

April 2025, Rottweil

## BACK TO THE FUTURE... BORDEAUX !!

Veronique Sanders from Haut Bailly titled the vintage

**“Singing in the rain”.**

And that’s certainly an accurate way to put it. After an extremely wet winter, the rainy harvest was only interrupted by short rain-free periods in Spring and June/August. In other words, boots were the preferable order in the vineyards.

The perfect environment for fungal diseases – just like paradise. Unhindered mildew and botrytis during the harvest.

Sort, baby, sort! These challenging whether conditions made many châteaux sort their harvest up to four times to ensure the desired quality. This ensured quality but lowered the yields of most chateaux and resulted in a lot of waste.

A vintage that was extremely labor-intensive and expensive. For the châteaux! And the result? Some were calling it a low-level vintage. Low-Level? Not at all! Classic in style - and excellent because of it. Maybe this was exactly the kind of year we needed. Right now, in a time where so many things are finding new direction. Bordeaux is no exception.

The best 2024 Bordeaux wines, and there are many good to very good ones - have exactly what wine lovers have always loved so much about Bordeaux – something that was missing in many of the past few years. The full-bodied, sometimes heavy wines with opulent fruit, sweetness and high alcohol level? Is this really Bordeaux? Where did the beautiful aromas of red berries, crisp cassis, and delicate bell peppers go? Where was the beloved structure with good acidity and ripe but firm tannins? Instead, we got soft, often interchangeable high-scorers. But what were the high scores even for, in the end? Are scores the only thing château owners and winemakers are aiming for when trying to blend their best possible wines? Is this what Bordeaux- Fans & Lovers truly seek from this great wine region? This does not apply to all châteaux. But to too many.

During the Primeur week, I had the opportunity to taste many vintages back to 1935. Classic vintages with low alcohol levels, pronounced acidity in their youth, medium body and sometimes extremely angular tannins (1975). How beautiful these wines are today. Still! But no one wants or needs to wait 20, 30, or 50 years anymore. Times have changed, and so did the palate and demand of the vast majority. Bordeaux should and must be enjoyable in its youth too.



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The highly praised vintages of the century? I never choose them in a restaurant. I always aim for the classics. Especially the X4- and X6-vintage wines from the last 30 years. Great wines with structure and character. Rarely a miss and disappointment.

The style of the 2024 vintage? It was dictated to the winemakers by nature. They couldn't help themselves. But with this vintage, we are what Bordeaux was always about. What made Bordeaux one of the most iconic wine regions of the world. Now I'm curious to see how sustainable this trend will last. Will this vintage change some of the chateaux owners' and winemakers' minds? Will they also produce this classic style wines in more stable and generally "very strong" years?

The Bordeaux style needs to change again – back to its origin, back to the future, back to how Bordeaux used to be. We don't need wines designed for tastings to chase the highest scores. We need Bordeaux wines we *want* to drink. Classics. I personally don't aim on 100 Points wines when I open a bottle. I seek the beauty and finesse, the classic, the elegance – also when this means that these wines score less. For me as a fine wine merchant, who has been tasting these wines professionally for over 30 years, this is what makes Bordeaux so unique and still so desirable.

Changing conditions due to climate change must also be considered. An earlier harvest with physiologically ripe tannins could help in the short-run. And yes, I personally believe that prices need to come back to a healthy level if Bordeaux wants to claim their reputation back. In my first years in the wine business, the prices of 1993 1er Crus were 36€ per bottle en primeur. These times are long gone. But also the prices of the 2010 vintage, for example. It's all a matter of balance.

We need to have pricing again in line based on cost, not on the idea of creating a luxury brand. Again, this does not apply to all châteaux. But to too many.

When I drink Bordeaux, I want wine. Not a brand. Not a label. Many of our customers follow the journey of a château. They buy the wine annually. They love the *style* of the wine. Not the score. Buying en primeur is a matter of trust—and also a risk—for customers. And if these Bordeaux lovers can buy the wine they purchased en primeur at the same price upon release, or even for less—as has been the case with many châteaux in recent vintages—then I see barely a future for the current en primeur system.

The style of the 2024 Bordeaux is classic. A vintage we needed right now. When I packed my bags and traveled to Bordeaux, I was skeptical. And many others probably stayed away because of the forecast and the negative news all over the different channels. A big mistake. I was always a big fan of tasting and making up your own mind rather than trusting the experts. So we have handled our business for years, tasting, meeting the people, understanding. You can always copy scores and thoughts of the critics. That's not



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our style and this is not what our customers value. This shouldn't be the desirable way to be a professional primeur merchant. Buying en primeur is a matter of trust – trust in our vision and first-hand feedback.

Now I'm looking forward to the promotion and to the conversations with my clients.  
By your side.

Yours,

Michael Severin Grimm

