

THERE'S NOTHING MORE likely to raise eyebrows in traditional wine circles than the presence of a few radicals. Happily, Bordeaux has its fair share of revolutionaries – some quiet, others outspoken, but all with fresh ideas and spirit to challenge the establishment in France's most august wine region.

Far from the Médoc's châteaux, in a plain building next to Bordeaux airport, is the office of **Olivier Dauga**. Apart from his geometric steel specs, Dauga seems more Australian than French. Brawny, blond and brash, rugby-mad and keen on Aussie women, he is nevertheless a Bordeaux local. He describes himself as 'the kid in class who always spoke the most and listened the least'. He must be pleased to have found his niche as winemaking consultant, with a growing number of willing listeners.

Dauga didn't start off in the wine business. He organised his life around playing rugby and found himself working at a distillery in Cognac. Here he discovered a passion for aromas – 'a distiller only works with his nose' – before switching to wine by taking a temporary job at Sociando-Mallet. He

stayed 10 years. With further experience at Châteaux La Tour Carnet and Rollande By under his belt, he set up on his own in 2000 with three clients. Today he consults to 30 properties and helps them to bring their wines to the market.

Dauga is blunt in his views on traditional winemaking in Bordeaux: 'The way we are taught is stupid!' He tries to do something different, seeking 'balance above all'. He controls oxygen, varies fermentation temperatures, and uses very little oak. His wines are striking, with vibrant fruit, lifted aromas and an easy elegance apparent in even the simplest examples.

He admits he learned a lot working in Australia a few years back. 'I arrived the proud Frenchman, thinking I was the best. I soon found out it wasn't true,' he says. 'They make very good wine, they just don't have the expertise to blend it.'

CHÂTEAU D'ARSAC DOESN'T look so unusual at first glance, apart from the fact that the winery is painted cornflower blue. Get closer and you will notice that the owner has a liking for contemporary art, particularly