

The vine leaf of Château le Puy

EDITORIAL

In 2009, after a tasting of wines from all over the world, including both petits crus and grands crus, the TV series "Les Gouttes de Dieu" on Nippon TV named the Château le Puy Émilien 2003 as the "best wine in the world", in the last of the nine episodes.

To thank Japan and her people, we organised an auction in Tokyo offering the most prestigious Château le Puy vintages and it was held at the French Embassy in Tokyo on 18th April 2014, in the presence of the Imperial Princess of Japan Takamado and Mr Christian Masset, the French ambassador, and his wife.

For this truly amazing reception, the chef Guy Savoy, who had travelled especially from France with his second-in-command Clément Leroy, worked alongside chef Mikuni and prepared a gala dinner for the 120 participants, with some remarkably refined dishes combining both French and Japanese cuisine.

Mr Stoker, the chairman of Spinks, showed enormous talent and managed to bring the auction's takings up to a grand total of 29 million yen. Amongst other things, the lots included some old Château le Puy vintages dating back as far as 1926 and a few bottles of Émilien 2003, "the best wine in the world". The sum will be donated to ten associations chosen because they have brought effective aid to the victims of the terrible Fukushima disaster.

All of this, dear friends and Château le Puy fans, has been possible thanks to the unfailing support and trust you have given us over the decades. We would like to say an enormous "thank you" to every one of you.

Jean Pierre Amoreau

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OCTOBER 2014

N° 16

A WINEGROWING FAMILY

There is one truly magical time in the year that is the harvest. For two or three weeks, the pace of our lives is set by the gathering of the fruit, and we always look forward to it eagerly just as we've done for decades now... As every day goes by, everyone here at Château le Puy is working hard towards this unique moment. Our delight when it comes around each year spreads to our teams of grape-pickers, so there's always a party atmosphere when we sit down to eat together. Granny was forever telling us stories about the grape harvests and grape-pickers. There's one time I particularly recall - it was the evening before the first morning's picking. The mood was cheerful as we sat down to our dishes of soup and once again we were urging granny to tell us one of her tales after another. Nothing can ever replace the mischievous look on granny's face as she searched her memory for another story.

- "Valentine! I know, I'll tell you about Valentine!" she exclaimed in delight.

- "Oh no, come on granny, we've already heard that one!"

She looked rather sullen, like a famous actress who's made a mess of her entrance.

- "Oh, well, in that case you know them all!"

- "Oh don't say that granny! We couldn't bear it!"

- "You're right, I can't have told you almost 400 years' worth of stories when you're only knee-high to a grasshopper! So... Let me just think for a moment... Well, there was the story about the grape-picking musicians, but it might be a bit too..."

- Oh come on granny, tell us about the grape-picking musicians - please!"

- All right. It was back in the 1850s. In those days Jean and Jeanne were running the estate. The grape-pickers often used to stay right down there in Négrie, because in those days we used to feed and house all the grape-pickers. One year they saw a team of musicians coming - you know, the ones who sing in the streets for a few coins. They were looking for work because being a musician didn't really put a lot of food in your belly. Well, we didn't actually need any songs, but we did need grape-pickers. They agreed and the very next morning they were out with everyone else among the rows of vines. The story goes that this was the merriest grape harvest the estate has ever seen. Everyone was working really hard but whenever they stopped for a break the musicians would pick up their instruments and hey presto, they'd soon have everyone up and dancing. Then after dinner everyone went back to the dormitory. The only problem was that the music never stopped - they kept on playing until ridiculous hours of the night. It happened once and then twice, and our nearest neighbour got angry. The story goes that he shouted so loudly you could even hear him over the music! Then there was silence. The next evening it was the same thing all over again, and the neighbour came into the dormitory and threatened to smash up a guitar. Then there was silence. In the morning, the neighbour went to see Jean to tell him what was going on. During the night the musicians had pulled down their breeches and relieved themselves in front of his door - all six of them - he'd counted! I'd imagine that Jean didn't actually laugh in his face- after all, you can't afford to fall out with your neighbours, so he just promised it wouldn't happen again. Apparently it was Jeanne who came up with the solution: she allowed the musicians to make music in the evening after dinner in the dining room before going back to the dormitory. That year, the "gerbebaude" party at the end of the harvest was amazing; they played all night and all the grape-pickers all sang together. People still talk about it to this day - which is saying something...

Valérie Amoreau

To be continued in the next issue

TASTING NOTE

DESCRIPTION

A lovely and sustained garnet robe.
 A nose dominated by red fruits.
 A fine attack with plenty of freshness.
 Well balanced in the mouth with supple tannins, revealing remarkable complexity.
 Emilien 2012 is a very harmonious, gourmet wine.

