

EXCERPTS FROM JEANNIE'S WINE DIARY



CHATEAU MARGAUX & CANTONESE CUISINE

Paul Pontallier, the General Manager of Chateau Margaux, recently asked me to collaborate on an evening that would pair their wines with classic Cantonese dishes. After considering Lung King Heen (3-Michelin stars), Tim's Kitchen, Lei Garden, among others, we decided on Yung Kee. I knew their specialties such as roasted goose and tea-smoked pork would pair very well with Chateau Margaux.

By all accounts, the dinner held on 22 February 2011, was a huge success. The food was very good and the wines were gorgeous, lovingly decanted and served by Aurélien Valance, Chateau Margaux' Commercial Director and Thibault Pontallier, Paul's son and Chateau Margaux' brand ambassador in Asia. The evening was mainly attended by journalists, even one from as far afield as Bordeaux. However, I noted that the logistics and rhythm of how wine is consumed and enjoyed is not always in line with the rhythm of a Cantonese meal.

Most Cantonese banquets serve roasted meats at the beginning of the meal and vegetables, noodles or rice at the end. In wine dinners, the best, mature wines, which would pair well with roasted meats, are always at the end. We opted to follow the rhythm of wine and started with whites, progressing to a pair of Pavillon Rouge and then the finale -- the 1999 followed by 1989 Margaux.

We occupied the private room on the fourth floor, far from the kitchen, which meant the food arrived just a tad cooler than it should. All the dishes, especially the steamed or stir-fried items were luke-warm rather than steaming hot. The first dish was late, but when the chef got going, it was full speed ahead: All the subsequent dishes arrived much too quickly forcing us to serve the wines before people had time to really appreciate the current wine. At the end, nobody complained because whether it was too fast or too slow, too hot or too cold, it's hard to go wrong with Chateau Margaux, plus great conversation and company.

1. Pavillon Blanc paired with dim sum selection

This is one of the best recent vintages of Pavillon Blanc and I loved it en primeur, just bottled and now. Because of its youth and firm acidity, it pairs well with a wide range of dishes including tofu, fried items, stir-fried meat or steamed seafood. As a wine for dim sum, it doesn't get much better. To showcase its ability to match well with a wide range of dishes, we had three bite-size dim sum morsels: Steamed Diced Chicken & Mushroom Wrapped with Egg White, Barbecue Char Siu Pork and Steamed Vegetable Dumpling.

As expected, the wine paired well with all three dishes, especially the chicken and mushroom dish. The pairing of the wine with barbecue pork was mixed – either people loved it or thought it paired better with the lighter dim sum dishes. I thought it held up well to the strong char siu flavours with the acidity cutting through the sweetness and the fat.

2009 Pavillon Blanc - Chateau Margaux, Bordeaux, France

This is a beautifully poised youthful wine with crisp acidity, very precise, delicate flavours that are intense yet gentle. It is the vibrancy of its flavours, including a strong star fruit character, that allows it to be paired with strong flavours such as barbecued pork and condiments like soy sauce. I adore its intricately layered profile and linearity. A wine that will age for decades. **(95)**

2. 1988 Pavillon Blanc paired with Sautéed Prawns

The Sautéed Prawns was about minimal seasonings and the focus was on the freshness and natural sweetness in the prawns. The 1988 Pavillon Blanc brought out the sweetness in the shrimp and the delicacy of its texture paired perfectly with the round silky texture of the wine. Given its substance and body, this wine is perfect for pairing with a wide variety of Cantonese dishes, especially those with subtle umami flavours. There was a wonderful interplay of subtle flavours.

