



CORNER

Rick Staff  
with a remit to sniff, taste,  
and spit his way around Nanjing  
and disseminate the drinkable.

POINT SYSTEM  
0-10 A WARNING  
11-14 A Feasible Party Prop  
15-17 Heartily Recommended  
17-19 Exceptionally Good  
20 The Apogee Of  
WINE EXPRESSION



# Chateau Lafake

In 2013 China accounted for almost 20 percent of all of Bordeaux's exports by volume making its one of the world's largest Bordeaux markets. The initial batch of the so-called "first growths" from Bordeaux's dusty 1855 classification, Chateau Lafite Rothschild, is what a certain band of Chinese wants and will pay anything to get. The prestige of such a glittering prize is the key to satisfaction of course, above any sensory impact, and in turn has led to some less than scrupulous behaviour. Chateau Lafite's total per annum production is around 250,000 bottles; conservative estimations put the total number of bottles sold with the Lafite imprimatur in the Middle Country at around two million a year. You do the math, as they say.

Wine fraud, however, is certainly not only prevalent within the domain of China, and in August this year Rudy Kurniawan, a California-based wine collector of Indonesian extraction, was sentenced to a weighty 10 years in prison and fined US\$20 million plus a further 28 million in compensation. An unprecedentedly severe conviction for wine fakery, but for Laurent Ponsot, the Burgundy winemaker who first detected and relentlessly pursued Kurniawan's scam for five years, that is not enough. "Twenty years would have been more satisfactory, considering how he has sullied the image and integrity of the wine appellations of Burgundy, Bordeaux and beyond".

Yet, Maureen Downey, one of the world's leading experts on wine forgeries, expressed some sympathy after the trial, "Rudy sold \$130 million worth of fake wine because other people told him to". And, of course, there were people silly enough to buy it; this includes the likes of American billionaire William Koch, a robustly ego-ed collector of boats, art and wine, who stashed 219 bottles of Burgundy in his cellar allegedly consigned by Kurniawan. He paid \$2.1m for the wines in total. Ripping off billionaires parading bottles of wine in front of each other suddenly doesn't look the most contemptible of crimes in the world, but more than that the great service inadvertently done, call it schadenfreude if you must, is to help demolish the sense of elitism of the world's cashed-up wine drinkers. They have been drinking knock-offs and boasting about it, and their boasts remain deliciously etched onto the fine wine forums posted with great chutzpah after the lavishly wined dinners hosted by Rudy and other crooks. The true imbibers of the world have only missed out on public humiliation. These storied French regions though still provide some of the best wines in the world and if you dig a little deeper than surface glitz you will not need to re-mortgage your house and risk being ensnared in litigation to drink them.

A lovely recent discovery from beneath the gilded covers of Bordeaux is Le Relais de Durfort-Vivens (the second label of Margaux's second growth Durfort-Vivens), which has a gorgeously luxuriant coat of cassis around satisfyingly dense Cabernet dominated berries and a light violet lift on the finish; it is absolutely integrated right now on the 2006 model (18.5 points). Even lovelier is that it can now be found at [yesmywine.com](http://yesmywine.com) for £288 after a hefty 40 percent discount. Jayson Wines (Taiping Road, 1912 district) houses the French top dogs along with the less flashy, and of those the stand-outs are Chateau Ponsac 2006, which offers enticing sweet cherries and licorice; pure, fresh and well structured and at ¥250 good value for a northern Medoc (17 points) and Chateau Talbot 2007, which delivers blueberry jam with a fresh herby undertone; supple, spicily charming drinking again from the Medoc, though this goes for a loftier ¥500 (17 points). ■