

To buy or not to buy?



Imbibe is new to Bakersfield but we have been in the wine and spirits business for over twenty-five years and have offered Bordeaux futures for over twenty years. We have delivered every case ordered. We thank you for your confidence and we look forward to being your wine and spirits merchant for the next twenty years.

- David and Tamera Dobbs

2008 Bordeaux futures offering from Imbibe Wine

If you haven't heard, 2008 is an outstanding vintage for Bordeaux. Yes, 2000 and 2005 were outstanding as most of you know. The 2008 vintage is dramatically better than expected. The Bordelaise stuck it to us in the 2000 and 2005 vintages; outstanding wines and the world economy was running at full speed. Buyers from all around the world were lined up to buy these vintages. If we Americans passed, the rest of the world picked up the wine. In their premier offerings today, the Bordelaise have lowered their pricing by as much as 60%. As I talk with many importers and wine buyers who have tasted the 2008 vintage, I've learned that there is a lot to get excited about.

The following notes are from Robert Parker's tastings of the 2008 Bordeaux vintage:

"It did not take me long to realize that the 2008 Vintage was dramatically better than I had expected. It has all the qualities that make an excellent and in some cases, a great vintage so special: exceptionally dark opaque colors, gorgeously ripe fruit, stunning purity almost across the board, great freshness (because it was a cool year), slightly higher acids than normal, and remarkable density as well as concentration. In 2008, the tannins are unusually velvety, even in wines that may lack concentration. After the vinifications were done in late October and early November, something excellent had been produced.

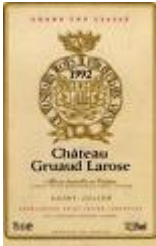
Bordeaux is always the first to be accused of over-hyping their wines, so why has the quality of the 2008 vintage turned out to be so excellent? 2008 provided a historically long hang time for the grapes. There is an old saying in winedom that a vigneron needs 100 days between the flowering and the harvest in order to produce wines with good ripeness and character. In 2008 the shortest hang time at any estate was approximately 130-135 days, and in longest approached an unprecedented 150-160 days. That long hang time has led to a steady, long maturation that has provided far more nuance and flavor intensity than anyone expected. It was also cooler and sunnier than normal. The total hours of sunshine were much higher than in a normal year. Examining the weather more closely reveals that May was very wet, creating some issues with flowering which reduced the crop size significantly for the right bank Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Damp, cool weather conditions in early June provided similar difficulties for the late flowering Cabernet in the Medoc. By the time flowering was completed, it was obvious throughout Bordeaux that for all grape varieties each vine had fewer bunches. It was clearly going to be a small crop. Indian-Summer like weather (warm, but not too hot days, and cool nights) gave the grapes the opportunity to mature evenly.

There are a number of superb wines that are close to if not equal to prodigious 2005 or 2000 vintage (two years with many of the best wines I have tasted from top to bottom)."



2008 Cos d'Estournel 94-96+/100 \$119.00

The 2008 Cos d'Estournel possesses an atypically high (85%) amount of Cabernet Sauvignon, with 13% Merlot and 2% Cabernet Franc. The first vintage vinified in the new facility, an unusually high percentage of the crop (78%) was included in the grand vin. The bad news is that yields were a minuscule 25 hectoliters per hectare. This wine achieved 13.8% natural alcohol, and the number of days between the flowering and harvest was 160, compared to the normal 100-110 (one of the keys to understanding the exceptionally high quality that characterizes the 2008 Bordeaux). There were no serious heat waves during the growing season, which meant that the maturation process was slow, long, and ideal. Combine that with the very low yields, and the superb weather from mid-September to late October, and the often splendid results are much easier to comprehend. The inky/purple-hued 2008 Cos is still very young, and probably will improve even further as the wine came out of malolactic fermentation very late. It reveals exceptionally precise, fresh aromas of black fruits, crushed rocks, licorice, flowers, and subtle smoke. Dense and high in tannin, the extraordinary richness of polyphenols has given the wine power, substance, and depth, but the sweetness of the tannin and the seemingly low acidity, even though the wine tastes remarkably fresh and the pH is only 3.57 (compared to pH's close to 4 when the fruit is this ripe), has given the wine a precision and elegance that is remarkable. And don't forget, this is probably the highest percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon ever used in a Cos d'Estournel blend. This wine should gain weight, richness, and a few Parker points by the time it is bottled. It is even denser and richer than the 1996, with an index of polyphenols at 80, which is not unusual for many of the top wines of the vintage, but is extremely high, and more along the lines of what one would find in the top wines of 2005. It should evolve for 30-35 years.



