

# GRAVES: WINES TO DRINK NOW

The clarets of 2007 haven't shone thus far. Could the Graves buck the trend? **CHRISTELLE GUIBERT** ekes out some good value, short-term quaffers

**L**ooking back at our *en primeur* report in the June 2008 issue and our 2007 crus bourgeois panel tasting in last month's issue, we all know that 2007 was not the easiest year in Bordeaux. The vintage saw the warmest April since 1949, and the flowering was one of the earliest on record. But it all turned sour for producers, with rain during summer; only those who worked tirelessly in the vineyard to avoid mildew and grey rot averted disaster.

By the end of August, we were all predicting a wash-out, but the ever-dependable Indian summer saved the vintage. On first tasting the wines *en primeur* in April 2008, however, it was clear this wasn't going to be a long-term cellaring vintage. Two years on and the wines of Graves and Pessac-Léognan bear that out, the best offering merely light, enjoyable, easy-drinking wines.

Of 57 red wines tasted blind in Bordeaux in December, a clear line was drawn between two distinct styles: green and lean

for some, where not enough work was done in vineyard and cellar; and soft, crunchy, red fruits with a fresh, pleasant structure for those who did. Apart from a few exceptions, all the wines have a short drinking window – some can even be enjoyed now. The 10 crus classés tasted had an extra dimension – more complexity and concentration, with deeper fruits and well-handled oak.

