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NOTES ON TASTING WITH JAMES MOLESWORTH

On to Pauillac and the Pichon Double

The 2024 Bordeaux barrel tastings continue with Cabernet- and Merlot-based *grands vins* from Pichon Baron, Pichon Lalande, Lynch Bages, Haut-Batailley and more



Château Pichon Baron's 2024 reflects the estate's perennially strong aging potential for its *grand vin*. (Serge Chapuis)



By James Molesworth

Apr 11, 2025

The 2024 Bordeaux futures campaign is under way. We'll be updating prices as they're released, and keep checking our 2024 Bordeaux Barrel Tastings index for my tasting notes on the newest wines and more at many of the region's top estates.

"Five years in a row now we've had humid springs, so we're used to it," says **Château Pichon Baron** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/serious-2023-bordeaux-at-pichon-baron-elegant-suduiraut-sauternes>] technical director Pierre Montégut of Bordeaux's 2024 growing season in Pauillac.

"2024 saw heavy mildew pressure. But we didn't have extreme up-and-down temperatures, and the average temperature was a little higher overall than in **2023** [<https://www.winespectator.com/packages/bordeaux-barrel-tastings-2023>] . So we had a good developmental cycle of the vines—as well as the mildew. Then mid-July and through August the humidity stopped. We had a dry summer and good hydric stress to start the ripening of the tannins."

"It's a fresh vintage, but different in sensation to other fresh vintages such as 2013 and **2021** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2021-bordeaux-wines-tasting-report-043024>] . It's similar to 2017 in style, but with a bit more fruit and better precision. So much has changed here since 2017, including the use of cover crop in the vineyard, to deal with these issues, so I think we are improving."

Located at the southern end of Pauillac, Pichon Baron echoes the vintage assessment of **my St.-Estèphe visits farther north** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2024-bordeaux-barrels-cos-estournal-montrose-2-new-wines-to-watch>] . But as one heads south through the upper Médoc, Cabernet becomes a greater component of the wines (at least until you hit

Margaux). Managing Cabernet through a “fresh” vintage (French code for a wet and/or cool year) isn’t the same as for Merlot, which ripens more easily.

“When it’s too fresh a vintage you have less **anthocyanins** [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Anthocyanins>] and a greenness in the tannins,” says Montégut. “But that’s not the case here.”

And indeed Montégut is right. The Cabernet-dominated lineup here is sleek and fresh, but without the crisp or vegetal side of a “too fresh” vintage, such as 2021, 2013 and 2008. This is part of the overall adaptation that producers here credit for giving them good quality in difficult years of both styles, “fresh” and warm. **2022 provides the counterpoint** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2022-bordeaux-wine-tasting-report-053125>] , a very warm and very dry vintage that yielded fresh, pure reds, and in which Merlot, counterintuitively, performed well if not better than Cabernet Sauvignon.

Médoc estates have been steadily shifting toward higher percentages of Cabernet in their *grands vins* over the past 20 years. Has Cabernet adapted to the shifting climate better than Merlot? Or did Merlot's performance in 2022 prove that both grapes have weathered the changes?

“The vineyard has adapted,” says Montégut. “When we have a hot vintage, we have success with Merlot. And when we have a fresh vintage, we have success with Cabernet Sauvignon. It’s the end of the season that is most important, where we get sun and warmth to finish the Cabernet. We can handle the humidity and lack of sun early as long as we get warmth later, but again, as long as we don’t get extremes up and down during the season.”

Bordeaux's newfound ability to handle both ends of the weather spectrum has been most on display since 2020. If it is the vineyard that has adapted more so than an individual *cépage* [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Cepage>] , then something has accelerated the adaptive process, surely. The answer most likely lies right outside Pichon Baron's tasting room window, in its vibrant cover crop.

"[The adaptation trend] is quite recent, so I think that cover crop and the vineyard shifts have something to do with that," says Christian Seely [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2022-new-york-wine-experience-wine-star-christian-seely>] , who oversees all the AXA-owned wine properties [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/axa-millesimes-buys-platt-vineyard-in-the-sonoma-coast-region>] . "The shift to cover crop and farming changes is significant, but I think another factor, that being vine age, also has an important role to play."