ANALYSES

Alcohol content 20/20	12.85	%vol
Reducing sugars	0.20	g/l
Total acidity	3.40	g/l
Volatile acidity	0.52	g/l
PH	3.56	
SO2 free	>1.00	mg/l

YIELD

25 Hectolitres/Hectare

A vintage and its history... Emilien 2012

A terroir vintage

Conventional wisdom has it that it is the years when the climate is capricious which mark the difference between "real" winegrowers and those people who just make wine, and the 2012 vintage is a very eloquent example of this. The climate favoured us with changes of mood all the year round. With a harsh winter marked by frost as early as January, everything seemed to be getting off to a good start, but then the spring was dreadful, with never-ending rain and constant humidity which continued to spill over into the summer.

In May and June, having had plenty of rain, the flowering got underway rather timidly and the attacks of mildew and oidium were severe, which meant we had to be even more on our guard. The grapes were not very consistent which made the maturing process rather a difficult business. At the end of July we feared the worst for our harvest but fortunately, our excellent terroir worked in our favour, draining off the soil really well.

Finally, August saw the return of the sun and greater stability in the weather, so the healthy grapes were able to complete their maturing process. The grape harvest took a long time because we had to sort the vines strictly and thoroughly. September was a good month for the vines and thorough sorting finally confirmed our hopes of a very fine vintage.



OENOLOGIE

CHAPTALISATION: A process which consists of adding sugar, beetroot or cane to the must in order to increase its alcohol content. The practice - which has been in use since the early 19th century, thanks to the work of the French chemist Jean-Antoine Chaptal in 1801 - artificially helps to disguise a lack of maturity in a grape harvest. Chaptalisation became commonplace in the 1950s and 60s along with increases in yields and the fact that the grapes were harvested from wider areas. It was sometimes thought to be necessary in order to achieve the minimum alcohol contents as laid down by the AOCs. A method that of course we do not practise at Chateau Le Puy.

Illustration above: Marcelin Albert, a champion of the fight against chaptalisation in 1907.

Retour des îles, a legendary wine...

Apparently...

Apparently, back in Ancient Times, Phoenician and Greek shipowners used to dominate the transportation of wine by sea ...

Apparently, in the Middle Ages the English used to import Bordeaux wines by sea and even took them as far afield as the countries of Northern Europe...

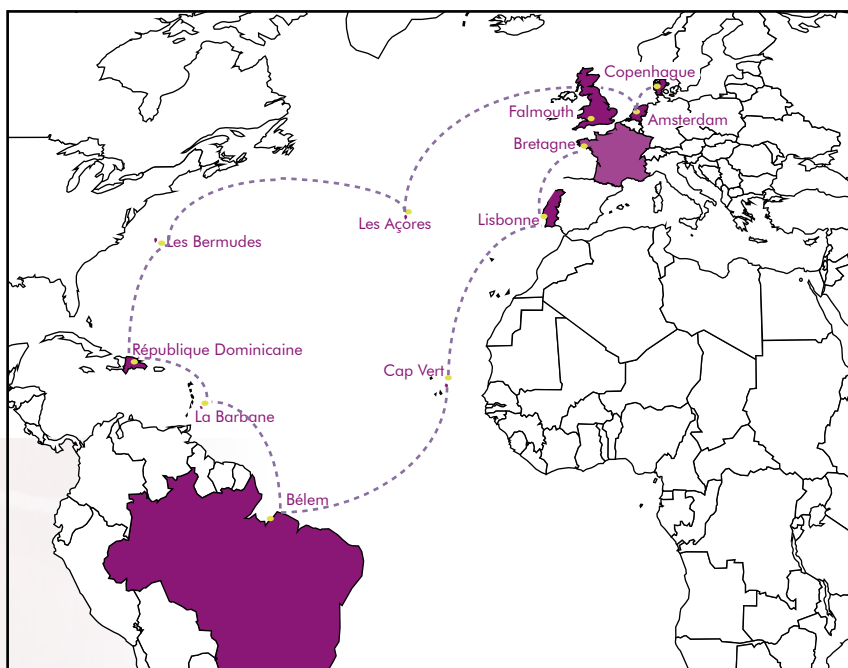
Apparently, during the Renaissance, the trade in Bordeaux was flourishing throughout Europe, as wine was considered to be such a luxury product...

Apparently, this golden age lasted up until the 19th century because wine was then the only drink which could both be stored and was safe...

Apparently, the wine was "improved" by these journeys.

Apparently, the people of Bordeaux even used to send their casks on "trips on the water" so that they could market and drink this "improved" wine themselves...

Apparently these wines used to be known as "Retour des Îles" (Back from the Islands) or "Retour des Indes" (Back from the Indies)...



There were so many legends about the improvement of wine during transportation by sailing ship that the winegrowers of Château le Puy decided to try this extraordinary experiment for themselves.

October 2013

Four casks of the 2012 vintage set off on a sailing trip around the Atlantic and the North Sea.

The ship:

Tres Hombres a 32 meters Brigantine fully propelled by wind power (not even an emergency engine)

The tasting

Back from the trip - September 2014

It has a dark, dense garnet colour.