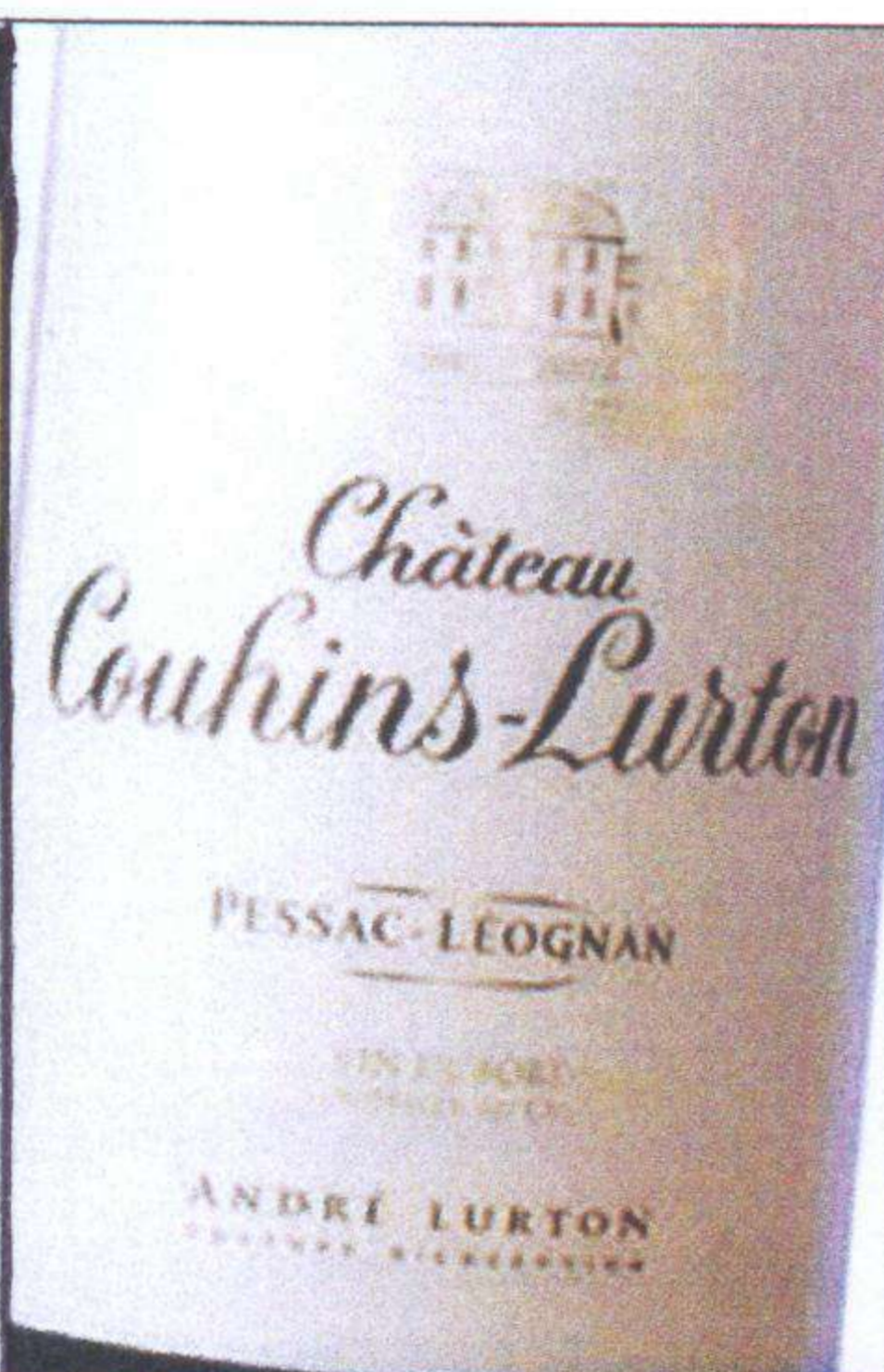
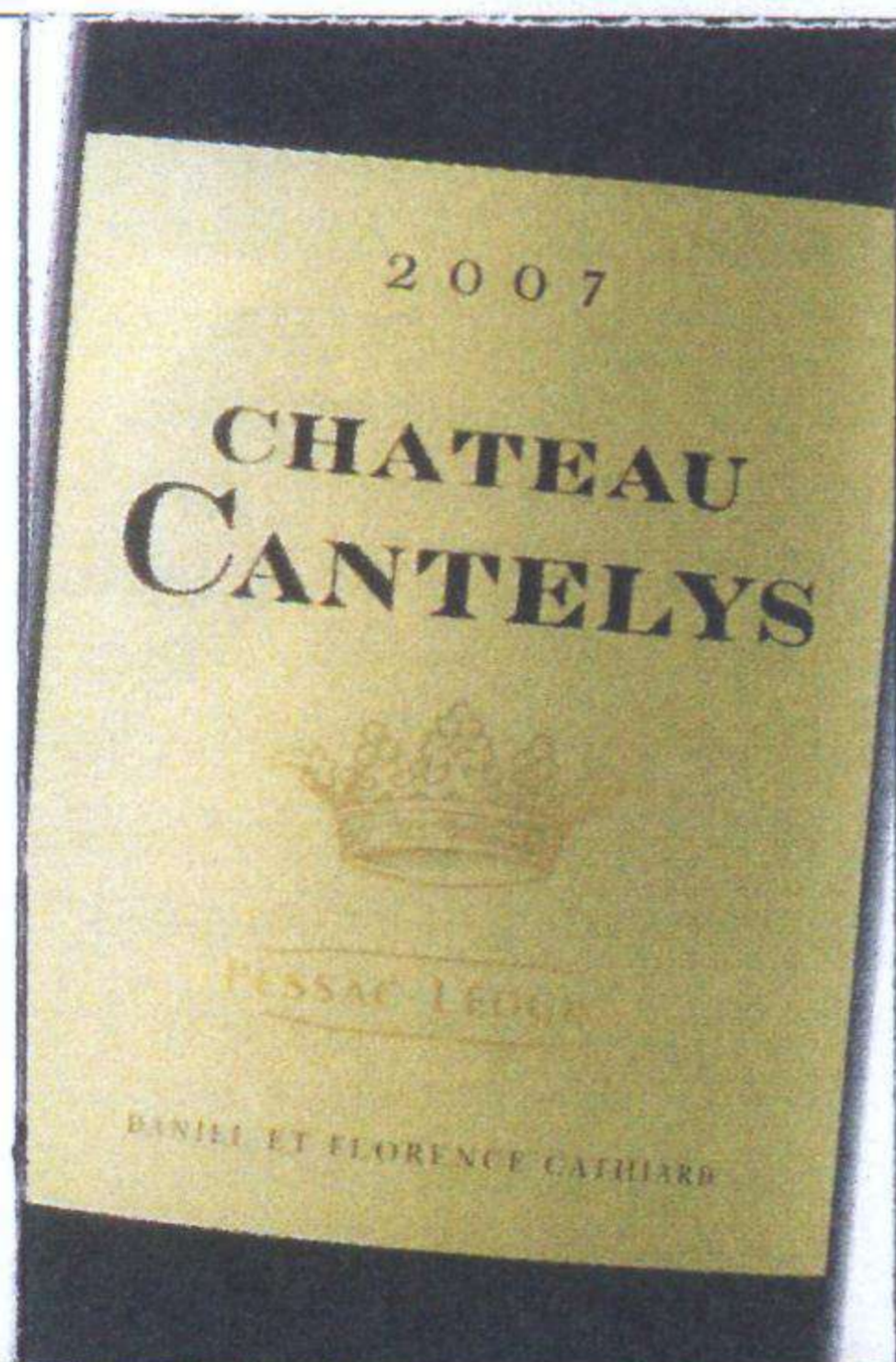
As to whether they are worth buying, we've selected the top 20 from the 57 wines tasted; for the Bordeaux loyalists among you, they are perfect to enjoy over the next few years while you wait for the great vintages such as 2005 and 2000 to flourish. For wine lovers with a broader palate, while some of these wines are great value, you might find better elsewhere in the world and save your cash for Bordeaux's 2008 and 2009 vintages.

