

La Mondotte 1998

Revue de presse
Press review

Vignobles Comtes von Neipperg

Palmarès

VIN	NOTE (sur 100)	RANG	CHÂTEAU	APPELLATION	CLASSIFICATION	SOUS-RÉGION
CHEVAL BLANC	93,41	1	Cheval Blanc	Saint-émilion grand cru	Premier grand cru classé A	Libournais
LA MONDOTTE	92,96	2	La Mondotte	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
LAFITE-ROTHSCHILD	92,9	3	Lafite-Rothschild	Pauillac	Premier cru classé	Médoc
LA GOMERIE	92,86	4	La Gomerie	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
ROL VALENTIN	92,76	5	Rol Valentin	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
RAUZAN-SÉGLA	92,73	6	Rauzan-Séglà	Margaux	Deuxième cru classé	Médoc
PAVIE	92,6	7	Pavie	Saint-émilion grand cru	Premier grand cru classé B	Libournais
HAUT-MARBUZET	92,53	8	Haut-Marbuzet	Saint-estèphe	Cru bourgeois	Médoc
GRAND MAYNE	92,34	9	Grand Mayne	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
MALESCOT S'-EXUPÉRY	92,3	10	Malescot St-Exupéry	Margaux	Troisième cru classé	Médoc
LATOUR	92,29	11	Latour	Pauillac	Premier cru classé	Médoc
CANON LA GAFFELIÈRE	92,25	12	Canon La Gaffelière	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru classé	Libournais
DE VALANDRAUD	92,24	13	de Valandraud	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
DASSAULT	92,22	14	Dassault	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru classé	Libournais
LA TOUR FIGEAC	92,16	15	La Tour Figeac	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru classé	Libournais
LÉOVILLE LAS CASES	92,05	16	Léoville Las Cases	Saint-julien	Deuxième cru classé	Médoc
MOULTON-ROTHSCHILD	91,9	17	Mouton-Rothschild	Pauillac	Premier cru classé	Médoc
LE MOULIN	91,89	18	Le Moulin	Pomerol		Libournais
HAUT-CONDISSAS	91,84	19	Haut-Condissas	Médoc	Cru bourgeois	Médoc
MONBOUSQUET	91,83	20	Monbousquet	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
PÉBY FAUGÈRES	91,73	21	Péby Faugères	Saint-émilion grand cru		Libournais
CLOS DE L'ORATOIRE	91,68	22	Clos de l'Oratoire	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru	Libournais
LYNCH BAGES	91,45	23	Lynch Bages	Pauillac	Cinquième cru classé	Médoc
MARGAUX	91,43	24	Margaux	Margaux	Premier cru classé	Médoc
CLOS FOURTET	91,4	25	Clos Fourtet	Saint-émilion grand cru	Premier grand cru classé B	Libournais
PICHON LONGUEVILLE	91,39	26	Pichon Longueville	Pauillac	Deuxième cru classé	Médoc
COS D'ESTOURNEL	91,35	27	Cos d'Estournel	Saint-estèphe	Deuxième cru classé	Médoc
GRUAUD LAROSE	91,3	28	Gruaud Larose	Saint-julien	Deuxième cru classé	Médoc
CANTENAC BROWN	91,12	29	Cantenac Brown	Margaux	Troisième cru classé	Médoc
LÉOVILLE BARTON	91,1	30	Léoville Barton	Saint-julien	Deuxième cru classé	Médoc
PAVIE-DECESSE	91	31	Pavie-Decesse	Saint-émilion grand cru	Grand cru classé	Libournais

GaultMillau n° 347. septembre-octobre 2001

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TASTED — Bordeaux Traditions

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Château la Mondotte - Has undergone a wonderful metamorphosis over the past decade. Formerly big, powerful and brooding, this beautiful wine has blossomed into a mineral driven wine. Intense blackberry liqueur, licorice and earthy aromatics are paired with a concentrated, structured and powerful wine. Big and dense, yet balanced and pure. Still young, this wine will continue gaining additional levels of complexity over the next decade or two.

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1998	LA MONDOTTE	ST. EMILION	(\$450.00)	(96-98)
1997	LA MONDOTTE	ST. EMILION	(\$350.00)	94

As reported earlier, the 1996 La Mondotte was a triumph in a vintage that was much more successful for the Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines of the northern Médoc than those from Pomerol and St.-Emilion. This amazing nectar (800 cases from a 30-year old parcel of Merlot planted on a hillside near Le Tertre-Roteboeuf and Canon la Gaffelière) may be the most concentrated and richest wine being produced in Bordeaux. La Mondotte is Bordeaux's ultimate *vin de garage*.

1997: A stupendous effort, and unquestionably one of the wines of the vintage, La Mondotte's 1997 boasts a saturated purple color as well as an explosive nose of blackberries, violets, minerals, and sweet toasty oak. Huge and massive, yet gorgeously proportioned, it possesses an unctuous texture with no hard edges. More seductive and easier to drink than the behemoth 1996, it should be consumed between now and 2015.

