

THE DRINKS BUSINESS – December 2015

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As Saint Estèphe estate Phélan Ségur celebrates its 30th anniversary under the Gardinier family, owner Thierry Gardinier explains how they retain a balance between tradition and innovation.

"A lot can happen over 30 years," said Gardinier. "It took us these 30 years to learn exactly how our vines and soils work, the right time to pick and how to unify our methods but we are at the peak now in what we are doing."

In the heart of the commune of Saint Estèphe, Phélan Ségur borders Montrose and Calon Ségur with its 70-hectare property, but due to the wines' tendency to be austere in their youth, Phélan Ségur uses a higher percentage of Merlot (45%) than most estates in the appellation.

The estate was established by Bernard Phélan in 1810, a wine merchant who built up vineyard holdings formed by the Clos de Garaméy and Domaine Ségur which became the core of the property.

The Gardinier family then took over ownership of the estate in 1985 with Xavier Gardinier at the helm after working at the houses of Lanson and Pommery. It was then that Phélan Ségur refined its winemaking techniques with sorting tables, double skinned tanks and crates for harvesting and now the estate is run by Xavier's three sons, Thierry, Laurent and Stéphane.

"The 1990s was the beginning of our adventure," said Gardinier, "and 1998 was our pinnacle. We have the typical bold style of Bordeaux but with elegance and balance. Our grand vins are aged in 18 months in new French oak to give just the right amount of structure and tannins."

Until this year, the distribution was split 50% UK and the rest of the world, but Phélan Ségur's director, Veronique Dausse decided to focus on Asia and moved 50% to Hong Kong, Singapore and China.

Plans for next year also include the re-introduction of one hectare of Cabernet Franc and the debut of Petit Verdot.

"I think for the next 15 years, we'll continue along the same path, in terms of marketing, distribution and also winemaking, respectful of the soil and environment," said Dausse.

"When we drink Phélan Ségur we are drinking tradition, history, and culture," said Dausse. "And these are things we are never going to change. Our wines are more consistent and more precise so I think for the next 15 years we'll continue along the same path, respectful of the soil and environment."



The Phélan-Ségur property in Saint-Estèphe