

THE GREAT WINE SEMINAR 2010

CHÂTEAU CHEVAL BLANC

Presented by Pierre Lurton

Summary – Cheval Blanc is one of the most celebrated wines of Bordeaux. It stands out – as do the other First Growths – not simply for its class but also for its individuality. Its distinctive personality is derived from a particular soil profile and a grape mix balancing Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The second wine, Le Petit Cheval, is a standout first offered in 1988.

2006 Le Petit Cheval *+**

Fresh, clean nose, youthfully reserved, with subtle red fruits and an herbal note. The palate is fresh, clean, and positive. Well-balanced and youthful with very good potential. 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc.

2005 Le Petit Cheval *(+)**

Ripe, pure, reserved with moderate concentration and very subtle oak. In the mouth, there is evident fruit maturity and purity. Still young, fresh and well-defined. Understated for now, will develop. 59% Cabernet Franc, 38% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon.

2004 Le Petit Cheval ***

Attractive, expressive if rather low intensity red fruits. Open on the palate, just medium weight. Clean with fresh acidity and slight tannin. Will develop soon. 70% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Franc, 1% Malbec.

2003 Le Petit Cheval **+

Somewhat weak nose with sweet, scented red berries. The palate is far more impressive, with attractive fruit expression. Light weight with a touch of tannin in the finish. The acidity is low. Very marked by vintage conditions and an atypical blend. 77% Cabernet Franc, 20% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon.

2001 Le Petit Cheval *+**

Rich, expressive nose revealing an appealingly complex mix of red fruits and cedar. Concentrated and remarkably long in the mouth. This has depth and poise, and the beginnings of evolution, yet remains vital, with a finale of fresh acidity and soft tannins. Another example of the very successful 2001 vintage. Drinks well now and will develop for another 3 to 6 years. 58% Cabernet Franc, 42% Merlot.

2006 Cheval Blanc *(*)**

Fresh, clean, engaging red fruits dominate the youthful aroma. Still held back on the palate, although it offers a lovely integration of texture and structure. Well-defined by noticeable acidity and ripe tannins. 54% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Franc, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon.

2005 Cheval Blanc **(*)**

Substantial concentration is evident in the aroma along with incredibly pure, high class red fruit. In the mouth, there is real depth and a firm structure. Firmly structured. Closes up, then reveals its concentration again at the very end. A superb wine with long cellaring potential. Equal parts Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

2004 Cheval Blanc *+**

Accessible, lifted red fruits with a tobacco accent in the aroma. Graceful, beautifully balanced. A wine of modest substance that is very enjoyable now. Fine, elegant frame with subtle integrated tannin. 53% Cabernet Franc, 47% Merlot.

2003 Cheval Blanc ***

Remarkably inviting nose revealing sweet red fruits, warmth and spice, which follow on attack. Then the wine closes up and finishes with a dry ending and somewhat gripping tannin. A split personality: shows the difficulties of phenolic ripening in this hot, dry vintage. 56% Cabernet Franc, 44% Merlot.

2001 Cheval Blanc **+**

Fabulous multidimensional aromatics with a mélange of red and black fruits with a cedary overtone. The palate has everything: polished attack and center, great equilibrium. The ripe tannins and acidity indicate there is no hurry drinking this excellent vintage. Is there an extra measure of seductive texture due to the high proportion of Merlot? It is interesting to note that their website says 2001 is a “favorite” of the staff – I concur! 68% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Franc.

2000 Cheval Blanc *****

Beautiful, generous and complex bouquet displaying wonderful fruit maturity and spice. The taste is fabulous: rich and sensual. Gains in generosity, ending with very soft yet fresh acidity and exceptionally fine-grained, integrated tannins. An alluring wine. 53% Merlot, 47% Cabernet Franc.

1998 Cheval Blanc **(?)**

Focused, concentrated and pure to the nose with fruit and spice highlights. The palate is so very elegant and still rather tightly wound despite its age. There is marked acidity and tannin. This is entirely different and far less forthcoming than the 2000. Needs more time to reveal itself. 56% Merlot, 44% Cabernet Franc.

1996 Cheval Blanc ***

Reveals moderate concentration and tobacco overtones with small red fruits and subtle oak notes. Has a certain angularity and dry aspect. Lacks some substance at the center and finishes with dry tannin. One of the weakest of this range of excellent vintages. 56% Cabernet Franc, 44% Merlot.

1990 Cheval Blanc *****

This exhibits a far more developed bouquet with attractive tobacco, leather and truffle accents. In the mouth, the wine is mature and highly complex, even a touch "animal." Seems to have reached its apogee. 50% each Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

1989 Cheval Blanc *****

Ample, warm and enticing nose offering spicy notes and a faint accent of green pepper. The palate is rich and certainly evolving, but not fully developed, with noticeable acidity and a touch of tannin in the finish. Delicious now and could still develop. 50% each Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

1982 Cheval Blanc *****

Powerful nose, beautifully mature and complex. Generous and quite evidently ripe at the origin, now evolving toward caramel and truffle. The palate is fat, layered and very long. Surprisingly elevated acidity keeps it vital and fresh. Truly outstanding. The acidity level of the 1982s, characterized as low at the time, was in fact much higher than recent top vintages (such as 2000, 2005 and 2009).

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich, MW

1971 Cheval Blanc ****

Evolved, gently lifted and piquant with spice notes together with a sweet leathery undertone. Not a big wine at this stage and well developed with marked spice notes on the palate. Pointed acidity keeps it alive and well-defined. The last vintage in wood vats. 50% each Merlot and Cabernet Franc.