1988 Pavillon Blanc - Chateau Margaux, Bordeaux, France

While I had tasted all the other Margaux wines previously on more than one occasion, this was my first encounter with the 1988 Pavillon Blanc. I was impressed to find freshness and a wonderful richness in the mid palate. After 23 years, the wine exudes confidence and a presence that is substantial without any youthful aggressiveness. The dried chrysanthemum leaf fragrance is enchanting and its mellow, rounded character makes it an extremely versatile wine that is drinking beautifully now, if you can still find it! **(93)**



3. 2003 Pavillon Rouge paired with Roast Goose

This wine would have worked well with a number of roasted meat dishes from Yung Kee's menu, including the Peking Duck or Roast Suckling Pig. But given that Roast Goose is the house specialty, we settled on this to pair with the 2003 Pavillon Rouge. As expected, it was a great match with the goose's burnt soya sauce and slightly sweet flavours of the goose skin and succulent meat being enhanced by the wine's ripe exuberant flavours and firm velvety tannins.

2003 Pavillon Rouge - Chateau Margaux, Bordeaux, France

A sexy wine that is youthful, intense, and filled with vibrant flavours. Unlike many 2003 red Bordeaux, this wine has a wonderful freshness with no sign of over ripeness, aggressive tannins or tired fruit. The tannins are ripe and velvety-soft. A perfect wine for numerous Cantonese roast meat dishes. Enjoyable now but will no doubt gain more expression with several more years in bottle. **(92)**



4. 1989 Pavillon Rouge paired with Deep Fried Duck Coated with Mashed Taro

When I tasted the Deep Fried Duck Coated with Mashed Taro, there was no question that it had to be paired with this wine. The 1989 Pavillon Rouge came immediately to mind because of its texture: The velvety softness in this dish from the taro with a touch of crispiness requires a similarly textured wine like the 1989 Pavillon Rouge. With 22 years of maturity the tannins in this wine are silky smooth and it echoed the elements in the dish perfectly.

1989 Pavillon Rouge - Chateau Margaux, Bordeaux, France

I have a weakness for mature wines and I love the evolved, spicy, earthy flavours and silky tannins of this wine. Beautifully mature, elegant and feminine, this wine doesn't need any food since it possesses such a strong sense of itself. The duck with taro had no aggressive flavours, providing a fantastic backdrop to the wine's subtle flavours. A mature wine at its peak, enjoy it now. **(93)**



5. 1999 Chateau Margaux paired with "Cloudy Tea" Smoked Pork

Yung Kee's award-winning "Cloudy Tea" Smoked Pork is renown for its smoky, tea-infused aromatic fragrance and its juicy pork meat. It wasn't surprisingly that the pork paired beautifully with the 1999 Margaux. The tea leaves brought out the beautiful fragrance of Margaux while the umami flavours of this dish married very well with the wine's silky tannins.

1999 Chateau Margaux, Bordeaux, France

I under-estimated this wine when it was young. As a baby, only 3 or 4 years old, I thought it was well-made, balanced but unexciting. Two years ago when I tasted it, I was surprised and impressed and enjoyed its bouquet and delicately layered flavours. Now, after 12 years of age, this wine has blossomed and it is now youthful and gorgeous, a wine that is just reaching its peak. Its bouquet right now is magical – classic Chateau Margaux. **(94)**



6. 1989 Chateau Margaux paired with Braised Beef Brisket with Mushroom

Traditionally, a Cantonese meal ends with a simple noodle or rice dish but we added this slow-cooked Braised Beef Brisket with Mushrooms to complement the 1989 Margaux. The savoury flavours of the beef and soft Chinese mushrooms were perfect backdrops to the opulent, intense and complex 1989 Margaux. The wine was the star in this pairing but neither over-powered the other.

1989 Chateau Margaux, Bordeaux, France

This is one of my favourite vintages of Chateau Margaux from the 1980s, along with the 1983 and 1982. Less than a year ago, I tasted the 1989 and the 1990 side by side and it was the 1989 that really impressed me. This is a stronger, more muscular Chateau Margaux, with firm tannins and amazing intensity even at 22 years old. There is absolutely no sign of age or development and when tasted blind, it would surely be mistaken for a wine half its age. A complex, concentrated Margaux that will easily age for another few decades. **(96)**

Wishing you all good health & great wines!



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