

J.J. BUCKLEY FINE WINES

Annual Bordeaux Report

The 2011 Vintage

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JJ BUCKLEY'S 2011 BORDEAUX REPORT

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THE JJB ADVANTAGE

Our Commitment To You

We want you to know that before you make a decision to buy these wines, that you can count on the following:

As a licensed importer, wholesaler and retailer, JJ Buckley buys *directly* from Bordeaux, bypassing third party wholesalers and importers. This gives us and you a significant pricing advantage. Provenance is guaranteed and all wines are shipped in air-conditioned containers to our climate-controlled facility, ensuring they remain in perfect condition every point of the way.

In order to secure large allocations of the most sought after and highly rated wines, JJ Buckley has worked hard over the years to build strong relationships with the most respected negociants and other suppliers. We are in Bordeaux at least twice a year to ensure we stay informed and well connected. This gives us unparalleled access to a huge selection of the finest wines at every level and at the best prices.

Our large and experienced sales team has a broad and deep understanding of the vintage. Please call, email, or stop by to discuss any or all wines with our sales team. Over the weeks leading up to this report, they have analyzed, lived, breathed, practically bathed in the vintage. No question will go unanswered. You will not find such a depth of

knowledge and experience with the vintage anywhere else in the country.

JJ Buckley offers on-site storage as well as access to resale services. Please contact one of our Fine Wine Specialists by phone for more information.



Chateau Palmer, April 2012



Chateau Latour, April 2012



2011 BORDEAUX PICKS

Top Red Wines of the Vintage

Right Bank

Lafleur (97-99)

L'Eglise Clinet (97-99)

Vieux Chateau Certan (97-99)

Le Pin (96-98)

Clinet (95-97)

Les Asteries (95-97)

Pavie (95-97)

Trotanoy (95-97)

Cheval Blanc (94-96)

Left Bank

Margaux (96-98)

Ducru-Beaucaillou (95-97)

Lafite-Rothschild (95-97)

Pontet-Canet (95-97)

Calon Segur (94-96)

Liber-Pater (94-96)

Montrose (94-96)

Mouton-Rothschild (94-96)

Palmer (94-96)

Pape-Clement (94-96)



2011 BORDEAUX PICKS

Top White & Sweet Wines of the Vintage

Bordeaux Blanc

- Haut Brion Blanc (97-99)
- Malartic-Lagraviere Blanc (96-98)
- La Mission Haut Brion Blanc (95-97)
- Pape-Clement Blanc (95-97)
- Domaine de Chevalier (94-96)
- Pavillon Blanc du Chateau Margaux (94-96)
- Smith-Haut-Lafitte Blanc (94-96)
- Aile d'Argent (93-95)
- Latour-Martillac (93-95)
- La Clarte de Haut Brion (92-94)

Sauternes

- d'Yquem (97-99)
- Climens (96-98)
- Doisy-Daene 'L'Extravagant' (96-98)
- Coutet (95-97)
- Guiraud (95-97)
- de Fargues (94-96)
- Sigalas-Rabaud (94-96)
- de Myrat (93-95)
- Doisy-Daene (93-95)
- Rieussec (93-95)

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

The Quest for Balance

Buying the 2011s

The 2011s arrive into a market still riding the high provided by two of the greatest vintages Bordeaux has ever produced – a rare thing, indeed, and one witnessed only a few times a century. Perhaps even more importantly, they are being presented in the aftermath of unprecedented price increases, the likes of which had never been seen. 2009 and 2010 set the bar almost impossibly high. Yet, even before anyone knew what kind of vintage 2011 would turn out to be, most of the chateaux owners and negociants agreed the market had neither the emotional, nor the financial, fortitude to withstand another “vintage of the century”.

Now that 2011 has been presented to the majority of critics and participating trade, the old saying “be careful what you wish for” has never been more apropos. While the vintage has turned out to be more successful than the initial rumors, 2011 represents a return to status quo. This is a good Bordeaux vintage, but after the runaway success of 2009 and 2010, a recalibration is in order on the part of the buyer and seller alike.

For the consumer, this means proceeding with caution and using discretion in

the selection process. And for the Chateau owner, negociant, or retailer, this naturally means a significant drop in pricing. There is simply no alternative. At the end of the day, the consumer should be rewarded for purchasing a vintage two years in advance of receiving the product.

To better understand the value proposition of the current vintage, it helps to have some perspective by taking a look back at other vintages of similar quality. The price of the current vintage, in this case 2011, needs to be at least competitive with current market prices for vintages of similar quality. Preferably, priced even lower.



The cellar at Beausejour-Duffau, Apr '12



Some of the team outside Chateau Petrus, April 2012.



THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

The Quest for Balance

2011 - Where does it fit?

2011 is a formidable vintage, but certainly not one that is on par with likes of 2000, 2005, 2009, or 2010. Does that mean that one should dismiss it? Of course not.

2011 has its place and, for the finest wines, a window of drinking pleasure that sits right between 2009 and 2010. The 2009s are sumptuous, lush with fruit, and show terrific quality across all appellations and price points. While they will certainly age gracefully for several years past the 2011's, many of the wines will be enjoyable on release. 2010's, on the other hand, have more structure, expression of terroir, terrific balance, and will age for decades. However, they will take some time to mature and thus their drinking window is much further out.

The 2011's fall right in between. Most will need a few years after release to come together, and to allow the tannins to mellow. But they will not be long-lived wines, as there is simply not enough structure to make for interesting cellaring. Thus, the consumer will enjoy the sumptuous 2009's first, then the charming 2011's, followed by the great 2010's.

There are some real gems to be had in 2011, wines of excellent quality, and quite a few we'd even label exceptional. There are plenty of clunkers as well, but what really impressed us was the drinkable and approachable style of the many very good wines that we encountered. These speak to their appellations, and will reward both near-term drinking and short-term cellaring. The top wines are all about balance – made from evenly ripe grapes and with the right amount of extraction and tannin. These wines are both charming and elegant.

While 2010 produced some long-lived wines, 2011 is a vintage of mostly 5 to 15 year wines. They will not be as approachable on release as the 2009's and they will not be as long lived as the

2010's, but they will fall in a very happy place. And as many winemakers noted, these are wines that could not have been made 20 years ago. The improvements in Bordeaux's cellars and vineyards over the past few decades have ensured that wineries today make above average wines even in "regular" years.

If compared to another vintage, 2011 is somewhat similar to 2001. It, too, followed a great vintage (2000), and if you ask anybody in Bordeaux what they are drinking and enjoying today, they will tell you 2001.



Cheval Blanc, April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

The Quest for Balance

Current Market & Pricing

Justifiably or not, pricing for the past two vintages has been some of the highest on record for many chateaux. Yet in the weeks prior to this report, the chateaux owners themselves stated these prices cannot be sustained. If there is to be any campaign at all this year, let alone a successful one, pricing will be the key. With respect to prior vintages, 2011, regardless of the actual quality of the wine, will be about the perceived magnitude of 'discount'. And that discount will need to be 30-50% for the top chateaux, 10-20% for the lower-priced wines. The question is, how much of a discount is enough to foster active trade and consumer participation?

Because of the irregularity of the vintage, we think there will be more dollars chasing fewer wines. This may create some serious price movements for the vintage's top wines. Shrewd consumers will buy these wines early, spending their remaining dollars on the sumptuous 2009's already bottled and available.

As a dedicated Bordeaux retailer, we will participate in the futures campaign, but at about half the volume of last year. Our focus will be on offering the top wines of 2011, along with a select assortment of mid-tier wines, in the \$30-70 category. We believe the under \$30 category is best served by re-visiting 2009 and 2010, as they offer far better wine for the money. The fun and exciting challenge will be cherry-picking the standout releases. At prices substantially lower than their 2009 and 2010 counterparts, there are sure to be some very opportunistic buys for the savvy consumer.

2011 also produced some excellent white wines. This overlooked category represents a true bargain in comparison to offerings from Burgundy and California.

As an aside, it is worth mentioning that Bordeaux produces some of the finest red wines in the world for the money, with plenty of wines in the \$10-50 range that are not only complex, but can improve with age. At the top end of the market, it's possible to find '100-point' wines for under \$275. Outside of the Rhone, it's nearly impossible to find that level of quality for less.

Last, the world financial markets remain unstable, with much volatility and uncertainty and the top end of the Bordeaux market is not immune to shifts in economic fortunes. China remains a big question mark, with the potential to move prices of entire vintages, depending on appetite. It remains to be seen, if China will continue to quench their thirst with Lafite, or if they will find a new flavor of the day. Regardless, they have the ability to move markets, as they did in 2009 and 2010. While demand subsided in 2011, it can return at any time.



Chateau Mouton-Rothschild 2011



THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

The Quest for Balance

Current Market & Pricing

Given the fairly empty cellars of the chateaux, a relatively low-yielding 2011 crop, and an appeal that now reaches around the world, anything is possible for the Bordeaux market. At the same time, Bordeaux is facing some difficult times here in the US where they lack strong distribution to ensure visibility and placement of wines in fine wine shops and restaurants.

Given recent price increases, Bordeaux will need to appeal to a new generation of wine enthusiasts, who don't recall the days of \$50 Latour (not that long ago). However, it shouldn't take much convincing, as Bordeaux remains one of the greatest sources of terrific red wine values.

While the pros and cons of buying wine on futures can be debated, keep in mind the following. First, buying on futures is the most secure way to ensure provenance. As a futures retailer, we work directly with Bordeaux negociants to control how, and when, the wines we offer are transported.

Second, buying on futures provides the opportunity to purchase rare, alternative formats. From half-bottles to double-magnums, the wines will be bottled to meet the orders we place on our customers' behalf.

Finally, if there are wines you simply must have—to round out your collection, because they hold special meaning, or because of inherently small production—purchasing in advance helps guarantee access. In fact, futures purchasing may be your only opportunity to secure some of these special wines.

Given the current appetite of the market following the 2009 and 2010 vintages, our intention is to offer our clients the best possible pricing, a complete selection of the top wines of the vintage, in-depth wine-specific analysis, and our 60% deposit-only option. We hope that with this combination, the consumer will be able to make sound and educated buying decisions.



Chateau Ausone, April 2012



Comparing wines at dinner, April 2012



2011 BORDEAUX CAMPAIGN

Buying 2011 futures

Changing the game

When you buy 2011 futures from JJ Buckley, we're not going to ask you for every penny up front. Instead, we are offering customers the option to pay a deposit of just 60% at the time of purchase, with 40% not due until the wines arrive to JJ Buckley (estimated 2014). There will be no additional cost for choosing this option.

Although the vendors and negociants we work with in Bordeaux will receive payment in full in 2012, our financial strength as a retailer allows us to offer this advantage, while still maintaining the competitive pricing our customers have come to expect from us.

This innovative payment option is just one part of our continuing commitment to offer the best possible advantages in choosing JJ Buckley as a retail partner. As far as we know, no other retailer in America is offering such an opportunity to their Bordeaux futures customers.



In the chai at Chateau Margaux, April 2012

For more information visit:
www.jjbuckley.com/2011-bordeaux-futures

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Weather Data

The new weathermen

Each year before we leave for Bordeaux, I make it a point to research the weather conditions leading up to the most recent harvest to glean some background and perspective. And my first stops are the sites with various weather analyses published by Bordeaux wine enthusiasts. The region has always maintained detailed meteorological data and this treasure trove of information can be quite useful in predicting the quality of the wines we will taste.

In past years, I particularly looked forward to the annual analysis by Bill

Blatch, a local legend who has made a name for himself with his detailed weather assessments. His ability to take detailed meteorological data to chronicle the happenings within a vineyard is unparalleled.

However, this year did not see the usual arrival of Blatch's report into my email box and my latest research indicates he may be on the verge of retiring. But Gavin Quinney has done an admirable job of filling this rarified space in the Bordeaux hierarchy with his weather analyses on www.liv-ex.com. An English chap, he owns Chateau Bauduc in

Bordeaux and runs a very informative blog about his estate. His weather analyses are supplemented by clear and easy to understand graphics that make his data come alive.

Denis Dubourdieu has proven to be another informative source. In addition to his day job as a professor of enology at the University of Bordeaux, he is also the owner of a number of properties in Graves and Sauternes. He is therefore well situated to offer insightful analysis on the weather and how it impacts the quality of the that year's wine. Though a bit technical, his report will fill the gap left by Bill Blatch and is a must-read for very serious Bordeaux enthusiasts.



THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

The Weather in 2011

Under the Bordelais sun?

It was very warm when JJ Buckley left Bordeaux after last year's en primeur festivities (and it was quite similar this year as well). In fact, this is now the second year in a row when there were buds pushing out in a few vineyards as we traveled to the airport on our way back to the States. The warm weather of 2011 continued on until June, in an unprecedented spate of hot and dry conditions. The only real blemish was a hail storm that hit the Medoc in May. The prediction at the time was for an early harvest, with drought contributing to stressful conditions in the vineyard.

As summer rolled in, the weather changed markedly. Temperatures dropped in June and July which helped to slow maturation rates. But at the same time, above average rainfall in those months and early August created disease pressures in many vineyards. Those conditions were exacerbated by some extended periods of humidity. Going into the crucial picking times in September, growers grew justifiably worried that the quality of the harvest would be problematic. An early September shower ratcheted up the nerves even more. Some wineries were forced to pick right after the storm to prevent the development of rot in the vineyard.

The weather, however, blessed many growers with perfect, warm temperatures for the rest of September, thus giving those grapes left on the vine the boost necessary for their final phases of maturity. With only a few sprinkles in the middle of the month to deal with, wineries were able to bring in their fruit and assess the impact of the previous months' weather. Much of the vintage's quality was heavily dependent on the sorting table, where drought affected fruit was discarded along with those showing signs of rot and mold. With the grapes in the tanks, the harvest was now in the hands of the winemaker.



Bud-break at Chateau Latour, April 2012



THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Harvest Overview - The Year

2011: A Year of Inconsistency

If there is one word that could describe the wines of 2011, it's inconsistent. For those who have bought and collected Bordeaux for a number of years, this is normal, and one expects to find a range of wines from barely acceptable, to delicious, to truly exhilarating. In comparison to 2009 and 2010, they don't have the stuffing or the balance, but it's safe to say that 2011 was a good year. When we asked winemakers to provide a point of reference, nearly all point to 2001, while others see 2011 as a combination of 2001 and 2008.

The best 2011s we tasted displayed a sense of proportion and elegance. This is a year of conservative alcohols, vibrant acidity and some noticeable tannin. The wines are more moderate in scale and intensity, the finishes a touch shorter in length, and the textures are slightly less refined. Still, this will be a boon vintage for Bordeaux consumers, with an average drinking window of 5 to 15 years after release.

But there were some pitfalls. Those that picked early to minimize risk of rot and mold resulting from late September rains ended up with sharp, unpleasant acidity and green fruit. And some drought-affected and/or sunburned vineyards showed a jarring combination of both underripeness and dried, prune-like qualities. Call it the soulless modernization of winemaking if you will, but wineries that invested in optical scanners were glad they had them in 2011. Some estimated they dropped 5% or more of the harvest at the crushpad

based on the scanners, resulting in fresher, cleaner, wine.

Severity of selection was also key in 2011 for many, both in production of the grands vins, as well as the deuxiemes or "second" wines. Only 30% of the harvest made the final blend at Cos d'Estournel, and we heard similar production notes at most of the First Growth chateaux. Overall, yields were down in 2011, and it should be noted the quality of many second wines in 2011 did not match what was produced in 2009 and 2010.

It's not easy to sum up the 2011 harvest in a simple manner given the wide range in quality, the unusual growing conditions, and Bordeaux's increasing ability to adapt to adversity both technologically, and financially. As mentioned earlier, it wasn't that long ago that a year like 2011 would have been a disaster. But with the advancements made in the last 10-15 years, this is a much better vintage than we anticipated, with many very attractive, even exciting, wines to be had. This is a year where the Bordeaux drinker is to be celebrated, a year where there are many enjoyable wines suited for the table, and not the auction house.



Vineyard view at Feytit-Clinet, April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Harvest Overview - Regional Outcomes

In the very best years, a rising tide lifts all boats, and superb wines can be found in just about every region. But there are years when weather and fortune combine to favor a few regions over others. In this vintage, each corner of Bordeaux had its share of successes and failures. Such was the nature of 2011.

Pomerol

After tasting and re-tasting hundreds and hundreds of wines during *en primeur* week, it was clear that estates whose vineyards were planted to moisture retentive soils fared the best. Pomerol, a region with substantial amounts of clay, is the appellation to beat in 2011. Whether the wine showcased the purity and finesse of merlot, or displayed the ripe, structural muscle of cabernet franc, Pomerol provided the most thrills and excitement. This is our choice for the appellation of the vintage.