There have been adaptations in the cellar as well, of course. Since 2022, fermentations have been at lower temperatures, 82° F maximum, and the vats are tasted every day with an aim for more elegance and less overall *extraction* [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Extraction>] . That then gives the team here more to play with via the *press wine* [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/press>] .

"That's something that has completely changed in the 25 years I've been here," says Seely. "In the beginning, the extraction was not so subtle. The question then was how much press wine could be added without turning to a negative. Now with lighter and finer press wine lots, it's more beneficial to the overall blend."

2024 Bordeaux Barrel Tastings: Châteaux Pichon Baron and Suduiraut

The **2024 Château Pibran Pauillac** captures what already clearly seems to be the profile of the vintage—sleek, super fresh in feel and gilded liberally with violets, this lets a cassis core play out prettily and unencumbered.

The **2024 Château Pichon Baron Pauillac Les Tourelles de Longueville** (65 percent Merlot, 22 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 13 percent Cabernet Franc) is plump, juicy for the vintage, with solid dark cherry and plum fruit laced with an iris accent and a lightly singed apple wood edge on the finish.

In contrast, the **2024 Château Pichon Baron Pauillac Les Griffons de Pichon Baron** (56/42/2 Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc) is polished and silky, gliding along prettily, with an iron twinge amid its red currant and cherry coulis notes.

The **2024 Château Pichon Baron Pauillac** *grand vin* is grippy, focused and driven, with cassis and iron notes working in unison. Sleek and tightly coiled, there's freshness for sure, but also some power in reserve too. An admirable effort, it's built for the cellar, as seemingly always here.

The new Les Griffons white (just the second vintage of this wine) is a pure Sémillon sourced from a 1.8-acre parcel on limestone in the northern end of Pauillac that was grafted over with a [massale selection](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/selection_massale) [https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/selection_massale] from Suduiraut in Sauternes. It carried the basic Bordeaux White AOC this year, but starting in

2025 there will be a Médoc white AOC allowed, a sign that this small-but-growing category is turning some heads.

“There’s a lot of enthusiasm in the Médoc to make dry whites. The new AOC has appeared rather speedily for the French,” says Seely with a bit of wryness.

The **2024 Les Griffons White** is bright, racy and shows a strong fleur de sel edge to its white nectarine and grapefruit zest notes.

The rest of the whites here are from the AXA-owned Château Suduiraut, starting with the **2024 Suduiraut Lions de Suduiraut** (56/29/15 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Sauvignon Gris) that shows nicely chiseled and zingy tarragon, verbena and fleur de sel notes backed by a very refreshing finish.

The **2024 Suduiraut Vieilles Vignes** (56 percent Sémillon, 44 percent Sauvignon Blanc) is plumper, with a slightly waxy edge and tasty white nectarine and honeysuckle notes.

The **2024 Suduiraut Pur** (100 percent Sémillon) is very engaging, with bright verbena, orange blossom and wet stone accents. This marks the first vintage with some vinification and aging in 220-liter glass wine globes, as well as both used and new oak. As with my earlier visits to [Montrose and Cos-d'Estournel \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2024-bordeaux-barrels-cos-estournel-montrose-2-new-wines-to-watch\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2024-bordeaux-barrels-cos-estournel-montrose-2-new-wines-to-watch), it’s always instructive to see how the best producers are tinkering.

For the sweet wine, the **2024 Château Suduiraut Sauternes** carries its typically plump personality, marked by apricot, piecrust and elderflower honey notes that are forward in feel right now. [Botrytis \[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/botrytis\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/botrytis) arrived

early, according to Montégut, so that part was easy. But the early spread isn't always the most powerful or complex. The second wave of the noble rot spread was key, and most of the *grand vin* here came from the second wave-affected fruit.

I appreciate Montégut's belief in the dry whites, both from the Sauternes region as well as the Médoc. And perhaps I shouldn't be surprised: The legendary **Denis Dubourdieu** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/bordeauxs-denis-dubourdieu-dies-at-67>] was Pierre's professor back in the day [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/catching-up-with-the-professor-of-bordeaux-46149>] .



Château Pichon Lalande is a mainstay among the Pauillac elite. (Gunther Vicente)

Across the Street to Château Pichon Lalande

Neighboring **Château Pichon Longueville** has been gaining momentum [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-new-classic-bordeaux-on-the-horizon-at-pichon-lalande>] through the recent spate of "fresh" vintages, thanks to the efforts of general director Nicolas Glumineau [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/straight-talk-podcast-episode-6-bordeaux-napa-and-the-future-of-wine>] .

