

Wine
magazine

Gilbert & Gaillard

*Special
tasting*

*Champagne, Médoc,
Burgundy, Rhône:
560 carefully selected bottles*

GERMANY, LUXEMBOURG, NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL, SPAIN €6.20 - U.K. £3.80 - U.S.A. \$10.99 - CANADA C\$8.50



The wine's the star



What you now have in your hands is our eighth edition, in which we have devoted considerable space to our most popular sections:

- Our long-awaited wine-by-wine champagne guide, with wines assessed according to our tasting criteria (score out of 100), but also by price category, to assist legibility and ease of selection.
- Two tasting files featuring Médoc wines (vintages currently on sale) and the great white wines of Burgundy (Corton-Charlemagne, Meursault, Chablis Grand Cru, etc.).
- A selection of Rhône valley wines for the serious connoisseur!

However, we've also spent a good few months making plans for the future, and we can now proudly unveil the blueprint for what is to become Issue 9 of this magazine:

Firstly, we wanted a more modern typographical design to improve clarity and provide a more dynamic reading experience. In terms of content, we are more committed than ever to giving you the maximum amount of information about the wines themselves, and so we'll be continuing to fill the magazine with as much tasting information as we can. For this reason, we're retaining the 'wine-by-wine guide' concept, with a series of features throughout the year which will include such topics as co-operative cellars and nouveau wines from Bordeaux.

We'll also be introducing Focus. This section will cover an average of around twenty pages in the magazine, and will compare two French appellations with a common link (either geographical or vinicultural), one pair at a time: for example, do you know what makes an Anjou different from a Touraine? – You don't? Our main aim will be to teach you how to distinguish them, using descriptions of the wines' terroirs and styles – and then to bring you the best examples, tasted by our editors.

This significant new introductory material will be complemented by a number of other new introductions – or existing sections with a new look – covering lighter themes: Brand News, Test Bench, Wines without Frontiers, Special Events! Believe us, we're very excited about the changes you'll be seeing soon.

Gilbert & Gaillard

Editorial Directors

Chardonnay: king of white wines



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Chardonnay is unquestionably the king of white wine grapes. If you want proof, consider its numerous and frequently successful migrations from its home soil in Burgundy. It ranks as the world's eighth most widely-cultivated grape, with more than 140,000 hectares planted. Its success outside France has been such that its native country now no longer tops the plantation table, but ranks No.2 behind the United States (where its adopted home seems to be California) - just ahead of Australia. We take a look at the reasons for this success...

Chardonnay's origins are venerable and obscure, although it may derive its name from the village of Chardonnay in the Mâcon region. It was long believed to belong to the same family as Pinot and to be none other than the 'white version' of Pinot Noir. However, it has very distinctive leaves: orbicular*, with a fairly lively clear green colour and a slightly bubbly appearance.

AN UNFUSSY GRAPE

Chardonnay's worldwide success can be accounted for by its ease of cultivation and ability to survive and acclimatise at all latitudes. However, its precocious development renders it susceptible to spring frosts (particularly in the Chablis and Champagne regions). Fortunately, it also ripens early, which usually spares the grape from the rot-inducing autumn rains. Chardonnay has a natural vigour, and tends to waste its energy on its leaves rather than its grapes. This rather undesirable habit is offset by its high plantation density in cold and temperate

countries, and its large size in hot regions. Chardonnay is highly susceptible to mille-randage* when faced with unfavourable climatic conditions (cold, rain) at the time of flowering, as can be the case in Champagne, Burgundy or northern California.