In addition, early budbreak, combined with warm, dry temperatures after mid-September, allowed for full ripening of the mercurial (and finicky) cabernet franc variety. Yet as Burgundy lovers know, the most 'difficult' grapes often produce the world's most transcendent wines. And those estates with cabernet franc made some very special wines, indeed.

Pomerol's neighbors in St. Emilion were not as lucky, missing their opportunity for a four-year run. Here, there was much irregularity. Too often, the region's wines were out of balance with firm and bitter tannins or acidity levels, while others were overripe, extracted and prune-y. Of course, there were some notable exceptions, including some estates whose vineyards are planted to clay and limestone soils.



Jacques Guinaudeau, Chateau Lafleur (Pomerol), April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Harvest Overview - Regional Outcomes

Sauternes

2011 marked the third year of excellence for Sauternes, a streak of fortune for this region not typically associated with consecutive vintages. What made Sauternes so successful was the even, measured spread of botrytis, aka 'noble rot'. In most years, wineries make five to seven passes through the vineyard, picking botrytised berries one-by-one. But in 2011, many estates were able to pick whole bunches in three to five passes, a very rare occurrence. This vintage resulted in ripe fruit, harvested under optimal conditions, with considerable botrytis flavors in the finished wines. These promise to be spectacularly long-lived and complex.

The Left Bank

The erratic nature of the 2011 harvest was most apparent in the wines of the Left Bank. Looking at the communes of St. Estephe and Margaux, wines ran the gamut, from below average to superlative. In Margaux, the less successful wines are somewhat vegetal, with hollow mid-palates and austere tannins. This was undoubtedly due to early picking for fear of rot that could have resulted from September's late rains. And yet Chateau Palmer, with the lowest-ever recorded yields, turned out one of the top wines of the vintage.

Similar wide variations in quality were found further north in St. Estephe. Once again, estates like Montrose and Calon Segur turned out exceptional wines that, in comparison to their peers, seemed to

have been born in another vintage. For these properties, and some others in St. Estephe, moisture retentive clay soil helped endure the drought. However, some wineries were less fortunate, hit by hailstorms that swept through the area. Those wineries were forced to pick earlier than desired, resulting in a severe selection process to cull damaged and unripe fruit.

The center of the Haut Medoc, in St. Julien and Pauillac, frequently fares the best in difficult years. (There's a reason the First Growths are clustered here!) But the variable quality of the vintage was also seen in these two communes. Here, the leafy, herbal character was not as apparent as elsewhere. Instead, there was a preponderance of imbalanced wines, with hollow mid-palates and austere tannins. Those that kept acids and tannins in check while maximizing fresh fruit made great wines. We found Lafite in Pauillac, and Ducru Beaucaillou in St. Julien, to be among the very best from the Left.



Pontet-Canet, April 2012



Dead soldiers at Ducru Beaucaillou, April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Harvest Overview - Key Factors

Soils

Perhaps the most important predictor of success in this vintage was soil. The extended drought conditions placed considerable stress on most vines, but those wineries with a preponderance of clay, renowned for its drought-resistant capacity, were able to withstand the harsh spring and summer weather conditions. Merlot is particularly well-suited to clay, so it's not surprising that sites on the Right Bank grew some very good fruit.

In 2011, grapes grown on gravelly soils suffered the most and this is where the Left Bank was at a disadvantage. Cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc are frequently planted in gravel. Poor in nutrients, gravel soil helps tame the vigorous nature of these vines. However, the inability of gravelly sites to retain water placed inordinate stress on those vines during the drought. In addition, gravel reflects and retains heat, adding further stress to a thirsty vine. Younger vines, with their shallow root systems, also suffered in 2011.



Soils at Ch. Lafleur, April 2012

Harvesting dates

The storms that rolled through Bordeaux at the beginning and middle of September certainly rattled some nerves. Faced with an existing mold problem, hail damage in some cases, and uncertainty about future weather patterns, some estates elected to pick a bit earlier. If there wasn't enough hang-time, the resulting wines were unpleasantly green and hollow. Higher acid levels, the result from picking too early, also contributed to lack of balance.

On the other hand, the extended warm temperatures and dry conditions that lasted on through October allowed those chateaux who waited out the storms to harvest perfectly ripe fruit. Cabernet franc was a big benefactor of the more moderate weather, with many Right Bank estates picking their best grapes ever. But, those properties who let the fruit hang a bit too long made some overripe wines, lacking in freshness and vibrancy.



Soil education at Chateau Petrus, April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Harvest Overview - Key Factors

Acid & tannin

Acidity levels were a particular problem in 2011 with many wines leaving a tart presence on the finish. When combined with fruit that was picked early, the acidity's impact was magnified. And for those wines with prune and raisin flavors derived from the drought pressures of the season, acids accentuated the overripe flavors leaving a disjointed palate-presence.

With respect to tannin, 2009 and 2010 saw some of the highest levels ever recorded by many wineries. 2011 saw wineries on both banks with tannin levels that exceeded 2010, or ended up between '09 and '10. Tannins were very high due to low skin-to-juice ratios because of the drought conditions. In addition, vibrant sunlight during the hot spring created thicker skins. Those wineries that handled the tannin best avoided the pitfalls of the vintage.

The feel and shape of the tannins in the resulting wines was directly affected by how the fruit was handled. Gentle pressing was more imperative than in previous vintages to lessen the chance of extracting harsh tannins. Wineries also shortened maceration to leave less time for the fresh juice to soak up excessive tannin and phenolic qualities. And yet, there were many cases of green, bitter tannins contributing to unbalanced backpalates and finishes. Those wineries with strong, firm tannins failed to adopt cellar practices that would alleviate the situation, resulting in wines that may never resolve their grippy nature.



Christian Moueix, master of tannin management. April 2012



Wines of Denis Durantou (L'Eglise Clinet), April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

Harvest Overview - Key Factors

The human touch

Great wines are not only a reflection of what is born from exceptional terroir. It also requires talented winemakers who have a sense of style, as well as the technical expertise to fashion wines according to their personal vision. As occurs in any harvest, 2011 was another year where winemakers had a say in the quality of their wines. And we noticed a few standout portfolios which performed exceptionally well in this difficult year. These producers successfully responded to the unique challenges of the vintage and made exceptional wines across the board.

A big surprise this year was the return of Jonathan Malthus to the conversation. Known for his small-lot releases, Malthus was one of the new guard of winemakers who helped renew the fortunes and popularity of St. Emilion. 2011 saw

a new look to some of his wines. Gone were the extracted, riper styles of the past. Rather, his wines showcased remarkable balance and freshness. For a taste of the old Malthus though, fans will want to snag his stellar Les Asteries.

Denis Durantou is another name that came up repeatedly for us this year. This soft spoken and modest Pomerol winemaker is the force behind L'Eglise Clinet, and other properties that showed very well in 2011. Denis lets his wines do the talking, and a visit to his modest tasting room is almost like being in church, quiet and reverential.

Expansion is difficult in areas like Pomerol where land is expensive. So over the years, Denis has acquired properties in neighboring appellations. Estates in St Emilion (Saintayme), Lalande

de Pomerol (Les Cruzelles) and Côtes de Castillon (Montlandrie) are now in his portfolio, representing a new outlet for his considerable talents. Wine enthusiasts would be wise to search out these excellent values.

Another name to look for is Jean-Philippe Fort. A star member of Michel Rolland's consulting team, Fort's name was frequently associated with many of the wines we enjoyed this year, showing a flair for wonderful textures and lengthy, complex finishes. Fort is also working closely with Bordeaux negociant Jeffrey Davies, and it seems this duo is well on the road to making a name for themselves.



Vines at Chateau Lafite, April 2012



THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

En Primeurs Week—The Only Way To Know, Is To Go

Why we go

Our staff trip to Bordeaux to taste the 2011 vintage *en primeurs* represented our seventh consecutive year at this important event. The significance of these wines to our customers demands that we rely on our own judgment as much as the opinions and observations of others, and there is absolutely no substitute for being on the ground each year to taste a broad range of estates. By getting a first-hand look at the vintage through tasting (and re-tasting) and discussion with winemakers, chateau owners and negociants, we are able to give our customers honest and straightforward information, answer your questions, and ensure that the wines you buy are the wines that you will most appreciate over the long haul.

As in previous years, our offices in Oakland took on an eerie silence as our team of wine specialists departed *en masse* to Bordeaux. Our schedule was packed with chateau visits, tastings, and dinners all the while trying to maintain business as usual for our customers back home. As JJ Buckley's team of wine specialists has grown significantly over the past year, we were able to attend more of the critical events of *en primeurs* week, giving us both a broad and in-depth assessment of the vintage that is rivaled by few other retailers anywhere in the world. Each and every tasting is rigorously analyzed and debated as we slowly build a consensus on the vintage's specific attributes while selecting our top picks.



At Chateau Pontet-Canet, April 2012

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

En Primeurs Week—The Only Way To Know, Is To Go

Tasting challenges

Tasting wines *en primeurs* is not easy. Obviously the sheer quantity of wines to be sampled over the week is daunting, even for industry veterans. But there are other, more subtle difficulties as well specific to tasting young Bordeaux.

En primeurs week typically occurs about six months after harvest. By the time the wines are presented, most have just finished malolactic fermentation and winemakers have assembled a basic blend that represents their expectation for the finished wine. As the wines will not be bottled for another 12 to 18 months, tweaks and adjustments will continue to be made up until bottling. What they present to the trade during this week are essentially snapshots of what the final wine is likely to be. And despite the use of the term "barrel sample", the wines we taste are not drawn directly from the cask, but from specially prepared bottles frequently labeled *échantillon*, French for 'sample'.

While the *en primeur* wines poured for the trade are considered to be representative, they can vary considerably. A sample pulled from a new oak barrel, for example, may show richness of texture, a more dense weight on the palate, and more oomph. These are sometimes so appealing, they taste like a finished wine. A similar sample pulled from older wood is often more austere when young, with subtle complexities. Most chateaux assemble their *en primeurs* samples as well as the finished wine from the best possible lots and exclude

those lots deemed to be of lesser quality. However in some cases, less scrupulous wineries have been known to present wines *en primeurs* that while not doctored *per se*, will not represent the finished wine in an accurate fashion. Tasting young, unfinished wines is also difficult even for the trained palate. Such wines are by their very nature incomplete and it takes considerable experience tasting barrel samples to understand where the wine is at that moment in time, and then to project where it will end up. Add to this the fact that the samples themselves can change quite rapidly. Chateaux typically prepare their sample bottles just a day or two prior to presentation as they spoil quickly. This year, we encountered a number of tired, spoiled samples and doubled

our efforts to retaste as much as possible.

The weather and time of day can also influence how a wine tastes considerably. There are noticeable differences between identical wines tasted on sunny versus cloudy days and wines tasted early morning, when both you and your palate are alert and fresh, versus later in the day when you are staring down sample bottle #186. With so many factors affecting how a wine can taste on any given day, the best option for getting an accurate understanding of a particular wine is to taste and re-taste as much as possible over the course of the week.



*Knowing where to start is half the battle.
UGC event hosted at Barde-Haut, April 2012*

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What we look for

The primary reason for examining wines at this young stage in their life is to assess the overall qualities of the vintage and the distinguishing characteristics of each appellation. This helps to predict what the style of the finished wines will be, whether they are lean or rich, forward or reserved. In addition to the broader view, we are also looking to get an impression of individual wines—those that we will offer our customers on futures, and those that we might consider offering if our standards are met. This is a considerably more difficult task if given only one opportunity to taste the wine, which is yet another reason we will taste the same wine as often as possible.

As mentioned before, barrel samples are basically just a snapshot in a wine's development, but there are certain things that can be taken away immediately. Aromatically, the wines are pretty straightforward showing primary attributes of fruit and wood, while exceptional examples will reveal more complexity and nuance. On the palate, wines at this stage can be somewhat simple, fruity and direct, but it is fairly easy to determine whether the fruit intensity is appropriate to the variety. Better examples will show true varietal character, while the best show increasingly attractive levels of complexity. Though it is to be expected that wines at this young stage may be disjointed, the best youthful examples show layers of seamlessly integrated flavors.

At a more detailed level, it is essential to look at acidity levels as well as the amount and shape of the tannins. Wines can seem lean due to excessive acidity while some may seem in need of more acid to avoid being ponderous and 'heavy'. In terms of tannins, some wines may show an abundance at this stage, but we're looking for those that are finely textured and pleasant rather than spiky and rough. As the finished wines will be judged on these important qualities, winemakers can adjust some of these factors before bottling if they feel it's necessary.



At Chateau Lafite, April 2012

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How it works

Traditionally held at the beginning of April, the Bordeaux region is besieged by thousands of importers, journalists, retailers and some regular folks as well. The spectacle is centered around three days of tastings hosted by the *Union des Grands Crus*. These tastings are organized by appellation where the current vintage is poured for the massed throngs and are no different to other trade tastings held across the globe. The whole *en primeurs* event used to take place over a week but now goes on for almost a month to give VIPs special access to private tastings, as well as to accommodate the overflow of people.

It's important to note that not all wineries pour at the UGC-hosted tastings. Many of the top properties present their wines only at their estate and only by appointment. Due to the expanded interest in Bordeaux in both existing and emerging markets, it has become more difficult to secure an opportunity to visit a chateau and taste the new releases. In talking with a few wineries, as many as 40-50% of the requests for appointments are rejected, while others note they are looking to reduce the number of visitors in the future due to the sheer logistics of handling such large crowds. Traffic jams along the D2 have yet to become a problem, but parking lots are increasingly packed.

In reality, most of the actual business of Bordeaux is transacted behind closed doors at negociant offices and warehouses that the public rarely sees. As they have for centuries, negociants play a vital role in the Bordeaux wine market, acting as middlemen between the chateaux and the marketplace. There's nothing particularly romantic about these strictly business affairs, which take place in rather sterile, brightly-lit offices lined with endless rows of bottles to be tasted. But they do offer some privacy and quiet, which makes it easier to focus on the task at hand.



Taking a break at Chateau Palmer



Pichon-Lalande 2011

THE YEAR IN BORDEAUX: 2011

En Primeurs Week—The Only Way To Know, Is To Go

After hours

In addition to the UGC tastings and winery visits, a lot of activity during *en primeurs* occurs after the sun goes down and the industry settles down to dinner. Whether at restaurants, chateaus or convention halls, winery representatives and selected guests dine at small intimate gatherings or larger catered affairs. They are hosted by negociants, chateaus or the many quasi-governmental organizations such as the *Academie du Vin* or the *Union des Grands Crus*. These dinners are as much an important part of the *en primeurs* affairs as the tastings themselves and the conversations frequently steer towards the potential for the upcoming futures campaign.

At the same time, the chateaux themselves are part of the machine that is *en primeurs*. The majestic buildings and manicured landscapes have seduced wine buyers for centuries, and even an old curmudgeon like me finds it hard to resist the charms of a beautiful chateau and a dinner. At the same time, it's also a great chance to learn more about an estate and, more importantly, a chance to take a break and restore oneself in preparation for the next day's festivities.

Some final observations

In each visit to Bordeaux, I am reminded of the little customs and rituals that are associated with *en primeurs*. The quick scan as you enter the landscape of a tasting room to look for friends or check out the competition. The crunching sound of feet on gravel as you traverse from the parking lot to the chateau. The spit buckets and stained teeth. Each of these small things are components that make up the tapestry of *en primeurs*.

This year, we were surprised to see few other U.S. retailers in Bordeaux. Granted, JJ Buckley experienced record sales of both 2009 and 2010 futures (and we plan to continue our long-standing involvement in the Bordeaux market), but judging by the sparse representation,

we doubt the Bordelais will see increased U.S. participation in this year's campaign.

And while there was (yet again) never-ending discussion about the potential of the Chinese market, it seems to us the key word here is still 'potential'. We encountered fewer members of the Chinese wine trade than in previous years. And while no one doubts Bordeaux will play an important role in the Chinese trade at some point, we predict that only a few select estates will see much action in this campaign.



Crunch of gravel underfoot on the walkway at Chateau Lafite, April 2012



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Margaux

While Margaux can produce some magical wines, by and large they underachieve compared to the communes of Pauillac and St. Julien. The marginal growing conditions in this area in 2011 didn't do them any favors. While the heat in spring and summer gave the wines a boost towards ripeness, cool temps during harvest left many vineyards with unripe fruit. The impact of picking early was particularly noticeable here and the resultant wines lean toward the herbal-scented portion of the flavor spectrum, lacking in both ripeness and texture. The best wines we tasted were from vineyards where yields were curtailed, such as at Chateau Palmer.

