

Pierre Seillan: The perfect wine-maker comes to Manchester

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Sharing some of the highest scoring (and expensive) wines in the world with the man who made them at Albert Square Chop House



WHAT is the secret to making perfect wine?

Well, if meeting a wine-maker who has been credited with making perfect wine was anything to go by; humility and the right soil.

I was lucky enough to be invited to share dinner with vigneron Pierre Seillan who has made some remarkable and high-scoring wines in France, Italy and California.

Pierre was born in Gascony into a wine-making family and he quickly blossomed into a fully-fledged vigneron.

While in Bordeaux, he began to develop his own style by singling out blocks of grapes that consistently produced the best fruit and bore the signature of their differing terroir.

This became the basis of Pierre's philosophy, enabling him to develop elegant and complex blends from the different parcels.

He now works with the Jackson Family Estate brand which owns fine wine vineyards worldwide. Seven of the wines created in the Californian Sonoma vineyards under the name of Vérité have been scored 100 points out of 100 by America's most famous critic Robert Parker. It is in Sonoma with its incredible variety of soil types that Pierre has been able to extend his techniques to their fullest.



Pierre Seillan (centre) with his wife Monique (left) and Lori Buchanan from Jackson Family Wines

Given their achievements, Pierre and his wife Monique, exuded modesty, humility, as well as wisdom and joie de vivre.

“My wines come from the turf,” he said, “and I am a servant of the soil.”

The meal was held at the Albert Square Chop House with a wine flight curated by legendary Manchester sommelier George Bergier and head sommelier Garry Clark.

To match the exquisite wines the food needed to be of the highest order, and so it was, with dishes provided by head chef Stuart Valentine.

I was surprised to learn later that many of Pierre's wines are available at Carringtons which has branches in Chorlton and Didsbury. If you have a few hundred quid to spare you may want to pop in.

For our excellent canapés came an English wine that managed to put a smile on the face of Frenchman Pierre: **Nyetimber, Blanc de Blancs 2009 (N/A)**.

Bursting with floral aromas this wine is very tightly focused with excellent minerality; a genuine UK rival to Champagne.

Our first introduction to Pierre's wines came via Tuscany with his **Tenuta di Arcano, Arcanum 2007 (£69 Carringtons)** to match a game terrine (game from Johnson & Swarbrick in Goosnargh).



High Peak lamb from John Mettrick's Glossop butcher shop

This wine hails from Chianti Classico but in keeping with other 'Super Tuscans' it is not made from Sangiovese like Chianti but from Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

It was scored a mere 96 points by Robert Parker's Wine Advocate which still puts it in the very highest echelons.

What's remarkable about it is that the same aspects that I so admire in a Chianti Classico are still present.

There's lifted aromas of berry fruits and cherry with a waft of savoury spice. The palate is utterly delicious with a broadside of freshness firing across the entire lengthy profile of the wine.

After an amazing **Pouilly Fumé 2012 made by Didier Dageuneau, in the Silex vineyards of the Loire Valley**, came Pierre's sublime **Chateau Lességué Saint Emilion Grand Cru 2005 (£75 Carringtons)** to match High Peak lamb from John Mettrick's Glossop butcher shop.

This Saint Emilion, one of Pierre's own favourites, boasted vanilla-scented aromatics matched by supple and generous fruit.

For a pre-dessert French-style cheese course came the three perfect score wines:

'Perfect' wines

Vérité La Muse, Sonoma, 2007 Parker score 100 (£390 Carringtons)

This wine, made predominantly from Merlot (90 per cent), is characterised by seamlessness; everything is knitted together perfectly. The voluptuous nose reminded me of Douro wines with a huge blackcurrant profile and a faint hint of dried herbs. The palate is delightfully supple and inviting with colossal length. It's still very young and needs more time.

Vérité Le Desir, Sonoma 2008 Parker score 100 (£390 Carringtons)

This wine mainly combines Cabernet Franc (61 per cent) and Merlot to produce a wine of depth and minerality. Oak gives the nose toasty aromas but the overall character is the purity and elegance of the fruit.

Vérité Le Joie, Sonoma 2005 Parker score 100 (£450 Carringtons)

Utterly stunning wine made with Cabernet Sauvignon in the style of a Bordeaux left-bank Chateau such as Pauillac.

This wine is showing a little more maturity than the other two with a nose boasting almost feral levels of savoury 'barnyard' spice. The bold, powerful cassis and blackberry fruit is structured by cigar box oak and ripe tannins.