The team here feels that 2024 is a bit like 2008, but without the crispness or vegetal side. (I wasn't a fan of 2008 on release, and I remain [thoroughly unimpressed with those wines today \[https://www.winespectator.com/vintage-charts/region/bordeaux-left-bank-reds-medoc-pessac-leognan\]](https://www.winespectator.com/vintage-charts/region/bordeaux-left-bank-reds-medoc-pessac-leognan)). Dilution was also an issue, especially with the late September rains that hit, so sorting was a key.

There was twice the normal rain in 2024 (63 inches for the year), with 14 inches from May through June and another 6 inches in September. Consequently, as at [Montrose \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2024-bordeaux-barrels-cos-estournel-montrose-2-new-wines-to-watch\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/2024-bordeaux-barrels-cos-estournel-montrose-2-new-wines-to-watch) , the approach here for a best-case scenario was to have more crop early and start sorting in the vineyard as mildew developed, rather than to start small and cull the mildew-affected grapes later.

Luckily, the room created by the [millerandange \[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/millerandange\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/millerandange) and [coulure \[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/coulure\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/coulure) helped the remaining berries to not just survive but do well. Bunches typically have around 250 berries, but there were only only 80 to 100 in 2024 on average here. In the end, the crop is half the normal amount, at around 1.5 tons per acre, the third lowest in estate history, behind 2013 and 2021.

But Glumineau just doesn't miss these days.

2024 Bordeaux Barrel Tastings: Châteaux Pichon Lalande and de Pez

The **2024 Château Pichon Longueville Lalande Pauillac Réserve de la Comtesse** (49 percent of the crop and a 72/24/4 Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc blend) is the first vintage without any Petit Verdot. It's juicy, with a bramble edge to the blackberry and black cherry fruit that has some sweet tobacco injected on the finish. It shows a lightly chalky frame overall but I suspect it will fill in and soak that up well enough.

The **2024 Château Pichon Longueville Lalande Pauillac** *grand vin* (51 percent of the crop) is a fairly typical 83/14/3 Cabernet, Merlot, Petit Verdot blend that is caressing in feel, with dark currant, blackberry and violet notes laced with alder, wet earth and dark tobacco. It's very Pauillac, and has impressive flesh, range and cut for the vintage.

There are more than a handful of elite estates that have smaller satellite properties that should not be overlooked. Montrose's **Tronquoy-Lalande**

[<https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Tronquoy-Lalande>] , Calon-Ségur's **Capbern** [<https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Capbern>] , Lynch-Bages' **Ormes de Pez** [<https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Ormes+de+Pez>] , Cos-d'Estournel's **Cos Labory** [<https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Cos+Labory>] among them. For Pichon Lalande, it's **Château de Pez** [<https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&scope=ratings&winery=Ch%C3%A2teau+de+Pez>] .

You can reference more details on the work happening here as well as **my tasting notes on a short vertical during last year's visit here** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/pichon-lalande-stunning-2023-bordeaux-throwback-wine>] . That work includes a replanting program,

recently finished, that changed rootstock. In the cellar there is lighter vinification protocol that includes less **pumping over** [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Pump>] , no **punch-downs** [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Punch>] and a cooler temperature for fermentation that has switched from wooden vat to stainless steel. There's also some aging in *foudre* and wine globes as well.

The **2024 Château de Pez St.-Estèphe** is very fresh, with a pronounced chalk dust frame to its lilac, rose petal and bitter cherry fruit flavors. Don't sleep on this wine ...



Famille JM Cazes: Châteaux Lynch Bages, Haut-Batailley and Ormes de Pez

What's a day in Pauillac without a stop at "Lunch Bags," as I lovingly call the Cazes family's flagship property?

The new winery facility at Château Lynch Bages and the acquisition of neighboring [Château Haut-Batailley](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-2023-bordeaux-bargain-wine-at-chateau-haut-batailley) [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-2023-bordeaux-bargain-wine-at-chateau-haut-batailley] have kept Jean-Charles Cazes [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/lynch-bages-ny-wine-experience-2023] busy in recent years.