2011 Alter Ego de Palmer (Margaux) - 48% merlot, 37% cabernet sauvignon and 15% petit verdot. Chateau Palmer's second wine. Vines are grown on stony gravel soils, with a planting density of 10,000 vines per hectare. Aged for up to 17 months in oak, with 25-40% new. Dense and concentrated ruby red color throughout. Additional emphasis on petit verdot in this vintage added tight fine tannins and restrained aromas of wild red berry followed with savory herbs, leather, and tar. As usual, very soft on the palate, presenting flavors of raspberry and blackberry liqueur, transitioning to crushed earth and savory jerky. The finish is medium in length. Should age nicely over the medium term. One of the top second wines of the Left Bank. Enjoy 2015-2023. 91-93 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Bellevue Tayac (Margaux) - 50% merlot, 40% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. Dense ruby core with a medium red rim. This unusual, merlot-heavy blend exhibits a black fruit-driven nose filled with currant, blackberry, and black cherry plus secondary aromas of tobacco and spice. The palate is soft and supple, with red fruit, a touch of milk chocolate, and a medium-length finish. This should drink exceptionally well while young. Cheap and cheerful for Margaux. Enjoy 2015-2022. 86-88 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Boyd Cantenac (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot, 8% cabernet franc, and 7% petit verdot. 50% new oak. Pretty ruby core with a garnet rim. A classic Margaux nose of red currant, cherry, and cassis with a touch of light rose petal and some scorched earth. Pretty and medium-bodied with bright red currant flavor as the dominant characteristic. The medium-length finish is rustic and slightly austere. Nervy acidity leads me to believe this could use some bottle age. Enjoy 2015-2023. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Brane Cantenac (Margaux) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot with the remainder cabernet franc and a touch of carmenere from 75 hectares of gravel soils. Portions of the vineyard benefit from a very deep water table which provides good drainage, while others have higher sand content and a shallower wa-

ter table. Vines are planted at a density of 8,000 vines per hectare, and have an average age of 35 years. Hand harvested with yields of 45 hl/ha. Beautiful deep ruby throughout. The classic claret nose offers dusty cherry, red berry, and cassis. There is a hint of menthol, which lends some nice complexity. The palate is tight and linear. A bit primary and backward at this young stage, but there is some potential for aging here. Enjoy 2015-2025. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Cantenac Brown (Margaux) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, and 5% cabernet franc. Vines are planted on 54 hectares of gravel soils, with a planting density of about 8,500 vines per hectare. Dense, opaque core with a crimson rim. This is a step up in aromatic complexity with an interesting array of black fruit on the nose including blackberry and super ripe black currant, backed up with a touch of vanilla and subtle oak. Soft and elegant on the mid-palate with black fruit throughout. I like the finesse and balance here. Should benefit from at least a couple of years in bottle and then develop over the following 15 years. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Chevalier de Lascombes (Margaux) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 35% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, and 5% petit verdot. Lascombes' second wine. Dark ruby color through to the rim. The petit verdot shows through with some green edges on the nose, but is buoyed by red fruit and a touch of camphor and leather. Shows some austerity on the palate but with bright fruit as well. Some evident oak in this modern Margaux. The finish is dry with some tannic backbone. Give this a year or two in bottle to integrate and become more approachable. Enjoy 2014-2019. 85-87 points — Alex Lallos

2011 d'Angludet (Margaux) - Deep attractive crimson color throughout. Loads of red currant and sweet vanilla. A touch of mocha chocolate graces the nose as well as a little underbrush. Overall nice complexity. Soft tannins on the palate with a nice burst of chocolate and allspice flavor. Has some length as well. Overall a well-balanced and pretty wine. Enjoy 2014-2025. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Margaux

2011 d'Issan (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. Aged in 50% new oak. 53 hectares of 35-year-old vines grown on gravel soils. Beautiful ruby color throughout this elegant Margaux. Inviting aromas of red currant are followed by semi-sweet chocolate and tobacco. Medium-bodied, with some grippy tannins toward the finish. I really like the overall mouthfeel and drinkability of this young D'Issan, though it will benefit from at least a few years in the cellar. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Dauzac (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. Aged in 60% new French oak. Classic ruby color with a bright rim. Subdued nose of red cherry, bitter chocolate, and anise. Lighter-bodied and mostly fruit driven on the palate. This is a modern wine with character despite its overall restraint. I would give this a few years in bottle to let the fruit develop and really show at its best. Enjoy 2015-2025. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Desmirail (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 38% merlot, and 2% petit verdot. Aged 14 months in 40% new oak. Medium ruby core with a paler violet rim. The nose is dominated by red fruit, including raspberry and red cherry, as well as floral perfume, red licorice, and a touch of tar. The palate features primary fruit flavors which dry out toward the medium-length finish, which is acid-driven and slightly tight at the moment. I suspect this will come into a nice balance with a couple of years of bottle age. Enjoy 2015-2025. 86-88 points — Alex Lallos

2011 du Tertre (Margaux) - 43% cabernet sauvignon, 33% merlot, 19% cabernet franc, and 5% petit verdot. Aged for approximately 16 months in 45% new oak. Deep purple core with a beautiful garnet rim. A strong bouquet with a touch of powdered sugar and mocha chocolate that nicely complement an alluring assortment of black fruit aromas. Big and soft on the palate, with blackberry, cassis, and plum carrying over nicely through the finish. High in both acidity and tannin, yet more or less in balance. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Durfort Vivens (Margaux) - 70% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot, and 5% cabernet franc. The vineyard comprises 32 hectares, with a planting density of 6,666 vines per hectare, and yields of 45 hl/ha. Harvest is by hand. Aged between 16-20 months in 40% new oak. Bright crimson color throughout. A touch of green underbrush scents on the nose along with some sulfur, which makes the wine a bit tough to evaluate at this young stage. Bittersweet chocolate with red currant on the pal-

ate. A hint of mint keeps this bright and fresh. Nervy acidity and a somewhat tannic finish. Enjoy 2017-2025. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Ferriere (Margaux) - 70% cabernet sauvignon and 30% merlot. One of the smallest of the classified Margaux growths. Absolutely beautiful youthful ruby color throughout. Lighter on the nose but really pretty fruit all the way through. Perfumed and elegant array of rose petal, strawberry, and loamy soil. Almost Burgundian on the palate, with lovely strawberry and rose extract flavors. Soft and delicious, and a great example of minimalist interference in a tough vintage, as the fruit is allowed to speak for itself. Enjoy 2014-2022. Tasted twice. 86-88 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Giscours (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, and a dollop of petit verdot. Spreading over 400 hectares, vineyards are planted on gravel outcrops at a high density of 10,000 vines per hectare, with 25% over 40 years old. Vines yield less than 50 hl/ha, and are harvested by hand. Aged in approximately 50% new oak. Bright ruby with a pink rim. A bit carbonic and primary bouquet with mostly red fruits, raspberry and strawberry, as well as bittersweet chocolate, leather, and a bit of gravel. Tangy, but full on the palate with the same red fruit flavors carrying over from the nose. A tad sharp but that should settle down once the wine is in bottle. Enjoy 2015-2025. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Kirwan (Margaux) - 45% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 10% petit verdot. Average vine age is 27 years, planted in sandy soils with a gravel topsoil. Pure garnet color, with a classic Margaux nose of perfumed black fruit, liquor, violet, and baking spices. The palate has some nice dried herbs and coffee along with deep black fruit flavors. Continues to build in intensity towards a long and balanced finish, replete with baking spices and chocolate. Good quality and balance in this classic styled wine. Enjoy 2015-2025. Tasted twice. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 L'Aura Cambon (Margaux) - 50% cabernet sauvignon and 50% merlot from a tiny 0.5 hectare vineyard near Cantenac-Brown. Soils are mixed gravel and clay. Aged in 100% new oak. Deep garnet color through to the rim. Modern nose of cassis, freshly picked blackberry, tar, dark chocolate, and a hint of menthol. The palate is lively with lots of bright fruit character as well as a cocoa note. Long and exciting finish that blends elegance and power the way Margaux should. An interesting and well-made wine. Enjoy 2016-2026. 91-93 points — Alex Lallos



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Margaux

2011 La Gurgue (Margaux) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 45% merlot, 5% petit verdot. Aged in 25% new oak. Deep ruby with a medium crimson rim. Pretty red fruit and roasted espresso on the nose give this elegant Margaux the aroma profile of a high class Burgundy. A bit austere to start but becomes fleshy as the wine passes from the front of the palate towards the back. Loganberry and red currant on the palate combine nicely with notes of sage and anise to give some complexity. Refined and elegant. 85-87 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Labegorce (Margaux) - 50% cabernet, 45% merlot, 3% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. From 57 hectares of sandy-gravel, silt and limestone soils, directly across the road from Ch. Margaux. Average vine age is 30 years, with yields of 50 hl/ha. The wine spends up to 15 months in new oak. Deep ruby core extends to a bright pink rim. A stylish bouquet of red fruit is accompanied by anise, sage, and fresh tobacco. The palate offers mocha, raspberry, and plum flavors, along with some good structure. Finishes strong with red fruit and nice texture. Give this a couple of years in bottle and try through 2025. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Lascombes (Margaux) - 50% merlot, 47% cabernet sauvignon, 2% petit verdot, and 1% cabernet franc. Planted on mixed clay-limestone and gravel soils, the vines average 35 years old, at a density of 8,000-10,000 vines per hectare. Harvest is done by hand. Deep, dense crimson throughout. Intense and modern nose of ripe red raspberry, blackberry, and cherry cola, followed by sweet mocha chocolate, incense, and tar. Already showing a little of the new oak in which it was aged. The palate is big and intense, with tannins that continue to build towards a dry and angular finish. This also deserves a few years in bottle to give all components time to come into further balance. Enjoy 2015-2025. Tasted twice. 89-91 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Malescot St. Exupery (Margaux) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 35% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, and 5% petit verdot. Planted in gravel over mix marl, clay and chalk soils. Vines are planted at a density of 10,000 per hectare and have an average age of 35 years. Hand harvested, then aged in 100% new oak. Deep violet core with a brighter rim. The nose is replete with cool red fruit, menthol, underbrush, and tobacco. Less massive and modern than recent vintages of Malescot, but just as soft. The palate offers more bright red fruit as well as some good acidity and backbone. Finishes fresh with good lift. A classic style, this is soft enough to drink upon release and over the following 20 years. Tasted twice. 91-93 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Margaux (Margaux) - 86% cabernet sauvignon, 10% merlot, 2% petit verdot, and 2% cabernet franc. Vines are planted in 82 hectares of gravel soil, with pockets of sand, gravel, and limestone. The average vine age is 36 years. Gorgeous deep ruby color all the way through. The nose is outstanding, with a perfumed array of violet, rose petal, strawberry, blackberry, and cassis. What an elegant yet powerful expression of Margaux here. Exceptionally soft and lush on the palate with layers of pretty red fruits followed by light chocolate and essence of rose petal. Already beautiful at this infant stage, this is a serious wine to behold. This is the most accessible of all the First Growths. Simply exquisite. Enjoy from 2015-2030. 96-98 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Marojallia (Margaux) - 70% cabernet sauvignon and 30% merlot. Beautiful ruby all the way to the garnet rim. Open nose of ripe raspberry, red plum, and cherry liqueur with subtle espresso aromas. Enters the palate with lively acidity and fresh red fruit flavors, underpinned by a tannic backbone and a finish laden with notes of blackberry and anise. Nice balance and structure. This should drink well through 2025. 91-93 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Marquis d'Alesme Becker (Margaux) - 70% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, and 5% petit verdot. Average vine age is 45 years, planted on 16 hectares with differing soil composition including silica and gravel, mixed with clay in some areas. Deep ruby color throughout. This classic Margaux shows elegance and finesse on the nose with aromas of red currant, Rainier cherry, cola, root beer, and anise. The palate shows great restraint and medium concentration. Finishes long and tannic with nice red fruit, and lingers long after the wine has been sipped. High quality, and should perform at its best with a few years of bottle age. 90-92 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Marquis de Terme (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 35% merlot, and 5% petit verdot. Aged in 50% new oak. Opaque, inky core with a bright fuchsia rim. Packed with ripe dark fruit on the nose, with black cherry, berry liqueur, and sweet red licorice. The palate is fresh and lively, again with good acidity and tannic structure. More fruit driven than some examples but still shows a good amount of secondary characteristics including coffee and leather. Leave this alone for at least a year or two before enjoying over the following 15 years. 90-92 points — Alex Lallos



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Margaux

2011 Monbrison (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 24% merlot, 13% cabernet franc, and 3% petit verdot. Aged in 40% new oak. Beautiful ruby color throughout. Classically styled, with plentiful, cool and fresh aromas of bright red currant, raspberry, and loganberry surrounding a core of bittersweet mocha chocolate and spice. Very angular on the mid-palate with more red fruit and an acidic backbone. The finish is long and earthy with notes of coffee and fresh herbs. 86-88 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Palmer (Margaux) - 55% merlot, 45% cabernet sauvignon. Vines are planted on 55 hectares of stony gravel soils at a density of 10,000 per hectare, and are on average 35 years old. All are harvested by hand. Yields were an incredibly low 20 hl/ha. Deep garnet core with a medium bright garnet rim. An exceptional and complex nose of ripe red cherry, warm mocha, and freshly picked savory herbs. The style is warm with silky tannins that continue to build throughout the palate. Red currant and tobacco flavors are followed by subtle oak nuances and a touch of cedar. The finish is long and tight, with a backbone of acidity and fine grained tannins which are all in balance. One of the top wines of the Left Bank. Enjoy 2018-2030. 94-96 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Pavillon Rouge de Margaux (Margaux) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot, 8% petit verdot, and 2% cabernet franc. Vines are planted in 82 hectares of gravel soil, with pockets of sand, gravel, and limestone. The average vine age is 36 years. 28% of the harvest was designated for this year's Pavillon Rouge. Lovely opaque core with a bright purple rim. Sexy aromas of dark chocolate, rose petal, vanilla, blackberry liqueur, and anise. Soft and sensual on the palate with excellent fruit character plus notes of warm vanilla and baking spice. Powerful yet elegant all the way through the broad, luscious finish. Margaux's second wine, this is better than any second I can remember. Beautifully lush and supple from beginning to end. Excellent. 91-93 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Prieure Lichine (Margaux) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, and 5% petit verdot. Vines are planted on a ridge of alluvial gravel with a density of 8,500 per hectare. All are hand harvested. Beautiful ruby color leads to a bright red rim. Lots of aromatic complexity on the nose, with an array of red fruit, including cherry, dark raspberry, and currant, followed by graphite, tar, anise, and lavender. The palate explodes with character and complexity, with a lovely mix of red berry and baking chocolate. This should benefit nicely from a few years in the cellar and drink beautifully through 2032-2035. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. 90-92 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Rauzan Gassies (Margaux) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot, 5% petit verdot, and 5% cabernet franc. Deep ruby throughout. Classic yet fresh on the nose, where dark red fruit meets chocolate as well as a core of sweet tobacco, herbs de Provence, and anise. The palate offers supple and delicate texture with a fruit driven core and tannins which continue to build all the way through the long, soft finish. Lots of character here and really well-done for this vintage. Enjoy 2015-2025. Tasted twice. 89-91 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Rauzan Segla (Margaux) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 35% merlot, 3.5% petit verdot, and 1.5% cabernet franc. The vineyards comprise 75 hectares on gravel soils, with about 50% planted at a density of 10,000 vines per hectare. Opaque color throughout. The alluring bouquet displays aromas of black cherry, boysenberry, and kirsch, as well as an enticingly rich mocha chocolate note. Cassis flavors dominate the palate, along with hints of cocoa, baking spices, and confectionary sugar. Good structure leads to a tightly wound finish. Well done. Enjoy from 2017-2030. Tasted twice. 92-94 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Siran (Margaux) - 48% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon, 11% petit verdot, and 1% cabernet franc. Aged for 12 months in approximately 35% new oak. Restrained aromas on the nose of bright red cherry, red currant, and loganberry. The palate offers subtle vanilla, bright red forest fruit, and freshly picked herb flavors. This is a complex wine showing great restraint. Lighter-bodied, yet showing great balance, this should prove rewarding while young. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Tour de Mons (Margaux) - 55% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% petit verdot. This atypically merlot-heavy Margaux blend shows a ruby red core with a lighter rim. The nose offers elegant aromas of red cherry, bright raspberry, and orange blossom, with a subtle touch of menthol. Restrained and soft on the palate with abundant red fruit. The finish is tight and also restrained, showing good acidity and overall finesse. Enjoy between 2015-2025. 86-88 points — Alex Lallos



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pauillac

The traditional heart of the Haut-Medoc usually produces the best wines of the vintage and so it goes in 2011. But the inability of the First Growths to produce truly profound wines is testimony to the difficulty of the vintage, and Pauillac did not fare particularly well overall. One notable exception was with Lafite Rothschild, who made a very elegant, balanced, and thought provoking wine in 2011. But the erratic nature of the vintage was expressed elsewhere, and many examples showed green, unripe tannins along with noticeable acidity leaving an impression of imbalance. However those wineries that exercised restraint in the cellar came out well, showing balance and a sense of proportion. Pontet-Canet and Pichon Lalande made solid wines and the appellation could be a source of good values if priced correctly.

