

## SCOTT GREENBERG

Vine Guy

## 2004 Bordeaux: A tasty 'sandwich' at the right price

**A**t the recent Heart's Delight fundraiser for the American Heart Association, I had the opportunity to sample more than 30 red Bordeaux wines from the 2004 vintage. The moderator, noted Bordeaux wine expert and educator Robin Kelly O'Connor, explained why this particular vintage was truly a victim not of the weather, but of timing.

Referred to as a "sandwich" vintage, the 2004 crop had the rotten luck of being squeezed between the highly acclaimed 2003 vintage and the exceptional 2005 vintage — similar to the questionable timing of the 1987 vintage almost two decades ago. Although the 2004 vintage is not a "blockbuster" vintage, it is indeed a consistent one, where the grapes in both the Medoc (Left Bank, cabernet sauvignon) and in Pomerol and Saint Emilion (Right Bank, merlot-based) produced good to very good wines.

As with all vintages, the weather in 2004 played a major role. Things started out nearly perfect, with moderate spring temperatures resulting in early and prominent flowering — and the promise of an abundant crop. But the combination of more-than-average rain and lower-than-normal temperatures in the late summer months resulted in a high concentration of tannin and acid in the fruit. The dry, warm fall allowed patient Chateaux owners the luxury of waiting to harvest their grapes to get the sugar levels down and acidity in balance.

The good news is that you have a vintage yielding classically structured Bordeaux that is suffering from poor timing. With any luck — and a favorable exchange rate — the wines from the 2004 vintage represent a decent value. The following is a list of my favorites. All red wines are from Bordeaux, France, and are available at area retailers including MacArthur Beverages and Calvert Woodley in the District and Fine Wine.com and Total Wine and More in McLean. Retail prices are approximate.

**RIGHT BANK****2004 Château La Couspaude, Saint Emilion (\$45)**

A pretty wine featuring good, solid cherry/berry fruit with nice balance and structure. The generous mouth feel provides considerable depth to the pleasant, soft finish.

**2004 Château Fombrauge, Saint Emilion (\$45)**

Prominent scents of licorice and pencil lead dominate the nose of this merlot-based wine. Graceful notes



of black cherries, plums and currants glide over the tongue on their way to a soft, elegant finish.

**2004 Château Rol Valentin, Saint Emilion (\$65)**

Owned by former soccer legend Eric Prissette since 1994, this tiny estate produced a soft, seductive wine with subtle flavors of plum, cherry and earth on the long, pleasing finish.

**2004 Château Angelus, Saint Emilion (\$120)**

A big price tag to go with this chateau's big reputation, this effort has a good grip to support the wonderful flavors of ripe cherry, black plum and coffee, thanks to the substantial tannins. The big finish suggests that it needs a few years in the cellar before it's ready.

**LEFT BANK****2004 Château D'Issan, Margaux (\$35)**

A classic Margaux featuring hints of tar and ripe fruit on the aromatic nose and on the palate. Sweet tannins and notes of coffee and orange peel make for a pretty finish. Definitely a good value.

**2004 Château Talbot, Saint Julien (\$40)**

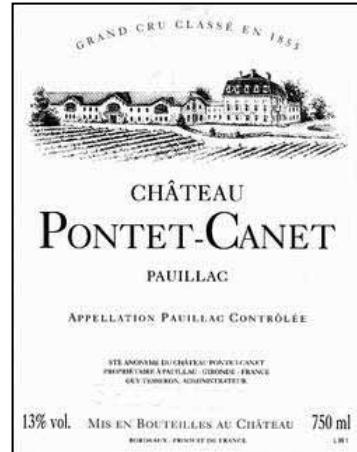
An appealing nose of barnyard and sage leads to multilayered flavors of plum, cassis liqueur and mint on the palate. Hefty tannins provide structure and depth to the big finish.

**2004 Château Léoville Poyferré, Saint Julien (\$50)**

With wonderful fruit and structure, this wine was one of my favor-

## FRENCH FLIGHTS

Free tonight? Go to France — or at least drink wine from two of its regions, Burgundy and Alsace. Eight wines will be served, including reds and whites. 7 to 9 p.m. Woman's Democratic National Club, 1526 New Hampshire Ave. NW. Tickets are \$65. Call 301-841-7609 or go to [www.giramondowine.com/events](http://www.giramondowine.com/events).



ites for the money. Flavors of cherries, black raspberries and herbs are delivered by soft and sweet tannins to provide a full, round mouth feel. Pretty notes of cassis provide a memorable finish.

**2004 Château Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$50)**

I was captivated by the prominent aromas of cedar, cherry and earth in the nose. The full-bodied, well-structured frame holds the ample flavors of cherry, cassis and dark plum in check while providing a lush, full finish.

**2004 Château Cos D'Estournel, Saint Estèphe (\$69)**

A blockbuster wine from a legendary estate. A heady nose featuring trademark scents of curry and Asian spices leads to flavors of black plums, blackberry jam and cassis with big tannins to provide structure. A great chance to own a renowned wine for a great price.

**2004 Château Palmer, Margaux (\$100)**

The star of the tasting, this wine is big, opulent and rich. Aromas of blackberry liqueur, earth and mint jump out of the glass and grab your attention. Full, lush flavors of black fruits, crème de cassis and licorice coat the palate up front, while hints of espresso sneak in on the long, powerful finish. This is definitely a wine that will require a few years in the cellar before it reaches its peak.

So if you're looking for a good value in fine French wine, the 2004 Bordeaux vintage definitely offers some great choices. Just remember, in a sandwich vintage,

it pays to be picky.



*Do you have a favorite royalty of wine? E-mail me at [scott@giveguy.com](mailto:scott@giveguy.com).*

