

Super Bowl, Bordeaux, and Why are we Drinking?

Well here it is people: the end of the road. For many of us the Super Bowl signals the last gasp of the partying, merrymaking, and entertaining season. But while I'm looking forward to witnessing the final four quarters of the NFL just as much as the next guy, it is to the *beginning* of a new exciting cycle—one full of brand new wood cases packed with the latest Bordeaux vintage—that I'm now devoting my energies. The Super Bowl teams have been set, the players are in line, and the Fortune 500 companies have bought their ad time. All that remains is to find a soft place to sit and taste the Bordelais's latest offerings.

Wait, wait...hold up a minute...

Is it just me, or do the Super Bowl and Bordeaux have a lot in common?

Just like the best teams, the best châteaux know how to persevere through difficulties. Both generate consistency, play rough, and do not give up. They are not to be dealt with idly, they hail from renowned places—like Pittsburgh or Pomerol, Seattle or St. Julien—and their "players" don't come cheap.

Just like calling Super Bowl games, whether or not a Bordeaux vintage will be a "great" one can be difficult to judge. The ultimate game can be either complex and full of backstory or anticlimactic and disappointing—the same way a vintage can be prematurely hailed or dismissed. A history of close calls and blowouts. We all remember Joe Namath's 1969 guarantee of a Jets victory over the Colts, and Robert Parker's declaration of 2000 as "The Vintage of the Century."

And just like the Super Bowl, Bordeaux pits two winners against one another—Cabernet Sauvignon vs. Merlot. Or perhaps it's the run-game vs. the pass game.

All comparisons aside, the wines of Bordeaux are released once a year much the same way the Super Bowl is played once a year. We look forward to both and whether they thrill or bore we'll probably still pay attention next year. I know I will. [IAS]

What's Up in Bordeaux?

FREE WEEKEND WINE TASTING!
Friday, January 27, 4 to 7 pm
Saturday, January 28, 1 to 5 pm

2004 Château Charmes-Godard Côtes de France

Reg. Price: \$24.99

Wine Source Price: \$19.99

The appellation Bordeaux-Côtes de France is one of those satellite regions that make Bordeaux both thrilling and maddening. Located far to the east, north of the Côtes de Castillon, it's considerably removed from the lofty regions of Bordeaux both in miles and culture. Merlot is the dominant grape here, and whites are seldom respected.

This wine, however, may change that perception. A blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon, the wine opens with tropical and exotic flavors that belie its origin. Would you believe guava and papaya with a hint of vanilla bean? Behind these bountiful flavors lurks a mouthful of refreshing acidity, bringing the wine into a rich and satisfying balance. Gosh, I hope the red wine snobs continue to think whites are boring; that will leave more of this sensational wine for the rest of us! [PW]

more Bordeaux...

1999 La Demoiselle de Sociando-Mallet Haut-Médoc

Reg. Price: \$24.99/ Wine Source Price: \$19.99

The '99 Demoiselle de Sociando-Mallet from Château Sociando-Mallet was born in the humble Haut-Médoc, a region just south of the more famous communes of Pauillac and St. Estéphe. While we don't encounter many grand châteaux in this region, we do find some world-class Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines. This particular example is displaying its very first signs of maturity—the integration of bright, red fruit with supple tannins. It carries both its oak and alcohol well, allowing us to enjoy all of the minerality imparted by the Haut-Médoc's gravelly soil. Plus, it's a fantastic food wine. [IAS]

2000 Les Hauts de Pontet-Canet Pauillac

Reg. Price: \$29.99/ Wine Source Price: \$23.99

The second label of the fifth growth house Pontet-Canet, this wine is a cousin to the royalty of Bordeaux. Located next door to famed Château Mouton-Rothschild (all kneel), the estate has been making wine since the 18th century, with varying degrees of success. These days, they're on the upswing, producing wines of very good quality, and perhaps of equal importance, style and character. This wine is how Bordeaux should taste, in my opinion. Subtle rather than dynamic, elegant rather than loud, the mellow berry fruit is skillfully intertwined with mineral and earth notes. The oak presence is likewise understated and the overall impression is one of completeness. A beauty of a wine, it never struts and postures, it merely fulfills. [PW]

