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EXCERPTS FROM JEANNIE'S WINE DIARY



BLIND TASTING OF INTERNATIONAL CABERNETS

On May 19th, Robert Mann, Estate Director of Cape Mentelle invited me to an intriguing tasting which they billed as 'a blind tasting of international cabernets'. All we knew was that these wines were from the 2007 vintage and included a mix of French, Italian, Californian and Australian wines of the highest calibre. All fifteen wines were poured into large Riedel Cabernet Sauvignon glasses and there was sufficient wine and time to go back to see how the wines evolved with time.

The wines I rated highest were nearly all from Bordeaux. Looking back, I was disappointed with the Margaret River wines and wished they showed better. The wines at the bottom of my tasting were those that were excessively herbaceous, with intense green pepper character; even with time in bottle, those mean, green tannins would still mar the fruit. Given that 2007 was not a spectacular vintage in Bordeaux, I was surprised at how well they showed.

1. 2007 Suckfizzle Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, Australia

Deep ruby colour with an intense nose of green capsicum and fresh herbs. Out of this flight of 15 wines, this is the most herbaceous. There are some dark berry fruits in the background but the greenness is so obtrusive that it seems unlikely to come around. With several more years in bottle, the tannins are likely to soften in this very young wine, but the coarse, unripe tannins will remain. Not a friendly wine and slightly unbalanced because of its harsh tannins. Moderate length. **(83)**



2. 2007 Petaluma Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra, Australia

This is a deep ruby coloured, opulent, very generous Cabernet. The nose is attractive with ripe plums, blackberries and cedar notes. The dark fruit flavours are supported by firm tannins. This is obviously a New World wine – the ripeness of flavours and opulence gives it away. It's a well-made wine with moderate length. Wait several years before enjoying it. **(87)**



3. 2007 Chateau Pichon-Longueville Baron, Pauillac, Bordeaux, France

This is a very elegant wine with lovely silky tannins. Tasted blind among the 15 other Cabernets, this is clearly one of the most elegant wines in the flight. It has a gorgeous perfume of violets, spices and cassis with velvety textured tannins. The wine is still very young, but it shows depth and promise that it will reveal even more in the years to come. A fantastic Bordeaux! **(93)**



4. 2007 Newton Unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, United States

This is a ripe, full-bodied Cabernet from Western Australia or Napa Valley. There is a rounder fleshier element which suggests Napa compared to Western Australia or

Victoria. The aromas are intriguing offering an array of flavours including blackberries, plums and roasted herbs. This is an elegant, refined New World Cabernet that has good ripeness balanced by firm tannins. The wine will benefit from at least 3-5 years in bottle. **(88)**



5. 2007 Leeuwin Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, Australia

The herbaceous element in this wine juts out in the nose but on the palate, there are riper flavours of blackcurrant and Chinese red dates. The tannins are firm with a slight green note and it offers a contrast to the savoury characters in this wine. Everything about this wine is still tightly wound, it's very young. It may improve quite a bit after 3-5 years in bottle. **(87)**



6. 2007 Ornellaia, Tuscany, Italy

This is a tannic reserved Cabernet with plenty of ripeness in the mid palate. There are layers of flavours which reveal itself from behind the tannins – plums, blackberries and fresh Chinese red dates. At the moment, the new oak used in this wine is sticking out in an awkward way but the wine will likely come together in about five years time. **(90)**



7. 2007 Fraser Gallop Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, Australia

This wine is mean and green. The intense herbaceous and vegetal notes are detracting from some dark berry fruits lying in the background. The finish is astringent, tough and fairly short. **(81)**



8. 2007 Houghton Gladstones Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, Australia

This is a gorgeous full-bodied red with firm, velvety tannins and an array of flavours ranging from violets, plums to blackberries. The flavours suggest an elegant Australian from a cool region. It's a well balanced young wine that will require at least 5 years until it reaches full maturity. **(91)**



9. 2007 Chateau Cos d'Estournel, St. Estephe, Bordeaux, France

This is a majestic wine with wonderful density and structure. On the nose, it is classic Bordeaux – cedarbox, violets, cassis and fresh Chinese red dates. The flavours are multilayered and intense yet elegant, without any sense of heaviness. Very long finish. A classy wine that is surely a 1st or 2nd growth? **(94)**



10. 2007 Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, United States

This deeply coloured wine has a wonderful nose of chocolate, leather, herbs and blackberries. The flavours are supported by elevated tannins that are chewy yet velvety textured. This wine is generous in every aspect – its flavours, tannins and body. Wait at least 5 years for the wine to mellow and evolve. There is plenty of potential here and the finish is fairly long. **(91)**



11. 2007 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, Australia

This wine is all about fruit – plums, dried Chinese red dates and ripe blackberries. There are plenty of tannins to support this but the tannins are chunky rather than refined. The wine has moderate length and can be enjoyed fairly young. **(86)**



12. 2007 Chateau Margaux, Margaux, Bordeaux, France

This is another intensely aromatic wine with a gorgeous nose of violets, cedar and blackberries. It is the lovely texture of tannins which charm and beguile. The flavours have plenty of depth and layers of flavours and ends with a very long finish. A classic Bordeaux that is showing well despite its youth and the modest vintage. **(95)**



13. 2007 Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, Australia

An herbaceous Cabernet with some ripe dark berry fruits but the green vegetal notes dominate at the moment. There is also an intense aroma of mint, eucalyptus and an array of fresh herbs which is intriguing. However, the flavours fall short on the mid palate with insufficient depth and a modest finish. **(84)**



14. 2007 Araujo Estate Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, United States

This is a big generous Cabernet packed with ripe dark berry fruit flavours. It is obviously a New World Cabernet exuding hints of cocoa and chocolate notes. The tannins are firm and provide good support for the densely packed flavours. This is a well made wine that is not showing its full potential now since all of its elements are so tightly wound. **(91)**



15. 2007 Chateau Leoville Las Cases, St. Julien, Bordeaux, France

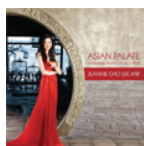
This is a restrained Cabernet Sauvignon with a generous amount of tannins which support a wonderful array of flavours – cassis, fresh Chinese red dates and ripe plums. While the texture, nose and tannins are very Bordeaux-like, the flavours are vibrant and ripe enough to be from the New World. This is a classy wine that will age beautifully. **(92)**



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