



DOMAINES BARONS DE ROTHSCHILD
LAFITE

PRESS RELEASE

PRIMEURS 2019

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Reinventing the primeur tastings at Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite)

Bordeaux, May 26, 2020 – Bordeaux's centuries-old en primeur ritual of offering an April sneak peek of its latest vintage and releasing it on the market shortly after has been pushed back this year, as have most events, due to social distancing.

Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite), however, decided to take this time-honored tradition and reinvent it with the help of digital technology by allowing a select few buyers and critics to sample the 2019 vintage through live virtual tastings in June.

"How can we convey enough information and emotion to wine lovers for them to feel excited about our 2019 vintage without them actually being able to taste it?" asks 33-year-old chairwoman Saskia de Rothschild, referring to the challenge posed by the current global situation. By turning to digital channels of communication in times of social distancing, she hopes to maintain a human connection by sharing anecdotes and moments from the vineyard and cellar teams that capture the feeling of creating the 2019 vintage.

"I'll always remember dancing in the rain on the 26th of July in Pauillac," she says. *"We had been faced with such a terrible drought, and the rain came as a liberation to us all. When we saw the first drops fall, we knew our vines and the vintage were saved!"*

Offering a more intimate and approachable image of winemaking in Bordeaux is a personal challenge for Saskia, who took the reins from her father, Baron Éric de Rothschild, two years ago. Along the way, she made it her mission to convert all of the French estates to organic farming, starting with **Château L'Évangile** three years ago. *"Bordeaux wines are too often seen like the wines our parents used to drink. We have to change that cliché to appeal to a new generation of wine drinkers so they can see that drinking Bordeaux can be a down-to-earth experience,"* she says.

So, how does this mentality translate to the 2019 vintage? After two challenging vintages filled with frost and mildew attacks at **Château L'Évangile in Pomerol**, 2019 proved the shift toward organic farming to successfully produce a healthy and abundant crop of Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The estate even added a hint of Cabernet Sauvignon to the final blend. *"We only have a few rows of the grape for now, but it's one we're betting on for the future on the right bank, especially with global warming,"* Saskia says.

The vines at first-growth **Château Lafite Rothschild in Pauillac** also offered a surprise this year. The 2019 is proving to be a *"modern classic"* with a few outsider plots that really shone during blending sessions taking the place of old timers in the final blend. The match has already started between the lovers of the 2018 versus the 2019 vintages.

Carruades de Lafite continues to race toward precision with the help of the Anseillan vineyard (Lafite plots across the road from the château), which was remapped by soil type and pushed to perfect maturity until October 7. The new playing field gives this year's wine its racy quality.

At **Duhart-Milon**, Merlot – a grape that is sometimes left behind in the Cabernet-loving land of Pauillac – took center stage. Both the Merlots on clay and on gravelly soil produced their purest expression – which Saskia says is her favorite Duhart so far.

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In Sauternes, the scattered showers in September sped along the progression of botrytis at firstgrowth **Château Rieussec**, but sour rot threatened the quality of the grapes. The harvesters worked like gold diggers, separating the precious noble rot from the sour one – with the Muscadelle standing out in particular.

“This is another year where everything played out in the vineyard because, after all, that’s where we play the cards nature hands us by deciding on vine conduct and harvest dates,” Saskia explains. “Once in the cellar, we did what we always do: followed a ‘less is more’ philosophy with soft extractions that allow for the purest expression of our grapes.”

The big question ahead: Once wine lovers are familiar with the vintage, will they still be interested in purchasing the wines when they have no idea what the future holds?

“The primeur buying experience is already at odds with our ‘see now, buy now’ society of instant gratification, since you’re purchasing a bottle of wine you’ll receive two years later,” Saskia explains. “We don’t know what tomorrow will bring, so why not play that waiting game and wait twenty more years to open it?”

About DBR (Lafite)

Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite) have based their development in the crafts of the vine and of wine. Around Château Lafite Rothschild, the Group has grown with the successive acquisitions of Château Duhart-Milon (Grand Cru Classé in Pauillac), Château Rieussec (Premier Grand Cru Classé in Sauternes) and Château L’Évangile (Pomerol).