2011 Batailley (Pauillac) - 85% cabernet sauvignon, 11% merlot, 1% cabernet franc, and 3% petite verdot. 58 hectare estate, with average vine age of 40 years. Wines are aged in 50% new French oak. A very pretty, perfumed nose, with red and purple fruit-driven notes of blackberry, cassis, and plum. The wine on the palate is full bodied, opulent, and silky with a medium-grained tannin structure and bright acidity. This is quite a pleasant Pauillac. Denis Dubourdiou consults. Enjoy 2018-2030. 90-92 points — John Sweeney

2011 Carruades de Lafite (Pauillac) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 39% merlot, 2.5% petit verdot, and 3.5% cabernet franc. The second wine of Lafite-Rothschild. The harvest at Lafite began on September 3rd and finished on September 21st. Deep purple core and a bright magenta rim. A ripe nose of fresh grape jam, cherry, plum, cassis, and a touch of fresh herbs. The defining characteristics on the palate are the intense minerality and fine polished tannins, though subtle notes of cedar and French oak also play a role. A complete wine, the finish provides good coffee and mineral notes. Enjoy 2015-2025. 90-92 points — John Sweeney

2011 Clerc Milon (Pauillac) - 54% cabernet sauvignon, 37% merlot, 7% cabernet franc, 1% petit verdot, and 1% carmenere. Part of the Rothschild stable, located in the northernmost part of the Pauillac appellation. Vineyards are planted in a mixture of sand and gravel, with more clay towards the river. A toasty and high-toned nose of red and black fruits is complimented by graphite, black pepper, and baking spices. On the palate, vibrant acidity and fairly aggressive tannins provide a contrast to the red fruit and spice notes. This will need time to mellow out but should prove quite age-worthy. Enjoy 2015-2025. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Croizet-Bages (Pauillac) - 71% cabernet sauvignon and 29% merlot. Sits on the Bages plateau with neighbors Lynch-Bages and Grand-Puy-Lacoste. The nose exudes notes of purple fruit, leather, and subtle French oak. Silky on the palate, with pronounced acidity on the medium-length finish. The most interesting aspect is how fine and polished the tannins are for such a

young wine. Overall a pretty good showing of this wine and it should drink well relatively young. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-90 points — John Sweeney

2011 d'Armailhac (Pauillac) - 57% cabernet sauvignon, 28% merlot, 13% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. 50 hectare estate with average vine age of 47 years. Harvest began on September 12 and finished on September 28. Aged 16 months in 30% new oak. Deep ruby color, the nose offers notes of perfectly ripe plum, cassis, and wet pavement. Opulent and rich, with black cherry, coffee, and subtle oak flavors along with silky, well-integrated tannins. Finishes long, with a balanced acidity that few wines achieved this vintage. This showed very well. Enjoy 2017-2027. 92-94 points — John Sweeney

2011 Duhart Milon (Pauillac) - 75% cabernet sauvignon and 25% merlot. Vineyards planted in fine gravel mixed with Aeolian sands, on tertiary limestone bedrock. The merlot harvest began on September 5 and ended September 13th, while cabernet was harvested September 13 through 21st. Aged in 50% new oak, for 14-16 months. Deep ruby in color with a brighter rim. A truly mouth-coating wine, loaded with red raspberry, dark chocolate, a touch of barnyard, and oak. Very full-bodied, with fairly aggressive, chalky tannins. A very complete wine, from the initial intense burst of flavor and on through the midpalate and finish. Enjoy 2017-2027. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Grand Puy Ducasse (Pauillac) - 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. A 40-hectare estate, between Mouton and Lafite to the north and Batailley to the south. The wine is aged for 18-24 months in 30-40% new French oak. Deep purple in color, the nose is very mineral driven, as there are notes of graphite, scorched earth, and metal. This wine is super tight and needs quite a bit of coaxing to offer up any sort of bouquet. On the palate, balanced acidity leads to a medium-length finish. This wine should age exceptionally well but really needs time to show its true potential. Virtually seamless, I look forward to tasting this again. Enjoy 2017-2027. 88-90 points — John Sweeney



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pauillac

2011 Grand Puy Lacoste (Pauillac) - 78% cabernet sauvignon and 22% merlot. 55 hectare estate, vineyards are planted in deep gravel soil. Aged for 16-18 months in 75% new French oak. Harvest occurred between September 15th and 29th. Very dark in color, almost opaque at the core and very primary on the nose. The palate offers a very juicy frame of black and purple fruits and a chalky texture in the mouth. With good, balanced acidity, it offers a long, lingering finish. Jacques and Eric Boissenot consult. Enjoy 2017-2027. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Haut Bages Liberal (Pauillac) - 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. From a 30-hectare estate located next to Chateau Latour. Aged in 40% new French oak. Deep ruby in color, with a bouquet of red and black fruits and a spicy, peppery profile. The palate offers plum, cassis, red raspberry, and a touch of new oak. A wine of great balance and elegance, the flavors are precise and focused. This has beautifully balanced acidity and soft, medium-grained tannins. The finish is long, persistent, and silky. Enjoy 2018-2030. 90-92 points — John Sweeney

2011 Haut-Batailley (Pauillac) - Planted to 65% cabernet sauvignon, 25% merlot and 10% cabernet franc on 22 hectares of gravelly soil adjacent to Haut-Batailley, owned by Xavier Borie of Grand-Puy-Lacoste. Generally aged in 55% new French oak. Deep ruby, with a nose of black cherry, cassis, raspberry, and a slight hint of oak. Medium to full-bodied, this wine offers a spicy profile with a medium-plus finish. Nicely textured with balanced acidity. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Lafite Rothschild (Pauillac) - 80% cabernet sauvignon and 20% merlot. 178 hectare estate, with average vine age of 40 years planted in gravelly, sandy soil over limestone bedrock. The early harvest at Lafite began with cabernet sauvignon on September 3rd and finished on September 21st (about a month earlier than 2010). Very dark ruby in color with a deep ruby rim. Classy and exquisite notes of Asian spices, dark chocolate, raspberry coulis, and hints of lead pencil and fresh roasted coffee. Medium bodied on the palate, with well-integrated tannins and balanced acidity. The oak is fairly apparent but not obtrusive. The wine's highlight is its long, complex, and silky finish. The most balanced of all the First Growths in this vintage, showing an alluring elegance, but certainly not the power of the 2010. Enjoy 2020-2030. 95-97 points — John Sweeney

2011 Latour (Pauillac) - 84.5% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot, and 0.5% petit verdot. 78 hectares of vineyard planted on Gunzian gravel, clay, and marl, over limestone bedrock. The *grand vin* represents 34% of the harvest in 2011 which began on September 12th with the merlot, and finished September 26th with the cab-

ernet sauvignon. Potentially one the darkest and most intense wines of the vintage yet not a 'classic' Latour. Opaque core with a deep purple rim. Exudes some structure and layers of complexity, but this is perhaps where the 2011 Latour falls short. Cassis, espresso, wet stone, fresh raspberry, and dark chocolate aromas dominate the nose. The medium to full-bodied palate is very primary, and flavors are currently difficult to coax out beneath the all that tannin, which are brooding but not overbearing. The hallmark of this Latour is its obscenely long finish. Enjoy 2020-2035. 93-95 points — John Sweeney

2011 Le Petit Mouton de Mouton Rothschild (Pauillac) - 70% cabernet sauvignon and 30% merlot. The 2011 Mouton harvest began September 12th and was completed on September 28th. Deep ruby core, with ripe aromas of plum, cassis, pavement, and a touch of chalky minerality. Bright on the palate, with lively, bordering on excessive, acidity. A mouth-coating tannic structure leads to a long, spicy finish. Enjoy 2017-2027. 90-92 points — John Sweeney

2011 Les Forts de Latour (Pauillac) - 72.5% cabernet sauvignon, 25.5% merlot, and 2% petit verdot. The second wine of Latour, Les Forts represents 43% of the 2011 harvest, which began on September 12th with the merlot, and finished with the cabernet sauvignon on September 26th. Very deep purple core with a magenta rim. The nose is reminiscent of fresh baked blackberry pie, fresh raspberry, and strong minerality. The full-bodied palate is very fresh, with balanced acidity, refined texture, and a long, spicy finish. Enjoy 2017-2027. 90-92 points — John Sweeney

2011 Lynch Bages (Pauillac) - 72% cabernet sauvignon, 23% merlot, 3% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. 100 hectare estate on gravelly soils. Aged in 79% new French oak. Opaque at the core with a deep purple rim. Incredibly primary and closed in its current state, with a very shy nose of red cherry, cedar, coffee, and a touch of toasty oak. The palate offers vibrant (if slightly off-balance) acidity, and fruit-driven flavors of red cherry, currant, and plum. Good length on the finish. A bit disjointed in its current state, this will hopefully come together in time. Enjoy 2017-2030. 90-92 points — John Sweeney

2011 Lynch Moussas (Pauillac) - 70% cabernet sauvignon and 30% merlot. 57 hectare estate on gravelly soil. Aged in 55% new French oak. Deep ruby core, boasting aromas of red and purple fruits on the nose. The palate is already very elegant and complex, with a terrific balance of fruit and earth components and a smooth, well-integrated tannin profile. Incredibly balanced with a long, silky finish. One of the vintage stars of the region and one to seek out upon release. I was quite impressed by this wine! Enjoy 2017-2030. 90-92 points — John Sweeney



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pauillac

2011 Mouton Rothschild (Pauillac) - 90% cabernet sauvignon, 7% merlot, and 3% cabernet franc. 75 hectare estate sits on a 40m-high mound. Soils are gravelly over a base of sand, clay, marl, and limestone. The 2011 Mouton harvest began September 12th and was completed on September 28th. Totally stacked and packed this is a top Mouton! Concentrated and intense bouquet leads to a balanced palate, with notes of vanilla, cassis, blackberry compote, plum and cherry. Ultra-complex, there is just a hint of earth and herbal notes to balance the ripe fruit flavors. The refined tannins lead into a long, fresh finish. An impressive, seamless wine. Enjoy 2020-2035. 94-96 points —John Sweeney

2011 Pauillac (Pauillac) - 37.5% cabernet sauvignon and 62.5% merlot. This is the third wine of Chateau Latour. Bright purple core with a magenta rim. The nose offers a complex array of black and purple fruits as well as a touch of oak and coffee. A medium to full-bodied effort, the acidity is balanced and leads to a long finish, backed up with subtle peppery notes. Nicely concentrated, especially considering this is a 3rd wine. This should drink well at a relatively young age. Enjoy 2014-2022. 89-91 points —John Sweeney

2011 Pedesclaux (Pauillac) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, and 5% cabernet franc from vines averaging 35 years in age, planted in gravel over clay. Opaque in color, with a bright magenta rim. The nose is very rich and fruity, with aromas of black cherry, fresh jam, and graphite. On the palate, the wine is leaner than the nose suggests, with bright acidity and a chalky texture. A medium to full-bodied wine with fairly grippy tannins. Enjoy 2015-2025. 89-91 points —John Sweeney

2011 Pibran (Pauillac) - 55% merlot, 45% cabernet sauvignon. From 17 hectares of vines on a gravel ridge near Mouton-Rothschild, Lynch Bages and Pontet-Canet. Average vine age is just over 30 years. Aged in 50% new and 50% one-year-old oak. 13.5% alcohol. Dark purple core with a vibrant fuchsia rim. Perfumed blackberry and plums from a showy bouquet, with underlying notes of fresh turned earth and clay expressive of the terroir. Juicy and supple on the palate, this builds and expands nicely toward the finish. Tannins are balanced and broad, providing a fine counterpoint for the fruit. Enjoy 2015-2022. From owners of Pichon-Baron. 89-91 points —Andy Frieden

2011 Pichon Longueville Baron (Pauillac) - 82% cabernet sauvignon and 18% merlot. 73-hectare estate on gravelly soil. The wine was harvested beginning September 12th and finished on October 8th. Aged for 18 months in 80% new French oak. Deep purple in color with a bright magenta rim. The nose exudes up-

front earth driven aromas with secondary notes of black fruit and graphite. A clear streak of minerality runs through this wine, as does a firm tannic structure. A bit shorter on the finish than I would have expected, but overall a pretty nice wine. Enjoy 2014-2022. 91-93 points —John Sweeney

2011 Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande (Pauillac) - 78% cabernet sauvignon, 8% merlot, 12% cabernet franc, and 2% petite verdot. Independent sibling of Pichon-Baron, this 89-hectare estate borders Chateau Latour. Soils are gravel and clay over deep limestone and sandstone. Aged in 50% new French oak. Deep purple core. The nose exudes notes of blackberry, raspberry, and crushed rocks. The palate is all about finesse and elegance, as the tannins are ultra-refined and the finish is remarkably long. This wine is big, rich and balanced. Another very successful vintage at Pichon Lalande in an overall difficult year. Enjoy 2018-2030. 93-95 points —John Sweeney

2011 Pontet Canet (Pauillac) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 36% merlot, 3% cabernet franc, and 1% petit verdot. The biodynamic, 120-hectare estate is planted in gravel, clay, and limestone. Aged in 50% new French oak. Deep ruby core with a bright ruby rim. The nose offers notes of blackberry, red cherry, cassis, licorice, and cedar. Very refined on the palate, with super fine-grained tannins and a bright vibrant acidity. This beauty is totally complete; a polished and persistent, with loads of character. Another hugely successful wine from Pontet Canet. Michel Rolland consults. Enjoy 2016-2030. 95-97 points —John Sweeney



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pessac-Leognan & Graves

The relatively warmer climates of the areas south of the city of Bordeaux helped most wineries avoid the unripe qualities encountered in some of the Haut-Medoc appellations. Yet while most estates produced correct and balanced wines, few went for the bleachers. The annual debate between La Mission and Haut Brion was settled for the latter as its creamy textures outweighed the fresh, herb-laced fruits of La Mission. Haut-Bailly, however, added another notch in their belt by putting forth a powerful, balanced wine that can proudly stand with its successes of the last three years.

