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Virginia Wines Shine in Paris

Old World, New Roots Blind Tasting at Le Cordon Bleu Demonstrates Virginia's Place Among the World's Great Wine Regions

PARIS, France — July 1, 2026 — Fifty years after the historic Judgment of Paris transformed the world's perception of New World wine, **Old World, New Roots** brought Virginia and French wines together at **Le Cordon Bleu Paris** for an international blind tasting celebrating the remarkable evolution of Virginia wine while honoring the enduring traditions of French viticulture. The tasting was also the cap-stone event that concluded the Art, Science and Wine Management Diploma academic program.

Using the American Wine Society's 20-point judging matrix, the judges awarded Virginia wines the two highest scores in the Chardonnay flight, all three top Petit Manseng scores, the highest-scoring Cabernet Franc, and the top three Bordeaux-style red blends.

Jury Chair **Xavier Thuizat**, **Best Sommelier of France** and **Meilleur Ouvrier de France**, praised Barboursville Vineyards' 2021 Octagon, saying:

"Superb! One of the best I have ever tasted. Everything is perfectly balanced!"

Octagon was the only entry in the tasting to receive a perfect score and it was awarded by Xavier Thuizat.

Co-organized by **Thomas McCune**, a student in Le Cordon Bleu Paris's **Diploma in Art, Science and Wine Management** program, and **Frank Morgan**, a writer and Director of Judging for the Virginia Governor's Cup, the tasting brought together nine American and French wine professionals and Le Cordon Bleu Paris students to evaluate a total of twenty-four wines. The wines were divided into four flights of three French and three Virginia in each category: Chardonnay, Petit Manseng, Cabernet Franc, and Bordeaux-style Merlot blends. All wines were tasted and evaluated blind using the American Wine Society's 20-Point Wine Evaluation System.

Inspired by the 50th anniversary of the historic Judgment of Paris, the event was never intended to recreate that landmark tasting. Rather, **Old World, New Roots** celebrated the extraordinary progress of Virginia wine over the past five decades while creating a meaningful dialogue between two great wine cultures.

McCune curated the French wines featured in the tasting. He was guided by his professor Maxime Caderon. Many of the wines had been introduced during his program as benchmark examples of their respective French wine regions. He intentionally selected independent producers whose vineyard holdings and production more closely mirrored those of the participating Virginia wineries, creating a thoughtful comparison among producers of similar scale.

"Old World, New Roots was never intended to recreate the Judgment of Paris," said Frank Morgan. "Its purpose was to celebrate how far Virginia wine has come and to demonstrate that it belongs in the international conversation alongside some of the world's most respected wine regions. Holding that conversation at the historic Le Cordon Bleu in Paris made it especially meaningful."

McCune added, "France remains the world's greatest classroom for wine. Bringing Virginia and French wines together in a blind tasting created an opportunity to celebrate craftsmanship, curiosity, and the enduring friendship between our two wine cultures."

The judges' observations reflected both the quality of the wines and the significance of bringing Virginia and French wines together in Paris.

Tanisha Townsend, an American-born wine educator based in Paris and founder of the wine education and lifestyle agency **Girl Meets Glass**, reflected on the broader significance of the tasting:

*"When the Judgment of Paris happened 50 years ago, California was really the only American wine region in the conversation. Fast forward to today, and Virginia wines are standing shoulder to shoulder with some of France's top regions. I'd call that progress, and I'm grateful to have been part of **Old World, New Roots**."*

Paris-based winemaker **Antoine Sfier** described **Michael Shaps Wineworks' 2023 Honah Lee Vineyard Petit Manseng** as:

"Very complex. This is a serious Petit Manseng!"

Morgan Ipaktchian, a student in Le Cordon Bleu Paris's Diploma in Art, Science and Wine Management program, praised **Valley Road Vineyards' 2023 Estate Reserve Cabernet Franc**, noting:

"Great depth of pigment and on the mouth, direct and clean."

The inaugural **Old World, New Roots** tasting demonstrated the remarkable evolution of Virginia wine while reaffirming the value of blind tasting as a means of fostering education, collaboration, and dialogue. Rather than recreating history, the event celebrated how two great wine cultures can learn from one another through thoughtful comparison, shared craftsmanship, and mutual respect for place.

Results of the blind tasting:

Flight	1st	2nd	3rd
Chardonnay	Michael Shaps Wineworks Wild Meadow Vineyard 2023	Pollak Vineyards Reserve 2023	Maison Shaps Les Chazots 2023
Petit Manseng	Michael Shaps Wineworks Honah Lee 2023	Veritas Vineyards 2023	Paradise Springs Vineyards 2024
Cabernet Franc	Valley Road Vineyards Estate Reserve 2023	Château Daugay PIOU 2023	Château de Minière Équilibre 2022
Bordeaux Blends	King Family Vineyards Meritage 2019	Pollak Vineyards Meritage 2021	Barboursville Vineyards Octagon 2021

High-resolution photographs from the event are available through Le Cordon Bleu Paris.

Media Contacts

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Event Overview

Old World, New Roots was held on **June 29, 2026**, at **Le Cordon Bleu Paris** to commemorate the **50th anniversary of the Judgment of Paris** and the **250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence**.

