

## Service spy

Café Shore



Until recently Sandbanks was an innocent secret, a tiny Dorset peninsula known only for its sheltered beaches and car ferry to Swanage. Fashion and aspiration has morphed it into a celebrity destination and the most sought-after pocket of land outside London. Naturally, its prosperous incomers demand a glamorous restaurant.

In style and location, Café Shore fills the need. It is the magnetic jewel in a brief parade of shops (watersports and fashion, newsagents and the obligatory estate agent) between two yacht clubs. From modest beginnings, it has expanded backwards so that a dramatic full-length window maximises the view across Poole Bay. There can be few better dining outlooks in the land — but you only get so far in this business through eye-candy.

In the front bar, the young staff are cool in black and sometimes cool in manner. There is efficiency without much warmth

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**The young staff are cool in black and cool in manner**

as drinks are dispensed to a clientele of regulars — including Harry Redknapp, the football manager, who lives up the road — and trippers. The room is dark, even in summer sunshine, but mini-palm trees and cosy booths lend an agreeable ambience.

Up some steps, turn right and the vista opens up in a dining room with consciously varied tables and chairs. This is a venue where people enjoy being seen and it is far from stuffy. One party on a Saturday night wore suits and evening dresses, while around them were couples in jeans and open-neck shirts. This mood extends to the menu. You can share fruits de mer at £85, eat whole lobster and chips for £40 or settle for a common burger.

Wines explore similar extremes, from a £470 bottle of Château Mouton Rothschild down to nine wines and three champagnes served by the glass. There is a low ceiling, a pleasing hum of chatter, gentle jazz and a wave effect on the walls.

All very soothing. Not so the inconsistencies in quality of food — a tough steak and a foul mushroom sauce masking a dry halibut — or service. It is not obvious who is in charge and a system of shared waiters, rather than individuals consigned to tables, is counterproductive. Come for the view and the Sandbanks cool, but come with patience and tolerance. **Café Shore, Banks Road, Sandbanks, Poole, Dorset, 01202 707271, www.cafeshore.co.uk**

## Bordeaux bonanza

Jane MacQuitty

Vineyards feel the pinch



Miracles sometimes happen. Against all odds, the grasping Bordelais have registered the recession and British criticism, and launched the latest 2008 Bordeaux vintage early, complete with axed prices. Given the absence of visitors in Bordeaux last month for the 2008 *primeurs* launch — 10 per cent down on last year — and the boycott by some buyers, including Farr Vintners, the leading Bordeaux merchant in Britain, something had to give. What surprised everyone was how swiftly the normally ostrich-like Bordelais moved.

The leading Saint-Émilion producer, Angélus, was out first at 40 per cent down on last year, making it, along with this château's 2004, the cheapest vintage available. Majestic first-growth Latour

came out next at a whopping 45 per cent down on its 2007, and so far most Bordeaux châteaux have followed suit, with reductions usually somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent on last year.

Before British Bordeaux fans get too excited it's as well to remember that with sterling's drop against the euro this means that, at best, prices are one third less than last year. Even so, this has left the lacklustre, mildew-beset 2007 Bordeaux vintage and the superior but obscenely priced 2006 dead in the water. Both years are now beginning to look very expensive indeed compared with the '08s, with even first-growth '06s and '07s available here below their *en primeur* prices.

This continues to make a nonsense of the entire *en primeur*, buy-early-save-money system, and prices of '08s have exacerbated the situation. What on earth is the point of buying the inferior '07 vintage of Latour for £2,450 a case when you can buy the much finer '08 Latour for £1,600? Clearly, storing unsold stock, as lots of proprietors confessed to me last month, is the current preoccupation of the Bordelais — and of plenty of British merchants, too: Berry Bros. & Rudd has £4 million of unsold 2007s in its cellars. And while well-heeled Bordeaux château owners and merchants, boosted by the huge sums they made in great years such as 2005, can afford to wait until the market picks up, not all Bordeaux producers can.



**Châteaux are cutting prices by as much as 40 per cent on last year**

For all that, I still think that acquiring the odd case of weather-defying, surprisingly good '08 clarets is a sensible option for those of you with the money to spare and anniversaries to mark. So far my best-value Bordeaux, which will cost up to £35 a bottle when the wines are shipped in 2011, come primarily from right-bank communes such as Pomerol and Saint-Émilion and left-bank communes such as Pauillac and Saint-Julien. Alas, the best clarets from the same successful communes will set you back three or four times as much. E-mail me at [Jane.MacQuitty@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:Jane.MacQuitty@thetimes.co.uk) for a list of both, with the merchants to buy from.

## This week's best buys



**2008 Vieille Fontaine White, Vin de Pays du Gers, France**  
Tesco, £3.29. A cheap as chips, light, lemony Gascon French white made predominantly from colombar topped up with ugni blanc.



**2007 Vieille Fontaine Red, Vin de Pays du Comté Tolosan, France**  
Tesco, £3.29. Like the white, this easy-swinging Gascon red blend comes from the Plaimont co-op and has lots of chunky, inky, crimson fruit.



**2008 Poggiotondo Bianco, Toscana, Italy**  
Liberty Wines (020-7720 5350), £7.99. Delicious, verdant, floral, zesty Italian white whose lively, lemony taste makes it a happy spring aperitif and fish-first-course wine.



**2007 Poggiotondo Chianti, Cerro del Masso, Italy**  
Waitrose, down to £5.99 until May 12. My kind of Chianti: all seductive, ripe, velvety, cherry-laden fruit, with a dash each of merlot and syrah.



## The keeper

**2001 Quinta da Falcorta, Dão Reserva, Portugal**  
Armit (020-7908 0600), £12.45. Dão used to be an evil, goaty red that modern wine drinkers understandably would avoid. Not any more, as this wonderful, elegant, perfumed red, bottled by the Vale das Escadinhas, proves. You could try sipping this refined, aromatic, herb and chocolate-spiked dão now, but with a few more years maturation, it will turn silkier and more scented still. Drink 2009-14.

## National treasure

Ovaltine

The Swiss innovation "Ovaltine" arrived in Britain in 1909 and, according to folklore, became "Ovaltine" when it was misspelt during the trademark registration process. The egg, barley malt and cocoa drink was hugely popular and in 1935 launched its own children's club and radio show, *The Ovaltineys*. Today's youth, in thrall to Red Bull, alcopops and Tango, may find the idea of a hot-beverage fan club a little twee. British troops in the Second World War had no such reservations, however. With Ovaltine in their rations they would march to the tune of *We are the Ovaltineys*.



## My comfort food

Tyson Beckford, model

Seafood. Fish, shrimp or anything else that is seafood-related. It just makes you feel like you want to do a little dance.

