

VIRADA

8 personages

8 varietals



France's Imperial Pedigree



NAPOLÉON III ✪ LE SECOND EMPIRE

Napoléon III (Cabernet Sauvignon)

Most often quoted for Bordeaux's 1855 Classification, Louis-Napoléon gained his legitimacy as the nephew of Napoléon via name recognition. He was unlike his uncle. Britain consistently outmaneuvered French ambitions. His aim was to make France great again as its standing was ebbing, sandwiched between dominant UK and the consolidating rise of united German states. Napoléon III proved himself to be a roué consumed by amours just as much to retaining dictatorial power. His final courtesan fittingly was a flexing circus performer much to his delight. First as an elected president, he committed a coup d'état to establish the Second Empire to continue the Bonaparte dynasty's unimpeded control in 1851. After 18 years, the Emperor's carnival's ball unraveled via the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, establishing modern Germany.



Le Second Empire wines, however, are a tribute not to this emperor of earthly flaws but to the efflorescence of culture and sciences which birthed modernism in arts and literature, while confronting the indelible footprints where France's boots marched for colonial possessions with conquests by his command. Millions have been impacted from his despotic ambitions. French wine is fine yet France prefers to abandon him beyond Bordeaux; his diplomatic and armed imperialism proved both devastating and ultimately enduring globally. He died exiled in Britain after being held as prisoner-of-war in a Rothschild château during the Siege of Paris by Bismarck. His son was later fallen in the Anglo-Zulu War ending the regnal Bonaparte lineage.

Prince Jérôme Napoléon 'Plon-Plon' (Merlot)

The cousin of Napoléon III, with a remarkable facial resemblance to Napoléon, exhibited no traits of the victor of Austerlitz and Marengo yet reminded all of his piercing imperial pedigree. Plon-Plon, as known, was a bonafide coward earning the name of 'Craint-Plomb' — 'afraid of lead' by French troops. He did all he could to avoid war but was always a fault forgiven by the Emperor. He was consistently given command on military adventures and often failed to perform his duties. Sailing away from the Crimean War against Russia under false medical pretenses, Plon-Plon returned to Paris and was afforded the distinction of presiding over the famed 1855 Universal Exposition which is now famous for the 1855 Classification of Médoc for the finest of Bordeaux wines. Wine authorities mention his name for pedigree's sake



for the Classification yet, curiously, never his desultory unkempt corrupt character for relying on a contrived oenophile fantasy. Though intelligent, he was widely discredited, uncouth and disdained being tolerated as an imperial nuisance. He was self-absorbed and not better than Napoléon III when courtesans were a concern with an insatiable appetite. For him, Bordeaux was a euphemism for boudoir. Cora Pearl, the famous buxom British-born courtesan of the Second Empire, continued a liaison with the Prince with even a private harem-themed room for his use at the 1867 Universal Exposition. He died exiled in Rome, not permitted to live in France, after the fall of Empire. Most likely, when he did pass away in reduced circumstances, no tears in France fell.

Baron Georges Haussmann (Cabernet Franc)

Born in Paris, self-made and married into a family of wealth, the Prefect of Bordeaux, proclaimed that France needed to be once again an Empire. The Baron, as a sycophant for Napoléon III and equally ambitious for France with more power than he could have imagined, was promoted to Prefect of the Seine. He is widely credited as the driving force with the ascension of modern Paris into its present design. His hand was seen as razing austere slums dislocating thousands for opening wide boulevards, parks and bridges; building grand exposition venues for 1855 and 1867 to showcase French national accomplishments in agriculture, industries, and the arts. Napoléon III relied on Baron Haussmann's sage judgment with instituting developments in Paris to forge the city into France's romantic glamorous capital and soon the envy of all Europe. What we easily recognize now as uniquely French architecture can be attributed to the designs he approved for Paris. Urbane, savvy and shrewd, Haussmann was however very much a man of his times with prized mistresses to confer his high social standing. He proved ultimately corrupt and used financial legerdemain to achieve his grand results. The bottom fell out towards the end of the Empire when he was retired, fortunately for him, before the Franco-Prussian War. Many boulevards and bridges of the Second Empire have been conveniently renamed to erase the luminaries of the epoch yet his legacy lives whenever we receive a postcard from The City of Light. Haussmann's daughter, Valentine, had an affair with his boss — the Emperor — and gave birth to a boy, Jules Adrien, to be raised eventually by a former mistress of de Morny, the Emperor's savvy half-brother. This, in a nutshell, exemplifies the connections and morals of the Second Empire.



Duc Charles-Auguste de Morny (Pinot Noir)

A founding member of the Jockey Club, often seen at the races of Longchamp always well-attired, Charles-Auguste de Morny was driven by money and power. The Duke used all avenues at his disposal to get as much as he could for profit. His greed knew no bounds. He was constantly embedded with spurious financial conduct. Reputed as the steel hand in a velvet glove, suave and debonair; famous for a string of mistresses and was instrumental early in Sarah Bernhardt's acting career which later propelled her onto film after the end of the Empire. Out of all demimondaines from this age of gilded courtesans, in which he was directly at the driver's seat, Bernhardt has a lasting legacy due to the advent of film. She was performing a character based on Marie Duplessis by Dumas *filis*. De Morny, born as an illegitimate grandson of Talleyrand as a Count, was promoted to Duke by his maternal half-brother, Napoléon III. De Morny was seen as "the Soul of the Second Empire," the brains and pacesetter in terms of male fashions and a fountain for shrewd investments. He was known as being both well connected and incorrigibly corrupt; his hand in the Prince-Président's coup d'état of 1851. De Morny was the dynasty's peerless power broker. The Duke was sometimes admonished by his brother for lining his own pockets at the expense of France with insider deals and chicanery. Importantly, de Morny was seen as a counter-weight to the more impulsive Empress Eugénie in aiding in making state decisions. Napoléon III often relied on his half-brother for his assessment on delicate issues. When he unexpectedly died from illness at fifty-three, it was believed the Empire started to totter and lose its way with the Empress holding greater sway with the weakening Emperor, a victim to his hedonism. He more than any other, possibly could have cooled the ardor to prevent Napoléon III from taking Bismarck's bait to go to war in Alsace. De Morny realized real power came from the comfort of stacked cash, more than hot shells fired from cannons.