2008 Gruaud Larose 89-91+/100 \$49.00

While it is not the 2000 or 1990, the 2008 is the finest Gruaud Larose I have tasted in eight years. Not a blockbuster, it is more beefy and dense than other recent vintages, revealing notes of pine forest, smoke, herbs, licorice, black currants, and cedar. With high but ripe tannins, medium to full body, and a strong finish, it will benefit from 2-3 years of cellaring, and should keep for 20 years thereafter.



2008 Leoville Barton 92-94/100 \$58.00

Another blockbuster, long-term wine from proprietor Anthony Barton, this 2008 is among the biggest, most back-strapping efforts of the vintage. As with many vintages of Leoville Barton, it is best forgotten for another decade. An inky/purple color is followed by notes of forest floor, camphor, red and black fruits, and a hint of wood. This brawny, masculine-styled St. Julien possesses huge body, massive concentration, and mouth-searing levels of tannin. However, the tannins are much sweeter than the 2005's were at the same stage, so that should not be an issue as long as potential purchasers exercise patience. This impressively pure, classic Bordeaux should be at its finest between 2020-2050.



2008 Les Ormes de Pez 89-91/100 \$29.00

The strongest effort from this estate in over two decades, the dense ruby/purple-tinged 2008 reveals plenty of structure and tannin as well as gorgeously rich, pure blackberry and cassis fruit intermixed with hints of minerals and underbrush. This full, dense St. Estèphe will benefit from several years of bottle age, and should evolve over the following 15 years.



2008 Lynch Bages 91-93+/100 \$67.00

This strong effort from Lynch Bages may turn out to be the finest wine produced here since the 2000. It is a backward, powerful, opaque purple-colored 2008 with fine acids, firm but sweet tannins, and thick, dense levels of attractive blackberry and cassis fruit intertwined with notions of underbrush, lead pencil shavings, and roasted herbs. It appears to be a denser, richer effort than some of the more lightweight Lynch Bages offerings of recent years. Anticipated maturity: 2013-2030.



2008 Lafite Rothschild 98-100/100 \$259.00

The 2008 Lafite Rothschild is one of the most profound young wines I have ever tasted. From a taster's perspective, it is reminiscent of a blend of the 1996 and 2003, but when you compare those vintages analytically, that makes no sense whatsoever. Representing only 40% of the production, this blend of 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Merlot, and 4% Cabernet Franc boasts an opaque ruby/purple color (one of the darkest Lafites I have seen in 30 years) as well as an extraordinary, blockbuster aromatic profile of lead pencil shavings, forest floor, black fruits, licorice, and a hint of unsmoked, high-class cigar tobacco. In the mouth, a massive richness is accompanied by a freshness, delineation, nuance, delicacy, and mind-boggling density. Even after three decades of tasting, I am still astonished when tasting such a prodigious wine as this. Full, inky, and rich with crème de cassis and spice box characteristics as well as a length that I stopped measuring after a minute, the wine reveals a sweetness to the tannin and an opulence to the fruit that suggests a hot, sunny vintage, but again, that was not the case. There wasn't a great deal of heat, but there was more sunshine than the negative press reported at the beginning of September. This is a great, great wine. The harvest at Lafite took place between October 1-7 for the Merlot grapes, the Cabernet Franc was picked in mid-October, and the Cabernet Sauvignon between October 7-14 - an unbelievably late harvest for this estate. This wine should evolve for 30-40 years and last 50 or more. As I have indicated before, Lafite's second wine is now one of Bordeaux's finest second wines, and is made very much in the Lafite style.



2008 Mouton Rothschild 94-96/100 \$249.00

Mouton's vineyard was harvested between October 2-15, and the wine possesses an unexpectedly high pH of 3.85 (high for this vintage, but normal for a riper year). Made from low yields of 34 hectoliters per hectare, it achieved a natural alcohol content of 13.2%, one of the highest ever for this estate. Made from 54% of the production, the 2008 Mouton Rothschild's final blend of 83% Cabernet Sauvignon and 17% Merlot has resulted in an atypically sweeter, more direct and opulent, fleshy Mouton. Keep in mind that this cuvee, because of the high Cabernet Sauvignon content as well as the terroir, is often backward, structured, and nearly foreboding in its youth. However, I do not think the 2008 will behave in that manner. There is plenty of tannin and exceptional density and ripeness, but the tannins are velvety, and I was amazed by how charmingly forward and fleshy this wine already is. A deep purple color, sweet aromas of crème de cassis, smoke, cedar, and an unmistakable floral component (another characteristic of the Cabernet Sauvignon in 2008) are found in this precocious, succulent Mouton that should firm up and put on more weight with aging. My score is somewhat conservative because it is hard to forget their prodigious 2006, but the 2008 will provide far more enjoyment and pleasure over the near-term than the 2006. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2035.