1998: Off-the-chart concentration results in a character more similar to dry vintage port than Bordeaux. This opaque black/purple-colored 1998 exhibits massive, highly-extracted flavors of blackberry and cherry liqueur, smoked bacon, coffee, and new oak. Thick, with gorgeously integrated sweet tannin, alcohol, and glycerin, this is a profoundly promising, complex wine that takes concentration and complexity to the limit. Give it 5-7 years of bottle age, and enjoy it between 2006-2025. Wow!

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JAMES SUCKLING'S TOP-SCORING 1998 BORDEAUX

For complete reviews, see the Buying Guide "New Releases" section starting on page 121, or our Web site at www.winespectator.com.
An alphabetical listing of all wines tasted for this report begins on page 136 of this issue's Buying Guide.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
CHÂTEAU LE PIN Pomerol 1998 Rich, wild and exotic. Dark ruby color, with decadent aromas of aged game, wild fruits and grilled meat. Full-bodied, with big, velvety tannins. Goes on and on.	100	\$615	CHÂTEAU LA MISSION-HAUT-BRION Pessac-Léognan 1998 Tight and muscular. Very floral on the nose, with gorgeous berry and cherry. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a long, fresh and fruity finish.	95	\$108
CHÂTEAU CHEVAL-BLANC St-Emilion 1998 Subtle, complex and refined, with aromas of cherry, licorice, mineral, berry and other sweet, ripe fruit. Full-bodied, compacted, with fine, silky tannins. Long finish.	98	\$190	VIEUX-CHÂTEAU-CERTAN Pomerol 1998 Powerful and wonderfully toned. Lovely mineral, berry and violet aromas with hints of new oak. Full-bodied, with big yet silky tannins and a long finish.	95	\$152
CHÂTEAU L'EVANGILE Pomerol 1998 Captivating aromas of wild raspberry, cherry, mineral and grilled meat. Full-bodied, with huge, silky tannins, a long, caressing finish. Wonderful proportions.	98	\$143	CHÂTEAU AUSONE St-Emilion 1998 Plenty of mineral and berry character with hints of smoke. Full-bodied, with big, chewy tannins and a long, long finish. Massive.	94	\$200
CHÂTEAU PÉTRUS Pomerol 1998 High-toned nose, with violet, floral, berry and toasted oak character. Full-bodied, with an incredible backbone of super-polished tannins. Satisfying finish.	98	\$550	CLOS DE L'ORATOIRE St-Emilion 1998 Blockbuster. Black in color, with strong grape, toasted oak and dark chocolate aromas. Full-bodied, with big, velvety tannins and a long finish.	94	\$37
CHÂTEAU HAUT-BRION Pessac-Léognan 1998 Classy and rich, with vanilla, raspberry and chocolate aromas. Full-bodied, with fine tannins and a long aftertaste of berry, grape and vanilla. Elegant and powerful.	97	\$193	CHÂTEAU LA FLEUR DE GAY Pomerol 1998 Exotic aromas of spice, meat and game, with lots of ripe berry. Full-bodied, with soft, ripe tannins, a long finish. On the level of the stupendous '90.	94	\$86
CHÂTEAU L'ÉGLISE CLINET Pomerol 1998 Rich and thick, yet refined and precise. Crushed raspberry and berry character. Full-bodied, with loads of fruit, fine tannins and an extremely long finish.	96	\$197	CHÂTEAU LA FLEUR-PÉTRUS Pomerol 1998 Big wine, classic in style, with loads of berry and Indian spices, hints of mineral and flowers. Full-bodied, with full tannins and lots of fruit.	94	\$77
CHÂTEAU LAFLEUR Pomerol 1998 Fascinating aromas of berry, chocolate, smoke and dried herb. Full-bodied, with incredibly well-integrated tannins, a fine texture and a finish that lasts for minutes.	96	\$200	CHÂTEAU LATOUR À POMEROL Pomerol 1998 Tar, berry and dry stone aromas, with wet earth. Full-bodied, thick and chewy, with velvety tannins. Big and rustic. Textbook Latour à Pomerol.	94	\$81
CHÂTEAU LA MONDOTTE St-Emilion 1998 Extremely well-constructed. Black in color, massively grapey, with mineral, menthol and toasted oak. Full-bodied, with big, velvety tannins and a long, grapey finish.	96	\$332	CHÂTEAU ROL VALENTIN St-Emilion 1998 Breathtaking. Very dark color. Loads of cinnamon, berry and currant aromas. Full-bodied, with big, velvety tannins and a lengthy finish. Well-crafted.	94	\$77
CHÂTEAU TROTANDY Pomerol 1998 Subtle and harmonious, with berry, tobacco and vanilla character. Full-bodied, with masses of polished, fine tannins. Long finish of milk chocolate and berry.	96	\$207	CHÂTEAU SMITH-HAUT-LAFITTE Pessac-Léognan 1998 Intense aromas of wet earth, stone and berries. Full-bodied, with super well-integrated tannins and long finish. Well made.	94	\$36
CHÂTEAU CANON-LA GAFFELIÈRE St-Emilion 1998 Wonderful aromas of ripe fruit, Indian spices and mineral. Full-bodied, with fine tannins and a plush, caressing structure. Fine and fabulous.	95	\$52	CHÂTEAU DE VALANDRAUD St-Emilion 1998 Exotic, a bit rough now, but quite likable. Intense aromas of tobacco, mineral, cedar, ripe fruit. Lots of toasted oak. Full-bodied, with big tannins, lots of fruit, a chewy finish.	94	\$284

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A Right Bank Year to Rediscover

I am always on the look-out for quality 1998 Bordeaux. I love their rich, opulent character, their round tannins and long, decadent finishes. It is one of my favorite recent vintages from France's premier wine region.

