

ONE BOTTLE:

THE 1937 CHÂTEAU CAILLOU “CRÈME DE TÊTE” SAUTERNES

BY JOSHUA BAER

Vanessa Redgrave, Suzanne Pleshette, Richard Farina, Warren Beatty, Colin Powell, Seymour Hersh, Jack Nicholson, Saddam Hussein, Rubin “Hurricane” Carter, Thomas Pynchon, Waylon Jennings, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Hockney, Bill Cosby, Dustin Hoffman, Jim Harrison, Jane Fonda, and Anthony Hopkins were all born in 1937. In 1937, gasoline cost ten cents a gallon. The average cost of a new house was \$4100; \$1780 was the average annual salary. Between January and December of 1937, the unemployment rate in the United States fell from 21% to 14%. Count Basie’s “One O’Clock Jump” was the number one hit song of the year.

On January 19, 1937, Howard Hughes set a record by flying an airplane from Los Angeles to New York City in seven hours and twenty-eight minutes. On January 20, Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes swore in Franklin D. Roosevelt for a second term as president.

On February 8, Spanish Falangist troops led by General Francisco Franco took control of the city of Málaga. On February 13, the NFL’s Boston Red Skins moved to Washington D.C.

On March 14, Albert Einstein celebrated his fifty-eighth birthday.

On April 4, Byron Nelson won the fourth Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, Georgia. On April 17, *Porky’s Duck Hunt*, directed by Tex Avery for the Looney Tunes series, and featuring the debut of Daffy Duck, was released in theatres. On April 20, Adolph Hitler celebrated his forty-eighth birthday. On April 26, the town of Guernica, Spain, was bombed by Spanish Falangists. In his account of the attack, British journalist George Steer reported finding German bomb casings, connecting Luftwaffe planes with the attack. Guernica burned for three days. More than fifteen hundred residents were shot and killed as they ran from collapsing buildings.

On May 1, eyewitness accounts of the Guernica massacre appeared on the front pages of newspapers in Paris. More than one million protesters took to the streets. After seeing black-and-white photographs of the massacre, Pablo Picasso ran to his studio and made sketches for a mural entitled *Guernica*. On May 3, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for *Gone with the Wind*. On May 6, the German airship *Hindenburg* burst into flames in Lakehurst, New Jersey. On May 8, War Admiral, with jockey Charle Kurtsinger in the saddle, won the Kentucky Derby. On May 15, War Admiral won the Preakness Stakes. On May 28, President Roosevelt pushed a button in Washington, D.C., signaling the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge to vehicular traffic. On May 29, John F. Kennedy celebrated his twentieth birthday.

On June 1, Marilyn Monroe celebrated her eleventh birthday. On June 3, Wallis Simpson married the Duke of Windsor at Château de Candé, near Tours, France. On June 5, War Admiral won the Belmont Stakes, and completed the Triple Crown.

On July 2, Amelia Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, disappeared after taking off from Lae, New Guinea, ending Earhart’s attempt to become the first woman to fly around the world. On July 11, George Gershwin died in Los Angeles of a brain tumor, at the age of thirty-eight.



On August 2, Congress passed The Marihuana Tax Act, the bill that led to the criminalization of marijuana. On August 5, Joseph Stalin began the Great Purge. Within twelve months, 724,000 Russian citizens were killed by their government. On August 14, China declared war on Japan. During August of 1937, Pablo Picasso finished *Guernica* and delivered the painting to the Spanish Pavilion at the World’s Fair in Paris. The German fair guide called *Guernica* “a hodgepodge of body parts that any four-year-old could have painted.”

On September 21, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. of London published the first edition of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*.

On October 9, in the ninth inning of Game Four of the thirty-fourth World Series, Lou Gehrig hit the last postseason home run of his Hall of Fame career. Gehrig hit the home run off of New York Giants’ pitcher Carl Hubbell—who was pitching the last inning of his Hall of Fame career. On October 10, the Yankees

defeated the Giants, 4-2, at the Polo Grounds, to win the series four games to one. The 1937 World Series was the fifth Subway Series,

and the first World Series in which a team—the Yankees—did not commit an error. On October 25, Pablo Picasso celebrated his fifty-sixth birthday. “A painting is not thought out and settled in advance,” said Picasso. “While it is being done, it changes as one’s thoughts change. And after it’s finished, it goes on changing, according to the state of mind of whoever is looking at it.” Toward the end of October, the wine-growing châteaux in Sauternes and Haut-Barsac harvested their grapes.

Which brings us to the 1937 Château Caillou “Crème de Tête” Sauternes.

In the glass, the 1937 Château Caillou is all amber. At first, the bouquet is charming and delicate—then it gathers itself into a force of nature. If the oceans were as sweet as they are salty, seawater would smell like this. On the palate, there are suggestions of beeswax, Meyer lemon, and rose petals, but the experience of tasting the 1937 Château Caillou is too powerful to be described in terms of flavors. The flavors are impressive, but when you taste this wine, you taste history. Two hundred and eighty-five dollars is a lot to spend on a bottle of wine, but the finish of the 1937 Château Caillou makes \$285 seem like pocket change. An hour after you swallow your last sip, it is still impossible to separate your memories of the finish from the finish itself.

On November 5, at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, Adolf Hitler held a secret meeting and disclosed his plans for the acquisition of more *Lebensraum*, or “living space,” for the German people.

On December 21, Walt Disney’s *Snow White* premiered in selected theaters. On December 22, the Lincoln Tunnel opened for traffic. On December 27, Marlene Dietrich celebrated her thirty-sixth birthday. At midnight on December 31, as the world’s two billion people celebrated New Year’s Eve, 1937 became 1938, and passed into history.

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