

Saint-Estève

CHÂTEAU MEYNEY




CA GRANDS CRUS



BIOGRAPHY : Michel Bettane

A University Classics professor who happened to love wine, he had the good idea to join the Académie du Vin in Paris as a student back in 1977.

By the early 1980's he had got to know the new owners of France's leading wine magazine, La Revue du Vin de France. Together they injected a fresh attitude into this long-established magazine, based on an open approach and some firm convictions, helping it to find a new audience. The arrival of Thierry Desseauve as editor-in-chief in 1989

paved the way for a further modernisation of both content and layout of La Revue.

In 2005, Michel Bettane and Thierry Desseauve founded their own company whose objective is to use their expertise and knowledge of the best wines for the benefit of all wine-lovers. In this project they aim to inform novices to the world of wine as well as aficionados, and address the world as well as the French-speaking public.

Their independence of judgement and their wide-ranging knowledge of the wines of the world have made them both internationally recognised experts.

« Michel Bettane is Europe's most important wine critic » Robert Parker

A PRESTIGIOUS TASTING

Château Meyney over 50 years of its history

by Michel Bettane



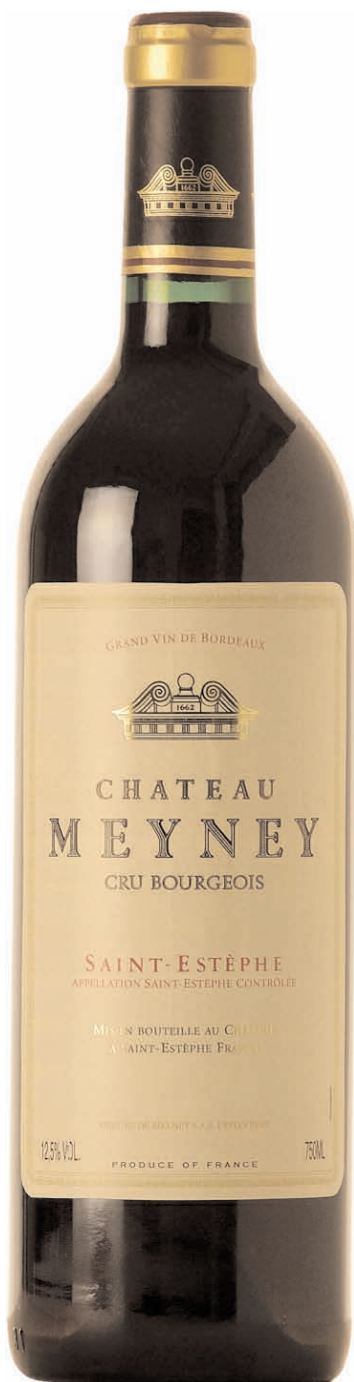
Château Meyney is a gem of Médoc architecture : it takes the form of an elegant *chartreuse*, quite rightly classified amongst France's protected buildings.

The château dominates a vineyard of 50 hectares (123 acres), forming a single block and facing the Gironde estuary, between Montrose and Phélan-Séгур. This was one of the first sites in the region to be planted with vines, largely due to the natural qualities of the terrain and meso-climate. The first to

grow vines here were probably Feuillant monks who owned Meyney in the 16th century and established a convent there. Spring frosts here, as in nearby Château Latour, are very rare and the water mass formed by the Gironde acts as a perfect regulator for both spring and summer temperatures. The gently slope of the land provides efficient natural drainage for most of the vineyard, but the nature of the sub-soil, a layer of blue clay that lies several metres deep in places, as at Petrus, necessitates additional drainage to be introduced in parts that tend to retain water. In over two-thirds of the vineyard area, the quality of the gravelly soil is magnificent and

A Prestigious Tasting

TAST n° 52
décembre 2008



quite comparable to that of its prestigious neighbour. It is ideally suited to Cabernet Sauvignon, which also happens to be planted on two-thirds of the vineyard. Another quarter is devoted to Merlot, in addition to a particularly high percentage (10%) of Petit Verdot. This unusually high share of the latter grape may well explain a particular trait of the wines, which regularly show notes of leather and musk after a period of time.

