

«Bordeaux's New Kids on the Plateau»



Bordeaux's New Kids on the Plateau

Having achieved great success in their home appellations, the owners of Haut-Brion, Pingus, Le Pin and Kendall-Jackson look to duplicate their achievements in Saint-Émilion.

Published on Nov 19, 2012

BY ROGER MORRIS



Château Lassègue

About a year before he died in April 2011, Jess Jackson was chatting as the evening sun disappeared behind the coastal range west of Vérité, the Sonoma County estate he built with winemaker and business partner Pierre Seillan.

Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay may have brought Jess, a former lawyer, and his wife, Barbara Banke, fame and wealth, but it was the Frenchman's work at Vérité that had garnered him Jackson's respect.

"Pierre and I have the same dream and passion for land and grapes," Jackson said, "and he brought the technical skills that were needed."

Jackson then launched into a story about how Pierre almost wasn't allowed to work in the U.S.

"I wrote State, I wrote Immigration, I wrote the President and said, 'If you don't let Pierre into the United States, you're making a big mistake!'" he laughed.

As friends and partners, Jess and Barbara and Pierre and his wife, Monique, launched Vérité in 1998, Tenuta di Arceno in Tuscany in 2002, and, in 2003, bought the 60-acre Château Lassègue and its companion property, Château Vignot.

Together, they have invested heavily to keep Lassègue at or above its *grand cru* designation. They use small-batch or micro-cru fermentations, as many organic techniques as possible, their own barrel company and a gigantic tractor that plows three rows simultaneously.

During en primeurs last spring, Héléne Seillan and Julia Jackson, the daughters of Pierre and Jess, led tours and tastings, while Pierre's son Nicolas explained his role as emerging winemaker at the estate, of which he is gradually gaining control from his father.

"There is work to be done here," Pierre says, still moving with the vigor of the rugby player he once was. "It cannot be done in one generation."



Pierre Seillan