nicely juicy, creamy, and mouthcoating, fine grippy but well buffered tannins. Long finish. Very good.
92-94+

2014 Le Dragon de Quintus

Second wine of Château Quintus, St.-Emilion Grand Cru

77% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Franc

Semi-clear; fairly closed on the nose; ripe, supple fruit, with fresh acidity, plummy flavor, flows nicely, touch of black fruit and licorice on supple finish. Nice, if lacking a little in spark.

87-89.

2014 Château Quinault L'Enclos

St.-Emilion Grand Cru. Part of Ch. Cheval Blanc stable.

Semi-clear, crimson rim; fresh and fragrant, nice perfume, quite fruity; nice fruit on the palate, ripe, succulent, fresh and elegant, good transparency, fresh plummy flavor. Good.
89-91

2014 Château Saintayme

Denis Durantou (of Ch. L'Eglise-Clinet) portfolio

St.-Emilion Grand Cru, 100% Merlot

Perfumed and expressive; ripe, fine-textured, quite dark fruit, slightly spocy. Delicious.
90-92

2014 Château La Serre

St.-Emilion Grand Cru Classé

Semi-clear; ripe fruit, confit berries; attractive fruit on the palate, elegant style, fresh acidity, low key, fine tannin. Nice wine, no fireworks, just svelte finely textured St.-Emilion. Good.

90-92

Péssac-Léognan

Largely missing from my report as you can see. I look forward to tasting the key wines later in the year. Given the quality of the Clarence Dillon estate whites I would be especially intrigued to taste Dom. de Chevalier Blanc.

2014 Château La Mission Haut-Brion

Pessac-Léognan Cru Classé

54% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Franc, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon

Semi-clear; super freshness greets the nose, and also a coolness of expression, a touch of mint, spice; moderate concentration, nice fruit, expressed with typical LMHB reserve, dark fruit, freshness, some buoyancy in the mid-palate, quite present tannins on the finish, nicely coated. Overall though there is a distinct coolness of expression – not overt unripeness, but this is right on the cusp. I find this wine attractive in its refined coolness, but it will not be to everyone's taste. This vintage seems to have played more to its stablemate neighbour at Haut-Brion.

90-92

2014 La Chapelle de La Mission Haut-Brion

Second wine of Château La Mission Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan Cru Classé

45% Merlot, 31% Cabernet Franc, 24% Cabernet Sauvignon

Semi-clear; quite a fresh lifted nose, quite floral and very pretty; lovely, gentle, caressing elegant stylish wine, plummy, lightly creamy, nice fresh acidity, fine tannin. This is a very good example of this 2nd wine. Recommended.
90-92

2014 Château Haut-Brion

Pessac-Léognan (1er Grand Cru Classé)

50% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Franc, 39% Cabernet Sauvignon

Semi-clear; perfumed, fresh aroma, a pretty, perfectly ripe nose – the Cabernets offering very lovely, detailed perfume – its as if the Franc is to the fore stylistically; this is really special in taste and texture. Sitting squarely between the Médoc and the Right Bank in blend and location, this year it seems to be pointed to the Right Bank – there is energy and flow here, with juicy acidity combining with succulent mineral-edged tannins in a way that makes me think of limestome more than gravels. There is a lovely inner-mouth fragrance and liveliness. The Haut-Brion elegance and refinement is there, but the aromatics are particularly special and individual this year. An Haut-Brion for Haut-Brion connoisseurs this year.

94-96

2014 Le Clarence de Haut-Brion

Second wine of Château Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan (1er Grand Cru Classé)

Fine, semi-clear; fresh, youthful, floral ‘soapy’ nose; elegant and stylish on the palate, fresh acidity, light intensity of fruit – this comes across somewhat angular in this sample. There is a hint of celery-like coolness of fruit, but no aggression or overt greenness or harshness – just a hint of bitterness in the gently grippy tannins and flavor on the finish. Good, but modest, perhaps not a choice vintage for this label, unlike the *grand vin*.