2011 Allary Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 69% cabernet franc and 31% cabernet sauvignon. Malolactic took place in barrels. Aged for 12 months in a combination of 50% new and 50% once used barrels, with 60% sourced from Taransaud and 40% from Ana Selection. The Allary family owns this 1.31-hectare vineyard located entirely within Haut-Brion's boundaries. The vines have an average age of 30 years. The unusual mix of varieties is planted in mixed clay, sand, and gravel soils. All vineyard work is done with horses or by hand, with no machines or tractors allowed in the vineyard. The cabernet franc was hand-picked on September 29th and the cabernet sauvignon on October 9th. Yields, after sorting, were 24 hl/ha. This has concentrated aromas with a very floral component that should integrate nicely with time. Very taut and complex, with focused flavors and aromas of blackberry and black cherry, this has nice intensity and balance. Vanilla and cassis flavors emerge as the wine flows over the palate. Especially compared to other 2011 Pessacs, this has an impressively long finish. Stephane Derenoncourt and Simon Blanchard consult. Enjoy 2015-2025. 92-94 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Bouscaut (Pessac-Leognan) - 55% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% malbec from this 42 hectare estate planted on gravel and clay soils on a limestone base. Aged for 18 months in 40% new oak, the 2011 Bouscaut is a mouthful. Deep, dark, shiny red with a rich and attractive aroma of blackberry liqueur. Soft, rich, and ripe on the palate, this has bright fruity flavors of cranberry and cassis, and a nice mouthfeel. Turns a bit grapey towards the finish, but it's one of the more finished wines from Pessac at this stage, suggesting that it will drink well while young. The oak imparts a considerable amount of flavor here. Enjoy 2015-2020. 86-88 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Branon (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% merlot, 25% cabernet franc, and 25% cabernet sauvignon. Located over 6.5 hectares on the slope of a gravelly hill between Haut-Bailly and Malartic Lagravere. An opaque ruby, the nose was at first somewhat muted but opened up nicely with aromas of gravel, violet, cassis, and toffee. There's great fruit concentration here and the cabernet sauvignon component really shines. Nicely balanced on the palate with ample fruit, spice, and acidity. Finishes smooth and will drink well young. Enjoy on release through 2020. 91-93 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Brown (Pessac-Leognan) - Planted to 55% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, and 5% petit verdot. The 2011 is an inky, almost totally opaque red. Very ripe nose, with aromas of sour black cherry and jammy blackberry along with a touch of barnyard. Ripe flavors continue onto the palate, with cool soft purple fruits. This finishes with tons of fruit and some chunky tannins. After a few years of bottle age this will drink well through 2020. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. 88-90 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Carbonnieux (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, 7% cabernet franc, with 3% petite verdot and carmenere from deep, sloping gravelly soils mixed with clay. Aged for 15-18 months in 35-40% new oak barrels. This release is a pale bright red, with aromas of minerals, cranberry, rose, violet, and plum. The palate has ample acidity, with dry gravel flavors balancing the red fruit. Medium-bodied and fleshy, this finishes with very dry tannins. One of the oldest estates in Graves, Carbonnieux has been making wine without interruption since the 13th century! Drink 2015-2022. 88-90 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Clos Floridene (Pessac-Leognan) - An unusual wine, this is 72% cabernet sauvignon and 28% merlot planted on thin red, calcareous clay soils rich in iron oxide. A dark inky red, with medium-light intensity aromas of wet gravel, tar, and red fruits. Restrained bouquet, but very rich on entry, then turning soft and smooth on the way to a lightly tangy, medium length finish. Made by Denis Dubourdieu and named after a combination of his wife's first name, Florence, and his own. Drink 2015-2020. 86-88 points — Cory Gowan

2011 de Chantegrive (Graves) - 50% cabernet sauvignon and 50% merlot from coarse gravel soils mixed with sand on a 96 hectare estate. Aged in 50% new, 50% 1-year old barrels. The harvest took place over 21 days starting on September 5. Translucent shiny red, with a highly aromatic and perfumed nose. Smooth, pure, and sweet on entry, with the great balance between the cabernet and merlot that one would expect from an equal blend, this has flavors of cassis and raspberry. More medium bodied, this is a fresh wine with everything integrated and it will be very pleasurable to drink young. Tasted twice. Drink 2014-2019. 87-89 points — Cory Gowan



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pessac-Leognan & Graves

2011 Couhins (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon, and 10% cabernet franc. A deep, inky red with a purple rim. Very lifted on the nose. The palate has a soft, smooth core with tangy cranberry flavors and a mineral-chalk texture that adds depth to the smoothness. Very pretty fruit flavor, with flavors of violet emerging on the finish. Made by Denis Dubour-dieu. Enjoy 2014-2019. 86-88 points – Cory Gowan

2011 de Fieuzal (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, 6% cabernet franc, and 4% petit verdot from gravelly soils mixed with clay. Aged in 60% new barrels. The color is a dark shiny ruby, with very lifted and perfumed aromas. Tarry, with wood smoke and sour cherry aromas, this tastes a bit incomplete at this stage. Very soft on the palate, with primary, juicy fruit flavors along with notes of mint and chocolate. Tasted twice. Enjoy 2015-2022. 90-92 points – Cory Gowan

2011 de France (Pessac-Leognan) - Planted to 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. Located on the highest and deepest gravelly plateau in Leognan, this small, 40 hectare estate gets more sun than many of its neighbors, giving a unique aspect to its terroir. The wine has a dark, opaque red color with aromas of purple fruit paired with crunchy red cranberry. Very soft on the palate, this is all juicy fruit with little acidity to give it lift. That said, the finish is very tannic, giving this a slightly sharp quality. Perhaps it will all come together. Enjoy 2015-2020. 85-87 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Domaine de Chevalier (Pessac-Leognan) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, and 5% petit verdot. Malolactic and aging take place in a mix of 40% new, 30% once used, and 30% twice used, barrels. This 40-hectare section of vineyard is planted with a density of 10,000 vines/ha and an average vine age of 35 years. The vineyards are organically farmed. Hand-harvested between September 8th and 24th and hand sorted three times, yields were 34 hl/ha. Deep dark ruby color, the nose features aromas of cassis and blackberry along with a note of clay. Soft and dense on entry with a chewy mouthfeel, this has very deep flavors that take some coaxing to emerge at this young stage, but the concentration is admirable. This shows great complexity, with aromas and flavors of cassis and blackberry, a hint of tar, and very concentrated, layered wood smoke. Soft and supple. Stephane Derenoncourt consults on the Chevalier rouge. Tasted three times. Enjoy 2016-2026. 93-95 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Ferran (Pessac-Leognan) - 30% cabernet sauvignon and 70% merlot from gravel soils on this 98 ha estate. The 2011 vintage shows layered aromas, with plum, crunchy red fruit, and dried herbs. Sweet and soft on entry, baking spice and oak flavor the

midpalate before progressing to a finish laden with flavors of black tea and massive tannins. This appellation made some nice wines in 2011, and this is one of them. Enjoy 2014-2020. 88-90 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Gazin-Rocquencourt (Pessac-Leognan) - Planted to 55% cabernet sauvignon and 45% merlot. Planted on 28 hectares, this is one of the rare Pessac-Leognan estate to produce only red wines. Owned by the same family which owns Malartic-Lagraviere, this property is located directly opposite Domaine de Chevalier. The bouquet is a pretty, harmoniously fragrant nose of chocolate, carob, herbs, sea air, and sour black cherry. There's a nice richness to the palate without becoming overripe. Balanced and pure, with good fruit intensity, this has a really serious and chewy mouthfeel, with jammy fruit and flavors of blackberry liqueur. The nice palate balance leads to a compactly tannic finish of medium length. Enjoy 2015-2022. 89-91 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Haura (Graves) - 53% cabernet sauvignon and 47% merlot. A rich dark ruby. Restrained on the nose, but still revealing lots of fruity aromas and a spicy backbone. A nice, smooth palate entry, the softness is paired with good intensity. The acidity found in wines from 2011 is very evident, lifting the flavors and carrying them across the palate. Finishes with some tart cherry flavors. What this lacks in complexity, it makes up in intense fruit. Made by Dennis Dubourdieu. Enjoy 2014-2020. 86-88 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Haut-Bailly (Pessac-Leognan) - 64% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, and 6% cabernet franc aged for 16 months in 50-65% new barrels. Situated on a 30 hectare plot, its unique gravelly sand soils sit on fossil-rich subsoil. The 2011 vintage is a medium bright red. Soft, pure, and very fragrant on the nose, a hallmark of Haut-Bailly, this has aromas of tar and blackberry liqueur. With a soft entry, this is ripe and pure on the palate with intense blue fruit flavors before yielding to some firm tannins. Though this will take some time to come together, it also has one of the longest, unhurried finishes of any 2011 Pessac. Owned by American Robert Wilmers since 1998, Chateau Haut-Bailly has seen a tremendous resurgence in quality. Well done. Tasted twice. Enjoy 2016-2026. 93-95 points – Cory Gowan



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pessac-Leognan & Graves

2011 Haut-Bergey (Pessac-Leognan) - 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot planted on 40 hectares of gravelly clay subsoil. Aged for 15-18 months in 50% new oak barrels. Sylvain Garcin Cathiard has owned Haut-Bergey since 1991, and has really elevated the quality, giving it the same treatment used at the family's other chateaux. Very chocolaty and rich on the nose and the palate, this has a nice soft entry with baking spice flavor in the mid-palate providing some complexity to accompany black cherry flavors. Fine tannins give this admirable length. Tasted twice. Enjoy 2014-2020. 90-92 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 34.8% merlot, 18.9% cabernet franc, and 46.3% cabernet sauvignon. The 2011 Haut-Brion is a nearly opaque red from core to rim. Features intensely pure aromas of cassis, plum, wood smoke, iodine, black tea, and focused minerality. This is soft and pure on entry, multi-layered and concentrated, with cool taut fruit giving it a slightly hollow mouthfeel at this young stage. Loads of fine tannins don't impart as much of a tarry element as in some other Pessac wines. Impressive in its purity, this finishes with flavors of toasty oak and black tea. Enjoy 2020-2030. 92-94 points – Cory Gowan

2011 La Chapelle de La Mission Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 68.7% merlot, 11.7% cabernet franc, and 19.6% cabernet sauvignon. This is the second wine of La Mission Haut-Brion. The 2011 has a very fragrant, high-toned nose of pure cassis. Round, clean, and polished on the palate even at this early stage, this has attractive flavors of gravelly minerals, fresh blueberry, and black tea. Very taut, this finishes with massive, chunky tannins that will need some time to resolve before this wine can become truly enjoyable. Drink 2016-2022. 89-91 points – Cory Gowan

2011 La Garde (Pessac-Leognan) - 60% merlot, 35% cabernet sauvignon, 3% cabernet franc, and 2% petite verdot. The merlot was harvested first, from September 15-30, with the other varieties picked from October 1-5. An inky red core with a clear purple rim. This has a super intense, fruity nose. Round, medium-weight and bright, with lots of cabernet sauvignon flavor, the palate has a soft, chocolate-laced entry. Showing great balance and complexity, flavors of spice mingle with cool fruit and ample acidity to help this glide over the palate. Smooth and velvety on the finish, with soft tannins and good length. Well done. Enjoy 2015-2025. 90-92 points – Cory Gowan

2011 La Louviere (Pessac-Leognan) - 64% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, and 3% of each of cabernet franc and petit verdot aged for 12-18 months in 50% new oak barrels. Listed as a historic monument in France, Chateau La Louviere makes wine from vines planted on 61 hectares of gravelly sand with a deep lime-

stone base. The color is an opaque red. A tad austere, the nose is combines aromas of red flowers and tangy black cherry. Shows a soft and fruity texture along with fine tannins that contribute flavors of black tea. Slightly sharp finish, with lively acidity and a high level of tannins. Enjoy 2017-2022. 86-88 points – Cory Gowan

2011 La Mission Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 33.7% merlot, 11.3% cabernet franc, and 55% cabernet sauvignon. The vineyards of this famous neighbor of Haut-Brion are planted on gravel over chalk, with an average vine-age of 20 years. Wine is aged in 100% new oak. The color is an inky purple red. This medium-weight effort has delicate and refreshing blue fruits and a soft texture, along with ample minerality, clay, and wood smoke flavors, and fine tannins. Pleasant finish, but lacks stuffing at this age. A solid if backwards young La Mission. Enjoy 2016-2028. 92-94 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Larrivet-Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 66% cabernet sauvignon and 34% merlot, grapes were harvested between September 12th and 26th. 48% of the harvest was selected for the grand vin. Larrivet-Haut-Brion uses soil surveys to enable better management of individual plots that are spread out over 70+ hectares. The estate also uses optical sorters that are increasingly common in Bordeaux. A dark inky red, this has aromas of ripe sweet red fruits and tangy black cherry, leading to flavors of red cherry and cassis. Soft and pure on entry, this also has some of that signature crunchy Graves gravel flavor. There is a lot going on here and it needs time to come together. Tasted twice. Enjoy 2017-2025. 90-92 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Latour-Martillac (Pessac-Leognan) - 43% merlot, 7% petite verdot, and 50% cabernet sauvignon. The merlot was harvested on September 8th and 9th, the petite verdot on September 20th, and the cabernet from September 21-28. Aged for 18 months in 30% new oak. Latour-Martillac occupies 45 hectares of an elevated rise of gravelly soil. An inky, bright red, this one of the darkest Pessacs of the vintage. Blue fruits abound on the nose, leading to flavors of carob and blackberry liqueur. Very ripe and soft on entry, this is round and balanced. Finishes with some tannins that should soften as this develops, resulting in a pleasant wine. Tasted twice. Enjoy 2018-2024. 90-92 points – Cory Gowan



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pessac-Leognan & Graves

2011 Le Clarence de Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 71.5% merlot, 4.5% cabernet franc, 22.8% cabernet sauvignon, and 1.2% petite verdot. Chateau Haut Brion's second wine is an opaque reddish purple, with lots of smoky aromas, plus cassis, blue fruits, and plum. The very soft entry, a hallmark of the 2011s from Pessac-Leognan is balanced, pure, and clean. Fragrant with loads of red fruit flavor, this expands to fill the palate before tightening up on the finish. This has good concentration, yet is very taut at this young stage. Drink 2017-2027. 90-92 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Le Thil Comte Clary (Pessac-Leognan) - 80% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon. This will age for 12 months in a mix of 20% new, 40% once-used, and 40% twice-used oak barrels. The 8.52-hectare vineyard is situated between Carbonnieux and Smith-Haut-Lafitte. Vine density is 6,700 vines/ha. The high percentage of merlot reflects the soil type, superficial gravel atop a rich mix of clay and limestone. Mechanically tilled, planted with cover-crops, de-budded, de-suckered, de-leafed, crop-thinned, and hand-harvested from September 16th to 28th. A deep and bright ruby red, this has a lifted, floral nose. Sweet and perfumed on the palate, with aromas of black cherry, cassis, tar, and touch of licorice. Soft on the entry, this has a smooth texture and flows well on the palate. The tannins at this young stage show their strength, but this is another strong vintage for Le Thil. Stephane Derenoncourt and Simon Blanchard consult. Tasted twice. Drink 2014-2020. 88-90 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Les Carmes Haut-Brion (Pessac-Leognan) - 55% merlot, 30% cabernet franc, and 15% cabernet sauvignon from a 4.7-hectare vineyard with an average vine age of 35 years. Malolactic took place in barrel. Aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% once-used barrels. Harvesting took place from September 13-21. Fermentation was conducted in stainless steel tanks with a 24-day cuvaision. A deep dense red, this has a luminous quality. Aromas of sweet black cherry, cassis, and plentiful minerals waft from the glass. Mineral flavors continue onto the palate, joined by flavors of gravel and concentrated black cherry. This is nicely balanced and shows good intensity, but turns tarry at the end and needs time to soften. For years this well-situated vineyard underperformed, but that is changing since Patrice Pichet's purchase of Les Carmes in December 2010. Mr. Pichet, a passionate wine lover, paid the highest price ever for a vineyard in Bordeaux! He has entrusted responsibility for vineyard management to Thierry Rustmann, formerly of Senejac and Talbot. Thierry, in turn, has enlisted Stephane Derenoncourt as consultant. Plans call for investing in new cellars and converting the vineyards to organic, if not, biodynamic, farming techniques. Tasted three times. Enjoy 2018-2030. 91-93 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Lespault-Martillac (Pessac-Leognan) - 70% merlot, 30% cabernet sauvignon. This has a powerful and attractive nose with aromas of chocolate, carob, dried leaves, and cinnamon. Smooth, ripe, and creamy on the palate, with cool blue fruit flavors and terrific balance. This has nice complexity, with vanilla flavors emerging towards the finish. I was surprised by how good this was, very well done in this vintage. Tasted twice. Enjoy 2015-2022. Managed by Olivier Bernard of Domaine de Chevalier. 88-90 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Liber-Pater (Pessac-Leognan) - 70% cabernet sauvignon and 30% merlot. Vines have an average age of 40 years. All vines are propagated from the property's own pre-phyllloxera, ungrafted rootstock planted in a mineral-rich soil of ancient gravel. The vineyard is organically farmed with all plowing done with horses. The merlot was harvested on October 2nd and cabernet on October 7th. Fermentation took place exclusively in 100% new French oak barrels, and there are only between 900 and 1,200 bottles. The 2011 is a deep cranberry ruby red. Very bright, lifted, and lively, with deep purple fruit aromas, blue flowers, and hints of fresh bread and baked dessert. The palate is packed and stacked with sweet red and blue fruit. Full-bodied, with very deep, intense flavors. Dense and long on the finish. Tannic and tarry at this young stage, with loads of structure and concentration in reserve. Enjoy 2018-2025. 94-96 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Malartic-Lagraviere (Pessac-Leognan) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 37% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, and 3% petit verdot. This wine comes from a 46-hectare section on a precipitous slope planted to a high 10,000 vines/ha, with an average vine age of 25 years. The soils are deep gravel atop clay and limestone subsoil. No chemical herbicides or insecticides are used, both plowing and de-leafing is done manually. Yields were just 32 hl/ha. The merlot was harvested between September 13-23, the petit verdot on September 21st; and the cabernet sauvignon and franc between September 21-27. Malolactic was conducted in barrel, with aging in a mix of 65% new and 35% once used barrels. A deep, dark ruby red, this has a restrained nose at this early stage that reveals deeply layered aromas of blackberry, black cherry, and dry stone. Soft and dense on the palate with intense flavors of blackberry jam and cassis, this is tight, layered, and complex. A complete wine, this has a long, tannic finish but should drink nicely through 2030. Very well done in this vintage. Michel Rolland and Athanase Fakorellis consult. Tasted three times. 90-92 points — Cory Gowan