For more than a quarter of a century, Georges Pauli managed this estate for the owners, the Cordier family, who also owned Châteaux Talbot and Gruaud Larose in Saint Julien, and Château Lafaurie Peyraguey in Sauternes. He remained in charge until the estate was taken over by the Crédit Agricole and had now been succeeded by Bernard Monteau, who is assisted by the vineyard manager, Jean-Louis Soussotte, and the cellar master, Denis Rataud. Denis Dubourdieu assists the team as consultant. All of the Credit Agricole wine estates are managed by Thierry Budin, who is in the process of providing his team with the means to fundamentally improve all aspects of viticulture and winemaking.

The best vintages produced by Georges Pauli have something flamboyantly baroque about them. They were also clearly inspired by the splendid work accomplished by his predecessors over the previous half-century, as shown by the sumptuous 1929 and 1952 that I tasted. The most recent vintages, whilst retaining the comfortable charm that is a keynote of this estate, are closer to a more classical médoc model that is based on balance, aromatic precision, and elegant, well-defined tannins. Compared with its next-door neighbour, Montrose, which is usually taughter and denser, with more mineral-edged tannins, Meyney shows seductive truffle-like flavours that probably derive from the clay soil component. These produce greater harmony in the younger wines together with the spicy and cedar-like aromas from the cabernet, and the texture derived from new oak barrels (about 40%). But its full finesse only comes through - provided the bottle is not let down by its cork - after more than twenty years. It then is the equal of the most prestigious estates in the area.

Meyney had perhaps not been in existence as a separate estate for long enough by the time the 1855 classification took place. Or maybe its owner didn't have as much influence as that of Montrose. Whatever the reason, it did not appear in the classification. On the basis of the best wines from this tasting, and from the level of quality that has been reached again in the most recent vintages, I would place it on a level of a third growth, and, in the future, if the work on the fundamentals in the vineyard that is under way bears its fruit, on that of a second growth, which would indeed reflect its exceptional site.



All the wines were tasted at the end of the 2008 harvest period and at the château.

Some of the vintages were tasted for the first time by those who are currently managing the estate. They were, like myself, quite stunned by the splendid showing of the great older vintages, some of which, I would add, appear considerably over the peak in the case of certain neighbours.

2007 - CASK SAMPLE

Very classy and spicy aromas, with fullish body for the vintage, and firm, clear-cut tannins that are well balanced against the fruit. General impression of harmony, finely made.



2006

Deep colour, quite a closed nose, probably not yet fully recovered from recent bottling. Full-bodied and fleshy, with nothing aggressive in its profile and the texture that seems so specific to this estate. Perhaps a bit less fine and subtle than the 2007.

16/20

2005

A thoroughly great wine, combining full body and elegance with suave tannins that are quite rare in a vintage that suffered from

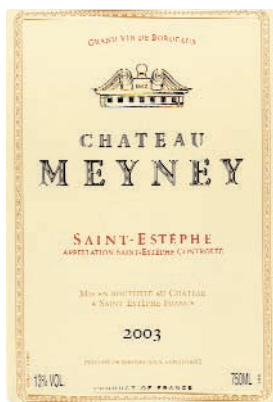
drought. Not a monumental wine, but one wine that shows all the nuances and refined tactile elements of a great, civilised bordeaux. For me this is the best buy of the Médoc region in this generally overpriced vintage.

18/20

2004

An excellent example of a wine from a terroir close to the estuary, with finely spiced aromas and perfectly balanced body. The tannins are not quite as smooth as in the 2005, but the vinification and barrel ageing have returned to an irreproachably classical style!

16,5/20



2003

An exceptionally velvety texture for this wine that shows epic proportions that will probably make it legendary. It has, to me, something more original and moving than the 2005 for all those who like slightly roasted, over-ripe grapes, as with the great 1947s.

18,5/20

1996

A magnificent first impression on the nose, with whiffs of leather and musk. It then shows strongly reductive aromas that require this wine to be decanted at least two hours before serving.

16/20

1995

For the moment this is far more harmonious than the 1996. It has terrific aromatic finesse that is quite rare amongst Saint-Estèphe wines that generally show a more rustic side. Excellent balance, dense but velvety texture and ideal ripeness. This has great style, and, despite having been scandalously underestimated by many, is a worthy successor of all the great vintages since 1945.