87-89

2014 Le Clarté de Haut-Brion

Second white wine of Château Haut-Brion and La Mission Haut-Brion

66% Sauvignon Blanc, 34% Semillon

Fine green-gold; lovely nose – complex and very fresh, layers of juicy capsicum coolness, passionfruit, white flowers and fresh-cut peach; round in texture on the palate on attack and through to the mid-palate, with citrus, passionfruit and a touch of capsicum, a hint of cream there too buffering the mid-palate texture, very fine extract, then it tightens up on the mineral finish which is such a signature at this estate. This is simply superb quality for a 2nd label levels. Very expressive, and the roundness will make it a lovely earlier drinking Clarté. Recommended.

91-93

2014 Château La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc

Formerly Ch. Laville Haut-Brion.

28% Sauvignon Blanc, 72% Semillon

Fuller green-gold; lovely nose, delicate and pure in expression, low key, the Sauvignon is more background seasoning here in the aromatics – this is very Semillon on the nose, the expression is very very fine; finely balanced on the plate, there is a nicely intense core of juicy fruit- melon, citrus, very fine phenolic grip, minerality, and a lovely fine aromatic finish. This is right in the classic mould of Laville/LMHBB – true to type. It is supple enough perhaps to begin drinking around 4-5 years, but so perfectly balanced and intense to be a keeper. Definitely a wine for enthusiasts of classic Laville/LMHBB.

93-95

2014 Château Haut-Brion Blanc

32% Sauvignon Blanc, 68% Semillon

Green-gold; fine nose, very fresh and meadow nose, florals, touch of spice, but coolness is the signature – the hints of passionfruit and wildness are there with prompting but this is not one of those big exuberant vintages for HBB; very refined texture, creamy and flavourful in the attack, and then layers down to a very juicy succulent acidity and a very refreshing impression. It is just delicious now in this infant state, in perfect balance, and the finish fans out with satisfying complexity. You could enjoy this right on release, and that's exactly what I would do – sacrifice a bottle right away, and then squirrel the rest away.... Completely seamless texture, classic within the cooler expression HBBs like 2007 and 2004 (amongst my favourites). Very very long finish – so full of energy.

Outstanding.

96-98

Margaux

Overall, very mixed, and a bit disappointing. Plenty of very decent wines, but nothing that grabbed me. The run away exception is Pavillon Blanc, the best of this label I have ever tasted, and one, I think, to try to snap up if they don't go silly on the price.

2014 Château Angludet

Semi-opaque; attractive fruit with a biscuit-oak note on the nose; round, supple, fruity, dark berry flavor, fairly straightforward, good with a fragrant finish.

90-92

2014 Château Brane-Cantenac

Semi-opaque; fresh, lively, fruity nose; very good fruit on the palate, fine textured ripe tannins, well covered. Very good.

91-93

2014 Château Cantenac-Brown

Deep, semi-opaque; nose a little leesy, slightly toasty, fresh fruit; fairly rich, dark fruit extract, coca note, good length, focused and supple. Nice.

89-91

2014 Château Dauzac

Deep, semi-opaque; dense on nose, closed, sweet leather note; good fruit and perfume on the plate, slightly herbal complexity of flavor, a bit extracted. A hearty, somewhat rustic Margaux, good in its way.

88-90

2014 Château Desmirail

Semi-opaque; open, fragrant, leather, dark berry, a touch of perfume; made in a nicely elegant way, not especially exciting flavours, but good fruit and a supple texture. Good+

89-91

2014 Château Ferrière

Semi-opaque; quite an attractive nose, Margaux perfume, fresh berries and violets on the nose; mezzo soprano expression, violets, some red fruit including red currant – summer pudding like which really works with its lively acidity and freshness, quite attractive in its way. Just ripe. Mid term cellaring. This won't be everyone's cup of tea, but it really works for me.

90-92

2014 Château Giscours

Semi-clear; very berryish fresh ripe nose, violets, lovely aroma; supple, juicy, good fruit, this is very attractive.

91-93

2014 Château Kirwan

Semi-opaque; dark ripe currant nose; juicy dark currant fruit, good layered here, a good example of the deeper, darker, baritone end of the spectrum. Fairly rich, fleshy, but firm. It will need time to soften. I'm left just wishing for a little more charm and flavor nuance, but there is certainly solid quality here.

90-92

2014 Château Labégorce

Semi-opaque; dark ripe fruit, reticent nose; dark fruit with an overtly toasty oak component; superficial flavor though there is some concentration of fruit. Finishes a bit oaky and dry, lacking both length and charm.

