

Grand Vin du Marquis de Léoville de Las Cases

(July 2008)



Bringing **spine-shattering thunder** to your world

For quite some time now, I have been dreaming of doing a vertical tasting of this legendary, though arguably discreet, estate which many consider as Bordeaux's most consistent producer of exemplary wines from the region (and therefore probably the world ...).

Situated on the extreme northern tip of Saint Julien, the emblematic stone arch, serving as a lion's watchtower, stoically welcomes you to the Pauillac region. Thus, it is often intriguing to wonder whether Léoville Las Cases makes Saint Julien or rather Pauillac styled wines. The answer, depending on the vintage, is both although after tasting 14 recent vintages, the pendulum would arguably swing more towards Pauillac.



Jean-Hubert Delon was not with us to accompany our staff through this exceptional tasting. Though he personally took over this estate starting in 1995, it was his father who led its qualitative renaissance notably by the end of the 1970's and most strikingly by 1982. Here, do not expect outlandish, eye catching, glittery nor techie architectural winery artefacts to gain customer seduction. This is a no non-sense, straight to the point, estate. Lastly, and most reassuring, is that media reports on the finished product

almost always either confirms initial barrel assessments if not even raising the initial appreciation.

2004 : 76% Cab Sauv, 13% Merlot, 11% Cab Franc. (34% of the harvest) Tonic, robust wine with exceptional elegance and balance. Powerful wine with spicy & red-fruit flavours.

2003 : 70% Cab Sauv, 17% Merlot, 13% Cab Franc (21 hl/ha, 54% of the harvest) This was *decanted 18 hours* prior to tasting. Exotic nose (chocolate & liquorice), wonderfully enrobed with stunning freshness of fruit.

2002 : 66% Cab Sauv, 14% Merlot, 14% Cab Franc (27 hl/ha, 43% of the harvest) This wine is stricter, more reserved or confined by comparison to the previous two. Firm tannins and freshness. Nonetheless, it would certainly overshadow any a neighbour in the same vintage.

2001 : 69% Cab Sauv, 19% Merlot, 11% Cab Franc (40% of the harvest). Jean-Hubert considers this one to be a cousin of the legendary 2006 & 1986 ... It is indeed an enormous wine with power, depth and fleshiness. Black fruits and spices, it gradually opens up and takes on exquisite magnitude on the palate over time. Great length. In this supposedly “difficult” vintage, this LLC may not (yet) have that sheer monolithic omnipotence of the 2006 nor certainly the 1986 but it indeed justifies its position amongst the F1 team, also at a fraction of the price.



2000 : 77% Cab Sauv, 15% Merlot, 8% Cab Franc (35% of the harvest). Also *decanted 18 hours* prior to tasting. Baaa, baaa..., dumbfounded... what to say here ? Stupefying nose : liqueur, roasted coffee Even the 18 hours of decantation does not open the wine up. A monster wine of epic proportions. Revisit in 10 years minimum (just for starters).

1999 : 62% Cab Sauv, 19% Merlot, 19% Cab Franc. (32% of the harvest) The lowest % of Cabernet Sauvignon in recent vintages. This is a much softer, seductive, styled LLC which one would associate more to a Saint Julien. Excellent overall balance nonetheless. Can begin to drink now.

1998 : 76% Cab Sauv, 15% Merlot, 9% Cab Franc (40% of the harvest) Again, density and amplitude here. In this characteristically “dry” styled vintage, here one senses none of that asperity as the tannins, whilst present, are savoury and ripe. Lead-pencil notes, which I particularly appreciate.

1997 : 74% Cab Sauv, 14% Cab Franc, 9% Merlot, 3% P. Verdot (40% of harvest) More ethereal, Saint Julien styled, here. Harmonious, supple and very gracious wine. Prune aromas. Colour is still rather dark ! Drink.

1996 : (40% of the harvest) Also *decanted 18 hours* prior to tasting. And wham !, once again, it’s like receiving a Sandy Koufax or Tom Seaver fastball (or a Roberto Carlos free-kick) between the eyes and loving it ! A monster of a wine. Wait another decade before even considering getting the slightest touch of assertive romance. Put this one blind next to any other (but seriously decant it for many hours).



1995 : (35% of harvest) The color here is the 1st to show the beginning of evolution. Good density but much more seductive now. Certainly more Saint Julien in style. Can begin to drink now.

1994 : (45 hl/ha, 40% of the harvest) Rather vigorous styled wine with leathery, animal, aromas. Can begin to drink now.

1993 : Slight vegetal touch on the nose, very mature though still fresh, lively and amicable, attractive wine. Can drink now.

1990 : Mineral and leathery notes here. Mature wine giving exceptional pleasure. A Saint Julien feel to it. Has it a higher Merlot blend ?

1986 : Whoa, here we go again ! The concentration, the sheer power, the purity and complexity of fruit and flavours, the finish. This is not just a magical Bordeaux but rather an example of a wine of galactic proportions showing terroir and wine-making perfection.

In sum, this was one of those very rare experiences where none of the vintages tasted showed the slightest flaw, thus proving extraordinary qualitative consistency.

Also seek out J-H Delon's other exemplary wines :

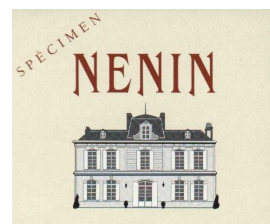
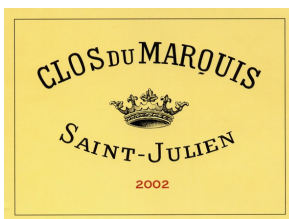
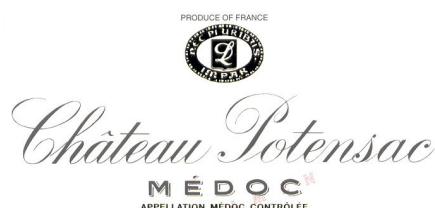
Clos du Marquis (2nd wine of Léoville Las Cases)

Château Potensac (Médoc)

La Chapelle de Potensac (2nd wine of Potensac)

Château Nenin (Pomerol)

Les Fugues de Nenin (2nd wine of Nenin)



Technical sheets on all the above can be found on : www.barriere-freres.com

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