

THE WINE FORUM
THE WINES OF JACQUES THIENPONT
AND COMTE LIGER-BELAIR

23 January 2014
The Hotel Grischa
Davos, Switzerland



IN VINO CARITAS

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WELCOME TO THE WINE FORUM

The Wine Forum is pleased to welcome you to a very special dinner featuring some extremely rare wines—those of Jacques Thienpont and Comte Louis-Michel Liger-Belair. In Davos each year during the World Economic Forum, The Wine Forum hosts one exclusive dinner where we showcase particularly fine producers. In tonight's dinner we are delighted to welcome Jacques Thienpont, the co-owner of Vieux Château Certan and the owner and winemaker for Le Pin, both top properties in Pomerol, Bordeaux. We also welcome Comte Louis-Michel Liger-Belair, the owner and winemaker of Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair whose wines include Aux Reignots and La Romanée. The wines you will taste tonight very few people in the world have tasted. Their rarity certainly contributes to the astronomical prices these wines enjoy on the market. However, their true value is generated by the skill and finesse these superlative winemakers bring to their craft.

This evening, we are very fortunate to be joined by Fiona Morrison MW. Fiona is a noted wine journalist and is married to Jacques Thienpont. We also fondly welcome Constance Liger-Belair, who admirably administers Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair.

The dinner menu has been created by Chef Roger Ebnöther of the Hotel Grischa in consultation with the winemakers to best complement the wines on show. The wines are poured by the top sommeliers in Switzerland to ensure your perfect enjoyment.

This is a truly rare evening and it is our very great pleasure to present it to you. We hope very much you enjoy it.

David Spreng

Vidhi Tambiah

*Co-founders
The Wine Forum*

23 January 2014

SCHEDULE & MENU



SCHEDULE

7:30 PM Apéritif—Krug 2000

8:00 PM Introductions:
Pierre Godé, LVMH
Jay Pryor, Chevron

MENU & WINE PAIRING

Pata Negra with avocado mousse and herbs salad
Vosne Romanée 1er Cru Aux Reignots 2006 en bouteille
Vosne Romanée 1er Cru Aux Reignots 2007 en bouteille

Grilled turbot fillet with Perigord truffle
Vieux Château Certan, Pomerol 2005 en bouteille
Vieux Château Certan, Pomerol 2006 en bouteille

Beef fillet with Mediterranean flavours
La Romanée 2008 en magnum
La Romanée 2003 en bouteille

Small choice of regional cheese with pear bread and nuts
Le Pin, Pomerol 2008 en magnum
Le Pin, Pomerol 2001 en magnum

Petit Fours with chocolate

BIOGRAPHIES

Jacques and Fiona Thienpont

The Thienpont family has been a well-known Belgian winemaking family for several generations. Georges Thienpont acquired Château Troplong Mondot in Saint-Émilion in 1921 and Vieux Château Certan in Pomerol in 1924. During the crisis in the thirties he had to sell Troplong Mondot to the Valette family as a country house but managed to build up the reputation of Vieux Château Certan, cycling to Bordeaux from Belgium during the war years to make his wine. Upon his death, the estate passed to his children and today is owned 100 percent by his descendants. Georges is responsible for establishing a veritable viticultural dynasty. Today, the third and fourth generation of winemakers are active in Bordeaux. Three cousins have made their name on the Right Bank of Bordeaux: Alexandre lives at and manages Vieux Château Certan with his son Guillaume; Nicolas has established a fine reputation in Saint-Émilion, managing several top properties including Larcis-Ducasse and Pavie-Macquin. His son Cyrille runs Jacques and Fiona's new domaine, L'If, next to Troplong Mondot in Saint-Émilion. Thirdly, Jacques owns and runs Le Pin and is considered one of the world's finest winemakers. Jacques is known for his down-to-earth manner and humble approach. However, he is uncompromising when it comes to winemaking and has achieved Le Pin's remarkable stature in a short few decades.