In parallel, it has expanded outside the Bordeaux region: Viña Los Vascos (Chile, 1988), Domaine d’Aussières (Languedoc, 1999), Bodegas CARO (Argentina, 1999) and Long Dai in China since 2008, launched in 2019. The Group has also produced Légende R and Saga R, a range of Bordeaux wines.

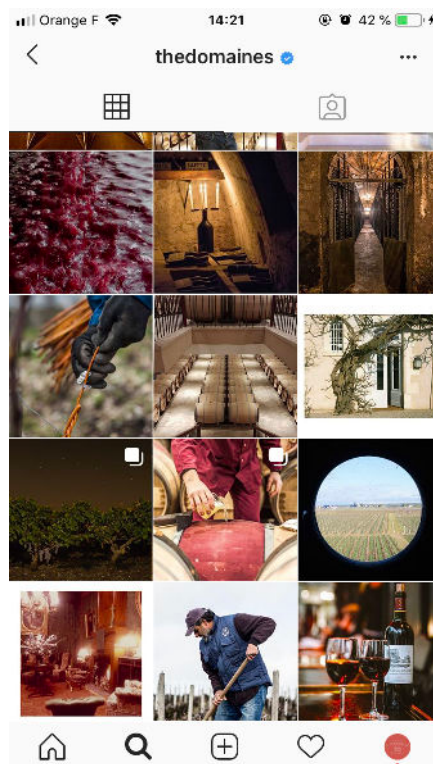
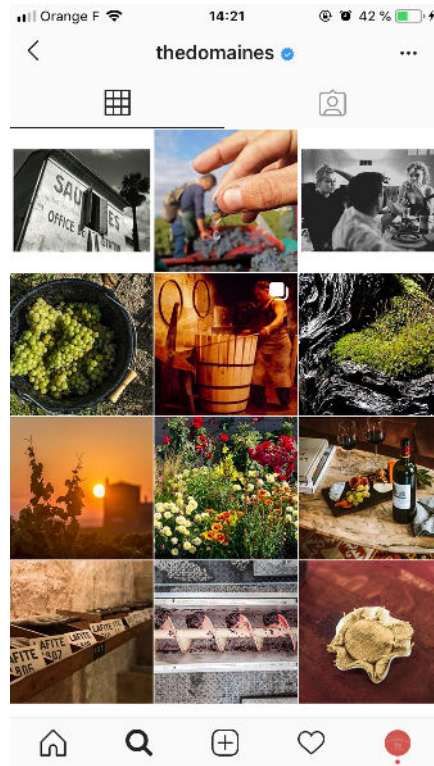
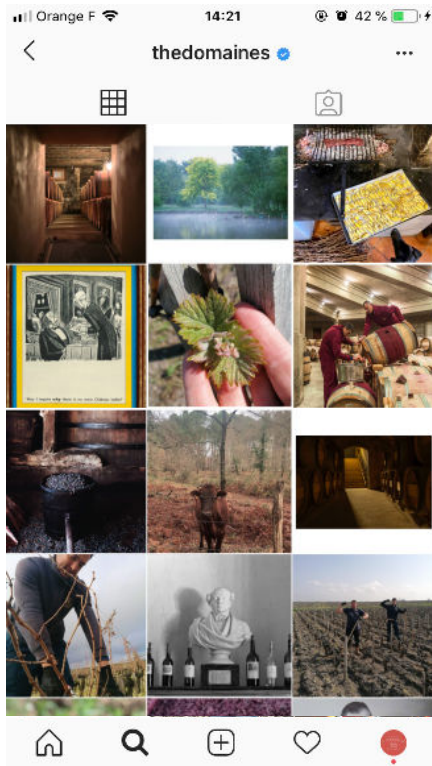
With 1 200 hectares of their own vineyards, Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite) work with a worldwide network of more than 80 distributors.

For more information: www.lafite.com

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APPENDICES

The Instagram account @Thedomaines offers a window into the behind the scenes of DBR's vineyards.



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APPENDICES

Pictures of our teams and our Bordeaux Châteaux



