

LE CLOS

FINEST WINES & LUXURY SPIRITS

THE JUDGMENT OF DUBAI – 20th OCTOBER 2010



	Flight One		Flight Two		Flight Three		Flight Four	
Judge	William Fevre, Chablis Grand Cru "Bougros" 2006	Stags Leap Wine Cellars Karia Chardonnay 2006	Chateau Lafite 2005	Harlan Estate 2005	Chateau Mouton Rothschild 2005	Opus One 2005	Chateau Montrose 1996	Heitz Cellar Marthas Vineyard 1997
A	8	9	7	9	7	8	6	8
B	8	6	8	9.5	8	8	7	8
C	7	8	8	6	7	9	8	9
D	8	9	6	8	4	9	2	8
E	5	8	6	9	8	7	8	8
F	5	6	8	7	8	9	5	8
G	8	7	6	7	8	8.5	7	8
H	5	7	8	5	5	9	5	7
I	8	3	4	7	5	6	2	8
J	7	4	8	7	6	8	4	9
K	8	6	9	9	8	8	9	9.5
Total	77	73	78	83.5	74	89.5	63	90.5

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On the 24th of May, 1976, Steven Spurrier, British wine-merchant, expert and Francophile, organized a tasting which was intended to see off the new pretenders from the new world, principally California. The central idea was a blind tasting conducted by the upper echelons of the French wine world. It had previously been thought that although undoubtedly of high quality, that the wines were not of equal standing and that to a more refined palate the Californian wines would not measure up to the opposition.

The reason for the grandiose name under which this tasting is now known, is that the results rocked the wine world. The exclusively French tasting panel had unknowingly voted for the Californians. The overall red winner was Stag's Leap Wine Cellars beating [Chateau Mouton](#), Haut-Brion and [Montrose](#), and The Ridge Monte Bello came in above "Super second" Leoville Las Cases. To read more on the original Judgment please click [here](#).

This experiment has been re-visited a number of times, most notably on the 30th anniversary of the tasting, with some of the original tasters present. It was thought that the new world wines would show well in their youth, but, the thinking was, they just had fruity charm in youth and that with age the Bordeaux would come into their own. At all of these tastings, the same expectations were dashed, as each time the Californian reds came out on top.

In the interests of fairness and to remain true to the original ethos of the tasting the Dubai re-enactment featured wines equally pitted against each other based on three criteria – Firstly, the Vintage, Secondly the predominant grape variety and thirdly as a barometer, closely correlated Robert Parker ratings. All of the wines were tasted blind with only one of the attendees present aware of the wines provenance in order to adjudicate and, without bias, complete the scoring. The assembled panel of 11 voters comprised some of the regions most distinguished palates with all wines served in the correct glassware and allowed equal opportunity to breathe post decanting.

Each pair of wines was denoted either Wine A or B and the score out of 10 taken from each of the panel based purely on their perception of how much they enjoyed the wine – not value for money or future development – a purely sensory judgment at that moment, with 1 registering a score of unpalatable and 10 equal to perfection. The maximum score any individual wine could receive on the evening equaled 110 based on eleven perfect ratings. The event saw one flight of whites and three of red with the order of Wine A and B randomly allocated so the panel had no opportunity to base future ratings on any preconceptions.

The first flight of wines pitted **William Fever, Chablis Grand Cru "Bougrons" 2006** against **Stags Leap Wine Cellars Karia Chardonnay 2006**. The Chablis offered peach, citrus zest and iris aromas, leading to a lush, rich, spice-tinged palate full of fruit and flowers, yet with an almost shimmering sense of chalky, saline and iodine minerality, and considerable buoyancy to its finish. With the Chablis receiving 93 Parker points and a score of 77/110 from the assembled crowd, the Karia Chardonnay had a strong challenge. Despite exhibiting a natural freshness and a lingering sense of marmalade, lemon oil and hazel nuts, the Karia received a score of 72/110 from the esteemed panel – leaving it in second place behind the Chablis.

FRANCE 1 – USA 0

The next Chapter involved two of the world's most iconic estates; [Chateau Lafite](#) and California's own 1st Growth - Harlan Estate. With very similar Parker ratings, 96+ and 97 respectively this was always going to be a close call with the ripeness of the Lafite more akin to a new world offering, with bold plummy fruit evident in each wine. Both wines exhibited enormous density though countered with a purity and savory minerality. Some would question approaching wines of this quality in their infancy though both already were approachable and able to satiate and refresh the pallet. A somewhat surprising result of 78/110 emerged for the Lafite, with the Harlan victorious with 83.5/110, receiving near perfect scores from four of the panel.

FRANCE 1 – USA 1

With fresh glassware and after a brief interlude it was time to visit two of the Rothchild families most respected concerns drawn again from the 2005 vendage; its flagship Pauillac [Chateau Mouton Rothschild](#) versus its Mondavi joint venture [Opus One](#). The Mouton delivered inky black fruit in the glass and was the most closed wine of the evening; Robert Parker is often quoted that wines can be enjoyed by your "Childre's children" and this wine is a case in point. More discernable as a Bordeaux than the Lafite, with a classic cedar and a pencil shavings nose and 96 Parker points this wine could have very easily trounced many a classed growth claret however the Opus One's abundance of rich berry fruit won over the group with a final score of 89.5/110 versus the Mouton's undervalued 74/110

FRANCE 1 – USA 2

The last pairing involved two wines drawn from the 1990's, equal in their own relative stature and of comparable vintages in their respective home countries. [Chateau Montrose](#) 1996 received 91 Parker points and with 12 years bottle age should have been grace personified, however the wine didn't find favour with all in attendance, splitting opinion from near perfection to un-evolved and dry scores. Its nemesis featured in the original tasting; Heitz Cellar Marthas Vineyard. The Heitz from the celebrated 1997 vintage received a creditable 90 rating from Robert Parker and turned out to be the dark horse of the event. Fresh with sweet tannins and copious black currant and licorice layers, the wine delivered perhaps the nicest textured finish and despite a market price of a sixth of the Lafite came out as wine of the judgment with 90.5 points against the Montrose struggling to muster just 63.

FRANCE 1 – USA 3

As in the original and subsequent judgments California's finest offerings found favour and general consensus amongst the panel with the grand totals reflecting their appreciation, not only of wine making prowess, but that whether in their infancy or mature the ability to offer purity of fruit, ripeness and balance. Although not conclusive the results highlight the significance and quality of Napa terroir....Following in the footsteps of Rothschild with [Opus One](#) and the Petrus Dynasty with Dominus could there be a Napa Valley Lafite venture in the not to distant future?