18/20

1988

An excellent bottle in perfect condition. The aromas are well defined, stylish and harmonious, with classic aromas of spice and cedar, quite harmonious with a dominant edge of mint. All this provides a note of freshness and elegance to the finish. A classic for the vintage, from grapes probably very ripe and picked late, in the style that Georges Pauli handled so well. Ready to drink now.

17/20

1986

Very individual aromas that show ripe peppers and old leather with a slightly animal touch that will not please everyone but would help the wine go with feathered game. A second bottle seemed quite different, with nothing animal at all, but a fantastic aroma range of soft spices and cedar and a fine, very elegant body. Very stylish. This shows just how hard it can be to generalise! All one can do is to try to account for the feelings produced by each and every bottle.

15/20 and 18/20 (second bottle).

1982

Wonderfully balanced and soft in texture. The bouquet is subtle, associating fine touches of musk (probably due to some brentanomyces) with cedar and truffles. The tannins are refined, but this also seems slightly diluted when compared with the 1995 or 2004 for example.

16,5/20

1975

Has decent volume but the nose is rather austere and the tannins are taught and dry, quite astringent. Not a bad wine, but one needs to situate this in the context of « old-style » médocs. We clearly prefer the modern style, even if this has been inspired by an oenological approach that is anathema to a few nostalgics.

14/20



1970

Far more pleasant than the 1975, this is supple and approachable, well defined and well made. Seemingly more diluted than the 1982 however. A missed opportunity: this is merely good, but it could have been great.

15/20

1966

A fine bottle in very good condition. With its very classic nose of spices and musk, this has class, elegance and fine tannins. A civilised and spiritual wine rather than a voluptuous and sensual one.

17/20

1962

Deliciously soft and supple, this shows how well this estate was managed at this time. The grapes seem riper than in the 1966. The finish is clean, although not quite as long as for the 1966.

16,5/20

1961

A superb example of this legendary vintage. Full and comprehensive, in a dense style which will only return at this estate towards the end of the 1980s, it shows noble aromas of cedar and finely bred tannins. This shows a terroir that is truly on a par with that of the best classified growths, and is in better shape than I can remember for bottles from the same vintage of Cos d'Estournel, Montrose or Calon Ségur. I would place it, together with Pez, right at the summit of the appellation for this vintage!

18/20



A Prestigious Tasting

TAST n° 52
décembre 2008

1955

The colour shows its age, but the condition is otherwise exceptional. The wine is fleshy, suave and harmonious, with not a sign of roughness in the tannins. It reminds me in its style of the remarkably successful Cos d'Estournel in this vintage.

17/20

1952

Even better, this is truly remarkable! The nose is incredibly subtle, with great intensity in its nuances. Very fine tertiary aromas close to black truffles (probably due to the clay in the sub-soil) and tannins that are even finer than those of the 1961. I cannot remember ever tasting a médoc from this vintage at this level (and that includes Latour) and I have tasted quite a few as I was born this year! Thanks be given to the cork that stoppered this bottle!

19/20

1947

Another wine that is exceptionally soft and velvety, with noble aromas. This shows very good wine-making in a vintage that was quite tricky. It is long and sensual, just a bit less complex than the 1952.

18/20

1934

Taught and vegetal, rather in the manner of the 1975, but finer and purer. Its difficulty was to have been preceded and followed in the tasting by two exceptional bottles.

15/20



A Prestigious Tasting

TAST n° 52
décembre 2008



1929

This is easily the most perfect of the 1929s that I have tasted over the past 20 years, and that includes several first growths! I was simply amazed by the purity of the aromas, by the delicacy of the texture, and by the subtlety and persistence of the finish. This wine is proof indeed of the quality of this terroir and confirms the injustice of this estate not being part of the 1855 classification. Truth however lies in the bottle, and the superior harmony of this one puts it on a level with the very best vintages of Calon Ségur (1945, 1947, 1953) which remain in my taster's memory as the very summit of the Saint-Estèphe appellation.

19,5/20



CA GRANDS CRUS

www.cagrandscrus.com

contact@cagrandscrus.com

Téléphone : +33 (0)5 56 59 00 40