Not surprisingly, [tariffs have been on everyone's mind in Bordeaux](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/trump-tariff-plan-hits-every-imported-bottle-of-wine) [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/trump-tariff-plan-hits-every-imported-bottle-of-wine]

“We export 15 percent to the U.S., and you don't replace percent 15 of your exports easily,” says Cazes flatly. “What hurts is the uncertainty. If we see tariffs at previous levels, it will settle down in time. Volumes will be down but there will still be some demand. But if they go to 100 percent or 200 percent, then the U.S. becomes a non-existent market for us. It's that simple.”

The Cazes portfolio covers estates both in Pauillac and St.-Estèphe, and overall Cazes feels the vintage played out evenly between the two [AOCs](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/appellation_d%27origine_contr%C3%B4l%C3%A9)

[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/appellation_d%27origine_contr%C3%B4l%C3%A9]

“A little more yield and maybe a little less rain in St.-Estèphe, but not really much difference than in Pauillac in 2024,” says Cazes.

As for where 2024 sits in relation to other recent "fresh" vintages, “The yield is lower in '24 than '23 or '21, and alcohols are in the normal range,” says Nicolas Labenne, technical director at Lynch Bages. “2024 has the smallest yields in 15 years, as mildew played a bigger role.”

“There was early **budburst** [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Budbreak>] and then things slowed down because of humidity and mild temperatures, which wound up making things run late by about a week and a half. It was a fine line to wait for the **phenolic ripeness** [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/index/word/Phenolic>],” notes Cazes. “August was very important, as it helped to get the maturity.”

2024 Bordeaux Barrel Tastings: Châteaux Lynch Bages, Haut-Batailley and Ormes de Pez

The **2024 Château Ormes de Pez St.-Estèphe** is for fans of minerally, fresh, slightly austere Bordeaux, as this has nice cut to its beam of cassis and bitter cherry notes laced with lilac, all married to a chalky minerality.

The **2024 Château Haut-Batailley Pauillac Verso** (the second wine, which contains most of the young plantings at this recently expanded estate) is a gentle wine, with friendly bitter cherry and currant notes carried by rose petal and cedar accents that lend a pretty perfume through the soft and supple finish.

The **2024 Haut-Batailley Pauillac *grand vin*** has a gentle juiciness at its core, though the edges have a soft tilt, as the plum and black cherry fruit shows pretty perfume via lilac and

violet notes. A late iron twang helps the finish linger steadily. It's fine-grained too, and nicely done for the vintage.

Save for the exceptional 2022 vintage in Bordeaux, the recent run of more difficult vintages has likely kept consumer enthusiasm for some of the new projects and changes in the region muted. That means there might still be time to get in on the ground floor here with [this estate that Cazes acquired in 2017](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/owners-lynch-bages-buy-haut-batailley) [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/owners-lynch-bages-buy-haut-batailley] —but time may be running out. Relative value plays for classically styled, ageworthy Pauillac don't stay under the radar for long.

From the flagship property, the **2024 Château Lynch Bages Pauillac Echo** (second wine) is plump, juicy and direct, with a nice shot of black cherry and black currant paste notes laced with hints of sweet tobacco and violet through a generous finish. This will be ready to go out of the gate.

The **2024 Château Lynch Bages Pauillac** *grand vin* is sleek and tightly focused, with a bright iron spine carrying cassis and red plum fruit. It shows solid length and precision too. The wine is in line with the vintage, and Lynch Bages is one of those estates where the decision is easy —because the quality is always there, and the price is always fair for a wine of its quality and track record.

And while white wine is becoming somewhat fashionable to make in the Médoc now, the Cazes family has been doing it for a while. The first vintage for the Lynch Bages white was 1990, ahead of its time. The wine was actually started by the family in the late 1970s for in-house consumption, and over time it grew into a commercially viable bottling.

Today the **2024 Château Lynch Bages Bordeaux White** (77/12/11 Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle and Sémillon) is delightfully stony and herbaceous, with tarragon, thyme, Meyer lemon, Key lime pith and white peach notes on a bright, lightweight frame.

Read more of James Molesworth's Winery Intels [<https://www.winespectator.com/display/stirring-the-lees-with-james-molesworth>] , hear his interviews with leading winemakers on Wine Spectator's Straight Talk podcast [<https://www.winespectator.com/straighttalk>] , and follow him on Instagram at [@jmolesworth1](http://instagram.com/jmolesworth1/) [<http://instagram.com/jmolesworth1/>] .

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