Jacques Thienpont is married to Fiona Morrison, a Master of Wine whom he met in Bordeaux. They work together and divide their time between Pomerol and the family home in Etikhove, Belgium in the Flemish countryside where Thienponts have lived since 1612 and have had a wine négociant business since the beginning of the 19th century. They have two children, George (15) and William (14), both of whom show interest in wine, taste well and help with the harvest.



Comte Louis-Michel and Constance Liger-Belair

When he was eight years old Louis-Michel told his parents that he would live in Vosne-Romanée and manage the family vineyards. His father, a successful general in the French Army, informed Louis-Michel that he could not take charge of the domaine unless he was suitably qualified. Thus, Louis-Michel became an agricultural engineer and gained a degree in business and a diploma in oenology from the University of Dijon.

On the face of it, Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair is a very recent domaine created at the beginning of 2000 by Louis-Michel with those few vineyard parcels remaining in family hands. In reality, the domaine is not at all recent; Louis-Michel is renewing two hundred years of family tradition dedicated to the vines and wines of Burgundy in general, and to Vosne-Romanée in particular.

The Liger-Belair family settled in Vosne when Louis Liger-Belair, a Napoleonic general, acquired the Château de Vosne in 1815. The domaine grew considerably under the general's direction. By the late 19th century, the family's holdings covered more than sixty hectares principally in the Côte de Nuits and comprised some of France's most prestigious appellations including the monopolies of La Romanée, La Tâche and La Grande Rue.

The domaine held together until the death of the Comtesse Liger-Belair in 1931. The economic depression and restrictive inheritance laws prevailing at the time meant the family vineyards had to be sold. However, two children, Louis-Michel's grandfather and a grand uncle, bought back La Romanée, Reignots, and les Chaumes. Louis-Michel's father managed the domaine through sharecroppers and negociants. In 2000, Louis-Michel created his domaine and over the next two years brought back 3.1 hectares of vineyards under his direct control. With other rented plots, he now manages 10.5 hectares of vines, all of which is certified as fully organic and biodynamic.

Louis-Michel is married to Constance and has three children—Henry (11), Brune (10) and Pia (6).



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

Apéritif: Krug Vintage 2000

Each Krug vintage reveals the expression of a particular year, complete with its distinct character and special story. Krug 2000 captures the climatically chaotic season of this very exciting year. It is rich, precise, complex and indulgent. It is one of the most intense, dramatic and romantic Krug Vintages ever created.

Aux Reignots 2006

The 2006 Vosne-Romanée 1er Cru Aux Reignots shows its class over the 2003 and 2004. It has a glorious, beautifully defined bouquet of raspberry and crushed strawberry fruit laid over scents of cold stone, violets and potpourri. The palate is medium-bodied with a silky smooth texture, very well-judged acidity and a sense of mineralite that this propitious premier cru ought to show. Weightless on the finish, this is a seductive Vosne-Romanée by Louis-Michel and it should drink well over the next two decades. —Neal Martin

Aux Reignots 2007

The Liger-Belair 2007 Vosne Romanée Aux Reignots really shows its class of origin. Blackberry mingled with rhubarb makes for a sweetly ripe, yet tart, expression of fruit that both stains and invigorates the palate, and which puts me in mind of 2008. The tannin here is extremely fine-grained, resulting in a seamless, almost silken feel; and a sense of salted, multi-bone meat broth concentration underlies a long, saliva-inducing finish. This might well hold for a decade, though one ought to feel no compunction about waiting. —David Schildknecht

Vieux Château Certan 2005

A stunning effort from Alexandre Thienpont, the 2005 Vieux Château Certan (a blend of 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc) reveals an inky/blue/purple color along with a rich, sumptuous perfume of black olives, lavender, roasted herbs, licorice, pain grille, and oodles of truffles as well as creme de cassis. In the mouth, hints of chocolate and charcoal also make an appearance along with good acidity, fabulous purity, and a full-bodied, powerful mouthfeel. In keeping with the style of this terroir, the wine is reserved and restrained, but deep. It should develop magnificently, and age for 30-40 years. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2035. —Robert Parker