Louis Pasteur (Vin Rouge – Red Wine Blend)

Napoléon III is too often given credit for the 1855 Classification and then his name just falls to silence. What Louis-Napoléon should be remembered for was he was instrumental in requesting Pasteur to examine how to improve French wines in 1863; later he was invited to Château Compiègne attended also by Dumas *filis* in 1865. This was the real revolution in modern science that led Pasteur to investigate bacteriology and pathology, understanding the foundations of fermentation precisely. Public and personal hygiene was the consequence as Pasteur realized, before any other, that each life harbors billions of bacteria. We live in a



world where life unseen is ubiquitous. Our modern world would simply not be what it is today without the common sense methodologies prescribed by Pasteur to hygienically control our environments. Whenever washing our hands, we thank Pasteur; confidence in the safety of our children's milk: pasteurized. Millions of lives have been saved from his laboratory insights spurred on first by investigating fine wine, and paradoxically millions lost too. Pasteurization was the positive result; modern germ warfare, such as with anthrax, was also now in hand for population eliminations too. He realized he was also giving France a specialized weapon. His châteaux are loaded with alcohol which we call clinics and hospitals. Streets with his venerated name continue illuminating his greatness in the pantheon of sciences worldwide today. Pasteur is the sweetest and generous fruit of the Second Empire for all humanity. Out of all of Napoléon III's calls, getting Pasteur on investigating wine, was indeed the Emperor's best — not the 1855 Classification of Bordeaux which major wine publications incessantly beat steadily for conferring prestige and superficial status.

Alexandre Dumas *filis* (Zinfandel)

Rarely of the same métier as their fathers can sons step out on their own account and make a mark distinctly by their hand. Dumas *filis*' grandfather was a general commanding thousands of men under Napoléon. His father, Dumas *père* being the most prolific writer France has ever produced and interred in the Panthéon with Victor Hugo and Émile Zola, Dumas *filis* seized the times of the Second Empire and coined the word *demimonde* — *the half-world*, where things are not quite what they seem. He brought to light the world of the Parisienne courtesans which forever established his literary reputation at only twenty-four.



Well-educated and sought after via the highest strata in Parisienne society and admired throughout Europe, yet subjected to racism and insulted of his pedigree by those of patent jealousy, he was admitted to the *Académie Française*. Dumas *filis* inspired *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi, as still performed worldwide. Purely French by birth, both he and Dumas *père* were of both mixed African ancestry. Authorities on French culture and literature deliberately do not mention any African extraction — curiously — yet effusive of praise of their perennially absorbing fiction and plays. Courtesan later turned silent films global sensation, Sarah Bernhardt, was a lifetime friend and performed *La Dame aux Camélias* countless times worldwide. Dumas *filis* died only two months after his friend and fellow of the Academy, Louis Pasteur. His genius has often been whitewashed for perpetuating a color-free French fantasy by design. The delusion now ends with his just recognition without apology.

Marie Duplessis (Sauvignon Blanc)

The inspiration of *La Traviata* by Verdi, whom drew his inspiration by Alexandre Dumas *filis*' tour de force of *La Dame aux Camélias* first performed in Paris of 1855, Marie Duplessis was the compassionate and loving prototype of a modern courtesan who died at only twenty-three. She had a deceptively refined appearance, was inquisitive, both charming and witty which perfumed her pungent promiscuity. As both the lover of Franz Liszt and briefly of Dumas *filis*, she was the rare embodiment of elegance and savior faire alloyed with a seductive primal magnetism drawing men of consequence at her will. Dumas *filis* used her character as the demimondaine from which all other courtesans would henceforth be judged in the Second Empire. Camélias were adopted by women's suffragette movements and later by Coco Chanel. Her tomb in Paris is still visited, especially by women from varied walks of life, with fresh camélias reverently placed in her honor. From the *demimonde*, she has been the world's most adored and acclaimed. The legacy of her brief eventful life continues to thrive in the arts and popular culture.



Cora Pearl (Chardonnay)

She is the mother of today's modern make-up for women, experimenting on how to make herself more alluring. A British-born courtesan, Cora conquered Paris with her outlandish reckless indomitable character backed up by a classical Athenian physique with flawless teeth. Cora would do all she could to make sure people would always notice her. An unapologetic exhibitionist, she appeared on stage near nude with diamonds; she had herself served on a silver platter nude at a party daring her admirers if they could cut her fine flesh. She dyed her dog blue to match her dress's color; the dog died. Cora spent incredible sums on fine wines and foods living only for the day. Her admirers and lovers were numerous. Women emulated her in every way. She owned a chateau, homes in Paris, the best of carriages, a stable of expensive horses and lovers which she rode into the dust. Cora was essential for the Second Empire newspapers to follow since newspapers were censored. Paris did not have a free press during Second Empire so courtesans instead took primacy to occupy the public and her conquests were the rage. She was one of the coldest of courtesans. Her lover's shot themselves, one committing suicide in one of her posh homes with her complaining about the damage he did to her carpet as he lay dead. She ultimately died impoverished in Paris but her legacy lives on whenever we see dyed hair. Her greatest conquest by pedigree was Prince Jérôme Napoléon whom could not control her, but he was not her wealthiest lover, out of many.

