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ORGANIC

wine guide



MONTY WALDIN

Foreword by Andrew Jefford, wine critic *Evening Standard*

Château Meylet

La Gomerie, 33330 St Emilion

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Visits: by appointment

Accommodation: bed and breakfast accommodation available

Château Meylet lies on St Emilion's sandy western slopes below the vineyard of Château Franc-Pourret (above) and thus closer to Libourne. The vineyard amounts to just 1.6 hectares and is worked entirely by hand. Its owners, Michel and Marie-France Favard, became interested in bio-dynamic methods gradually through Michel's maternal grandfather. Since 1987 the vines have been Demeter certified. At picking each bunch is sorted by hand twice, first in the vineyard, and again in the winery. This 'pick bunches like they were apples' approach is unusual in Bordeaux where the majority of grapes are trucked about like cattle. The care which Monsieur Favard and his team of family and friends take at picking means only the finest quality bunches enter the cement fermenting vats. Those pecked by the birds are put to compost. A policy of 'healthy fruit only' stems protects the bloom (and yeast spores) on the berries so they ferment spontaneously, rather than with the addition of a yeast culture. The wine is run off from the skins into new oak barrels (made by hand at a rate of just four barrels a day, by Pierre Darnajou, the only true *artisan* cooper left in the Bordeaux region). Most of Darnajou's casks end up with French winemakers rather than in those of Bordeaux's most earnest imitators in Chile, Tuscany or California – he sells them only to producers whose wines he knows he will respect.

After 12–18 months' maturing in the Darnajou barrels, Château Meylet is bottled by gravity. No liquid sulphur dioxide, fining or filtration is used, although sulphur wicks are burnt in the barrels, much to the chagrin of barrel maker Darnajou.

- Château Meylet, St Emilion Grand Cru AC: dry red wine with a crimson colour to brighten cheeks; the presence of concentrated and ripe Cabernet Franc is indicated by an airy smell of summer hedgerow fruits, and the fuller presence of Merlot is indicated by the smell of moist undergrowth. Made from such clean fruit that it will age happily for a decade, the most natural tasting red wine in Bordeaux. Suitable for vegetarians and vegans. 🍷

Other St Emilion domaines

Other St Emilion domaines, which are sometimes described as biodynamic but which have never been certified either as organic or biodynamic, include:

- Château Laroze in the commune of St Emilion, adjacent to Château Meylet, which has practised non-certified biodynamic methods since 1990 when Guy Meslin took over from his father. In 1996 two treatments not authorized by Demeter – one to counter leaf hopper and the 'Bt' bacteria to counter grape worm – were used. Meslin admits to be a natural non-risk taker, although he himself has taken homoeopathic treatments for 20 years. **Overall Price Rating:** 🍷🍷
- Château Moulin du Cadet – under green-minded vineyard consultant Philippe Garde, a biodynamic treatment trial was started in this 3.5 hectare estate in November 1995. One hectare of 8–10-year old Merlot, and 2.5 hectares of Merlot and Cabinet Franc, were converted. **Overall Price Rating:** 🍷
- Château Pavie-Macquin covers seven hectares of lighter ground immediately east of St Emilion town. Under its previous owner, Madame Maryse Barre, Château Pavie-Macquin was run biodynamically (her son Paul owns Château La Fleur Cailleau et Château la Grave, Fronsac, *see page 27*). It produced some remarkable wines, fleshy and intense, especially in the three great Bordeaux vintages of 1988, 1989 and 1990. They owed their denseness in part to Madame Barre's policy of low yields. Pavie-Macquin lies in a frost pocket and when a