Vieux Château Certan 2006

Shows complex and subtle aromas of dried dark fruits and blueberry. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a long, refined finish. Very fine. Solid and balanced, with lovely sweet fruit on the finish. All in place for the vintage. Best from 2014 through 2020 —James Suckling

La Romanée 2008

The 2008 La Romanee shows off the weightless elegance and sheer breed that only this site is capable of. Silky tannins frame the fruit in this totally elegant, understated Burgundy. The endless finish wafts on the palate for what seems like an eternity. This is a gorgeous wine from Liger-Belair. Anticipated maturity: 2018-2033. —Antonio Galloni

La Romanée 2003

Grilled oak, spices, and sweet red fruits are found in the aromatics of the 2003 La Romanée. Full-bodied, fresh and rich, this intense wine exhibits exceptional depth of fruit, concentration, and purity. Loads of candied black cherries dominate its juicy, extroverted personality and copious solid (yet ripe) tannin make an appearance in its exceedingly long finish. This offering, a beautiful marriage of power and elegance, should be drunk between 2009 and 2020. —Pierre Rovani

Le Pin 2008

Not that dark, but a lustrous crimson. Very rich and heady. Gloriously opulent. With a refreshing skein of tea. Lovely freshness. Long. A great glass of (refreshing) hedonism. —Jancis Robinson MW

Le Pin 2001

A tremendous effort, this 500-case cuvee (one of Bordeaux's original garage operations) is even better in 2001 than it was in 2000. Its deep ruby/plum/purple color is accompanied by an extraordinary perfume of creme de cassis, cherry liqueur, plums, licorice, caramel, and sweet toast. This flamboyant, opulently textured, rich, concentrated Pomerol is a brilliant success as well as one of the wines of the vintage for 2001. Its low acidity and extraordinary ripeness suggest early drinkability, but it has proven it can last for 18-20 years. —Robert Parker



THE REGIONS

Adapted from the *Oxford Companion to Wine* with kind permission from Jancis Robinson MW.