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Pessac-Leognan & Graves

2011 Mejean (Graves) - 76% merlot and 24% cabernet sauvignon. 13% alcohol. Will age for 12 months in a mix of 23% new, 22% once-used, and 18% twice-used barrels. The merlot was hand-harvested on Sept. 15th and 16th, while the cabernet was picked on September 26th. Yields were 36.3 hl/ha and the wine achieved 13% alcohol. This 6.62-hectare vineyard is planted in gravel. Viticultural practices are sustainable with mechanical tilling and cover-cropping. After a five-day cold soak, fermentation took place in stainless steel tanks and included a 28-day maceration. The 2011 is a deep, shiny red with a purple tinged rim. Expressive of its terroir, the nose is lifted and aromatic with aromas of damp earth, blue fruit, and plum. Sweet and soft on entry, with dense black cherry flavors and a pristine core. Taut and layered, this shows some complexity with a pleasant finish. Serge Charritte consults. Enjoy upon release through 2020. 85-87 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Olivier (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 48% merlot, and 2% petite verdot planted on 58 hectares. Aged for 12 months in 35% new oak. Fruit is hand-picked and undergoes a double hand sorting process. This wine doesn't match the breakthrough 2010 vintage, but did very well. A bright, inky red with aromas of wood smoke and sour black cherry, it is very floral and perfumed, but also a little leafy. Soft on entry, it shows purity of flavor, but is a bit hollow on the midpalate. Finishes oaky, with loads of tannic grip. After heavy investment in the property by the owners, Chateau Olivier is starting to make some very reliable wines. Enjoy 2017-2022. 87-89 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Pape-Clement (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% cabernet sauvignon and 50% merlot. From a 43-hectare portion of this historic, 700-year old domaine planted at a high density of 7,700 vines/ha. The complex soils are a mix of different geological gravel formations, and yields are just 26 hl/ha. The wine was run off by gravity into 100% new French oak barrels from eight different coopers, for malolactic and six months of aging sur lies. This will be aged in barrel for roughly 18 months. Harvest ran from September 13th to October 6th. The fruit is hand-harvested and destemmed by hand on sorting tables manned by 200 people. The whole berries are then moved by hand to small oak fermenters. A deep shiny red, this is an ultra-concentrated wine and for me, the top Pessac of the vintage. The intense aromas of clay, violet, lilac, red flowers, cassis, blackberry, tar, and licorice immediately place this on another level. At this very young stage, it's incredibly tannic but ample minerality and fruit contribute to this long finish. Very powerful and doesn't quit. Michel Rolland consults. Tasted three times. Drink 2019-2035. 94-96 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Picque Caillou (Pessac-Leognan) - Planted to 50% merlot and 50% cabernet sauvignon on 21 hectares. Aged for 12 months in 35% new oak barrels. Located in the urban area of Pessac, on the outskirts of Bordeaux and just north of Chateau Pape-Clement, Picque Caillou makes wine from stony gravelly soils. I really loved the 2010 vintage and had high hopes for the 2011. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite deliver. A brilliant, translucent red color. Very soft and pure on entry, this has bright, crunchy red fruit flavors. Still very taut at this stage, this comes across as a bit austere. The very tannic finish, combined with the high acidity left me missing the velvety fruit from the previous vintage. Drink 2018-2022. 85-87 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Rahoul (Graves) - 79% merlot, 19% cabernet sauvignon, and 2% petite verdot. Aged for 12-15 months in 20-30% new oak. The merlot was harvested from September 14-23, with the cabernet and petite verdot from September 29th through October 3rd. Medium pale translucent red. This has red floral aromas combined with sour black cherry, but is a bit lean on the nose. The palate is another story, with surprising richness and pure, ripe fruit, showing distinct layers, each evocative of the three varieties that comprise the blend. Chocolate and red fruit flavors yield to a tarry finish with massive tannins. Owned by Alien Theinot who came to Bordeaux from Champagne, the winery was revamped with state-of-the-art equipment in 2007. 100,000 bottles were made. Tasted twice. Drink 2017-2023. 85-87 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Smith-Haut-Lafitte (Pessac-Leognan) - 59% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, and 1% petit verdot from 67 hectares. This is aged for 18 months in 60% new barrels. Known as the "quintessential Graves" wine, Smith-Haut-Lafitte comes from one block of gravel soil and has been owned by the Cathiard family since 1990. They use horse-drawn ploughs, maintain their own cooperage, and use compost and plant extracts to treat the vineyards with organic methods. The color is a shiny translucent red. Perfumed aromas are dominated with mineral aromas. Soft on entry, with a lovely salinity, flavors of spice show up on the mid-palate, ending in a tarry finish. Medium body with good texture. Tasted four times. Enjoy 2017-2030. 92-94 points — Cory Gowan



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—St. Estephe

The most important factor affecting the 2011 harvest in St. Estephe was the storm that barreled through the district at the beginning of September. Severe weather brought a swath of hail, which devastated a few vineyards just as their grapes approached maturity. Cos d'Estournel was hit particularly hard and selected only 30% of their fruit for the grand vin. The hail storm affected a few other wineries, yet the strong showings from Calon Segur and Montrose showed that the storms played favorites to some, as they victimized others. A thorough understanding of how the storm impacted the commune is essential when selecting your favorites from St. Estephe.

2011 Andron Blanquet (St. Estephe) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. The average age of the vines in this 14-hectare vineyard is 35 years, planted on a gravelly marl and limestone plateau. Aged for 12 to 16 months in 25% to 30% new barrels. Nearly opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Pervasive notes of primary black fruits and with some backwards soil and pavement aromas. Pretty and concentrated black cherry flavor with medium plus concentration on the midpalate, finishing with a small tannic grip. Enjoy from 2015 to 2023. 88-90 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Calon Segur (St. Estephe) - 78% cabernet sauvignon, 20% merlot, and 2% petit verdot. 13.3% alcohol. Located northwest of the village of St Estephe, Calon Segur represents 50% of all production from a total producing area of 29 hectares. Average vine age is 37 years, planted in brown clay, gravel, and sand. Brilliant intense ruby core with a small magenta rim. A bouquet of spring flowers with warm blackberry compote progresses to aromas of pain grille and charcoal. Ripe black cherry and cassis present a sweet, rich, and explosive entry, flavors linger along with comforting tannins that build to a very approachable, balanced, and long finish. Enjoy from 2018-2030. Tasted twice. 94-96 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Clauzet (St. Estephe) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot; 5% cabernet franc. From 28-hectares, average vine age is 35 years, planted in gravel, clay and limestone soils. Aged 12 to 16 months in 50% new barrels. Dark purple core with a fuchsia rim. Perfumed cherry blossom and cassis aromas with underlying notes of tobacco leaf and loam soil. Black fruits feature on the lovely entry, with medium concentration building while a low level of grippy tannins resolve on the finish. Enjoy 2015 to 2025. 87-89 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Cos d'Estournel (St. Estephe) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot and 5% cabernet franc. Located on 70 hectares on gravel slopes and limestone bedrock. The earliest harvest since 1893, picking began on September 5 and ended on the 16th. Only 30% of the total production made it into the grand vin, resulting in the smallest case production on two decades. Concentrated, opaque color at core and rim. The moderately intense bouquet is

dominated by earth and mineral aromas and rounded out with vibrant blackberry and kirsch flavors. A beautiful seasoning of dried herbs, licorice, and tapenade flavors add layers of complexity with a hint of graphite and lead pencil forming the foundation of the palate. Showing some good vibrancy, the palate is medium bodied with fruit that maintains freshness and liveliness thanks to the balanced acidity. Spicy tannins are full but linear on the finish. Give this one five years in bottle and enjoy through 2030. 93-95 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Cos Labory (St. Estephe) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, with 12.9% alcohol. From an 18-hectare vineyard with an average vine age of 35 years. Yields are 45 hl/ha. The wine spends 16 months in 45% new oak, followed by 12 months in one year old barrels. Opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Perfumed cherry blossom and minerals on the nose lead to black cherry and cassis flavors with a backwards almost liquid minerality, earthy tar, creosote, and pain grille on the weighty palate. Medium to full-bodied, with broad tannins nicely balancing the fruit. Enjoy from 2015 to 2025 Tasted twice. 89-91 points — Andy Frieden

2011 de Pez (St. Estephe) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 46% merlot, 4% petit verdot. 12.9% alcohol. From an 18-hectare vineyard, vines have an average age of 35 years and yield 43 hl/ha. Perfumed spring flowers and violet match pervasive blackberry aromas, with underlying tar, creosote and mocha. The nice round entry of cassis, blackberry, and other black fruits expands to a softly textured, weighty mid-palate. Tannins are broad shouldered and powdery and match the intensity and power of the ripe fruit and acidity. Tasted twice. 88-90 points — Andy Frieden



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—St. Estephe

2011 Haut Beausejour (St. Estephe) - Planted to 60% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon. This property was recently acquired by Champagne house Louis Roederer, with Sylvie Cazes of Lynch-Bages family fame as manager. Aged in 30% new oak casks. Dark mahogany core with a fuchsia rim. Primary perfume of sweet blackberry and plum, with compelling tertiary notes of baking spice, tea berry, and fresh earth. With bright fresh blackberry flavor on entry, the medium to full-bodied wine shows nice weight and builds with expressive of wild bramble terroir, adding complex limestone minerality and tarry components to the polished tannins. A sleeper. Enjoy upon release through 2022. 89-91 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Haut Marbuzet (St. Estephe) - 50% cabernet sauvignon; 40% merlot; 10% cabernet franc. The average age of the vines in this 61-hectare vineyard is 30 years. Yields were 47 hl/ha. Aged in 100% new oak for 18 months. The color is an opaque purple. Pretty and perfumed nose of cherry blossom, violet, and pain grille leading to a well proportioned wine with big black cherry and black berry flavors. Tannins coat the mouth, but the wine maintains balance. A good value. Enjoy from 2015 to 2025. 88-90 points – Andy Frieden

2011 La Dame de Montrose (St. Estephe) - 72% merlot, 28% cabernet sauvignon. Very primary fruit on the nose, with blackberry and black cherry, a hint of brioche and a touch of loamy earth. The bright acidity highlights the fruit on the palate, with moderate tannic structure carrying through to a drying finish. Notes of minerality provide highlights on the palate, accentuating the fruit and providing a sense of overall complexity. An excellent second wine to Montrose, this should be drinkable within 4-5 years with best drinking between 2017-2022. 87-89 points – Alex Shaw

2011 Lafon Rochet (St. Estephe) - 64% cabernet sauvignon, 33% merlot, and 3% petite verdot, with 13.5% alcohol. Aged in 50% new oak. Yields were 30 hl/ha from vines with an average age of 31 years. Inky purple color, with an opaque core and a fuchsia rim. Bouquet of black fruit, with aromas of cherry blossom and violet, earthy minerals and pain grille. Black fruit flavors expand on the mid-palate of this medium-bodied wine with nicely integrated tannins adding structural balance. Enjoy from 2015 to 2025. 89-91 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Les Ormes de Pez (St. Estephe) - 50% cabernet sauvignon, 41% merlot, 7% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. Aged in 45% new oak. Yields of 47 hl/ha from 38 year-old vines. Inky purple with an opaque core. A perfumed bouquet of blackberry fruit, with tarry phenolics of pavement and fresh earth. Medium-

bodied, with nice fruit tension, dark blackberry and blueberry flavors and broad shouldered tannins. Enjoy from 2016 to 2025. 87-89 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Les Pagodes de Cos (St. Estephe) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 33% merlot, and 2% petit verdot. Cos d'Estournel's second wine is a vineyard selection from vines under 20 years of age. Fresh, delicate notes of strawberry lead the bouquet, with mineral nuances. More fresh, natural strawberry on the palate with red currant notes and an underlying mineral grip. A Burgundian styled Left Bank Bordeaux that will provide elegant drinking over the next 3-10 years. 90-92 points – Devon Magee

2011 Lilian Ladouys (St. Estephe) - 70% merlot and 30% cabernet sauvignon. From a 43-hectare vineyard planted on sand, clay, and limestone with an average vine age of 35 years. Aged for 14-16 months in 35% new barrels. Opaque purple core and with a fuchsia rim. Persistent cherry blossom and cassis perfume with an underlay of fresh earth and loamy soil. Concentrated black plum and blackberry flavor show good power and intensity on the midpalate, leading to a lengthy finish with ripe, fine-grained tannins. Definitely another candidate for sleeper of the vintage from St. Estephe and the entire Left Bank. Drink upon release to 2025. 90-92 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Marquis de Calon (St. Estephe) - 80% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon. 13.5% alcohol. From Calon Segur. Represents 30% of all production from the best lots of merlot vines. Brilliant and intense mahogany color with a thin magenta rim. Primary perfume of plum, black cherry, and black berry leads to fresh earth and pain grille. Sweet black fruit on entry builds to a weighty mid-palate with very ripe almost plush tannins contributing rich texture. Great value here. Enjoy upon release to 2022. 91-93 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Meyney (St. Estephe) - 77% cabernet sauvignon, 10% merlot, 10% petit verdot, and 3% cabernet franc. 12.7% alcohol. Planted on 51-hectares of sand, clay and limestone, with an average vine age of 35 to 40 years. Aged for 14-16 months in 40% new barrels. Nearly opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Bouquet of perfumed cherry blossom and cassis eclipsed by limestone minerality. Primary black plum, black cherry, and blackberry flavors on the palate. Sharp tannins on the finish. Denis Dubourdieu consults. Enjoy from 2016 to 2023. 87-89 points – Andy Frieden



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—St. Estephe

2011 Montrose (St Estephe) - 63% cabernet sauvignon, 22% merlot, 12% cabernet franc and 3% petit verdot. Over 95 hectares of vineyards are located in the southeast corner of St. Estephe, on deep swathes of gravel, as well as some clay and alluvial sand. The vines enjoy an earlier harvest due to its close proximity to the Gironde, as well as its' southerly aspect. Dark purple color at the core with a slight pink hue towards the rim. Rich aromas of dark chocolate, quince, plum, cassis and dark raspberry, with kirsch liqueur and crushed stones working themselves into the fold. On the palate, this is one of the most balanced wines of the vintage. Acidity is high, but structured and fine grained tannins support throughout. Lingering flavors of black tea, tobacco leaf and blueberry offers a lovely profile on the finish. One of the top wines of the Left Bank! This is a long lived wine that will benefit from 5-8 years in the cellar and enjoyed for two decades. 94-96 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Petit Bocq (St. Estephe) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, and 5% cabernet franc. Harvested from 39-year-old vines, the yields were 40 hl/ha for merlot with an average 50hl/ha for the remaining varieties. Aged for 12-14 months in 40 to 50% new oak. Inky purple with an opaque core. Pen ink and black and blue fruit aromas dominate the nose, with tertiary notes of tar and crushed earth offering complexity. *Very sauvage*, with animal flavors on the palate. Enjoy from 2014 to 2021. 85-87 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Phelan Segur (St. Estephe) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 45% merlot. From a 70-hectare vineyard, comprised of gravel and clay soils. Average vine age is 35 years, with yields of 45 hl/ha. Aged for 16-18 months in 50% new oak barrels. Opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Blackberry aromas dominate the nose, along with an undercurrent of spring flowers, pain grille, and tar. Black cherry and cassis flavors on entry mirror the bouquet, building to a weighty mid-palate dominated by sharp tannins that are somewhat out of balance with the fruit. Tasted twice. Enjoy from 2015 to 2023. 86-88 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Serilhan (St. Estephe) - 57% cabernet sauvignon, 35% merlot, and 8% cabernet franc. The vines on this 14-hectare vineyard, planted on gravel with clay and limestone subsoil, are an average 35-years old. Aged for 16 months in 33% new barrels. Dark, nearly opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Medium intense cherry and violet aromas on the pretty nose. Black fruits also dominate the palate entry, expanding slightly in the mid-palate. That is somewhat disjointed due to the heavy, drying tannins on the finish. Enjoy from 2016-2024. 87-89 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Tronquoy Lalande (St. Estephe) - 47% cabernet sauvignon, 42% merlot, and 11% petit verdot. This 42-acre St. Estephe property, planted over gravel topsoil and clay, is run by the highly capable Montrose team. Shy nose with raspberry and Chambord notes dominating the palate. A saline note runs through the fresh acidity, adding lift and lightness to the wine. The soft, fleshy merlot is a great expression of the grape in the Left Bank clay soils. Will be approachable young and mouthwatering over the next 3-5 years. 89-91 points — Devon Magee

2011 Tronquoy Sainte-Anne (St. Estephe) - 61% merlot, 39% cabernet franc. The second wine of Tronquoy Lalande, crafted by the Montrose team. Showy and fruit forward right out of the gate with red and black fruit and violet floral notes up front. All about the juicy primary fruit flavors, and is an excellent candidate to enjoy immediately. 87-89 points — Devon Magee



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—St. Julien

St. Julien has performed particularly well in the past two years, fashioning wines of intensity, balance and complexity. 2011 sees this appellation take a small step back as the quality levels drop down a notch. Wineries like Ducru-Beaucaillou continued their streak of making exceptional wines. But the broad swath of wineries that excelled over the last two vintages did not reach those same levels in 2011. A tough year for sure but if prices are adjusted, St. Julien will still offer some good values.