Look out for our 2007 St-Emilion and Pomerol tasting next month

**Château Cantelys,  
Pessac-Léognan ★★★★★ (17)**

Closed on the nose but the palate opens up to juicy plum fruit characters with some spicy wood intensity. It's an elegant, well-balanced wine with firm tannins and a tight structure, fine minerality and nice complexity on the finish. From 2012.

N/A UK; [www.smith-haut-lafitte.com](http://www.smith-haut-lafitte.com)



**Château Couhins-Lurton, Cru Classé Graves, Pessac-Léognan ★★★★★ (17)**

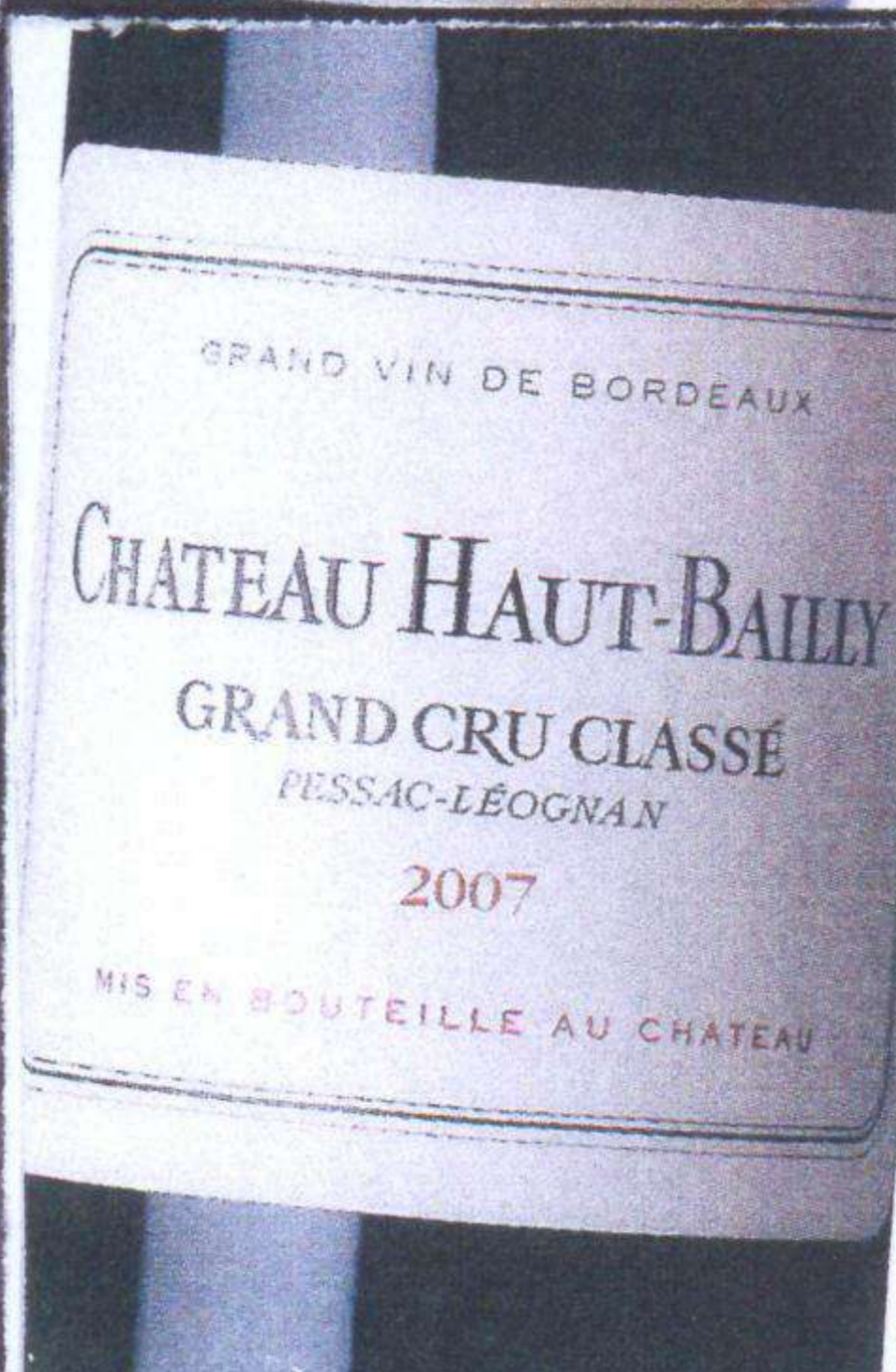
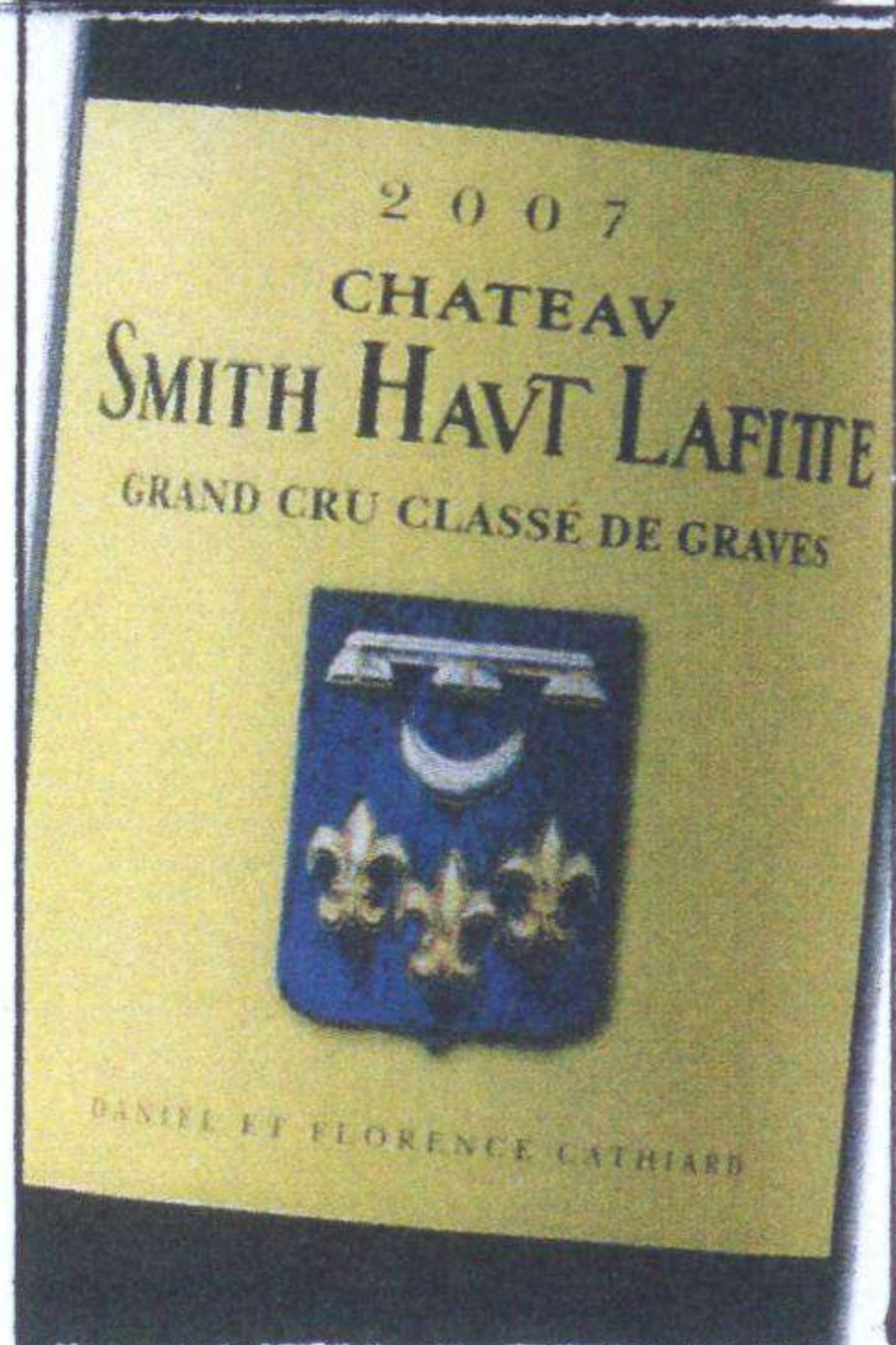
Oak still very present on the nose along with fresh, classic blackcurrant fruit. The palate is well-balanced and elegant, wrapped up in firm tannins, some minerality and nice peppery characters on the finish. Approachable now but the oak will soften up with time. Great value. From 2012.

£10; F&R

**Château Smith Haut Lafitte,  
Cru Classé Graves,  
Pessac-Léognan ★★★★★ (17)**

Layers of sweet cassis and toasty oak on the nose with a peppery edge. The palate of layered black fruit and cedar oak has a nice backbone of minerality balanced by fresh acidity and savoury tannins. From 2016.

£32-£34; BBR, EnP, F&R, J&B, N&P



**Château Haut-Bailly,  
Cru Classé Graves,  
Pessac-Léognan ★★★★★ (17)**

Good, expressive aroma with savoury notes, minerality and spicy oak. The palate is balanced and has firm tannins with well-handled spicy oak and further savoury characters. Lovely fine minerality on the finish. From 2015.

£33-£35; BBR, Cio, liW, J&B, Unc