

IRISH EXAMINER – Avril 2017

Leslie Williams

I return to Bordeaux again this week after a fascinating recent vertical tasting and also because the wine world is full of talk of the potential of the 2016 vintage thanks to the recent en-primeur tastings.



Lynne Coyle MW of O'Briens Wines believes 2016 is a left-bank year with the wines St Émilion more varied. In the Médoc she found very good consistency in St-Julien, Saint-Estephe and in Margaux.

In the Médoc she found very good consistency in St-Julien, Saint-Estephe and in Margaux.

Saint-Estephe is the most northerly of the great Médoc appellations and the one that produces the most wine. Wines here are traditionally firmer than elsewhere in the Médoc and names you may know include Cos d'Estournel, Montrose, Calon-Ségur and Phélan Ségur.

Wines here are traditionally firmer than elsewhere in the Médoc and names you may know include Cos d'Estournel, Montrose, Calon-Ségur and Phélan Ségur.

Unlike the afore-mentioned, Phélan was not classified in the infamous 1855 list so the wine is less expensive for the quality (although no top Bordeaux wine could be considered inexpensive these days).

Phélan Ségur was founded by Bernard Phélan from Co Tipperary in the late 18th century on land purchased from the Marquis de Ségur – sadly the last of the Phélans was killed in the first world war.

The current owners are the Gardiner family (who also own Restaurant Taillevent in Paris) and in their hands the chateau has jumped further in quality.

At 70 hectares this is a good-sized estate and I have never been disappointed by the wine – and I've been buying it since around 1993.

That first bottle cost me €16.40 in O'Briens Donnybrook and in 1994 I spent a week's holidays in the village of Saint-Estephe looking out at the chateau every day, alas I was too shy to knock on the door.

The charming Véronique Dausse (director of the chateau) talked us through the 2006, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12 and 14 vintages plus a barrel sample of the 2016 which had lovely purple fleshy fruits.

All the wines had charm and intensity with the 2010 probably the highlight thanks to its poise with the fruit, acidity and structure all in harmony and promising a long life ahead.

The 2009 I write about below but I also liked the cedar, pencil and blackcurrant 2008, the chocolate-tinged 2011 and the elegant and pure 2006 and 2014.

These wines are not cheap but given the company they keep they arguably represent good value.

BEST VALUE OVER €15

Frank Phélan 2012, Saint-Estephe, Bordeaux – €27.95



Stockist: O'Briens www.wine.ie

The second wine of Phélan-Ségur, first created in 1986 and named after the son of the founder of the Chateau Bearnard Phélan.

Made from younger vines on the estate and one 15ha plot of older vines, this is drinking remarkably well given its youth – solid blackcurrant fruit aromas, ripe supple fruits and a lingering black fruit finish.