2011 Beychevelle (St. Julien) - 47% cabernet sauvignon, 47% merlot, 4% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. The 250 hectare estate is planted in deep gravel with an average vine age of 25 years. Aged 18 months in 50% new oak. Notes of blackberry and Santa Rosa plum dominate the nose, which also shows aromas of eucalyptus, clove, mocha and vanilla. Medium-bodied on the palate, the tannins are broad and mouth-filling. There is a high level of acidity present, but also enough fruit to balance it and allow for a long, lingering finish. Give it 5-8 years to come together and enjoy through 2030. Tasted twice. 90-92 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Branaire Ducru (St. Julien) - 70% cabernet sauvignon, 22% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, and 3% petit verdot. Located over 50 hectares, in the southeastern most part of the St. Julien appellation, close to Beychevelle, on alluvial gravel soil. Average vine age is almost 40 years. Black cherry, currant, and cassis aromas are supported by notes of forest floor, saffron and damp earth. Big and broad on the palate, the wine shows ample muscle, with a high level of acidity matched by firm tannins and dark fruit. Despite the weight, there is still a level of elegance present. Give it 5-8 more years in bottle and enjoy through 2030. 91-93 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Clos du Marquis (St. Julien) - 65% cabernet sauvignon, 22% merlot, and 13% cabernet franc. Aged in 40% new oak barrels. Sweet notes of cooked strawberry, blackberry, and cassis balance nicely on the nose with aromas of violets and a hint of toasty oak. The tannins are big but not overpowering, balanced nicely on the palate by red and dark fruit. With vibrant acidity providing lift, this should have a long life ahead of it. Enjoy 2016-2026. 90-92 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Connetable de Talbot (St. Julien) - Planted to 66% cabernet sauvignon, 26% merlot, 5% petit verdot and 3% cabernet franc. The second wine of Chateau Talbot is generally about half the production. Notes of blackberry, blueberry and Bing cherry mix with earth and eucalyptus on a rather primary nose. A lighter style but juicy enough to please. Enjoy on release and over following 8-10 years. 86-88 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Croix de Beaucaillou (Saint Julien) - 73% cabernet sauvignon, 20% merlot, 7% petit verdot. The second wine of Ducru-Beaucaillou. Inky beet-like and nearly opaque purple with a vibrant fuchsia rim. Bouquet of gorgeous perfumed spring flowers and cool blue fruits, with hints of mocha, baking chocolate, and crushed minerals. Big fruit on the entry, with blackberry and blueberry building in power and intensity along with a weighty lushness. The acidity and tannins need a couple of years to resolve. An elegant wine for the near term, enjoy upon release and over the following 10 years. 89-91 points — Andy Frieden

2011 du Glana (St. Julien) - Cassis, wild blackberry, and plum notes are supported by aromas of eucalyptus, clove, and a touch of tobacco. A medium-bodied wine, the acidity bursts across the palate, but without enough fruit and structure to support, the wine falls off quickly. Enjoy on release and over the following 6-8 years. 87-89 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Ducru Beaucaillou (St. Julien) - 85% cabernet sauvignon and 15% merlot. Located over 75 hectares, between Beychevelle to the north and Latour to the south. Vines are planted in gravel and "cailloux", the large pebbles that gave the estate its name. Aged in 95% new oak for up to 18 months. 2011 saw Ducru Beaucaillou's lowest yields in 25 years, due much in part to extensive green harvesting. Nearly opaque at the core with a beautiful bright ruby/violet rim. Aromas of black cherry, baking chocolate, and boysenberry emerge from the glass. Shows excellent concentration and balance throughout. The palate is filled with lush black fruit, coffee, and more chocolate. Defined by richness and silkiness, the tannins fall right into place. Beautiful effort with a sublime finish. One of the top wines of the Left bank. Enjoy 2017-2030. 95-97 points — Alex Lallo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—St. Julien

2011 Gloria (St. Julien) - 69% cabernet sauvignon, 22% merlot, 5% petit verdot, and 4% cabernet franc. 48-hectare estate. Aged 18 months in 40% new oak barrels. Dark purple, almost blue fruit on the nose are complemented by aromas of cigar box, bitersweet chocolate and a touch of oak. More elegant than powerful, the tannins are fine and almost silky, while staying in balance with the fruit on the nose. Vibrant acidity keeps the wine bright through the finish. Give this 5-8 years to come together and enjoy through 2025. 89-91 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Gruaud Larose (St. Julien) - 61% cabernet sauvignon, 29% merlot, 7% cabernet franc, and 3% petit verdot. Aged in one-third new oak barrels. Dark fruit notes of blackberry and marion berry burst from the glass, supported by aromas of dark chocolate, tobacco, and a touch of cedar. With a broad and weighty mouthfeel, the wine coats the mid-palate while vibrant acidity provides nice, balanced lift to the tannic structure. The excellent texture carries through the lingering finish. One of the more full-bodied wines from St. Julien in 2011, this will need 8-10 years to really come into balance, and should be beautiful to drink through 2030. 92-94 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Lagrange (St. Julien) - 67% cabernet sauvignon, 26% merlot, and 7% petit verdot. Aged in 60% new oak. Black cherry, cassis, and plum highlight a complex, vibrant nose that also reveals aromas of cigar box, cedar, saffron, and a hint of forest floor. The tannins are big and broad, but with the vintage's hallmark acidity present, they support the fruit and carry it through to a balanced finish. The upgrades at Lagrange continue to pay dividends, and even in this somewhat difficult vintage, Lagrange has managed to fashion an elegant St. Julien, keeping the chateau on the upward trajectory we've seen over the past several vintages. Expect this to come into full balance in 5-7 years, and should drink well through 2025. 88-90 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Langoa Barton (St. Julien) - 70% cabernet sauvignon, 10% cabernet franc, and 20% merlot. Bright cherry and strawberry highlight a sweet, elegant nose more in the vein of a Margaux style. The red and black fruit on the palate is supported by broad tannins, and with its bright, slightly tart acid, the wine finishes extremely dry. 6-8 years should mellow this out and bring all the elements into balance. Enjoy through 2025. 89-91 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Le Petit Lion (St. Julien) - Assemblage varies, typically cabernet sauvignon and merlot. Second wine of Leoville Las Cases. Earth, cigar box, and dark chocolate highlight a nose that also shows aromas of blackberry and black cherry. Another somewhat tart 2011, except the fruit gets somewhat lost on the palate

without the tannic structure to balance. Try in 3-5 years and drink through 2022. 87-89 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Leoville Las Cases (St. Julien) - 76% cabernet sauvignon, 12% merlot, and 12% cabernet franc. Located at the northernmost tip of St. Julien, abutting the Gironde, and just south of Chateau Latour, vineyards are about 30 years in age. Aged in 80% new oak. Elegant and complex on the nose, the dark fruit notes of blackberry, black cherry, and cassis are supported by subtle aromas of mint, forest floor, and bitter chocolate. Broad, layered, and complex on the palate, the wine shows beautiful length and elegance thanks to supple tannins and acidity that does not overpower the fruit. Wait 6-10 years to start enjoying this wine, and continue through 2030. 93-95 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Leoville Poyferre (St. Julien) - 58% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 6% petit verdot, and 6% cabernet franc. Aromas of dark plum and black cherry mix with notes of cola, dark chocolate, and damp earth. Filled with big, firm, grippy tannins, the vintage's high acidity is notable but not overwhelming. With good length, the wine lingers and shows excellent promise. Give this 6-8 years, and enjoy through 2030+. Michel Rolland consults. Tasted twice. 92-94 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Leoville-Barton (St. Julien) - 80% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot, 5% cabernet franc. 47 hectares of vineyards lie close to the Gironde, sandwiched between the water and Chateau Talbot, with gravelly soils over deep clay. Notes of cassis and marion berry mix with more subtle aromas of clove, eucalyptus, saffron and a hint of tobacco. A dark, powerful wine, with broad, prominent tannins that carry the dark fruit through a long, dry finish. Ample acidity provides lift to the wine, and should make for a long-lived 2011 from this estate. Give it 5-8 years to come into balance, and enjoy through 2030. 91-93 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Les Fiefs de Lagrange (St. Julien) - Notes of Bing cherry and crushed blackberry burst from the glass, with just a touch of bitersweet chocolate rounding out the nose. Very primary. Elegant and rather straightforward, lacking some of the complexity found in past vintages. Enjoy on release and over the following 6-8 years. 86-88 points — Alex Shaw



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—St. Julien

2011 Saint Pierre (St. Julien) - 81% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot, 4% cabernet franc. Aged in 40-60% new oak. Located on 17 hectares, just outside the town of Beychevelle, near the boundary of the St. Julien appellation, and surrounded by Beychevelle, Branaire-Ducru and Gruaud-Larose. Dark and complex on the nose, aromas of blackberry and cassis mix with notes of wild mushrooms, damp earth, cigar box, and cola. Beautifully textured on the palate, the tannins are fine and already well-integrated, providing structure and length to the wine. The acidity remains in balance and compliments rather than overpowers the fruit, yielding an overall impression of elegance and complexity. Give this wine 5-7 years in the bottle, and drink through 2030. One of the top wines of the appellation. 93-95 points — Alex Shaw

2011 Talbot (St. Julien) - 59% cabernet sauvignon, 38% merlot, 3% petit verdot. Aged in 50% new oak. Notes of black cherry and cooked strawberry mix with aromas of forest floor, herbs-de-Provence, and cinnamon on the nose. Elegant and approachable on the palate, the wine lacks some weight, and with a high level of acidity the finish is short. Time may bring the overall package into balance, but without the structure, this feels too light overall. Enjoy 2015-2025. 89-91 points — Alex Shaw



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Medoc, Haut-Medoc, Listrac & Moulis

A traditional source of great values in the world of wine, the cool fall temperatures and September rains did little to help the cabernet components achieve full ripeness. The result is a number of understated wines with fresh aromas and medium weight. But be wary as shrill acidity, austere tannins and crunchy fruit profiles will be the order of the day. Wineries that reduced their yields did make some attractive wines. As this category typically fetches lower prices than the grands crus classés, we aren't expecting a drastic price reduction with the 2011s. However they will remain a great source of go-to cabernet-based reds for drinking over the next 3-5 years.

2011 Bel-Air (Haut-Medoc) - Planted to 70% merlot, 15% cabernet sauvignon and 15% cabernet franc. Fresh, red fruit on the nose coupled with floral accents of spice and pleasant perfume. Good acidity with medium tannins. Though a bit disjointed today, give this one a couple of years after release and enjoy over the following 6-8 years. 86-88 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Belle-Vue (Haut-Medoc) - 46% cabernet sauvignon, 31% merlot, and 23% petit verdot. 15 hectare vineyard planted in deep, gravelly soils. Hand harvested between September 10 and October 1. Aging will be 12-16 months in 40% new oak and 60% one year old barrels. Succulent dark fruit fills the nose. The palate follows, with notes of prune, cocoa, dark chocolate, coffee, and tobacco. A bit tight right now, so approach in 2015 and enjoy over the following 5-6 years. 7,800 cases produced. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Cambon la Pelouse (Haut-Medoc) - 55% merlot, 42% cabernet sauvignon, and 3% petite verdot. This 35 hectare estate on gravelly soils is located in Macau between Cantemerle and Giscours. Vines average 36 years in age. Fruit was harvested between September 13 and 30. Ripe cherry dominates the nose, along with fresh floral accents which carry onto the palate, revealing some nice acidity and lingering tannins. This will drink nicely shortly after release and over the following 6-8 years. Claude Gros consults. 85-87 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Camensac (Haut-Medoc) - Planted to 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. Earth, cherry, and generous alcohol are evident on the bouquet and palate. Mouthwatering acidity and firm tannins rouse the senses without being overwhelming. Enjoy upon release and over the following 7-10 years. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Cantemerle (Haut-Medoc) - Planted to 50% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, 5% petit verdot, 5% cabernet franc. Red fruit characterizes both the bouquet and palate. Both acid and tannins seem to come in powerful waves. Give this a few years to come together knowing it has a 10-15 year drinking window. 91-93 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Charmail (Haut-Medoc) - 50% merlot, 33% cabernet sauvignon, 15% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. 22 hectare vineyard, planted to clay and gravelly soils, overlooks the Gironde river estuary. Hand harvested between September 14 and 28. 13.5% alcohol and yields of 45 hl/ha. A balanced wine that shows glimmers of potential. Dark color translates into sweet dark, almost overripe fruit. A bit of tangy acidity mingles with earth tones and firm tannins on the finish. Enjoy over the next decade. 8,700 cases produced. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Citran (Listrac) - 47.5% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. Ruby color. On the nose, herbaceous notes of eucalyptus waft from the glass, while earth notes linger in the background. The palate is a bit lighter than the nose suggests, though plum, cherry, and mocha flavors still dominate. Will drink well over the next 7-10 years. 86-88 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Chasse Spleen (Moulis) - 47.5% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. The soils here are 80% gravel on chalk and 20% chalk and clay. Black pepper and rose petal aromas leap from the glass. Mouthwatering acidity on the palate leads into flavors of black cherry and plum, and a nice, long finish. Approachable a couple of years after release and over the following 7-10 years. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Clos du Jaugueyron (Haut-Medoc) - Planted to 53% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, and 7% petit verdot. Dark in color, its strong, earthy nose carries over onto a slightly tight palate. Dark fruit is present, but not particularly sweet, while firm tannins round out the finish. Fairly solid, it may take time for this wine's finesse and elegance to come through. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 86-88 points — Roland Hankerson



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Medoc, Haut-Medoc, Listrac & Moulis

2011 Clos Manou (Medoc) - 75% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot, 7% cabernet franc, and 3% petit verdot. A 16.8 hectare vineyard located in Saint Christoly in the northern Medoc. Planted at 10,000 vines/ha with an average age of 40 years. Harvest took place between September 20 and October 5. The alcohol level is 14.2%. Dark purplish-blue hue matches the dark ripe fruit on the bouquet. The palate reveals an essence of dark fruits, with plum, black cherry, and hints of cassis, all in harmony with lively acid and medium tannins. Approaching drinkability in the next 5 years, then great for the following decade. 2,500 cases produced. 90-92 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 d'Aurillac (Haut-Medoc) - 57% cabernet sauvignon, 20% cabernet franc, 21% merlot, and 2% petit verdot. Ruby red color, with an alluring bouquet of strawberry and cherry. The palate is pleasant, but not as full as the bouquet might suggest. A slightly tangy note overrides the fruit's initial sweetness. Solid tannin and acid are present but this needs more time to fully integrate all the elements. Enjoy from 2015-2020. 86-88 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 de Gironville (Haut-Medoc) - 45% merlot, 45% cabernet sauvignon, and 10% petit verdot. A small 5 hectare vineyard in the southern portion of the Haut Medoc planted in deep gravelly soil. Average age of the vines is 26 years and the yields in 2011 were 53 hl/ha. Its dark hue leads into aromatic blueberry and plum notes on the nose. While a bit tangy on the palate, plum and prune flavors provide balance, as do firm tannins. Leave this alone for a couple of years to allow more time to develop and then enjoy from 2015-2022. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Goulée (Medoc) -70% cabernet sauvignon and 30% merlot. The bouquet is soft, with restrained aromas of lavender and cherry. The palate is a bit livelier in weight, body, and character. Dark fruit prevails, although ample red fruit provides some tonal range. Enjoy over the next 5-10 years. From the owners of Chateau Cos d'Estournel. 89-91 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Haut Condissas (Medoc) - 60% merlot, 20% petit verdot, and 10% each cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon. Layered aromas of coffee, leather, cassis, cherry, blackberry, and earthy mushroom provide a sumptuous bouquet. The tannins and acid are nicely balanced. Medium-bodied, this is a sleeper and should drink well for the next 5-10 years. 89-91 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 La Char (Medoc) - 45% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon, and 15% cabernet franc. Dark in color with hints of strawberry and mocha on the nose. Good palate structure and nice, firm tannins. Enjoyable and approachable now through the next 7-10

years. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 La Lagune (Haut-Medoc) - 60% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, and 10% petit verdot, on 80 hectares of sandy-gravelly soil. Aged for 18 months in 55% new French oak. Dense purple hue, the nose is well integrated, with coffee and dark fruit aromas. The palate seems more rustic and chewy than that of recent vintages. Will remain tight for a few years, but the ample acidity and tannin should help it improve for an additional 10-15 years. Denis Dubourdieu consults. 88-90 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 La Tour Carnet (Haut-Medoc) - 47.5% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. Dark color. A bit of white pepper and spice tickles the nose while earth and herbal aromas follow. Though there's a light green streak on the palate, dark fruit flavors prevail. Its tanginess may calm with time. Try to approach in 2-3 years and enjoy for the following 5-10 years. 88-90 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Larrivau (Haut-Medoc) - Planted to 47.5% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. The bouquet and the palate reflect sweet, ripe red fruit. The tannins are light as is the acidity, though the finish suggests a bit of tartness. Give it a couple of years and enjoy over the following 5-7 years. 85-87 points. — Roland Hankerson