For California enthusiasts, while visiting Mouton Rothschild, I had the opportunity to taste several vintages of Opus One, which has taken on new, dramatically high quality now that the Rothschild's are sole owners. I'll just say that the 2007 Opus One promises to be the greatest example of that wine ever produced. More details will be published in the December issue on California wines.

2008 Tierpe La Cote Bordeaux Superior 89-91/100 \$16.00

A blockbuster effort from a humble appellation, this sleeper of the vintage exhibits a deep ruby/purple color as well as sweet crème de cassis, licorice, and incense characteristics, and a remarkably medium to full-bodied, concentrated style for a wine of this pedigree and lowly price. It can be enjoyed during its first 5-7 years of life.



2008 Pichon Lalande 94-96/100 \$75.00

The 2008 Pichon Lalande's final blend was 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, and the rest Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Only 38% of the crop made it into the grand vin, and the result is a wine that blows away the 2005. Terrific texture and opulence, forward fruit, sweet tannin, and a lush personality are found in this dense purple-colored 2008 along with copious quantities of sweet berries, roasted coffee, underbrush, black currant, and black cherry fruit. Sensationally pure, textured, and full-bodied, this will be a flamboyant, showy offering in its youth, but it is capable of lasting 20-30 years.



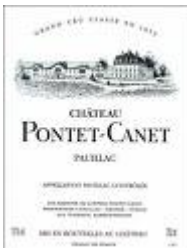
2008 Gazin 94-96/100 \$59.00

The 2008 is a marvelous effort from this property situated adjacent to Petrus and only a stone's throw from l'Evangile. An amazing effort, the wine exhibits an inky/ruby/purple color, wonderful concentration, a beautifully sweet perfume of caramels, mocha, jammy black currants, and smoky blackberries, a full-bodied mouth feel, a layered, skyscraper-like texture, and sweet but elevated tannins. Overall, it displays gorgeous freshness and delineation. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2025.



2008 Gloria 90-93/100 \$33.00

This estate has been fashioning terrific wines over recent vintages, and the 2008 is an opulent, dense purple-hued effort displaying sweet crème de cassis fruit intermixed with hints of tapenade, licorice, and roasted herbs. It exhibits fabulously pure fruit, a full-bodied mouth feel, and a flamboyant, almost exotic richness. Very ripe, pure, and long, this will be a wine to drink young, but given past examples, it should be capable of lasting 15-20 years. It is a fabulous sleeper of the vintage.



2008 Pontet Canet 96-98+/100 \$99.00

A wine for our children's children. Nobody in Bordeaux is more attentive to detail than Alfred Tesseron is at Pontet-Canet. Fashioned from incredibly low yields, a very late harvest, and a Draconian selection, the 2008 will not be close to drinkability for at least a decade, and it should still be in superb form circa 2060. An absolutely amazing effort, it boasts an inky/black/purple color as well as an extraordinary bouquet of crème de cassis, graphite, charcoal, and incense, blockbuster depth, and full-bodied power. The tannins are high, but they are remarkably velvety as well as well-integrated. Sensational acidity gives the wine precision and vibrancy, but the impression is one of massive concentration and power. The 2008 Pontet-Canet, a candidate for the wine of the vintage, is a tour de force in viticultural precision and winemaking savoir faire.



2008 Haut Bergey Rouge 92-94+/100 \$29.00

The earthy, smoky notes intermixed with notions of black fruits and road tar found in this blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot are classic Graves traits. Sweet, dense fruit, with tremendous opulence, a layered mouth feel, and excellent purity, freshness, and ripe tannins are displayed in abundance in this beautifully made offering from proprietor Helene Garcin. It should age effortlessly for

20 years.



2008 Sanctus 91-94/100 \$33.00

A brilliant effort from the proprietor of La Bienfaisance, Sanctus comes from a 7.5-acre parcel planted on clay, limestone, and the famous iron-rich soils of the vineyard. A blend of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc produced from modest yields of 24 hectoliters per hectare, it boasts a deep purple color followed by aromas of blueberry pie, creosote, charcoal, and background oak. Full-bodied, dense, and opulent with excellent fruit purity, sweet tannin, and fresh, crisp acids, this beauty came in at 14.2% natural alcohol. It

should be delicious in 2-3 years, and will evolve for 15 or more.