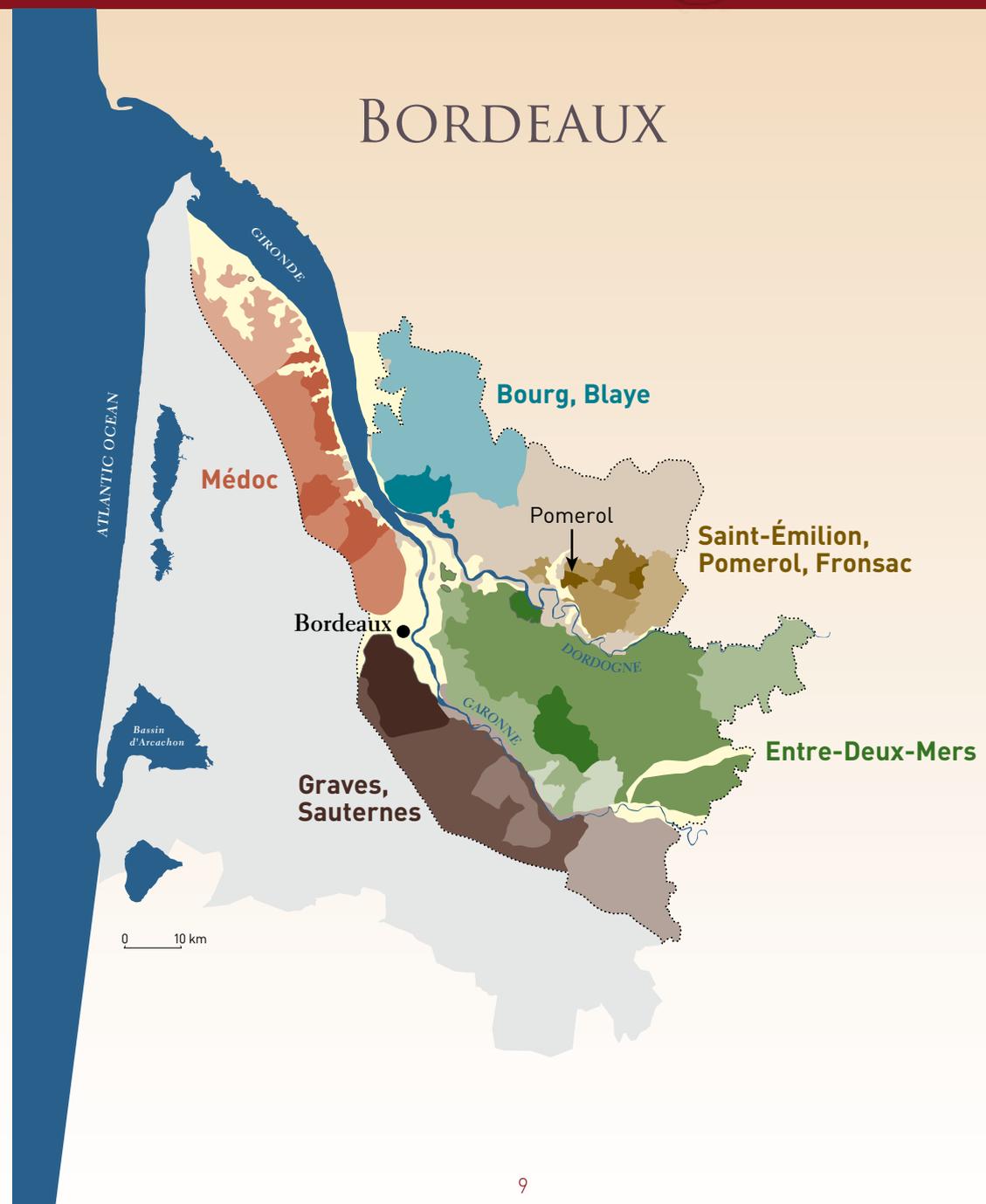
POMEROL

A small but distinctive wine region in Bordeaux producing opulent and glamorous red wines dominated by the Merlot grape. Although they are now challenged by their counterparts in its much larger neighbour St-Émilion, Pomerol's most successful wines are some of the world's most sought after, but the glamour attaches to the labels rather than the countryside.

Pomerol is produced from a constant 780 ha/1,930 acres of vineyard on a plateau immediately northeast of Libourne that is as geographically unremarkable as the *médoc*, but without even any buildings or historical landmarks of note. A confusing network of narrow lanes connects about 150 smallholdings, most of which produce only a few thousand cases of wine a year in one of the world's most monocultural landscapes.

Vines were intermittently grown on this inhospitable, unfertile land from Roman times, but viticulture was abandoned during the Hundred Years War and the vineyards not re-established until the 15th and 16th centuries. For hundreds of years afterwards, Pomerol was regarded merely as a satellite district of neighbouring St-Émilion to the east, and it was not until the late 19th century that the wines began to be appreciated, and then only in France. In the early 20th century, they became known in northern Europe, notably in Belgium, whose wine merchants would import the wines in bulk; Belgian-bottled Pomerols of this period attract high prices at auction. A succession of hard-working middlemen from the impoverished inland *département* of Corrèze made Libourne their base and developed markets for right bank wines in such markets as Paris, Belgium and Holland, leaving the traditional Bordeaux trade to provide the British market with *Médoc*, Graves and Sauternes. Such famous and well-educated British connoisseurs as George Saintsbury do not even mention Pomerol. It was not until the 1950s that British merchants Harry Waugh and Ronald Avery 'discovered' Pomerol.