85-87

2014 Château Lascombes

Semi-opaque+: open, fragrant summer pudding, berry nose; plushly fruited, berry-filled palate, fleshy and pleasurable. There is sufficient acidity and savoury elements to keep it lively and morish. A very good 'gourmand' style.

90-92

2014 Château Malescot Saint-Exupéry

Semi-opaque; ripe sweet berry nose; palate awkward, extracted and quite tannic for moderate, somewhat dull fruit. Okay, but so much competition a step up.

86-88

2014 Château Margaux

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot

Semi-clear; very beautiful nose – perfume, violets, some coolness; very fine-structured, juicy, elegant yet concentrated, fine tannins. Classic Margaux.

92-94

2014 Pavillon Rouge de Château Margaux

2nd red wine of Château Margaux. 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 1% Petit Verdot

Fragrant, some coolness on the nose; juicy, cool expression, just-ripe, delicious, just a bit of coarseness noted in the tannins, all well-covered by precious and delicious fruit, a hint of vanilla. Lovely freshness. For earlier drinking.

90-92

2014 Pavillon Blanc de Château Margaux

White wine of Château Margaux, 100% Sauvignon Blanc

Green gold; absolutely gorgeous nose – floral, fresh cuty white peaches, spice – gorgeous; really juicy on the palate, very intense flavor, apricot, passionfruit, cream, intense, zingy and long. Powerful without any heaviness, its sheer juiciness and tangy flavor make it a complete delight. The best Pavillon Blanc I've ever tasted and a wine to buy in 2014, and who might have guessed that this red wine district's top wine for '14 would be a white!?

95-97

2014 Château Marquis de Terme

Quite opaque and inky; dense, sweet, closed on the nose; chewy, decent ripeness, no charm, dull. Fruit is ripe, but too thick and tannic.

85-87

2014 Château Monbrison

Fresh, clear; light berryish nose, simple expression of attractive fruit; bright, fresh, juicy, light extraction, supple texture. A modest sort of wine but nicely made for easy drinking. I much prefer this to the inky ugly over-extracted examples made with similar quality of fruit. Look out for this chateau on restaurant lists – it is often very charming.

87-89

2014 Château Palmer

Fine, semi-opaque; fresh, ripe, detailed nose, opulent and rich; lovely fruit, rich, concentrated, seamless, fine and long. There is intensity here. Will be a long-lived Palmer.

93-95+

2014 Alter Ego de Château Palmer

Semi-clear, crimson rim; fragrant nose, a really lovely, detailed and very clear and expressive nose, fruity and floral; fine, lovely fruit, a touch exotic and spicy, fresh fruit and fine acidity, very fine mouthfeel and a long aromatic finish. There is a hint of coolness in part of the tannin, that may become more prominent with ageing, but this is an attractive Palmer wine.

91-93

2014 Château Pieurée-Lichine

Semi-clear; lovely fresh fragrant berryish nose, lifted and perfumed, quite pure; fresh, fragrant, lovely berries and flowers – perfumed on the palate. This typifies the ideal of Margaux elegance and expression. Probably very good value for money. Recommended

91-93

2014 Château Rauzan-Gassies

Semi-opaque; fragrant, fairly attractive nose; some nice fruit, supple, mid-weight, good fragrance, well made.

90-92

2014 Château Rauzan-Ségla

Semi-opaque; nice perfume, fresh berries – fragrant nose; fresh berries, elegance on the palate, an assured ripe texture, lovely fruit and mouthfeel, fragrant. Very good.

92-94

2014 Château Siran

Semi-opaque; slightly dense dark currant nose; good fruit, but both pinched by tart acidity and pushed in winemaking, and just not quite ripe enough for that. Decent fruit, hard texture.

85-87

2014 Château du Tertre

Semi-clear; a bit of SO₂ here in this sample; there on the palate too and it is blocking the aromas and flavours right now. There is an underlying elegance in the supple style. Need to re-taste to judge.

n/r

St.-Julien

A decent vintage in St.-Julien, with Ducru and Léoville-Barton making fine, classical wines – in both cases it will depend on where they price, as neither are 'must haves'.

