

## CHEERS

# The Modern Bordeaux

Contemporary thinkers give new life to a historic grape.

BY DARRYL BEESON

**B**ordeaux is a wine with a storied past. The village of Saint-Émilion is on the right bank of the river Dordogne in France's famous Bordeaux viticulture area. Winemaking there has been traced back to the Roman occupation of the area and, in the fourth century, Roman poet Ausone lived in a villa on the present site of the Grand Cru Chateau of the same name.

But just because something's been around for a while doesn't ensure quality. Do a little research, and you will soon conclude that too many Bordeaux producers have rested on past successes. The soil and aspects of growing the vines, called *terroir*, are still crucial, and new talents continue to tinker. Updated winemaking approaches have been received with enthusiasm thanks to vintners such as Pierre Seillan and Château Lassègue partners Jess Jackson and Barbara Banke. Jackson and Banke, the owners of California's Kendall-Jackson, bring both deep pockets and state-of-the-art insights. And Seillan has created wines in both the so-called new and old worlds of wine for more than 35 years. Together, the three have rewritten the direction of wine history in Bordeaux's Right Bank.

Lassègue, under the direction of Seillan, captures the essence of a fleshy merlot, along with the opulently ripe and rich cabernet Franc grape, plus a hint of the more structured ca-

bernet sauvignon. The exact recipe is 65 percent merlot, 30 percent cabernet Franc and a mere 5 percent cabernet sauvignon. The vines on the estate average between 30 and 45 years of age, adding to the complexities within the bottle.

The Château Lassègue 2003 Saint-Émilion Grand Cru (\$50) expresses delicacy along with huge complexity. This wine is already showing character, reflecting the minerality from the crucial limestone and clay of the vineyard's hillsides. Notice the leather and mocha and then the dark fruit in the long finish. The result is elegant and well-balanced.

Ample sunlight upon nearby vineyards and diverse and complex soils have allowed for the magnificent rebirth of grapes and wines from Château Lassègue. The ornate sundials found on the facade of Lassègue's magnificent 17th-century estate make for emblematic symbols of this French winery.

*Darryl Beeson, a former sommelier, is a freelance writer based in Dallas.*



LASSEGUE

#### I WANT THAT

For more information, go to [www.chateau-lassegue.com](http://www.chateau-lassegue.com). You can find the Grand Cru at the following places or ask your favorite wine merchant to order it for you.

- Put a Cork in It 2972 Park Hill Drive Fort Worth
- Central Market 4651 West Freeway Fort Worth
- Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse 812 Main St., Fort Worth



Lush vineyards of the 17th-century Château Lassègue estate are producing bumper crops of grapes.