Pomerol's finest wines are in general made on the highest parts of the plateau, which is predominantly layers of gravel interleaved with clay, becoming sandier in the west, where rather lighter wines are made. The subsoil here is distinguished by a local iron-rich clay, the so-called *crasse de fer*.



Apparently as important in fashioning wines that are plump, voluptuous and richly fruity enough to drink at less than five years old and yet which can last for as long as many a great Médoc are vine age and low yields. Yields here are often the lowest for red Bordeaux and are zealously restricted at the best properties. The early flowering of the Merlot grape, and the fact that a single vine variety accounts for about 80 percent of plantings in the appellation, unusual in Bordeaux, means that in vintages such as 1984 and 1991, the majority of the crop can be lost, for example, to poor weather at flowering or spring frosts.

Pomerol is also unusual in being the only one of Bordeaux's great wine districts to have no official classification. The scores of properties are in general humble farmhouses with little to distinguish one from another. The most sought-after wines, depending on the vintage, include Chx Pétrus, Lafleur, Le Pin, La Conseillante, Trotanoy, Certan de May, La Fleur de Gay, L'Église-Clinet, Clinet, L'Évangile, Latour-à-Pomerol and Vieux-Ch-Certan.



VOSNE-ROMANÉE

A village in the Côte de Nuits district of Burgundy's Côte d'Or producing arguably the finest red wines made anywhere from Pinot Noir grapes. As well as excellent wines at village and premier cru level, there are six grand cru vineyards, three of which share the name Romanée, the suffix to which Vosne was hyphenated in 1866.

The grands crus are Romanée-Conti, La Romanée, La Tâche, Richebourg, Romanée-St-Vivant, and La Grande Rue. Between them they produce, with Musigny and Chambertin, the greatest wines of the Côte de Nuits. They have more finesse than any other but to this is allied as much power and stuffing as their nearest rivals.

A vineyard formerly known as Le Cloux was rechristened La Romanée in 1651, presumably on account of Roman remains being discovered nearby. In 1760, the property was bought by the Prince de Conti, subsequently becoming known as Romanée-Conti. Just above this vineyard, is La Romanée. Romanée-Conti has brown, calcareous soil about 60 cm/23" deep with 45 to 49 percent clay and liable to serious erosion in the upper, steeper part. La Romanée also has a notably steep slope with less clay and more rendzina in the make-up of the soil. The former is the monopoly of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (DRC), the latter of the Liger-Belair family. About 300 cases are made each year from the tiny 0.84 ha/2 acres of La Romanée.

Other significant influences in Vosne-Romanée include Henri Jayet, for his unparalleled wine-making skills; René Engel for his patriarchal influence and local historical research and publications; Lalou Bize-Leroy, who has bought and transformed the former Domaine Nöellat. Other particularly fine domaines are those owned by the various members of the Gros family, Domaine Jean Grivot and Sylvain Cathiard.



THE WINERIES

VIEUX CHÂTEAU CERTAIN

The Thienpont family has owned Vieux Château Certain since 1924, and today it is regarded as one of the most prized Pomerol estates. Its 14 hectares are planted with 65 percent Merlot grapes, 30 percent Cabernet Franc and 5 percent Cabernet Sauvignon. The domain is run by Alexandre Thienpont, cousin of Jacques, and remains firmly in the family's hands. VCC, as it is affectionately known, has a worldwide following due to the precision of its red fruit character and its fine, long length. Vinified in large oak vats, the wine is aged in new oak barrels for 15 months on average before release.