2014 Château Beychevelle

Semi-clear; fresh, attractive, open berryish nose, some complexity, and a leafy cool note; good fruit and nicely supple texture, good length.

90-92

2014 Château Branaire-Ducru

Attractive fragrant berry nose; elevated acidity, good fruit, some fragrance, just-ripe.

Good.

88-90

2014 Château Ducru-Beaucaillou

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot

Semi-opaque; lovely lovely nose, perfumed, fresh and elegant; fine, ripe, generous, fragrant with nice acidity and freshness. Very currant flavor, fine structure, grippy finish, good length.

93-95

2014 Croix de Beaucaillou

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot

Second wine of Ch. Ducru-Beaucaillou

Semi-opaque; lovely nose, ripe, perfumed; supple, elegant, currant flavor, attractive fruit and texture, quite a ripe expression, very supple and fresh.

90-92

2014 Château Lalande-Borie

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc

Part of the Château Ducru-Beaucaillou stable.

Semi-opaque; sweet plush fruit and a cool, leafy aromatic note; plush, sweet fruit, leafy, fresh currant fruit, attractive, very 'Bordeaux', natural expression, well made.

89-91

2014 Château Gloria

Semi-opaque; sweet, berry fruit with a savoury, leafy edge; some nice fruit in the attack, but there is a definite green streak through this leading to a scratchy finish. Elegant weight. Okay.

84-86

2014 Château Gruaud Larose

Fine clear deep ruby; subdued nose with fresh fruit and a hint of lees; ripe, dry, a touch astringent, moderate weight and nice fruit, not the real depth expected here. Good.

88-90

2014 Château Lagrange

Semi-opaque; fresh dark berries, hint of dark chocolate, attractive nose, touch of vanilla; good dark fruit expression, a little extracted and pinched in the tannin/acidity on the finish. Good fruity middle.

89-91

2014 Château Langoa-Barton

Slightly dense colour compared to the Léoville. Fine, fresh nose, fruity; denser and more tannic than the Léoville Barton, good crisp fruit, a slight hint of bitterness leaves a question mark, but the fruit is attractive.

90-92

2014 Château Léoville-Barton

Bright fresh crimson, semi-opaque; attractive ripe fresh berry compote nose, good energy, juicy fruit and acidity, very fresh, fine tannin. This remains buoyant throughout the palate, a very good mid-weight classic Léoville-Barton

92-94

2014 Château Léoville-Poyferré

Fairly opaque; quite a rich nose, typical for this estate, slightly floral; mouthfilling, good fruit, feels a touch hollow and the tannins present a little extracted dryness. Firm, but good volume if not much charm.

90-92

2014 Château Saint Pierre

Deepish, semi-opaque; sweet oaky nose, seems a touch superficial right now; reasonably fleshy, fresh and bright, nice palate, a little bitterness at the end.

87-89

2014 Château Talbot

Fragrant crushed berries, a touch of vanilla, sweet fruity nose; bright, fresh, good acidity, nice fruit and supple tannin. Slightly opaque in expression, and slight bitterness mars the finish a bit and puts a question mark over its future development. Good, and may turn out better than my conservative estimate.

88-90

Pauillac

It seemed like a good year for Pauillac. For the (likely) price, I really liked Clerc Milon and Grand-Puy-Lacoste this year, and Pontet-Canet, Pichon Longueville Baron, Lafite and Latour made classics.

2014 Aile d'Argent de Château Mouton-Rothschild

65% Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Semillon

White wine of Château Mouton-Rothschild

Quite a ripe nose, melon, some stone fruits, open and precious, some underlying grassy notes offer attractive appetizing balance; ripe, rounded, very juicy, creamy, well-integrated, peach, there is a 'canned fruit' element that knocks it back slightly for me, lovely zippy acidity pulls the peachy-rich finish along, and grassy aromatic notes in the finish emphasize its refreshing quality and complexity. Very good.

91-93

2014 Château d'Armailhac

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot

Semi-opaque, deep; sweet, decadent nose; rich on the palate, supple, but thick-textured, oodles of fruit and extract, nice acidity, big muscular tannins. Pushed to the limit but does not feel over-extracted, this is a rich, solid d'Armailhac that should age well.