Co-organized by **Thomas McCune**, a student in Le Cordon Bleu Paris's **Diploma in Art, Science and Wine Management** program, and **Frank Morgan**, a writer and Director of Judging for the Virginia Governor's Cup, the event brought together twelve wines from Virginia and twelve wines from France for a blind evaluation by an international panel of Paris-based wine professionals and Le Cordon Bleu students.

Inspired by the historic 1976 Judgment of Paris, **Old World, New Roots** was not intended to recreate that landmark tasting. Instead, it celebrated the remarkable evolution of Virginia wine over the past five decades while fostering professional dialogue, education, and cultural exchange between Virginia and France.

The French wines were curated by McCune as representative examples of their respective wine regions. Many had been introduced during Le Cordon Bleu's Diploma in Art, Science and Wine Management program as benchmark wines, while also reflecting independent producers whose vineyard holdings and production more closely mirror those of the participating Virginia wineries.

Judging Panel	
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Judge	Role
Xavier Thuizat	Jury Chair; Best Sommelier of France; Meilleur Ouvrier de France
Tanisha Townsend	Wine Tour Guide and Educator
Aubrey Morris	Manager; L'arret by the Grey
Catherine Dulhoste	Paris-based wine author and educator
Viva Lenoir	CEO, Le Nez du Vin
Antoine Sfier	Paris-based wine professional and winemaker
Morgan Ipaktchian	Student, Diploma in Art, Science and Wine Management, Le Cordon Bleu Paris
Dr. Kyonghan Shin	Student, Diploma in Art, Science and Wine Management, Le Cordon Bleu Paris
Frank Morgan	Writer; Director of Judging, Virginia Governor's Cup

Results by Flight			
Flight	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Chardonnay	Michael Shaps Wineworks Wild Meadow Vineyard Chardonnay 2023	Pollak Vineyards Chardonnay Reserve 2023	Maison Shaps Les Chazots AOP Côte d'Or Chardonnay 2023
Petit Manseng	Michael Shaps Wineworks Honah Lee Vineyard Petit Manseng 2023	Veritas Vineyards Petit Manseng 2023	Paradise Springs Vineyards Petit Manseng 2024
Cabernet Franc	Valley Road Vineyards Estate Reserve Cabernet Franc 2023	Château Daugay PIOU AOP Saint-Émilion 2023	Château de Minière Ceci n'est pas que Équilibre AOP Bourgueil 2022

Bordeaux-style Red Blends	King Family Vineyards Meritage 2019	Pollak Vineyards Meritage 2021	Barboursville Vineyards Octagon 2021*
*Barboursville Vineyards' 2021 Octagon was the only wine in the tasting to receive a perfect score.			

All Wines Featured in the Blind Tasting

Flight	Virginia	France
Chardonnay	Michael Shaps Wineworks Wild Meadow Vineyard Chardonnay 2023 Pollak Vineyards Chardonnay Reserve 2023 Ankida Ridge Vineyards Chardonnay 2024	Maison Shaps Les Chazots AOP Côte d'Or 2023 Champagne Paul Lebrun AOP Coteaux Champenois 2022 Domaine Dugois Terres de Marne AOP Arbois 2024
Petit Manseng	Michael Shaps Wineworks Honah Lee Vineyard Petit Manseng 2023 Veritas Vineyards Petit Manseng 2023 Paradise Springs Vineyards Petit Manseng 2024	Domaine Coustarret Renaissance AOP Jurançon Sec 2022 Domaine Cauhapé La Canopée AOP Jurançon Sec 2022 Domaine Camin Larredya Costa Blanca AOP Jurançon Sec 2023
Cabernet Franc	DuCard Vineyards Vintner Reserve Cabernet Franc 2023 Valley Road Vineyards Estate Reserve Cabernet Franc 2023 Afton Mountain Vineyards Cabernet Franc 2023	Château Daugay PIOU AOP Saint-Émilion 2023 Château Hostens-Picant La Vie en Rouge AOP Sainte-Foy Côtes de Bordeaux 2023 Château de Minière Ceci n'est pas que Équilibre AOP Bourgueil 2022

Bordeaux-style Red Blends	King Family Vineyards Meritage 2019 Pollak Vineyards Meritage 2021 Barboursville Vineyards Octagon 2021	Château Vieux Sarpe AOP Saint-Émilion Grand Cru 2021 Vignobles Garzaro Clos des Amandiers AOP Pomerol 2020 Château La Rose Figeac AOP Pomerol 2018
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Judging Methodology

All wines were evaluated **blind** using the **American Wine Society (AWS) 20-Point Wine Evaluation System**.

Each judge independently evaluated every wine before scores were compiled. Wines were assessed for appearance, aroma and bouquet, taste and texture, aftertaste, and overall impression. The AWS system emphasizes typicity, balance, complexity, finish, and overall quality while eliminating producer and regional bias through blind evaluation.

Evaluation Category Maximum Points

Appearance	3
Aroma & Bouquet	6
Taste & Texture	6
Aftertaste	3
Overall Impression	2
Total Possible Score	20

Event Photography

High-resolution photographs from **Old World, New Roots** are available through the Le Cordon Bleu Paris media gallery:

https://cordonbleu-my.sharepoint.com/personal/fbaudry_cordonbleu_edu/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Ffbaudry%5Fcordonbleu%5Fedu%2FDocuments%2FEvénements%2FOld%20roots%2C%20new%20roots%20%2D%2029%2E06%2E2026&ga=1

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