



Château du Faure Haut Normand

WINE-OH

The Quarterly-ish Bordeauxwine.fr Newsletter
November 2020

Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly-ish newsletter "Wine-oh". We say "Quarterly-ish" because the last one came out a year ago..... Anyway no point crying over spilt milk (or wine though that is obviously more serious), so here we go with all good intentions to make this a genuinely Quarterly newsletter.

First off some of you with long memories will notice a new logo. Thanks to Tom Prendeville for this we love it!

In this issue we have harvest news, updates on our 2019 and 2018 vintages and a tongue-in-cheek article about wine critics.

We would love to hear your feedback on content and, of course, any ideas on what you would like to read about are very welcome (honestly they are!).



The 2020 Harvest

So the easy bit is done, well not really easy but nature has done its bit and now it is for the alchemists to get to work.

We harvested early this year, two weeks earlier than usual due to a long hot, dry summer. In fact we had planned to harvest three weeks earlier than usual, but the weatherman said we were going to get heavy rain so we decided to wait. The summer drought meant that the grapes were small so a slug of water would be very welcome.

The rains duly arrived and picking began on 28th September on a bright and cold Autumn morning. The team this year was truly international. French of course, but also Spanish, British and Romanian. Max the Spaniel was on hand to help/ hinder but the whole event took just 3 mornings to complete.

As usual we harvest by hand; we use small baskets and we sort manually as well. All of this is designed to ensure the grapes are in as perfect a condition as possible before they go into the 2,500 litre oak fermenting tank. If the grapes get bruised before the go into the tank they very quickly lose their flavours and of course the precious juice escapes!

The dry summer meant that the volumes are down by about 20% compared to last year but early indications are that the 2020 vintage will be rich and flavoursome. Watch this space for more updates.

2019 Barrel Tasting

The 2019 Chateau du Faure Haut Normand has now been sitting in its French oak barrels for 3 months so we are getting a really good idea of how it is going to turn out.

Now, the experts say that 2016 is the benchmark and that 2018 beat it. They say that 2019 is very good but not to the 2018 standards. As ever I like to disagree because I remember how nice the 2018 tasted this time last year and I think the 2019 tastes nicer. Now I have to admit that 'nicer' is not really a technical wine term and Jancis Robinson would not approve but it works for me. It is a bit spicier than the 2018 and has more tannins but these will ease over time and it has another 9 months before it goes through the trauma of bottling!

Will let you know more next time we taste in early 2021.



Launch of Chateau du Faure Haut Normand 2018

Bottled in late June, we launched our 2018 vintage on 1st October. Reaction has been very positive and sales brisk to say the least. We only had just over 500 cases to start with so I suspect it will not last that long!

This year we used an unusual mix of oak barrels and the result is a wine that is structured and smooth. I think it tastes more like a Pauillac or Margaux than a St Emilion or Pomerol at the moment. It is more mineral and tighter than the more jammy wines (another non-technical term - sorry again Jancis!) usually associated with our region. Over time it will soften as the tannins melt but it will keep its structure for at least 15 years.

Readers can still benefit from our opening offer of £99 for 6 bottles (or £185 for 12) delivered to your door anywhere in the EU. Drop me a line here at johnmira@bordeauxwine.fr if you are interested.



The Life of Vine – November

The grapes are picked and the vines are changing colour. The rain has started (and not stopped for weeks!) and there is nothing more we can do until the branches are bare. As soon as they are we can start trimming the vines before the start to spring back into life in February.

The replanting of the hectare of vines we ripped up last year has been completed and soon we will be putting in the pickets and wiring so they can grow the way we want them. We won't get any grapes for another couple of years and it won't go into our own wine for another 5 years at least but it is lovely to see new life being brought to the vineyard.



The Mad Mad World of Wine Critics

"A gorgeously aromatic right-bank claret, made from 80 per cent cabernet franc (think redcurrant leaves and sous-bois)"

"The deep growl of smoky, oaky cabernet sauvignon....is tempered with the bright silkiness of a dollop of cinsault."

"There's some supple fresh mulberry fruit there, but also a plume of autumnal glory, with a hint of bonfire."

"Dances across your palate, reminiscent of apricot kernels and saltwater."

"Suggestive of damp fossils"

"Reminds me of Fishermens Friend mints"

Yes these are genuine comments from real live wine critics, some of them world-famous, others just legends in their own lifetime.

Now I am not one for limiting freedom of speech, far from it - I spent most of my prior life as a wordsmith spinning yarns for investors and journalists. The point is though that some of the garbage written about wines is at best utterly useless and at worst misleading and expensive to the consumer.

Wine tasting is not, I repeat NOT an art. It is a personal experience that results in some level of pleasure. **NOT** the level of that pleasure will differ from person to person and the way you describe that pleasure to yourself is all that matters.

The number of people who tell me they don't know a good wine from a bad one is amazing. The fact is that a good wine is one that you enjoy; a bad wine is one that you do not enjoy. End of story.

Things get a bit more complicated when you add price tags into the debate but again it is all about your personal feelings. Ask yourself is this value-for-money? The same question applies for a wine that costs £5 or one that costs £5,000 (and yes some bottles cost even more than that). If you do not feel comfortable paying whatever the sum demanded is, then don't buy it. If you think you have paid more than you want it will spoil the enjoyment - trust me I know I have done it myself!

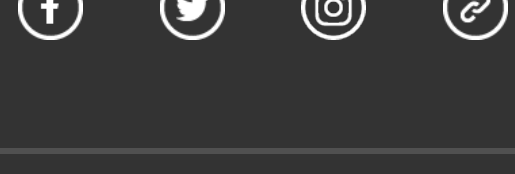
Let me leave you with my all time favourite. This is for a very fine wine but you would never know what it tastes like from this note

"Notes of ripe wild cassis, Boysen berry, small notes of crunchy raspberry associated with touches of nutmeg, cloves and flowers. The palate is fruity, well-balanced and offers a juicy/finely acidulous frame, a good definition, gourmandize and a beautiful suavity. On the palate this wine expresses notes of fleshy/juicy cassis, blackberry, small notes of raspberry associated with touches of small red berries as well as fine hints of violet, lilac and almond."

Stay safe and drink well!

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