

Ham & High

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L'ESPRIT DE BORDEAUX
PAR YVON MAU



YVON MAU
DEPUIS 1897
GROUPE FREIXENET

promotion of affordable yet interesting regional selection

And there is a bit of a personality cult associated with them (see the website at <http://lespritdebordeaux.com/>). But why not – that makes the drinking more interesting.

When the growers came to London, I talked longest to Pierre Taix, of Chateau Gaudet Plaisance in Montagne-Saint-Emilion, who is far from a mainstream grower.

His mother is from Bordeaux but his father's roots are much further east – in Correze – from whence comes the oak for many of the best wine barrels. Pierre worked in finance in Paris before returning to the vines and he's

an individualist. Not for him the involvement of a "guru" consultant. He wants to make wines which reflect the different terroirs of his vineyards and prove that the satellite appellations of Saint-Emilion deserve high respect.

At Gaudet Plaisance, he has set about improving the vineyard following organic principles – an approach which isn't fashionable in Bordeaux. "It's different from Burgundy or Alsace – none of the big names is organic," he said.

The proof of L'Esprit's united yet diverse approach is, of course, in the drinking. The

launch event showcased 2009 and 2010 bottles from each participating chateau. It was a happy experience: these are very good wines. Though the 2009s will live for years and are likely to improve, many are very enjoyable already. The 2010s will need more patience, but will richly reward it.

L'Esprit wines will be spreading through independent merchants and restaurateurs but you can start the 2009 experience now. Soho Wine Supply in Percy Street, just off Tottenham Court Road (020-7636 8490/www.sohowine.co.uk) has almost all of them – Chateau Gaudet

Plaisance (£14) and the Saint-Emilion Grand Cru Chateau du Val d'Or (£19.50) are two which meet the quality/affordable price criterion very well.

Now, out with your wine tasting diaries. The pre-Valentine's tasting at Maida Vale's lovely wine shop, The Winery, will include a host of romantic delights, from pink champagne to German pinot noir. It's at Clifton Nurseries on February 8. Tickets are £25. Visit www.thewineryuk.com or call 020-7286 6475 for more information. And, at the shop in Clifton Road on January 31, fine German dry rieslings will be open.

Restaurant review Joseph Connolly

A new twist on an old classic works again

Restaurateurs Jeremy King and Chris Corbin are back doing what they do best – offering Londoners more of their high-end glamour

It's almost time to set fire to the kitchen again. The duo behind the award-winning restaurant *Le Gavroche* are back in London, this time with a new twist on an old classic. The restaurant, which has been a London institution since 1961, is set to open in a new location in the heart of the city. The new restaurant, *Le Gavroche*, is a new twist on an old classic. The restaurant, which has been a London institution since 1961, is set to open in a new location in the heart of the city. The new restaurant, *Le Gavroche*, is a new twist on an old classic.



Joseph Connolly with a few special dishes – Stephen Fry is the background

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Present was the essential smattering of celebs: Stephen Fry, Sebastian Faulstich and Piersie, the Duchess of York

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■ Pierre Taix in the Chateau Gaudet Plaisance vineyard
Picture: Richard Nourry