

'87 Bordeaux wines for drinking, not collecting

Bordeaux is a city on the Atlantic coast of France. It is also the regional name for France's most renowned red wines.

Wine connoisseurs are eager to collect these wines, especially from great years. Wine drinkers, rather than collectors, will be happy to know that 1987 Bordeaux wines are meant for them and the price is right.

There are four types of vintages, said Bruno Prats, owner of Chateau Cos d'Estournel, a Bordeaux second growth.

- Those with ripeness and concentration (1988, '86, '85 and '82) are the great vintages to cellar.

- Those with ripeness and low concentration (1976 and 1987) are lovely wines for early drinking.

- Those that are concentrated but unripe (1977) are slightly herbaceous and acidic.

- Those with little ripeness or concentration (1984) are light, yet require some aging.

"In 1987, Bordeaux experienced a normal growing season until rain came early in October, right in the middle of harvest."

"Early maturing varieties, such as



focus on wine

Eleanor and Ray Heald

merlot and most of the white grapes, were picked before the rain.

Late ripening varieties, such as cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc, were diluted.

The 1987s are well-made wines. They tend to be light and flavorful but not as concentrated as those from vintages boasting a dry harvest.

As a result, the wines are not as heavy or tannic but provide near-constant enjoyment at prices that are 20-25 percent less than the 1986s.

IT HAS BEEN our experience that conscientious producers, those that make a severe grape selection, make good wines even under less-than-ideal conditions.

This vintage is a blessing since most Americans buy wine, age it in the car on the way home and drink it within a week.

Unfortunately, too many consumers buy wines from the great vintages, pay more and drink the wines too early.

A RECENT tasting of 1987 Bordeaux illustrated a user-friendly vintage.

"The '87s are great now and will be for the next five to six years," said Madeline Triffon, sommelier at the London Chop House in Detroit.

"I like the delicious, unrestrained style, forward fruit, youthful balance and soft tannins. Some wines are a touch herbaceous, but that will drop off with another six months' bottle age."

"These wines are made for drinking, not collecting. They are easy, balanced and delicious. What else can you ask for?"

"I will buy these wines for the restaurant and put them on our list for

WINE SELECTION OF THE WEEK

1987 Chateau Plagnac (\$7.75) is an incredible bargain from the Haut-Medoc, produced from 60 percent cabernet sauvignon and 40 percent merlot. It is a Cordier property (as are Chateau Gruaud-Larose and Chateau Talbot in St. Julien). Cordier ownership since 1974 has restored this little-known property, and the 1987 shows good fruit balance with pleasant oak nuances. The chocolate finish is unique and inviting. A definite best buy.

a good price. I will serve the '87s while waiting for the '85s and '86s to mature. The restaurant trade needs this vintage. I'm very happy."

Triffon prefers the Chateau Beycheville (\$27.50), Chateau Cos d'Estournel (\$32) and the Chateau Margaux (\$65). For good value she selects the Chateau Meyne (\$14) and Chateau Les Ormes de Pez (\$14).

"GO FOR THE wines in the lower-middle-price range to drink now, not to cellar," said Richard Vincent, owner of the Traffic Jam restaurant in Detroit.

"This is classy stuff at a good price for the short term. These wines are mostly light with few misses — light and flavorful. I'll sell them at 75¢ by the glass."

Vincent's favorites include an excellent Chateau Lynch-Bages (\$26), a fabulously sensual Chateau La Mission Haut Brion (\$47) and a chocolatey Chateau Plagnac (\$7.75) that represents a tremendous value.

"I also liked the Chateau Latour (\$60), but for less than half its price I'd buy either the Chateau Pichon-Longueville Baron (\$25) or Chateau Gruaud-Larose (\$26)."

STATUS-SYMBOL VINTAGES are easy to sell, said Claudia Tyagi, sommelier at the Whitney in Detroit, but she will be recommending several of the 1987 Bordeaux to diners, she said.

"The wines are pleasant, enjoyable and very viable inclusions for our wine list."

"I noted a continuing herbal theme as I tasted the wines. That component is attractive when the wine is balanced but represents a flaw when the wine is out of balance."

"I'm very enthusiastic about these wines. They are drinking nicely now

and will continue to please the palate for another five years."

"Great wines do not always taste delicious when young. Someone tasting a young wine from a great vintage will certainly wonder what the critics think is so great."

"Except for the first growths, which are controversial and not showing well, the '87s represent an excellent introduction to drinkable wines of Bordeaux."

FOR CURRENT enjoyment, Tyagi selects Chateau Talbot (\$27.50) and Chateau Les Ormes de Pez (\$14).

Of the first growths, Chateau Margaux (\$65) is her favorite. She likes the Gruaud-Larose (\$26) for its grace and structure. The Chateau Duru-Beaucallou (\$35) is seductive and agreeable and the La Mission Haut Brion (\$47) exhibits an appealing spiciness.

"The top wine, in my opinion, is the Chateau Cos d'Estournel (\$32)," Tyagi said.

"It is concentrated and complex with an appealing herbal note. Cos is usually backward, but in this vintage it is a giving wine with wonderful up-front fruit."

Saga blue cheese adds to bread, salad recipes

AP — Bread and salad take on a new taste with classic Saga blue cheese.

CRUSTY STUFFED BREAD

1 loaf Italian or French bread, about 14 inches long
4 ounces classic Saga blue cheese, broken into small pieces
1/2 cup sliced pitted black olives
1 tomato, sliced
1 small red onion, finely chopped
1 small dill pickle, chopped
1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
1 teaspoon crumbled oregano

With a serrated knife, cut bread in half lengthwise. Remove soft white inside and crumble into a bowl. Stir in cheese and remaining ingredients. Blend well. Pile mixture into bottom half of bread shell. Replace top.

Place on cookie sheet and brush with olive oil. Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 30-35 minutes or until crusty. Cut into diagonal slices to serve. Makes 6 servings.

Note: Bread can also be prepared as above and served cold, without baking.

SCANDINAVIAN COBB SALAD

1 head green leaf lettuce, trimmed and washed
3 large tomatoes, cut into wedges
12 slices crisp bacon, broken into 2-inch pieces
3/4 pound skinless, boneless, chicken breasts, cooked and cut into julienne strips

6 ounces classic Saga blue cheese, broken into chunks
6 hard-cooked eggs, sliced
3 ripe avocados, pitted, seeded and sliced

Dressing:

1 cup olive oil
1/2 cup tarragon vinegar
4 ounces classic Saga blue cheese, broken into small pieces
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon dried herbs

2 tablespoons chopped chives or scallions
Salt and white pepper to taste

Line a platter with lettuce leaves. Arrange tomato, bacon, chicken, cheese, egg and avocado in rows on top of lettuce. Cover and chill.

To prepare dressing, place all ingredients in blender and whirl until well blended. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper. Pass the dressing. Makes 6 servings.

The Crusty Stuffed Bread can also be prepared according to the recipe and served cold, without heating.

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