

Props to the impressive 2006 Bordeaux

Among the featured wines at the annual Heart's Delight wine tasting and auction, a benefit for the American Heart Association held earlier this month in the District, were the 2006

Grape Lines

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Bordeaux. Coming on the heels of the much-heralded 2005s — considered a nearly perfect vintage — late September rains helped dampen expectations. But the 2006s have not received the notice they deserve. The Bordelais know how to blend varietals to maintain their specific style, and the Chateaux that managed their vineyards carefully and controlled yields created impressive wines. Several are surprisingly ready to drink, while others need at least five years to reach their potential.

Two from St. Julien could be enjoyed now and during the next 15 years. The **Branaire-Ducru 2006** exhibits delightful floral aromas accented with pencil shavings. Medium-bodied with soft tannins, it has incredibly smooth and silky blackberry and dark cherry flavors with mineral accents in the finish. Floral aromas also predominate in the **Beychevelle 2006**, which is a bit lighter in style

than other vintages. Medium-bodied with a pleasant earthiness, it has cassis, red berry and raspberry notes with moderate cedar during the pleasing ending.

Also drinking beautifully now are two from Margaux. The **Brane-Cantenac 2006** has spicy, jammy floral aromas leading into complex lush red berry, cassis and boysenberry flavors, while the violet-scented **D'Issan 2006** is showing licorice, red currants, blueberries and red cherries. More restrained is the excellent **Palmer 2006**; its licorice and violet aromas with dark cherry, plum, vanilla and currant flavors will need at least eight years to achieve their peak.

The full-bodied and perfectly balanced **Smith-Haut-Lafitte** has graphite and coffee aromas, well-integrated tannins and blackberry, raspberry and chocolate flavors with bits of smoke and spice in the long finish. The Blanc 2006 is also exceptional, with creamy honeyed citrus, pineapple and pear notes, great acidity and a lovely fresh finish.

Comprised of 83 percent Merlot and 17 percent Cabernet Franc, the lush, full-bodied **Vieux Chateau-Certan** has impeccable structure and balance. The raspberry and mocha aromas, medium sweet tannins and blueberry, dark plum and floral flavors fin-

ish with some spicy oak. Cellar for at least five years, but expect that it will drink attractively for decades. Also from Pomerol and needing a few years to develop completely is the delicious, full-bodied **Rauzan-Segla 2006**, which has anise and black fruit aromas, black cherry and currants flavors with hints of earth and spice, especially in the lingering finish. The **Clinet 2006** has enticing aromas of flowers and red cherries. Full-bodied and still very closed it will need a long time for the smokey blueberry, black cherry and plum flavors to fully integrate and soften.

With red rose and berry scents, the **Pontet-Canet** has wonderfully complex, deep blackberry, cassis and smoky currant notes; it is just beginning to open. The medium-bodied **Lynch Bages 2006** was the first vintage for winemaker Nicholas Labenne. Soft and well balanced with delightful minty blackberry aromas, cassis, earthy red fruit and anise flavors, it is structured to be a great food wine to enjoy now and for many more years. The **Pichon-Longueville Baron** is more densely flavored with aromas of oaky currants. Dark and almost brooding, this full-bodied effort has excellent balance with cassis and black fruit flavors, but will need at least 10 years to open up.