90-92

2014 Château Batailley

Semi-clear; nice nose, classic Pauillac Cabernet; supple, ripe and seamless. This is a good wine, well balanced.

89-91

2014 Château Clerc Milon

58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot, 1% Carmenère

Semi-clear, deep; a more open, floral nose than d'Armailhac, fresh berry fruits and violets; ripe, fine, airy-feel to the ripe fruit, fine inner mouth fragrance and good length. Tasted twice. This is a very good Clerc Milon, and may turn out to be a good quality/price pick in 2014.

92-94

2014 Château Croizet-Bages

Fairly clear; fresh and leafy on the nose; fleshy, supple and delicious on the palate, precious,, this will offer early drinking pleasure.

89-91

2014 Château Duhart-Milon

55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot

Semi-opaque; low key currant nose; ripe, quite currant, nicely structured, a bit sleepy right now. Good balance.

91-93

2014 Château Grand-Puy-Ducasse

Semi-opaque; closed and oaky on the nose; fairly dense, extracted and overtly oaky on the palate, there is some good fruit, will settle down I think, but lacks charm and sophistication.

86-88

2014 Château Haut-Batailley

78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot

Semi-opaque; discrete Cab-led nose, a touch floral; ripe Cabernet, firm fine tannin, good structure and freshness. Firm in style. Good solid Pauillac. Flavour-packed. Will require much more patience than the immediately forthcoming Lacoste-Borie.

90-92

2014 Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste

82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot

Fine, semi-opaque; beautifully floral fresh nose, lovely Cabernet; very good palate, tight, focused and juicy, layered and concentrated. Nice floral edge. Needs plenty of cellaring time. Solid, but with lovely freshness.

92-94

2014 Lacoste-Borie

2nd wine of Ch. Grand Puy Lacoste

67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

Semi-clear; real freshness, a distinct leafy aroma; fresh, airy texture, lovely flavor, stem ginger note with is morish, good flesh to the fruit. Delicious and will drink well quite early. Well made.

89-91

2014 Château Haut-Bages Libéral

Semi-clear; fresh, fragrant aroma, detailed and refined; juicy fruit style, elegant Pauillac, supple and the tannins well buffered, great flow. Sophisticated style. Very nice.
90-92

2014 Château Lafite-Rothschild

87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc

Fine, glossy deep appearance; fine nose, subtly floral, cassi-cab, pencil lead and cedar notes; very fine texture, layered, ripe, fine, very Cabernet, elegant, with good depth and concentration, coats the palate well, very good structure, abundant fine tannin well covered by juicy fruit. Very pure and effortless. Beautifully classic refined Lafite.
95-97

2014 Carruades de Lafite

2nd wine of Ch. Lafite-Rothschild

58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Merlot

Violets on the currant nose; elegant, nice fruit, generously fleshy and soft textured. Stylish with good ripeness.
90-92

2014 Château Latour

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot

Semi-clear, fine; lovely freshness on the nose, floral – violetty and very pure in expression; lovely fruit, very very fine, very focused, pure and fresh, the tannins are extremely fine and rounded in texture. This has very Latour texture – tremendous grip, yet it retains elegance and flow. Nothing out of place, very coherent and of superb quality.
96-98

2014 Les Forts de Latour

2nd wine of Ch. Latour

71% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot

Semi-clear, bright crimson rim; elegant nose, ripe, slightly floral, fresh, low key reserved expression; fresh, fine, good silkiness, creaminess and energy in the mid-palate, tannins are very present but ripe and supple on the finish. Will age well. Long. Very proper wine.
92-94

2014 Pauillac

3rd wine of Ch. Latour

51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot

Semi-clear; fresh nose, a touch of herb and spice; attractive fruit, fresh acidity, supple finish. Good wine.
88-90

2014 Château Lynch-Bages

Semi-opaque; dark fruit, Cabernet to the fore, some leafiness; good dense ripe fruit at the core of this, some extraction and coarseness in the texture, but the fruit pushes through. Good.
89-91

2014 Château Lynch-Moussas

Semi-clear; bright nose with toasty oak; supple, some nice leafy Cabernet fruit, then turns quite green. The saving grace though is supple, light extraction – it is light and fragrant, and quite decent. For the short term, drink on its immediate fruit.

