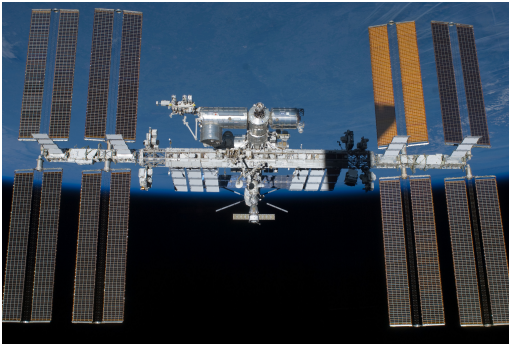


Pétrus 2000 Cuvée de L'espace - A Merlot ahead of its time

Commercial space exploration is the ultimate apex of human innovation, and the project to dispatch one of Château Pétrus' finest vintages to the International Space Station (ISS) is one rooted in exploring the reaches of not only luxury, but scientific research.



ISS (Nasa)

The label Pétrus is synonymous with a degree of prestige, sharing its name with one of Gordon Ramsay's flagship restaurants in London. The chateau's location within the Bordeaux region lends itself specifically to the production of Merlot, as the clay based soil promotes growth within the grape

variety.



Front entrance to Château Pétrus, Bordeaux

The question that may immediately arise as you consider investing in a bottle of wine valued at 1 million British Pounds is...why does Petrus warrant this obscene cost? The Château's meteoric rise correlates with the space exploration race, as the vineyard was largely under-utilised until 1962. The Moueix family purchased a half share of the estate, and propagated the growth of the programme, much in line with the growth of the international space programme; the USA and the Soviet Union combined to execute 65 successful launches throughout the year, with 5 crewed flights.



John Glenn was the first American to orbit Earth in 1962, in Space Capsule Friendship 7 (NASA)

The exercise to dispatch 12 bottles of the Pétrus 2000 garnered multiple conclusions, for both scientists, and connoisseurs alike. Pétrus has a legendary reputation for ageing and developing deeper tasting notes, well into 60-80 years of the ageing process. During the blind tasting of the space aged wine, many experts noted that the wine was "definitely different", and journalist Jane Anson commented that "The aromatics were more floral and more smoky - the things that would happen anyway to Petrus as it gets older." (BBC, Toby Luckhurst)



Organiser Philippe Darriet proudly displays the space aged Pétrus (Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images)

The tasting conclusions correlate to the scientific ones, creating a unique marriage. With deeper and more evolved tasting notes, the indication seems to be that under zero gravity conditions, the grapes released their tannins more readily, and the ageing process was accelerated.

The case of wines spent 14 months orbiting Earth, along with 320 vine canes; remarkably, despite the relatively absence of sunlight and water, the vine canes, much like the wine itself, underwent accelerated growth. The phenomenon is currently being attributed to the higher exposure to radiation that the canes experienced, as stated by the

Oenology Research Unit Institute of Vines, Science and Wine.

The purchase of a fractional share in the galactic enterprise offers a totally unique opportunity to own a share in the past, the present, and the future of space exploration, as proceeds from the sale are being invested into further projects to determine the potential growth of food in zero gravity.



The space age wine is presented in a stunning display case, with a regular Earth-dwelling 2000 vintage to accompany it, as well as a crystal decanter and glasses (image courtesy of The New York Times)