It has powerful ripe red berry aromas.

The wine is remarkably well-balanced, full-bodied, persistent and fleshy on the palate, offering a full expression of the fruit and smooth, mellow tannins.

The tasting of the wine leads to an explosion of flavours.

It is a very expressive wine with a great laying down potential.

The journey: the "Retour des îles" casks set sail from Douarnenez in Brittany then, after travelling down along the Spanish coast, they made a first stop off at Lisbon in Portugal. They continued along their way as far as Cape Verde and set off to take the Atlantic Ocean by storm. After a short stopover at Bélem in Brazil, they sailed back up to the Caribbean with a stop at Barbados and in the Dominican Republic. They left the warm waters to head for the Azores and then Falmouth in the United Kingdom. The journey could have ended there but, keen to explore the world, the wines sailed back up the North Sea as far as Amsterdam and Copenhagen. Having had their fill of sea air and gorgeous landscapes they finally returned to Douarnenez. A year later "Retour des îles" is available for the Christmas holidays.

THE ROOTS OF THE VINES

The main function of the vine's root system is to take the water and minerals from the soil that it needs for its growth. It also helps to fix and stabilize the overground part of the plant: the vine stock.

Up to a depth of 1 metre we find the nutritional layer. The vine develops a horizontal root system to capture the run-off water and the elements that help it to grow. Between a depth of one and several metres, the roots become vertical and are thinner. They make their way through the cracks in the clay and rock.

Some manage to go down as far as the capillary rise from the water table and keep the plant supplied with water during a very dry season.

The roots develop in stages. They spread out sideways first of all, then grow downwards. Then, during the aging phase, the main roots and root-lets die out due to the decline in biological activity, asphyxia, soil compaction and parasite attack.

Each root is obviously different depending on the soil structure and the attention paid to working the surface soil. This has an influence on its fertility and good health. The Château le Puy winegrowers believe that it is essential to have a healthy, living soil if the plant is to grow properly. This is a pre-requisite for making great terroir wines.

Steven Hewison

RACKING

Racking helps to remove impurities and obtain a clear wine without thinning it down through filtering. It also allows the wine to breathe.

The operation consists of clarifying the wine by separating it from the lees or sediments, which are not wanted during the maturing phase. Prolonged contact with these sediments can cause aroma deviations in the wine, sulphide smells, unpleasant tastes and even illness. Racking also responds to a need to eliminate the carbon dioxide produced during alcoholic fermentation.

The operation is carried out by transferring the wine from one barrel to another by gravity, air pressure or pumping. Whatever method is used, the wine must be handled with extreme care.

During the racking operation, the inside of the barrel should be steam-washed to remove the lees.

Racking frequency is determined by the maturing strategy. Too much racking can damage the wine through excess oxidation. Its success depends on how carefully the wine is handled.

Racking should preferably be carried out under a waning moon, on Fruit and Flower days to encourage the aromatic expression of the wine.

Steven Hewison

BRAZIL, WHERE SHOULD WE EAT TONIGHT?

- **DOM** - (Chef Alex Atala) - Rua Barão de Capanema, 549 - Jardins, São Paulo - (5511)30623634
- **Roberta Sudbrack** - (Chef Roberta Sudbrack) Avenida Lineu de Paula Machado, 916 - Rio de Janeiro - (5521) 38740139
- **Apravízel** - (Chef Ana Castillo) Rua Apravízel, 62 - Santa Teresa, Rio de Janeiro - (5521) 25089174
- **Le Pré Catelan (Sofitel)** (Chef Rolland Villard) Avenida Atlântica, 4240 - Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro - (5511) 25251160
- **Freddy** (Chef Pedro Santana) Rua Pedroso Alvarenga, 1170 - Itaim Bibi, São Paulo - (5511) 31670977
- **Emiliano (Hotel Emiliano)** (Chef Stefano Impera) Rua Oscar Freire, 384 - Jardim Paulista, São Paulo - (5511) 30684390

Here are some of the Chefs who have done us the honour of choosing Château le Puy to serve with their refined dishes.

FOR THE PLEASURE OF THE PALATE

White butter sauce with Marie-Cécile 2013

serves four

- 160 g of cold butter
- 2 shallots
- the juice of 1 lemon
- 20 cl of Marie-Cécile 2013
- salt and pepper
- Chives or other fresh herbs

Snip the shallots into pieces and then place them in a saucepan. Add the Marie-Cécile 2013 and the lemon juice. Reduce over a low heat. You should have the equivalent of two 2 soup spoons of liquid left. Make sure that you do not colour the shallots. Whisk in the very cold butter, cut up into pieces. Each piece of melted butter should have started to sizzle before you whisk in the next one. As soon as the first piece of butter has melted, withdraw from the heat immediately. Strain the sauce, pressing down hard on the shallots. Add salt and pepper then serve

Valérie Amoreau

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