2008 Cantenac Brown 90-92/100 \$44.00

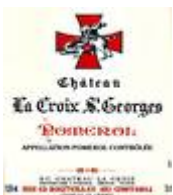
For producing the finest Cantenac Brown I have ever tasted, kudos go to the new administration and proprietor. This property has always produced a rustic, austere wine with too much tannin and muscle for its delicate Margaux personality. However, in 2008 the tannin has been tamed, and it is now sweet, ripe, and well-integrated. The wine exhibits a dense purple color in addition to a ripe bouquet of black fruits, licorice, smoke, and underbrush. It is a medium-bodied, classic Margaux that will benefit from 3-5 years of bottle age, and should keep for 20-25 years.



2008 Croix de Labrie 93-95/100 \$59.00

If you drink wine for pleasure (and I hope 99.9% of my readers do), this is an example of what one might call liquid Viagra - a sexy, opulent, flamboyant claret with extraordinary density of fruit, sweet tannins, a multidimensional mouth feel, and abundant amounts of black fruits, licorice, incense, and a hint of truffle. Its purity, texture, and fleshiness are something to savor. This is a wine to consume during its first 12-15

years of life. Sadly, only 200 cases (8 barrels) were produced in this low yielding year.



2008 La Croix Saint Georges 93-95/100 \$57.00

A brilliant effort from proprietor Jean-Philippe Janoueix, this blend of 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc possesses an inky purple color as well as a gorgeous perfume of melted chocolate, blackberries, black cherries, licorice, new saddle leather, lead pencil shavings, and a touch of new oak. While dense, powerful, full-bodied, and built for the long haul, the tannins are sweet, and the acids give the wine precision. This long,

deep, impressive 2008 should be approachable in 2-3 years and last for two decades.



2008 Fleur Cardinale 91-93/100 \$40.00

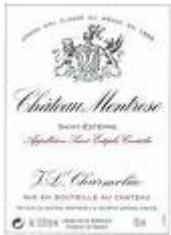
The 2008 possesses a deep ruby/purple color as well as complex aromatics of graphite, cedar, blackberries, black currants, and subtle background oak. Dense, with abundant fruit, soft, ripe tannin, and a long, heady finish, I am not sure it is as powerful, rich, or as potentially long-lived as the 2005, but it will be drinkable at a much earlier age, and should evolve for 15 or more years.

This 45-acre vineyard owned by the Decoster family has produced fabulous wines over recent years. In 2008, yields were the lowest to date, 35 hectoliters per hectare, and the final blend is 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Only 5,000 cases have been produced because of the tiny yields and strict selection. The winemaking is overseen by Jean-Philippe Fort (Michel Rolland's right-hand man) as well as Jean-Luc Thunevin.



2008 Clinet 94-97/100 \$77.00

This is the greatest Clinet since the incredible duo made by the late Jean-Michel Arcaute in 1989 and 1990. The dense purple-colored 2008 offers up beautiful floral, blackberry, and pen ink-like notes, exceptional intensity, that multilayered texture that seems to be commonplace in the top 2008 Pomerols, silky but elevated tannins, good freshness, precision, and nuance, a substantial size, and an extremely long finish with not a hard edge to be found. It should evolve for 30+ years.



2008 Montrose 95-97/100 \$85.00

An undeniably great Montrose, after some time in wood, the 2008 should achieve the heights of the 2003, 1990, and 1989. Stylistically different from those wines, the 2008 harvest took place between September 29 and October 15, and yields were a modest 44 hectoliters per hectare. This superb terroir west of the Gironde River possesses a remarkable amount of gravel in the soil base. Sixty percent of the production made it into the 2008 Montrose, and the person responsible for so many great Haut-Brions, Jean-Bernard Delmas, came out of retirement to take charge over the last several vintages for proprietor Martin Bouygues. An inky/purple color is accompanied by sweet, pure aromas of black fruits and spice. This full-bodied wine exhibits superb concentration, sweet tannin, and a multilayered, textured, full-bodied mouth feel with no hard edges. The sweetness of the tannin, the extraordinary purity of fruit, and the intense aromatics suggest a year of great ripeness. The difference between the 2008 and the 2003, 1990, or 1989 is the freshness and purity of expression. This should be a long-lived wine (35+ years), yet it will drink surprisingly well at a young age. For some reason, it comes across like an even more pure example of the 1989, even though there is nothing essentially comparable between the two harvests.