86-88

2014 Château Mouton-Rothschild

81% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc

Semi-opaque; ripe, opulent oaky nose, not yet knit; palate is lovely and it is easy to see the superb quality here, more understated than on the nose, juicy and velvet-textured, fine tannin and extract. Freshness in the expression is the key to this year's style. Very fine.

93-95+

2014 Le Petit Mouton de Château Mouton-Rothschild

93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot

2nd wine of Château Mouton-Rothschild

Ripe nose, toasty oak; ripe, plush, more open and soft compared to d'Armailhac and Clerc Milon, lovely, quite charming in style. Very nice.

90-92

2014 Château Pibran

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon

Part of the AXA Millésimes stable with Ch. Pichon Baron.

Semi-opaque, crimson rim; very slightly reduced on the nose, fresh, ripe aroma; ripe, juicy, very slightly reduced, velvety and juicy, classic fresh black fruit flavor.

89-91?

2014 Château Pichon Longueville Baron

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot

Fine, semi-clear; fine, ripe, mineral note; very fine on the palate, elegant, real depth without excess weight, fine minerality, nuanced and detailed expression, very finely made and restrained. Great quality of fruit and real freshness. Superb quality.

93-95

2014 Les Tourelles de Château Pichon Longueville Baron

65% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot

A 2nd wine from the Ch. Pichon Baron estate from different terroir than the grand vin.

Semi-clear, fragrant, fresh, floral, lovely nose, touch of vanilla; fine-textured, juicy, elegant, plump but transparent.

90-92

2014 Les Griffons de Château Pichon Longueville Baron

55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot

A 2nd wine from Ch Pichon Baron, from terroir similar to (or the same as) the grand vin, and with a similar orientation in the final blend.

Deep clear ruby, crimson rim; fine cabernet-led aroma, a touch of leafiness, but sufficient ripeness; fine, concentrated, clear ripe fruit, cabernet to the fore, a touch of leafy coolness, but nothing overtly green. Nicely made.

90-92+

2014 Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 6% Petit Verdot

Semi-clear with a crimson rim; floral and ripe reserved aroma, a hint of peppery coolness; good fruit, fine and fleshy with a very slight coarseness for a *grand vin* toward the finish in the tannins. This is a very good wine, but a step below the others at this level. Lovely fruitiness.

92-94

2014 Réserve de la Comtesse

2nd wine of Ch. Pichon Lalande

59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 41% Merlot

Fine, semi-opaque, crimson rim; quite fresh, floral and plummy on the nose; fine, fleshy, a hint of astringency, but the wine is made in a gentle style. Nice.

89-91

2014 Château Ponet-Canet

Semi-opaque; very attractive aroma, fresh, ripe, detailed 'deep'; concentrated and ripe on the palate, with good energy, mouth-coating, a touch spicy, a hint of ginger, florals, fine very ripe tannins. Bold yet refined style. Good freshness and supple texture.

Delicious.

92-94+

St.-Estèphe

Along with the whites this vintage, this seemed the stand out success commune. Everything I tasted here was good. Calon Segur's quality seems to be on the rise, Cos was very good, and Montrose really nailed it.

2014 Château Calon Segur

66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc, 19% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot

Deep glossy crimson, opaque; ripe, floral, rich nose, spicy notes; ripe, fine and intense on the palate, detailed dark fruit flavor, good energy and length. Opulent. Grippy fine tannin and juicy extract to buffer. Very very good. Reminded me of the richness and power of the classic Calons of old from the '40s and '50s.

93-95

2014 Le Marquis de Château Calon Segur

2nd wine of Ch. Calon Segur

Opaque crimson; ripe fruit cake and spicy nose; big, voluptuous, ripe and ample, with freshness and juiciness. Good.

89-91

2014 Château Capbern

Part of the Ch. Calon Segur stable. 78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot. From a single 35ha block outside of Calon Segur, between Phelan Segur and Meyney.

Deep, opaque, crimson rim; ripe, currant dark fruited nose, some florals; dark fruit, laden with fruit, ripe, supple, good acidity. A very fruity style, ripe and generous. Likely to be one of the great value wines of 2014.

