Wine expert predicts dramatic change for Bordeaux 2050
Connexion journalist / Tue 17 Apr 2018 / connexionfrance.com

The flavour of Bordeaux wine could change dramatically by 2050, an expert has said

A viticulturist and oenologist has predicted that the taste of Bordeaux wine is likely to change dramatically by 2050, should global warming continue at its current rate.

Pascal Chatonnet, an expert in Bordeaux wine, was invited to make the predictions by environmental journalist group l’Association des Journalistes de l’Environnement.

The taste of the wine will change dramatically by 2050, he said, if global warming proceeds at the current rates of 2-4°C as predicted by government experts le Groupe d’experts intergouvernemental sur l’évolution du climat (GIEC).

The taste will likely be much more fruity, with a riper flavour, as opposed to the fresh, light fruits found in current vintages.

Mr Chatonnet also found that while the flavour of some red wine can improve in longer, warmer summers, the harsh heat waves of recent years - and any future very hot summers - could provoke a negative effect long-term.

Referring to hot summers past, he said: “We have never made good-quality products in extreme weather.”
To make his predictions, Mr Chatonnet brought together Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes - those typically used for Bordeaux production - that had been grown much further south (in the Languedoc-Roussillon area and in Tunisia), in warmer temperatures more akin to those expected in Bordeaux by 2050.

He then combined them 50-50% to see “what we will have in 2050 if the harvesting and growing conditions do not change, and climate predictions are shown to be true”.

The alcohol level will likely be lower, he said, at about 13.5% instead of 14-15%, due to grapes ripening quicker. This acceleration of the ripening cycle could mean “we miss a lot” and effectively “burn the fruit”.

Mr Chatonnet said the 2050 wine project wanted to raise awareness of the impact climate change could have.

He said: “This experimental wine was very different. The nose on it was of very ripe fruit - almost jam-like - whereas nowadays Bordeaux wines are characterised by very fresh, cool fruit. On the mouth, it was supple but almost syrupy. It will also likely have less capacity for long-term aging, because it is already quite evolved [in terms of aged flavours].”

He added: “This was a coherent approach that could rapidly show the public the consequences of global warming. At the moment it is difficult to get people to understand, because there haven’t yet been any very negative consequences where we are. So people think it only affects others.

“The vines we plant in 2018 are those that we will drink in 2050. We must ask ourselves new questions on the grape variety, production, the selection of terroirs, and water. The Bordeaux of three centuries ago was not the same as the one today, and we must continue to evolve.”