



∞ CHATEAU ROC DE CAMBES ∞ One of Bordeaux's Hidden Gems

The little port of Bourg, some twelve miles due north of the city of Bordeaux, overlooks the confluence of the great Dordogne and Garonne rivers; henceforth they collectively form the Gironde estuary. On the distant bank lie the famous vineyards of the southern Haut-Medoc – Margaux, Cantenac and Ludon. Important when Aquitaine was under the English crown and the town held some significance in the export of wine, the vineyards which lay on the limestone escarpment and its hinterland were once held in far higher esteem than those of the Medoc. Today the town possesses an air of sun-kissed, if sleepy, decay, an effect which might easily be perceived as being reflected in the wines traditionally produced in its appellation, the Côtes de Bourg; solid, but perhaps uninspiring, a little old-fashioned. In 1988 Francois Mitjavile, owner of the then rising-star St.Emilion Château Tertre Roteboeuf, heard of a vineyard which was on the market here. He visited, and was immediately struck by the similarity of the limestone escarpment and aspect with that of St.Emilion – it is essentially a continuation of the same geology – and the unique setting of the vineyard, which comprises a pair of natural amphitheatres overlooking the river, the ‘great thermo-regulator’ which would provide protection from both frost and extreme heat. He persuaded his bank to back him, and immediately set about breathing life back into what he had intuitively perceived as a sleeping beauty, its 14 hectares of venerable vines split roughly equally between Merlot and Cabernet.

Today, Chateau Roc de Cambes is recognized by lovers of fine claret as not merely the leading wine in the appellation, but as one which can sit very comfortably at the top table of all of Bordeaux. That it is very often better than much that is produced in the famous appellations across the river is perhaps not the point – it arguably leans more towards St.Emilion than the Medoc – but it is both great and original in its own right. The hand of a quiet genius is clear, for the familial link to Tertre Roteboeuf is undeniable. Perhaps more characterized by red and berry fruit – cherries and blackcurrant – to the opulent spice of Tertre, sometimes more roasted, it is a wine which drinks beautifully from its youth, yet is fully capable of staying the course, developing breathtaking, thrilling finesse, depth and complexity over anything up to 20 years.

It has always given me enormous pleasure (for it permits me to drink it) that Roc de Cambes falls largely below the radar as regards the speculative investment that has definitively removed most decent Bordeaux from the shopping lists of mere mortals. I sense that this is changing. We have quantities of both the 2003 and 2004 vintages that we have held since the original shipment, and I must admit to having been taken aback when I saw the worldwide market prices for the wines during the course of preparing this offer. If perhaps it is no longer quite the bargain it once was, in relative terms it still defines ‘*rapport qualité-prix*’ in a region where few wine are still able to make that claim.

The Black Dog Wine Company Limited
The Cart Barn, Ashlyns Farm Shop, Epping Road, North Weald, Essex CM16 6RZ
Telephone: 01992 525009 E-mail: vinifera@blackdogwines.co.uk

∞ CHATEAU ROC DE CAMBES continued ∞

2004 Roc de Cambes – The Press

There are a handful of real stars in the côtes, but one stands out. At Roc de Cambes, François Mitjaville is making what is surely the best right bank wine outside Pomerol and St-Emilion. The 2004 Roc de Cambes, Côtes de Bourg is silky, graceful and harmonious with medium-weight tannins, cassis and black cherry. Buy some before it doubles in price. Or someone from Paris buys the château.

ees of Margaux across the river. As the fragrant, silky, black cherryish 2004 Roc de Cambes demonstrates, Mitjaville's intensive vineyard work has made a nonsense of Bourg's humble status with a series of remarkable wines.

Lovely bloody edge to this wine that shows fine maturity. Refined, cedary, touches of gaminess quite tight and refined, has lots of spice and racy finesse. £46.99

Tasted four times - last time in April 2009. Consistent notes. Strong and spicy wine, full-bodied, black cherries everywhere. Fine length and fine aftertaste.

2003 Roc de Cambes – The Press

Deep cherry colour, medium intensity. The nose displays red fruit, jam, cinnamon, chocolate and fine notes of toasted nuances. Excellent attack on the palate followed by an impressive evolution of vivacious, smooth vinosity and a richly ample finish. A real treat!

Fragrant and beautiful, black fruit, prunes, woodsmoke, coffee and jam: Exotic. A note of warmth on the finish. A very complex wine, and not at all surprising given the vintage.

This was my first taste tonight and what a treat! Truffleley, briary nose, great balance on the palate. It has evolved into a dark fruit, complex mouthful as the night has worn on. Tannins and acidity are balanced and easy on the mouth.

Good bright red. Exotic aromas of cherry and dried rose, with a slightly roasted quality. Rich, sweet and lush; fat with jammy fruit but firmed by an edge of acidity. Very ripe and sweet but with sufficient structure to maintain its shape.