

WINE & SPIRITS



Richard Bernard | Bordeaux table talks

As head Sommelier from Le Saint-James in Bordeaux, Richard Bernard is one of the most highly respected sommeliers in France and a great wine cellar to match with their own vineyard and an estimated 500 bottles production a year. We spoke more to Richard about how he oversees both aspects at the luxury hotel.

Richard, can you tell us a bit about where do you work?

I've been in Bordeaux for more than 10 years, where I enjoy helping local, national and international people rediscover the greatness of Bordeaux. We are privileged to have over 2,000 references including 800 from Bordeaux in Saint-James' wine cellar.

What do you do on a daily basis?

My daily life is great because every day is a new adventure of encounters: pairing food with wine in harmony with our Chef Nicolas Magie's cuisine, to discover and understand new wines, to explain and make our guests dream whilst teaching them wine knowledge.



So you how would you describe the kind of wine teaching you give?

In fact, the point is to convey knowledge and the passionate context of wine, as a dabbler or not, and through this, make them travel for the duration of a dinner.

Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge?

Having the knowledge is useless if you don't transmit it to one another – it is essential to train my team to make them evolve in the profession in order to make every single day better than yesterday.

What skills would you say are required to be a top sommelier?

On a more technical and pragmatic side, rigor is an essential quality as the management of a cellar of more than 20,000 bottles requires constant and accurate work, and every mistake can have serious consequences.

Could you describe how a day in your life looks like?

A beautiful day begins in a vineyard where after a "coffee/croissant" breakfast I get a glass of the last vintage lately produced to awaken the taste buds. To be able to talk about a wine, we must understand it, by meeting the wine maker for example.

Back at the restaurant, the organisation of the cellar is part of the daily pleasure: the alignment of bottles, crates perfectly arranged, the control of humidity and temperature... literally soak up the smell, that airy feeling of a prestigious and unique environment.

What does being a sommelier mean to you?

As a matter of fact, it is about sharing with teams, tasting experiences, emphasising the attention to details and perfection of the service we offer.





How do you communicate with your guests?

As the service begins, the approach of a table is always a moment of happiness because you have to understand the expectations, the desires, the food and wine marriages that our host might desire. Small details are very useful: how the customer holds the wine card, the shining stars in their eyes. All these clues help to immediately understand their expectations and this is when the conversation starts and the experience begins.



What is most important when serving guests?

During the service, we may sometimes deal with various technical issues such as decantation and airing but it is especially important to be careful of the temperature of the wine we serve, as a cold wine tastes bad and a warm wine is not to be drunk...

How would you sum up your passion for wine?

Wine culture is not for those who have the knowledge but for those who share dreams and pleasures...

Find out more about Richard and Le Saint-James, Bordeaux here | www.saintjames-bouliac.com

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