LE PIN

Jacques Thienpont had the opportunity to purchase one hectare of vineyard adjacent to Vieux Château Certain in 1979 on the advice of Alexandre's father. Almost 35 years later, Le Pin has become one of the top wines in the world, covering 2.7 hectares in one single plot of land which is planted exclusively with Merlot grapes. Only 500 cases are made each year and Jacques Thienpont is the owner and winemaker. In 2011, the Thienponts inaugurated a new winery designed by Belgian architect Paul Robbrecht. Jacques's Le Pin is appreciated for its rich, dark berry fruit, its freshness and purity and its silky, long taste.



© Philippe Roy



Top: Vieux Château Certain
Bottom: Le Pin

AUX REIGNOTS

Aux Reignots lies just above the La Romanée vineyard. It comprises 1.62 hectares with a steep slope and shallow stony soil. The climat is divided into various different parcels like a staircase. Comte Liger-Belair owns the lion's share with his 0.73-ha parcel running from the bottom to the top of the slope, thus incorporating all the different soils of the area. The wine is very elegant and more approachable in younger years than its Grand Cru neighbours, yielding a round, rich palate. However, over time, this roundness transforms to an intense precision with a long length and subtly perfumed nose.

LA ROMANÉE

The tiny vineyard of La Romanée lies directly above La Romanée-Conti and is separated from it by a path. Further upslope is the premier cru Aux Reignots, to the north is Richebourg, to the south La Grande Rue. La Romanée has its own appellation contrôlée and, at 0.84 hectares, is the smallest in France. By contrast, La Romanée-Conti, at 1.81 hectares, is the fourth smallest. La Romanée is a monopoly, under the exclusive ownership of the Comte Liger-Belair family, as it has been since 1826. The vines are old and carefully pruned so that production is severely limited. La Romanée's yield varies from 25 to 33 hectolitres, equivalent to a maximum 3,500 bottles. As a wine, La Romanée is somewhat reserved and aloof in youth, but reveals wonderful perfume and aristocratic grandeur in maturity. It is usually compared to a symphony: all the desirable Grand Vin elements being harmoniously present and the long length moving in a seamless crescendo and decrescendo swell.



FOR YOUR NOTES

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Thank you for attending The Wine Forum's tasting of the wines of Jacques Thienpont and Comte Liger-Belair in Davos. We aim to attain the highest standards in everything we do. We will be delighted to hear your feedback on how we might improve for next time and what you enjoyed the most.

Next events:

Burgundy | June 2014

Napa Valley | September 2014

Please contact vidhi@thewineforum.org or david@thewineforum.org for more details.

The Wine Forum is an independent, not-for-profit society of very senior private and public sector leaders who share a passion for fine wine and philanthropy.

Our events feature the best wines from the most renowned producers and take place in discreet, unique settings.

Our members come from many different cultures, religions, and political philosophies and set aside two or three days a year to attend our events.



If you are interested in joining the Wine Forum, please contact Vidhi or David at vidhi@thewineforum.org or david@thewineforum.org or complete this form and leave at the front desk. Alternatively send your completed form to The Wine Forum, c/o David Spreng, Crescendo Ventures, 600 Hansen Way, Palo Alto, CA 94304, USA.

The Wine Forum is a society of senior business people, politicians, academics, media and civil society who love fine wine and philanthropy. The Wine Forum charges no joining fees or annual dues. We mark up our wines only modestly. Members commit to give as much again to charity as they spend on wine. We conduct two vineyard tours a year and host several city dinners in major cities around the world. We have 250 members on five continents and are based in Palo Alto, USA and Geneva, Switzerland.

Membership Application Form:

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Position _____

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Email _____

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The Wine Forum Voluntary Code of Conduct:

- 1 **Confidentiality:** *Keep member details and pricelists confidential.*
- 2 **Consume:** *Buy wine for consumption only and not for resale.*
- 3 **Charity:** *Match wine purchases with charitable donations of your choice.*
- 4 **Disclose:** *Inform us which charities you have given to at the end of the year so we can publish in our Annual Journal.*

I would like to enlist as a member of The Wine Forum and am willingly bound by the rules and regulations above:

Signature _____ Date _____