89-91

2014 Château Cos d'Estournel Blanc

66% Sauvignon Blanc, 3% Semillon (from further north in the Médoc)

Bright, green tint; ripe, melon, gooseberry, fresh nose, touch of creamy oak – great nose; juicy, melon and gooseberry again on the palate, a fine spice and herb element, focused but creamy middle, great acidity, sophisticated style. Very good.

91-93

2014 Château Cos d'Estournel

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc

Deep, glossy, semi-opaque; ripe, grand, fresh aroma, lovely; ripe, juicy, ample but focused, very fine melting tannin. This combines good balance of fruit, energy and extract. Superb. Recommended.

93-95+

2014 Les Pagodes de Cos

2nd wine of Ch. Cos d'Estournel. 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 43% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot

Semi-opaque; ripe, perfumed nose; fresh, tightly focused, ripe, mouthfilling wine, nice balance, ripe and fresh. Delicious. Cohesive.

91-93

2014 Goulée by Cos d'Estournel

78% Merlot, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc

Produced by Ch. Cos d'Estournel from a vineyard in the northern Médoc

Dark, semi-opaque; ripe, plummy nose; ripe plummy fruit, nice juiciness and freshness in its expression, soft and quite forward and delicious for earlier drinking. Attractive wine.

90-92

2014 Château Cos Labory

Semi-opaque; slightly spicy fragrant nose; nice fruit, plump, ripe, relatively soft in texture, nice acidity. Good wine.

88-90

2014 Château Lafon-Rochet

Semi-clear; fresh, fragrant; nice fruit, chewy, but ripe and transparent. Really very nice – a good choice at this price level in '14 for sure.

89-91

2014 Château Montrose

Deep colour; beautiful nose, violetty, very pretty, so floral and expressive and effortlessly expressive; fleshy on the palate, ripe, violetty, effortlessly expressive and generous, yet elegant and sleek. Great balance and poise. Very long finish. Absolutely terrific – one of my top picks for the vintage. Recommended.

95-97

2014 La Dame de Montrose

2nd wine of Château Montrose

Fine crimson, semi-clear; a slightly reduced note on the nose; juicy and fresh, elegant, moderate weight of fruit, mineral note, a little reduction on the palate, but good texture and fruit.

89-91?

2014 Château Les Ormes de Pez

Semi-opaque; oaky nose; pushed too hard, not showing fruit and what's there is modest. A bit raw right now.
85-87

2014 Château de Pez

Semi-opaque; quite an oaky awkward nose; better on the palate, a touch of celery coolness, decent fruit, plush textured. Okay+
88-90

2014 Château Phélan Ségur

Semi-opaque; glossy 'make up' nose, but attractive; good fruit on the palate, moderately fine texture, perfectly ripe and no edges. Crisp acidity. Good.
89-91

2014 Château Tronquoy-Lalande

Ch. Montrose stable. 56% Merlot, 37% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot, 1% Cabernet Franc.

Deep, semi-opaque; lovely nose, ripe, plummy, slightly perfumed; ripe, really ample dark fruit, thickness of fruit extract here, it stays supple though, a touch of violets. Plump. A great gourmand style. Very good.
90-92

Sauternes

I didn't get there as you can see. The 'S' was tasted at Pichon, and Yquem was tasted at Cheval Blanc. They are good.

2014 Château d'Yquem

1er Grand Cru Classé A, Sauternes

A quick taste at the end of the Ch. Cheval Blanc visit – distinctly spicy, with a particularly gingery expression this year, good concentration and decadence, very 'warm' vintage expression, spicy botrytis. A forward, precious Yquem, accessible for early drinking.
94-96.

2014 'S' de Suduiraut

The dry white wine from Ch. Suduiraut

60% Semillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc

Christian Seely has been steadily increasing the proportion of Semillon in the blend, and it shows, positively. Fine, floral, subtly fragrant; high energy, good mid-palate extract, citrus, melon, fine-textured white, fine fresh acidity married to sufficient mid-palate breadth and texture. Refined white.
91-93

La Tupina – my favourite place to eat in the city of Bordeaux – below left: homemade rigatoni cooked with cream, lardons, foie gras and morel mushrooms, a heart attack on the plate! Below-right, the amazing open kitchen of La Tupina. I had a ring-side seat.

