

# Wine Scene

QRW STAFF

## CHÂTEAU MARGAUX AT BLANTYRE



Left: Paul Pontallier, General Manager and Winemaker at Château Margaux, speaks, while Aurélien Valance, Senior Vice-President and Commercial Director, listens. Below: Cristelle Cotar of Blantyre



Several glasses of Margaux, a sumptuous dinner at Blantyre (the manorial Relais & Châteaux property in Lenox, MA), and a concluding glass of port — not just any port, but the incomparable 1997 Quinta do Noval “Nacional” — along with a gorgeous spring evening engagingly conspired to make more than 50 guests delighted with themselves, the wine, and the venue. Paul Pontallier, Château Margaux’s general manager and winemaker, was there to oversee the wines, and Blantyre’s owner, Ann Fitzpatrick Brown, was there to direct the dining. It was yet another grand Blantyre wine dinner — worthy of any Michelin three-star restaurant, which few can match for excellence and grace. Like Lafite, Margaux is the aristocrat of First-Growths: stylish with a First Empire hauteur. Hugh Johnson says, “at its best Margaux is fluidly muscular as a racehorse and as sweetly perfumed as any claret — the very taste and smell

of elegance.” Winemaker Pontallier, who has run Margaux for decades, is the perfect representative for the estate — an urbane and courteous gentleman. He has lost none of his enthusiasm for the business of wine, expressing passion for his various vintages (a classical 1983 — Pontallier’s first and favorite wine, an outstanding 1985, a great 1995, some arriving in magnums and imperials) and for the cuisine of Blantyre’s two well known chefs, Christopher Brooks and Arnaud Cotar (New England scallops, roasted squab, and rack of lamb fashioned with awing inspiration and presentation). Excellence is execution: the best of wines and food will not fare well without it; the successful marriage of the two must have a natural chemistry of its own. At Blantyre this happens all the time. To that end, Blantyre’s staff is so good, so organized that their presence is virtually unseen, and plates and cuisine appear as if by magic.