2001 Château Le Sartre Pessac-Léognan

Reg. Price: \$14.99/ Wine Source Price: \$11.99

The high quality growers in the villages of Pessac and Léognan on the northern border of Graves devised their own appellation designation in the late 1800's to further their aspirations to greatness. And although the marketplace may not recognize it as such, this is the birthplace of the storied wines of Bordeaux—Château Haut-Brion has been the standard bearer for four centuries. This wine lets you see what the buzz is all about at a fraction of the price of Haut-Brion. Made mostly of Cabernet Sauvignon, the wet stones in the nose speaks of the loose, gravelly (Graves! get it?) soil where the grapes are planted. Soft and supple, this is an excellent choice with medium hard cheeses and grilled meats. [PW]

2002 Château Rocher Corbin Montagne Saint-Émilion

Reg. Price: \$19.99

Wine Source Price: \$15.99

Is there a place in Bordeaux for modern winemaking? But of course! The wines of Rocher Corbin—made in the satellite appellation of Montagne St. Émilion—present some of the best examples of the synthesis of modern methods and equipment with traditional Bordeaux values. Vineyard manager Philippe Durand works with old vines averaging 30 years and primarily comprised of Merlot. The resulting wine is full and intense while retaining a supple, clean core of chocolaty, blackberry fruit. Delicious with a seasoned piece of lamb or beef. [IAS]

2003 Château Manoir du Gravoux Côtes de Castillon

Reg. Price: \$14.99

Wine Source Price: \$11.99

This little treasure hails from the very eastern boundary of the entire Bordeaux region: Côtes de Castillon. Comprised mostly of Merlot, it is softly styled with tannin taking a back seat to ripe, berry fruit. Located on the property of an old medieval castle, the vines used for Manoir du Gravoux are planted in clay-limestone soil, allowing for excellent ripening potential and purity of fruit flavor. May we recommend this as your new Tuesday night favorite? [IAS]

2003 Château D'Agassac Haut-Médoc

Reg. Price: \$39.99

Wine Source Price: \$29.99

A modern example of Bordeaux, down to its Stelvin (screwcap) closure, this wine is just plain good. One of the few (in my view) balanced wines of the very hot 2003 vintage, it's bolder and broader than most with big New World fruit flavors dominating. While it's not a wine for long-term aging, it's clearly a very enjoyable wine today. [PW]



If you ever reach total enlightenment while drinking beer,
I bet it makes beer shoot out through your nose.

--"Deep Thoughts" by Jack Handy



The Year of the Dog

If something is good enough to celebrate once, twice is better. Like my birthday. I always need at least two parties to make sure it actually happened. So now we can all bring in the New Year one more time. Year

4073 by the Chinese calendar starts this Sunday, January 29th, as we say goodbye to the Year of the Rooster and welcome in the Year of the Dog. To honor this auspicious new beginning, we have selected two special "dog" wines. No mangy mutts these. Rather, a fine pair of red canine companions with lots of character and maybe even a little class. One is obedient and charming—a Good Dog—and the other is just full of the devil—a Bad Dog. But both are guaranteed to make the wine hound in us wag its tail as we "woof" them down. [PVB]

2004 Jim Jim Shiraz "The Down-Under Dog"

McLaren Vale, Australia

Reg. Price: \$12.99

Wine Source Price: \$9.99

Definitely a good dog, Jim Jim is responsible for cruising the vineyards looking for ripe Shiraz grapes. When he starts eating, the winery starts picking. Ace Aussie winemaker Hugh Hamilton makes the wine as welcoming as the pooch, with a great nose of spice and cherries and lush black fruits with hints of smoke and meat. Its crisp, acid balance is classic McLaren Vale, and makes for a wine that is eager to please.

2003 Mad Dogs and Englishmen

Jumilla, Spain

Reg. Price: \$10.99

Wine Source Price: \$8.79

On the east coast of Spain north of Valencia lies the hot, semi-arid region of Jumilla. It's probably not a good idea to hang out in the mid-day sun here—unless you're a grape. Then the intense light brings on full ripeness, while the cool nighttime temperatures encourage a balancing crisp acidity for freshness. The lush raspberry and mulberry fruit of Monastrell gains structure from the Cabernet and spice notes from the Syrah. You'd be mad not to like this.

啤酒

Beer

We're back to the Year of the Dog...a year in which it is said that "the Dog's domestic character will bring harmony to home life, patriotism to one's country, and unwavering focus to whatever cause you wish to support." I'm not too sure about all that, but here are two beers to drink at your Chinese New Year festivities. [Bear]

Tsingtao

Quingdao, China

\$6.99 per 6-pack

\$9.99 per 12-pack

The city of Tsingtao (pronounced Ching-Dow) was originally a fishing village until it was recognized as having one of the best natural harbors in northern China. In the late 1800's the Imperial Germans took over the city, and during WWI it was occupied by the Japanese. It was the Germans who founded the original brewery in 1903. Despite its long history, the city is now best known for its beer. Light in gravity, Tsingtao possesses a balanced malt and hop character.

