



BERRY BROS & RUDD

3, ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON

WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS

2016 – a genuinely unique vintage

Friday 28th April 2017: Berry Bros. & Rudd Buying Director Max Lalondrelle has described the latest vintage from Bordeaux as ‘genuinely unique’.

With the 2016 *en primeur* campaign heading into its second week, the Fine Wine Team at Britain’s oldest wine merchant are delighted by the quality of wines coming from Bordeaux: “2016 is unique and exciting. From the 56 châteaux visited by the team over the past three weeks, the elegance, purity and energy in the wines has truly shone through” comments Lalondrelle.

“If I were to describe the wines in a few words I would say they have the freshness of a top vintage of a Loire Cab Franc with the elegance and intensity of a Grand Crus from Chambolle. 2016 is a return to a very fine style of winemaking” he adds.

The real momentum for the 2016 *en primeur* has not fully kicked in, with releases mostly coming from some of the smaller estates however Château Cos d’Estournel released earlier than anticipated and at the same price as last year, which could signal a trend amongst the Chateaux to release at the same or close to last year’s price.

“Pricing is complicated, as it always is for Bordeaux which makes it hard to generalise,” concludes Lalondrelle. *“2015 was very good but only 25% of the properties have sold out and we can still find a lot of stocks with Négociants. Properties which sold out would naturally be inclined to increase their prices and I think the UK market could sustain a moderate increase despite the difference in the exchange rate. But with Donald Trump threatening to impose a 20% tax increase on wine imports into the US, a weak Sterling and a Chinese market reluctant to buy wine en primeur, I think Bordeaux has to be careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past.”*

Berry Bros. & Rudd published its 2016 Bordeaux *en primeur* report this week which can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/2ozcxzP>

Further updates and ongoing commentary from the team can also be viewed on the Berry Bros. & Rudd Blog: <http://bbrblog.com/tag/bordeaux-2016/>

Vintage Report

The 2016 Bordeaux vintage is one of the most unique and exciting vintages in recent memory. From the barrel samples, we tasted, the takeaway is that the wines possess



elegance, glorious ripe red fruit, silky tannins, lower alcohol than in previous years and vitality. The energy of these wines is their selling point, with many displaying a pleasing freshness which will delight lovers of traditional Claret.

After big blockbuster vintages, such as 2005, 2009 and 2010, this is a return to what the Bordelais do best: producing wine with power, concentration and freshness. Although the wines possess the characteristics of a hot vintage – dark, deep colours, ripe fruit and structure – there is a drinkability to these wines which makes them glorious to taste.

Quality is uniform across both Left and Right Banks, but if we had to be pushed on the wines we enjoyed the most, we would say the further up the Médoc we travelled, the better the wines tasted. We were notably impressed by those that had vines on clay soil, which retained the water during the vintage's long, dry summer. In that regard, Pomerol excelled.

Berry Bros. & Rudd's Buying Director Max Lalondrelle wrote ahead of the en primeur tastings that 2016 would be marked by having lots of body and dark juicy fruit, flavours such as blackcurrants and cassis, and finishing with a huge amount of freshness. He was right.

Stylistically it is very difficult to compare it with previous vintages. Some say it is like 2010 with more freshness, others that it has the freshness of 1986. Some producers even go as far as to say that their wines are better than in 2010. What we do know is that in 2016 Bordeaux produced a different style of vintage. As Max Lalondrelle says, 2016 is "unique" and offers a return to a lighter, fresher style, and a move away from the larger extracted styles and heavy use of oak found in the early 2000s.

The Bordelais know they have a very good vintage on their hands, but they are also aware of the market conditions and the external pressures in terms of economics. Let us hope that the châteaux get the pricing right, as there are some glorious wines which will give a great deal of pleasure over the next 20 years.

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