

Luc Thienpont

Let's face it, Luc does tend to get slightly overshadowed by his big brother Jacques, owner of Le Pin in Pomerol. However, he is the only Medoc-based member of the family (and Jacques doesn't live full time in Bordeaux, spending much of the year in Belgium and Switzerland), and makes some pretty excellent wines in his own right. The Luc Thienpont company was established in 2000 in order to distribute Luc Thienpont's own wines but since the summer of 2008 has now embarked on a period of growth that will see it become an active participant in the Cru Classé en primeur market and trading physical stocks of Fine Bordeaux.

The Thienpont family are numerous in Bordeaux, both as proprietors and managers of leading châteaux and as négociants. Luc's elder brother Baudouin, who bought Château Pellebouc in the Entre Deux Mers in 2006, is the most recent arrival from Flanders of the immediate family. Their uncle Gérard had moved to Bordeaux many decades earlier and their French-born cousins include Alexandre, manager of Vieux Château Certan in Pomerol, and Nicolas, who is responsible for a number of estates including Châteaux Pavie-Macquin and Larcis-Ducasse in St Emilion, and Château Puygueraud in the Côtes de Francs. Their cousin François owns the négociant company Wings.

The winery buildings of Clos des Quatre Vents overlook Château Margaux. Margaux's Director, Paul Pontallier, has no objections as he and Luc Thienpont have been friends for over 25 years (and it's too far to see in the windows). The vineyard itself is slightly further to the north, to the east of Soussans, on top of a croupe of Garonne gravel at the highest point of the appellation.

The Wines

There are five wines in Luc Thienpont's portfolio at the moment, with another high-quality property in Margaux that will be offered for the first time in the 2008 vintage.

Luc Thienpont spent over 25 years bringing Château Labégorce-Zédé up to Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel classification. This property was sold in 2004 by the Thienpont family (to Hubert Perrodo, who tragically died in the Alps in

2006). Luc now focuses mainly on Clos des Quatre Vents, a tiny 1.2ha parcel of 50-80 year old vines on fine, elevated gravel with a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot which are left to ripen as long as possible and then harvested in one go, normally in a single afternoon.

Fermented in cement cuves, with malo in barrique, the wine spends 18-20 months in new French oak. The power and purity of the old vines is what first impresses, and with Luc's first vintage being 2000, there has been a steady improvement in quality year on year as he gets to understand this parcel better.

Villa des Quatre Sœurs is Margaux AC produced from vines of around 20-30 years age planted on 1.5ha to the north of the Clos, and is a wine that offers all the charm and smoothness of a classic Margaux, but remains very much at the more affordable end of the appellation's wines.

Luc also continues to make a Bordeaux AC from 8.5ha to the east of Margaux, a wine that was originally entitled "Z de Zédé" and became known as Labégorce-Zédé's second wine, but which is now simply labeled "Z". This is a fresh and fruity drinker that has found followers in many countries.

In 2006 Luc bought a 23ha property in the Haut-Médoc, next to Avensan which lies a few kilometers to the west of Margaux. Château Bonneau is a single parcel of 20-30 year old vines, with some new plantings being put in now. The focus here is on attentive vineyard work and minimal intrusion in the winemaking. The wine passes both alcoholic and malolactic fermentation in cement tanks, then spends 18-20 months on French oak of one year's use. The first vintage, 2006, is medium-bodied with vibrant red fruit, a hint of pepper and a vivacious character. This property is set to improve as Luc and his team achieve a fuller understanding of its individual terroir.

Hexagone is a branded Bordeaux AC wine that Luc Thienpont Vins Fins distributes mainly in Belgium and Holland.

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