If you are scratching your head, you have forgotten that 1998 was a split vintage for Bordeaux. I rated it at 95 points for the Right Bank regions of St.-Emilion and Pomerol. Pessac-Léognan also excelled. (I gave the Left Bank just 88 points.)

I remember writing in early 2001 following an extensive tasting of the 1998 wines in bottle that "If Bordeaux were only the regions of Pomerol and St.-Emilion, then the 1998 vintage would be one of the greatest ever . . . They have everything from ultraripe, exotic fruit aromas and flavors to copious, opulent tannins. They are classic wines for long-term aging."

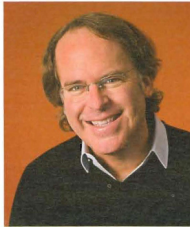
This is still true. I tasted more than 100 1998s in blind tastings in Bordeaux late last year, and the wines showed as they did from the beginning, or even better: I gave 16 wines scores of 95 points or more; 15 of these were Right Bank wines. The top performers were Le Pin (100 points) and Pétrus (99). Overall, I rated four dozen St.-Emilions and Pomerols 90 points or more. (An alphabetical list of all the wines tasted for this report is available at www.winespectator.com/06/30/09.)

Other top-rated wines in the tasting included La Mondotie (98), Cheval-Blanc (98), Lafleur (98), L'Église Cînet (97), Trotanoy (97), Haut-Brion (97), L'Évangile (97), La Mission-Haut-Brion (96), Pape Clément White (96) and Haut-Brion White (96).

I scored only one Médoc wine 95 points—first-growth Lafite Rothschild—and only a handful of other Left Bank wines were outstanding in my tasting.

It all makes sense. The 1998 vintage was hot and sunny for most of the growing season. But in late September, rain began. I still remember the headline on an Oct. 4, 1998, story in Bordeaux's daily newspaper *Sud Ouest*: it read "Take Cover! Too Much Water in the Grapes."

WINE SPECTATOR.COM
For an alphabetical list of all red Bordeaux tasted for this retrospective, visit www.winespectator.com/06/30/09. WineSpectator.com members can also view full tasting notes for the wines.



IF BORDEAUX WERE ONLY POMEROL AND ST.-EMILION, THE 1998 VINTAGE WOULD BE ONE OF THE GREATEST EVER.

Wine estates in such areas as St.-Emilion, Pomerol and Pessac-Léognan finished harvesting their grapes by Sept. 29. Right Bank wines are made with earlier-ripening varieties such as Merlot and Cabernet Franc. So, they made excellent reds in 1998.

The difference in picking can be as much as two weeks between the Merlot of the Right Bank and the Cabernet Sauvignon of the northern Médoc. So essentially, the more Cabernet Sauvignon a wine estate had in its vineyard, the more diluted or unripe the final bottles could be in 1998. Most

producers in regions such as Margaux, St.-Julien, Pauillac and St.-Estèphe had to harvest in between rain showers. This is why many of the Left Bank 1998s are slightly diluted, hollow or unripe.

But, boy, are the outstanding reds beautiful. The St.-Emilions and Pomerols are classic clarets, with all the structure and richness one could hope for. Right Bank vintners and wine collectors have often compared the 1998 to the legendary 1950—another year when Left Bank estates failed but Right ones triumphed—and I think they are correct.

Moreover, many of the 1998s are excellent values, selling for less than their counterparts in more famous vintages such as 2000 or 2005. For example, the classic-quality 1998 L'Église Cînet averaged \$190 a bottle at auctions in the fourth quarter of 2008; a bottle of the 2000 traded for \$275. The 2005 was initially released at \$382.

Many lesser-known 1998 Pomerols and St.-Emilions sold at auction in late 2008 for between \$40 and \$75 a bottle, and they are fantastic buys. Examples include Canon-La Gaffelière (94, \$73), Fougères (93, \$41), Clos de l'Oratoire (92, \$57) and Le Bon-Pasteur (93, \$42).

The best 1998s will age well for decades to come. In fact, most of them still need another two or three years of bottle age to become truly attractive to drink. I would recommend waiting until 2011 or 2012 to try them, although you could enjoy them sooner if you decant them a couple of hours before serving. (Wines that scored in the low 90s or below, however, should be consumed over the next few years.)

With 1998 in mind, it's good not to follow the pack on Bordeaux vintages. And if you love Right Bank wines, rediscover a 1998 Pomerol or St.-Emilion and see for yourself.

European bureau chief James Suckling is Wine Spectator's lead taster on the wines of Bordeaux.