Dogfish Head "Fort" Ale

Milton, Delaware

\$15.99 (750 ml.)

To further honor the Year of the Dog we have one of the most adventurous beers from one of the most adventurous breweries around. Brewed with more than a ton of pureed raspberries, Dogfish Head's Fort Ale pours orange with a hint of red and light, fizzy head. It has notes of a framboise (Raspberry) lambic but with more hop structure. The finish is pleasantly alcoholic as it should be with 18% ABV. Split this 750ml with a friend or let it age until next new year.

Mark Your Calendar!

FREE WEEKEND WINE TASTING

What's Up in Bordeaux?

Friday, January 27, 4 to 7 pm
Saturday, January 28, 1 to 5 PM



LAST SUNDAY SUPPERS AT IGGIES

Sunday, January 29, 5:30 pm **SOLD OUT!**
Upcoming dinners are 2/26 & 3/26
Make your reservation now! 410.467.7777

FREE CHEESE & SOUP TASTING

with fresh soups from Soup's On
Thursday, February 2, 5:30-7:30 pm

WINE TASTING

Sicily's Cusumano Winery
presented by Ann Sommer of Vin DiVino
at Sotto Sopra

Monday, February 6, 6-8 pm
6 wines with hors d'oeuvres ~ \$30 per person
For reservations, call 410.467.7777

FREE WINE TASTING

More Italian Wines from Vin Divino Ltd.
presented by Ann Sommer of Vin DiVino
Tuesday, February 7, 5-8 pm

FREE WEEKEND WINE TASTING

Wines for Lovers

Friday, February 10, 4:30 to 7:30 pm
Saturday, February 11, 1:30 to 5:30 PM

FREE CHEESE & SOUP TASTING

with fresh soups from Soup's On
Thursday, February 9, 5:30-7:30 pm

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Comments from the Cheese Cave

Zingerman's Creamery

This week's featured cheeses come from Zingerman's Creamery in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Setting the dairy industry back 100 years, the master cheesemakers at Zingerman's turn fresh, local milk into some of the most delicious cheeses you'll ever taste. Made without modern fillers that get in the way of flavor, these cheeses taste of fresh milk and cream the way cheeses did in the 19th century. From their award-winning fresh cream cheese to the aged, mold-ripened cheeses, Zingerman's sets the standard for flavor and texture.

Cream Cheese: This won "Best Fresh Cow's Milk Cheese in America" at the annual American Cheese Society competition. There's really nothing "fancy" about this cream cheese. No secret ingredients, no secret recipe, nothing hidden. It's hand-ladled, which protects the cream cheese's delicate texture, and because there are no added vegetable gums, preservatives, artificial additives or sweeteners, the flavor is way better. You'll find that it's softer, lighter, and fresher tasting than any other cream cheese you've tried. Don't just limit this great stuff to bagels! *Special introductory price: \$4.50 per 8 oz. tub*

Little Napoleon: The little cheese with the big complex. Inspired by the French Peladron, this mold-ripened goat cheese is aged for two to four weeks and because of its small cannonball size, the flavor is really deep and intense. Grab a Bonaparte baguette and complete the whole Napoleonic experience with a bottle of Sancerre. *Special introductory price: \$4.25 each*

Manchester: An easy-to-love, delicate, buttery double-cream cheese with a tickle of transcendent pepperiness at the finish. The latest cheese offering from Zingerman's, this is a little snow-white, mold-ripened round that's easy to eat and enjoy. Mold ripening changes the cheese from the outside in, making it softer and richer as it ages. It's got a lovely, modestly forward flavor that most cheese lovers will enjoy. *Special introductory price: \$6.50 each*

Lincoln Log: We've always been frustrated with the Bucherons in the marketplace because most of them are made with powdered milk, which shows in the flavor. So we decided to build a "better mousetrap". Mold ripened and aged for about 2 weeks, the Lincoln Log is about 12 inches long with a thin rind that gives the cheese a soft mouth feel and hints of citrus in flavor. Perfect for anyone wanting to expand his or her goat cheese horizons. *Special introductory price: \$14 per pound*

Soup and Cheese!

Join us every Thursday in February from 5:30-7:30 p.m. for a soup and cheese tasting. Cynthia Shea from *Soup's On* in Hampden will be sampling a new soup each week, which we will pair with a cheese from The Wine Source Cheese Cave. Just think...a quart of soup, a hunk of cheese and a bottle of wine...you may never have to cook again!