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Cheers: London Has a Fantastic New French Wine Bar

by Ted Loos October 30, 2015



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Trial size? I'll have a glass.

By-the-glass programs have shrunk at too many restaurants, and that's a pity. And half-bottles, a size that by now seems like an antique curiosity (at least outside of dessert wines) have almost disappeared.

They are both great ways to try a wine and decide if you like it. You don't have to be a commitment-phobe to feel that spending \$100 on a wine requires being pretty sure that you're going to dig it.

So it's a good piece of news indeed when anyone is putting time and energy into trial-size vino. The latest happy event is that [Les 110 de Taillevent](#) opened last week in [London](#). The high-end brasserie-style restaurant, set on lovely Cavendish Square, will have a whopping 110 wines by the glass. It's an offshoot of Paris's famed, two-Michelin-star Taillevent—think of it as a “second label,” as Bordeaux producers often call their less fancy wine. (It's right near the [Wallace Collection](#), one of the overlooked treasures of the London museum scene.)

And the Bordeaux comparison is apt, since the owners of the Taillevent group, the Gardinier family, also own [Château Phélan Ségur](#), a top Bordeaux property, as well as [Domaine Les Crayères](#), a Relais & Châteaux hotel in Champagne that is among the nicest places I have ever stayed.

The London iteration is the second spin-off—there's already a 110 de Taillevent in [Paris](#), near the mother ship. I sat down with Thierry Gardinier earlier this year, to find out more about the concept, and to sip some vintages of Phélan Ségur (the things I do for you, readers!).

It's pretty straightforward: the original Taillevent is sitting on a mammoth wine cave, with some 3,000 selections (meaning tens of thousands of actual bottles), and they want to make wine more accessible.

When I read between the lines, there's self-interest here, too, beyond just profitable brand-extension. The Gardiniers know that Bordeaux has been [struggling with a snooty reputation](#)—even though there are loads of value wines from the area, it's thought of as beyond-reach—and anything they can do to broaden and deepen people's experience with all wine helps the traditional French regions stay relevant.

As long as I can graze all those wines by the glass on my next London trip, I'm all for it.

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