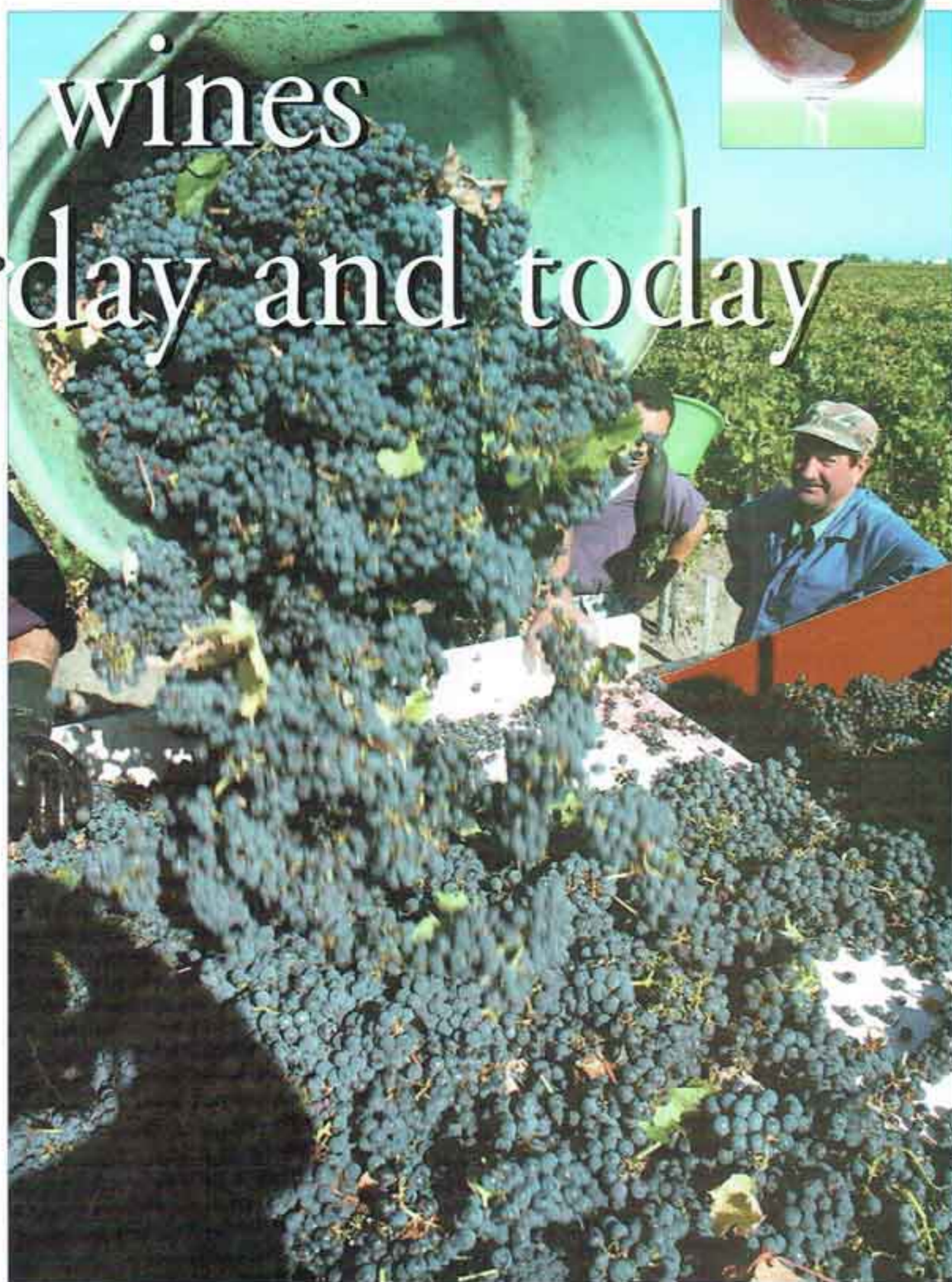
The grape's main qualities are its rich sugar content (and therefore high potential alcoholic strength), combined with generous and - more importantly - reliable yields. The most common error is to wait too long before harvesting, in which case the wine becomes heavy and pasty. But when the respective talents of the grower and the oenologist combine, Chardonnay can produce highly refined and well-balanced wines with sustained acidity and a characteristic sweetness. It is fairly docile during vinification - which has been one reason for its international success - and even a fairly incompetent producer can obtain halfway decent wine from it. Its richness and fleshiness, and therefore its ageing potential - although apparently lower in 'exotic' locations such

Médoc wines yesterday and today



Gilbert & Gaillard

The politicians and traders of Bordeaux were the first to take an interest in the Médoc region, and in the sixteenth century founded the *bourdieux* (country houses run as genuine viticultural estates). Always mindful of their prized return on investment, they created an innovative business model in which the steward replaced the tenant farmer. Century after century, the owners, stewards and business managers have continued this tradition to extract the best from the Médoc terroir. In this article, we will look at the impact of the improvement in techniques, combined with a growing understanding of the *terroir* and the spectacular advances of modern oenology, to trace the fortunes of Médoc wines over the last three decades or so in the face of the fluctuating markets and fashions to which all consumer products are subject. And last but not least, we will finish with a few truly excellent vintage wines to die for... there are so few left these days!



