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Pichon Lalande 1864–2018

Jan-Erik Paulson supplies another panoply of tasting notes on a famous Bordeaux château to complement his earlier [Pichon Baron vertical](#). Above, a younger Paulson with the long-standing chatelaine May-Eliane de Lencquesaing who [sold the estate to the Rouzaud family](#), owners of Louis Roederer, in 2006. See also [this guide to our bordeaux verticals](#).

Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande, Pichon Lalande in its shorter form, produces one of the most popular wines of Bordeaux.

One reason is its very consistent quality but most of all is its charm and drinkability, thanks to its relatively high proportion of Merlot. Compared with its [brother across the road](#) it is softer and approachable earlier. This doesn't mean that it doesn't age well. On the contrary, because of its balance it is able to drink well over several decades. Lying on the border with St-Julien (see [this World Atlas of Wine map](#)), it shares some characteristics with wines of that commune to the south. You may still find some bottles with St-Julien instead of Pauillac on the label.

This is one wine that I have had the good fortune to taste at many dinners and tastings over the years – though even I was surprised to see that I had notes on as many as 61 vintages. Most of these notes come from a tasting of 40 vintages that I organised together with the château in 1997, a splendid lunch at restaurant Le Taillevent in Paris to celebrate May-Eliane de Lencquesaing's 80th birthday. This was complemented by notes from a tasting of both Pichons in 2017 and a tasting of 25 vintages in 2022 at the Rheingau Gourmet and Wine Festival as well as other smaller tastings.

Jan-Erik Paulson with Pichon Lalande's current managing director and winemaker Nicolas Glumineau

The oldest Pichon I have tasted was the 1864 Pichon mentioned in my earlier article. This was apparently the last vintage vinified together by Raoul Pichon with the wine of Pichon Baron, the property having been divided up a few years earlier. It was a pale wine with delicate sweet fruit – a moving experience.

1914 was very old and past it – if it ever was good. 1920 was similar. 1922 had a tawny colour with some fruit left but it was getting old. 1926 was a very small harvest of top-quality wines. The Pichon was lovely and sweet, almost burgundian. It was showing some age but still very good. 1928 was a massive, tannic vintage. The only note I have is from a bottle still alive but only just so. 1929 shows the typical sweetness of the vintage paired with some volatility keeping it fresh and attractive to drink.

1934 showed a lovely sweetness, with some volatility but still enjoyable. 1937 showed some fruit but the tannins are likely to have overtaken this by now.

1940 is pretty nasty with hard acidity. 1942 was a touch better but will most likely be very tired by now. 1945 was a year of great concentration of fruit with wonderful structure and backbone and the Pichon Lalande, still a great wine, is no exception. 1947 was a difficult vintage to vinify with many volatile wines. There's still some sweet fruit but quite a tannic finish. 1949 was a wonderful vintage and Pichon Lalande is no exception. The fruit is sweet and elegant but the wine is starting to show some age.

1950 is sweet and sour and probably well past it. 1953 is one of the loveliest and most classic of all bordeaux vintages and Pichon Lalande made one of their best wines ever. It's still quite dark with perfect balance and class. 1955 is another wonderful vintage – the last one before the crippling frost of 1956. The wine has great structure with good fruit left. 1957 was always too acidic.

The comparison between 1959 and 1961 is always a fascinating one. Both are truly great vintages and so too for Pichon Lalande. I prefer the 1959 slightly because it's fresher with sweet, lovely soft fruit even after 60 years.

The 1961 is still a gorgeous wine but showing some age. 1962 is now showing its age. 1964 is for me the most underrated of all bordeaux vintages – the charming Pichon is still drinking well though it won't improve by keeping. 1966 is a classic left-bank vintage and Pichon Lalande is still drinking well, albeit with more structure than charm.

1970 is a good wine but not one of the top Pauillacs. It should be drunk. 1975 was not an easy vintage on the left bank; most wines were simply too tannic and have long since dried out. Pichon Lalande is an exception and probably the best wine from Médoc next to Latour in this vintage. There are none of the hard tannins and it is still a very good drink. Interestingly, the wine was made by May-Elaine de Lencquesaing's old schoolfriend and neighbour, the late Michel Delon of Château Léoville Las Cases (as were the following two vintages). 1976 was a

vintage ruined by rain during the harvest and not a good wine. 1978 was Mme de Lencquesaing's first vintage. Just about everything that could go wrong during the growing season did so and the Bordelais were expecting a disaster, then the weather changed and a glorious autumn brought some very good wines. The 1978 Pichon is still a stylish wine with some tobacco flavours but it's starting to show its age so I would suggest that it needs drinking now. 1979 is one of the better wines in this vintage.

1980 is a forgettable wine. 1981 is very good for the vintage. 1982 was the vintage which propelled Pichon Lalande to super second status. This has always been a total charmer and a great success for the château. It's a very soft, attractive wine with great concentration of fruit but without the massive tannins present in some 1982s. 1983 is very good with fresh, spicy fruit. Its only problem was to have to follow the great 1982. 1984 is goodish but past it now. 1985 is to me the modern version of the 1953 as a vintage. It's a beautiful vintage that lives on with impeccable balance and charm rather than power. More and more, I am starting to prefer 1985s to 1986s on the whole. And, like the 1953s, it will age better than most people think, balance being much more important than alcohol, concentration and power. 1986 Pichon is very nice now. It shows softer tannins and better fruit than most wines from this year. 1987 is similar to 1984. I like the 1988 vintage very much. It is now shedding its tannins and improves from year to year. The Lalande is very good and will drink well for many years to come. The 1989 Pichon Lalande is one of the many stars of the vintage: very exotic with spicy fruit and a joy to drink.

1990 is a good wine but nowhere near its potential and is rather a disappointment considering the vintage. 1991 was a difficult vintage mostly ruined by spring frost and the wine should be drunk up. 1992 is only goodish with some green tannins. 1993 and 1994 were both affected by rain; they're not bad but need drinking. The 1995 and 1996 are quite different in style: the 1995 sweet and charming, but on the lighter side with some dry tannins on the finish, whereas the 1996 will eventually become a classic with very good, concentrated fruit and a long finish. For me it is the greater of the two wines. 1997 is a classic, quite elegant 1970s-style wine. The nose of the 1998 a touch herbal. 1999 has good, stylish fruit.

2000 is a massive, very impressive wine. 2001 is a charmer from a very good, classic vintage. 2002 is goodish but with some unripe tannins. 2003 Pichon Lalande is one of the best wines of this complicated hot vintage with good fruit and is not too alcoholic and jammy. 2004 is a good wine. 2005 shows very good soft, sweet fruit. A total charmer, it will age well. 2007 is good for the vintage. 2009 has massive tannins but very good fruit and surely has a fine future. 2010 has a very good, spicy nose with a touch of eucalyptus, good soft fruit and softer tannins than the

2009. 2010 is a very, very good wine. 2012 has good soft fruit. 2014 has good fruit and is a good wine. 2016 is a touch closed but has good concentrated fruit. 2018 has soft tannins and is quite long.

See also [Julia's tasting notes](#) on eight vintages between 1991 and 2005.

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