The eighteenth century brought new techniques and saw the growth of the colonies and the foundation of the French *Académie royale des sciences* in 1712, as well as encouraging the spread of wines to the very depths of Médoc. The concept of the *cru* appeared, and the theory of selecting only red grapes for the vinification of red wines was introduced, notably at Château Margaux. Topping-up, racking, clarification, barrel maturation and the use of SO₂ (sulphur dioxide), introduced by the Dutch, at last made it realistic to expect a certain amount of ageing from the wine. All of these new factors would enable the brokers of the period to establish a first draft of a hierarchy of Médoc crus. This list of the finest crus was a forerunner to the official classification of 1855, which identified 60

estates in the Médoc region alone. The crus bourgeois obtained their own classification in 1932 (with 444 being listed).

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CHÂTEAUX!

Crus classés, crus bourgeois, crus artisans... the wines of the eight AOCs of the Médoc region (Médoc, Haut-Médoc, Listrac, Margaux, Moulis, Pauillac, Saint-Julien, Saint-Estèphe) span the centuries, having attained international fame long before modern times (the twentieth century) and the notion of the *appellation d'origine contrôlée* itself. Huge estates (Château Larose Trintaudon, AOC Haut-Médoc, a 175-hectare monster) sit side by side with far more modest properties (Château Pontoise-Cabarrus, another AOC Haut-Médoc; and

CUVÉE PRESTIGE

CÔTES DU RHÔNE-VILLAGES VISAN

CUVÉE DU MAROT 2000

85/100

The 30,000 magnums of this wine, walled up for a year in the cellars of the Château de Visan, are "liberated" on the second Saturday of July every year by the Confrérie Saint-Vincent...

The cellars of Visan were founded in 1897 by Ferdinand Delaye, the driving force behind the renown of Visan wines and their marketing under the Côtes-du-Rhône Visan name. Back then, there was just one cellar to which the Visan growers brought their grapes. In 1937, it became a co-operative – and each of its successive directors has been a member of the founder's family ever since. In 1967, Visan was one of the very first *communes* to obtain the "Village" appellation.

In that year, the Les Coteaux cellar installed a vinification facility devoted entirely to the production of Côtes du Rhône-Village Visan, making it possible to perform rigorous selection and produce exceptional wines. These wines are made with a careful attention which begins at the stage where parcels are selected (*terroir* and old vines) by a viticultural technician. They are then ranked and sorted during harvesting (which is performed manually, as required for "Village"-appellation production) and vinified separately (by *terroir* and by grape). Lastly, the wine is prepared according to a traditional style and bottled on-site at the estate.

REMARKABLE WINE

OUR VERDICT

The Cuvée du Marot 2000 should ideally be drunk as an accompaniment to pheasant, and served at a temperature of 16/18°C. Also worth trying: L'Odysée 2 Mille, Notre-Dame des Vignes, Cuvée Ferdinand Delaye.

Where to order:

The "Les Coteaux" cellar, Visan - 84820 Visan - Tel.: (+33) 4 90 28 50 80 - Fax: (+33) 4 90 28 50 81
Website: www.coteaux-de-visan.fr - E-mail: cave@coteaux-de-visan.fr

The Cuvée du Marot, produced from Grenache (70%), Mourvèdre (15%), Syrah (5%) and Clairette (10%) grapes, has been selected by the *Confrérie Saint-Vincent*, at its winter assembly, as one of the best wines to be produced from the old vines planted by their forerunners on the slopes of Visan. The *confrérie*, founded in 1475 – making it one of the oldest in France – received a makeover in August 1978. The 30,000 magnums of this wine, which age for one year in the château's cellars, make their reappearance at the wine festival on the second Saturday of July.

This prestigious wine has a sustained colour, with purple-garnet reflections. Its deep nose combines black berry and animal notes. There is a most attractive silky texture in the mouth, emphasising the clean, fruity liquorice aromas. A supple and already very attractive vintage.

Cuvée du Marot 2000
Cave Les Coteaux de Visan
A.O.C. Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages Visan

Prices upon request

Information on:
(+33) 4 90 28 50 80