2011 Les Grand Chenes (Medoc) - Planted to 50% merlot, 45% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% cabernet franc. Ruby red, with a purplish hue. Spicy aromas entice the nose, along with ripe red fruit, which continues on the palate. Tannins and acidity are light, which allows for enjoyment now, though this should last for the next ten years. 87-89 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Malescasse (Haut-Medoc) - 47.5% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, 2% petit verdot. Ample sweet, ripe cherry flavors dominate the nose and palate. A slightly medicinal quality persists, though it is not unpleasant. Best enjoyed upon release and over the following 3-5 years. 85-87 points — Roland Hankerson

2011 Maucaillou (Moulis) - Planted to 52% cabernet sauvignon, 41% merlot, and 7% petit verdot. Deep red hue, with a nose of lilac, black pepper, cocoa, and ripe red berries. The palate reveals a bit of extracted fruit, and the tannins and acid are still trying to find their balance. Enjoy 2015-2020. 88-90 points — Roland Hankerson



2011 TASTING NOTES

Left Bank Reds—Medoc, Haut-Medoc, Listrac & Moulis

2011 Poujeaux (Moulis) - 45% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. The 52 hectare vineyard has an average vine age of 35 years and is planted at 10,000 vines per hectare. Very approachable and smooth, with blueberry and ripe black cherry on the nose and palate. While not as tight as its vintage counterparts, it could still use some time before reaching its full potential. Owned by the Cuvelier family that also own Clos Fourtet. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Approach it in a couple of years and enjoy for the following 5-10 years. 88-90 points – Roland Hankerson

2011 Rollan de By (Medoc) - 70% merlot, 10% cabernet sauvignon, 10% cabernet franc, and 10% petit verdot. The 45 hectare vineyard is planted to vines with an average age of 35 years at 8,500 vines per hectare. Deep red color, with sweet, ripe dark fruits on the nose and palate. Fairly soft, silky, and pleasant, with just enough structure to back it up. Alain Raynaud consults. Enjoy upon release and over the next 10 years. 88-90 points – Roland Hankerson

2011 Saint Paul (Haut-Medoc) - 50% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon, 8% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. Deep red color, with bell pepper, cherry, and earth on the nose. Rather disjointed on the palate, as the flavor profile needs time to flesh out. Drink upon release and over the following 3-5 years. 82-84 points – Roland Hankerson

2011 Senejac (Haut-Medoc) - 47.5% cabernet sauvignon, 43% merlot, 7.5% cabernet franc, and 2% petit verdot. Well-integrated floral notes on the nose are accompanied by ripe red fruit and baking spices. The palate is soft and silky, with flavors of cassis and a hint of blueberry. Well-rounded and a standout in its class, though the lighter acidity may restrict longevity. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 90-92 points – Roland Hankerson

2011 Sociando Mallet (Haut-Medoc) - 55% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, and the balance petit verdot on more than 50 hectares of gravelly soils, with. The property sits right on the Gironde, just to the north of St. Estephe. Average vine age is 30+ years. Deep purple in color, heady dark fruit dominates the bouquet, which is accompanied by earthy, gravelly tones. Medium-bodied, the black fruit flavors are supple and approachable. Good balance. Enjoy a couple of years after release and over the following 7-12 years. 87-89 points – Roland Hankerson

2011 Tour Seran (Haut Medoc) - 75% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 10% petit verdot. Deep, glass-staining purple. Rich aromas of olive and mocha leap from the glass. The palate offers rich, luscious fruit notes of plum, black cherry, cassis, and blueberry. The tannins are firm and the acidity is evident, but not overbearing. Drink upon release or enjoy over the next decade. 87-89 points – Roland Hankerson



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

Pomerol clearly excelled in 2011, staking an easy claim for appellation of the vintage. The clay soils in this area allowed vines to weather the drought-like conditions of spring and summer. The vines later benefited from the soils' water-holding capacity, giving an extra boost of energy to fully ripen the merlot and cabernet franc portions of their blends. The best wines show precision, intensity, balance, and the sense of extraordinary excitement to elevate them to the top of the pyramid. The debate about the wine of the vintage will be centered here, candidates will no doubt be Lafleur, Vieux Chateau Certan, l'Eglise Clinet and Le Pin.

2011 Beauregard (Pomerol) - 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc. Merlot was aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% one-year-old oak. No new oak was used for the cabernet franc. Bright purple color. Primary red plum and dried fig notes on entry, enhanced with sarsaparilla and incense aromas. Fruit has a slightly raised quality, but gains lift from mouthwatering acidity. Saline and mineral notes pick up intensity towards the end of a long and subtle finish. Enjoy from 2015-2025. About 5,000 cases produced. 89-91 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Beau Soleil (Pomerol) - Slightly opaque with light violet rim. A lovely fragrant ripe raspberry scent permeates the nose and palate entry. Black truffle mingles beautifully with the fruit. Mild licorice, olive, and herb flavors add spice to the sweet cherry core. Well integrated oak and tannins lead to a nice finish. Enjoy on the early side, 2015-2020. 1,500 cases produced. 89-91 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Bellegrave (Pomerol) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc from an 8-hectare estate owned by the Bouldy family for several generations. 50% is aged in new oak, with 25% in one-year and 25% in two-year-old barriques. Medium opaque color, with a pale rim. Saline on the nose along with aromas of sweet tobacco and clay. Notes of black plum, olive tapenade, and new leather, with medium intensity. The finish is slightly short, with some drying astringency. This might be resolved once the final blend is determined. Drink upon release through 2020. About 3,000 cases produced. 87-89 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Bonalgue (Pomerol) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. From 25-year-old vines, aged for 18 months in a combination of 50% new and 50% one-year-old oak. Cocoa, plum and cola nut permeate the nose and palate on entry, with black plum, licorice and hints of cranberry moving to center stage on the back end. Medium to full body with a somewhat dry finish full of cedar and mineral flavors. Drink upon release, through 2020. The Bourotte Family has contracted Michel Rolland for the final blend. 2,500 cases produced. 88-90 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Bon Pasteur (Pomerol) - Expected blend of 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. This 7-hectare estate near L'Evangile is owned by Dany and Michel Rolland. Soils are clay and gravel. Nearly opaque purple color. Soy and blackberry fruit intermingle with soy, cola, and ample sweet black licorice on the palate. Leafy tobacco and tar figure on the back end, along with more robust notes of coffee, espresso, and cigar ash on the finish. The firm tannins make Le Bon Pasteur one of Pomerol's heartier wines of the vintage with plenty of sweet, refined fruit and well-integrated oak. Cellar for 5-6 years and enjoy through 2025. 92-94 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Bourgneuf (Pomerol) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. Medium opaque purple with a garnet hue. The aromatic nose has clay-inflected black cherry aromas, with mild black truffle and camphor. The palate features bright and tangy black cherry and cranberry flavors, with hints of cedar, lead pencil, and graphite. The succulent core contrasts nicely with cleansing acidity, while heady cardamom and other spices add another dimension to this structured, medium to full-bodied wine. The finish is briary, with background mineral and menthol notes. Enjoy 2017-2030. Christian Moueix consults. 90-92 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Certan de May (Pomerol) - Planted to 70% merlot, 25% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. This 5-hectare estate is situated on the Pomerol plateau near Petrus and directly across from Vieux Chateau Certan. Soils are clay and gravel. Medium deep purple color. Brambly but dry nose with blackberry, blueberry, cola nut, and clay aromas. Black and blue fruit flavors carry through from the entry to the mid-palate, joined by cola nut, brown spices and racy minerality. This elegant and balanced package will need 10-15 years to reach its peak and can be enjoyed through 2035. Part of the Moueix family of wines. 92-94 points —Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 Clinet (Pomerol) - 85% Merlot, 12% cabernet sauvignon, and 3% cabernet franc. From a 9-hectare estate with average vine age of 40 years, planted at a density of 6,600 vines per hectare in mixed gravel and clay soils. Aged in a combination of 55% new oak and 45% one-year old barrels, sourced from five to six forests and a similar number of coopers. Opaque purple with violet rim. The wine displays an enticing and harmonious nose of black truffle, black fig, pepper, sweet tobacco, and licorice and an impressive silky mid-palate. Surprisingly, this is accessible enough to pull the cork and enjoy now, but built for mid-term drinking with fine grained tannins that will carry this for the next 15 to 20 years. Clinet has been making some really stellar wines and Roman Laborde's 2011 effort is a great follow up to the sensational 2009 and 2010. About 4,000 cases produced. 95-97 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Clos du Clocher (Pomerol) - 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc. Average vine age is 30 to 35 years, planted in deep, blue clay and gravel soils. Aged for 18 months in two-thirds new and one-third neutral, one-year-old barrels. Initial briary note on entry with cola nut and licorice undertones, followed by sleek minerality encasing medium intense, candied black plum flavors. Mineral flavors continue on the finish, along with a hint of camphor, and a slightly bitter element that distracts somewhat from the overall package. A Bourotte family property with Michel Rolland consulting on the final blend. Enjoy upon release, through 2024-2029. 87-89 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Clos l'Eglise (Pomerol) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. This micro-sized, 6-hectare estate owned by the Garcin family is planted in mixed clay and gravel soils, with iron-rich subsoil. Vine density is 7,150 vines per hectare, with an average age of 35 years. Aged in 100% new barriques. Medium purple color. Elegantly polished nose of tapenade, mild truffle, and a touch of lead pencil. The cab franc lends a wonderful herbal element that beckons you back for another smell and taste. Candied fruity core of red cherry and plum, with hints of dried fig, new leather, and an earthy, mineral element. The clay and gravel based soils were a saving grace in 2011. Enjoy 2020-2030. 1,000 cases produced. 92-94 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Clos Vieux Taillefer (Pomerol) - Planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet sauvignon, this 3.8 hectares estate was originally purchased by the Robin family in 1875. Soils are a combination of sand and iron dross. Color shows an alluring opacity. Initial aromas of blueberry and truffle on the nose give way to coffee and tapenade flavors, with hints of sweet, creamy oak. Ample tannins are balanced with forward fruit, cleansing acidity, and a supple mid-palate and finish. Enjoy 2018-2030. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. 91-93 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Domaine de L'Eglise (Pomerol) - 95% merlot and 5% cabernet franc. 7 hectare estate with average vine age of 40 years. Opaque purple color. Blackberry and blueberry flavors are seasoned with black licorice, iron filings, and iodine nuances on both the nose and palate. The medium to full finish evinces cedar, toast, and a lingering minerality. Some drying tannins give a slight bitter note to the back end, but this should resolve with some bottle age. Enjoy 2018-2027. 87-89 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 'Duo' De Conseillante (Pomerol) - 95% merlot and 5% cabernet franc. Aged in 60% new oak. The second wine of La Conseillante represents 20% of total production. Fresh plum, smoke, and licorice aromas on the nose and palate entry. Silky, with refreshing acidity on the mid-palate, the finish is round, supple, and generous. This is tempting to enjoy right now, but will be better integrated on release in 2014. One of the Right Bank's finest and most user-friendly second wines from this vintage. A home run on the "QPR" charts! Drink upon release and enjoy through 2024. 91-93 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Esprit de L'Eglise (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. Aged in one-year-old barriques. Medium intense brick with garnet hints. Primary aromas of tapenade and licorice on the nose. The palate displays a briary element with red cherry and plum flavors, with nuances of cola nut, mushroom, and forest floor. Silky and very approachable right out of the gate, this should offer enjoyment on release through 2020. An excellent offering from the Garcin family, this second wine offers a nicely affordable counterpoint to the grand vin. 90-92 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Fayat (Pomerol) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. 30-year-old vines planted to clay and gravel soils comprise this 15-hectare estate. Aged for 13 to 16 months in 50% new barriques. Soft purple color. Lighter and more delicate than prior offerings. The nose has primary aromas of blackberry compote, clove, and other brown spices. This effort is light and lively on its feet, with sweet cassis and raspberry notes, and medium-dry tannins that lead to a bone dry finish. Give this one five years in bottle and enjoy through 2025. 91-93 points — Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 Feytit Clinet (Pomerol) - 92% merlot and 8% cabernet franc. The unique terroir of this 6.5-hectare estate, situated between Trotanoy and Latour a Pomerol, benefits from a soil structure of gravel on top of clay and has seen tremendous advancements in quality, resulting in breakout vintages for 2008, 2009, and 2010. 2011 is no exception. Aged 14 months in 70% new oak. 13.8% alcohol. Dark cherry core with violet rim. Alluringly aromatic, with layered aromas of dark plum, cola nut, espresso, and clay. The palate is infused with expansive cassis flavors that gain in concentration, along with cola nut and licorice in the background. There's a seamless integration with wonderful silkiness on the center palate. Energizing and lifted, this has a mélange of cedar, mineral, and garrigue on the finish, leaving a final impression of spice framed by full and fine-grained tannins. Like numerous Pomerol, this 2011 stacks up to the 2010 quite well. Tasted four times. Hands down the finest Pomerol of 2011 in its price point. Bravo to Mr. Casseuil! 93-95 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Franc Maillet 'Cuvee Jean Baptiste' (Pomerol) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. From a 7-hectare estate planted on deep gravel and clay soils. Aged for 18 months in 100% new oak. Opaque purple color. Gorgeous nose, with copious blackberry and kirsch aromas, seasoned with iodine, squid ink, and a briary mineral note. The midpalate has a similar theme, with hints of cola, coffee, and sweet oak flavors. The finish is balanced very long. A wonderful surprise from the appellation! 91-93 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Gazin (Pomerol) - Planted to 90% merlot, 7% cabernet sauvignon, and 3% cabernet franc, this 24-hectare estate neighbors Chateau Petrus, L'Evangile and Lafleur. Planted on gravel over mixed clay and limestone soils, the vines average 35 years in age. Malolactic fermentation was conducted in barrel and then aged in 50% new barriques. Nearly opaque color. Coffee, cola nut, and black cherry aromas on the nose. The palate features primary blueberry and cola flavors, along with plentiful tar, licorice, and camphor that lead to a polished mid-palate. Medium-bodied with cleansing acidity, the finish lingers, leaving an impression of elegance. As with other Pomerols in 2011, the wine offers silkiness on every corner of the mouth and a supple texture right out of the gate. For an estate of this quality, Gazin really does represent very good value in the Pomerol region. Begin to enjoy in 2015 and this wine will age nicely through 2025. About 6,750 cases produced. 91-93 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Hosanna (Pomerol) - Planted to 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc, this 4.5-hectare Moueix property is situated on mixed clay and iron-rich gravel. Vines are harvested by hand, with an average age of 40 years. Production will hover just shy of 1,500 cases in 2011. Opaque purple with a dark violet hue. The aromatics

suggest red fruits, truffle, dried herbs, and old leather. Vibrant and mineral-inflected black cherry, blackberry, olive, and licorice flavors shape the entry and mid-palate. Tannins and fruit are nicely integrated, with a lovely contrast between talc and creamy textures on the back end. Briary cola nut flavors emerge on the finish. Drink 2015-2022. 92-94 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Cabanne (Pomerol) - 92% merlot and 8% cabernet franc. Aged in a combination of 55% new barriques and remainder in one-year-old barriques. 75% of total production goes into the grand vin. Medium purple garnet hue. Slightly muted nose, with aromas of red cherry, blackberry, and with iron, leather, chalk, and graphite. Black fruit and kirsch flavors continue onto the palate, along with a seasoning of cocoa and coffee. The angular finish is creamy with restrained and elegant new oak and lingering fine grained tannins. Only 2,500 cases produced. Enjoy shortly after release through 2029. 89-91 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 L'Enclos (Pomerol) - 88% merlot, 12% cabernet franc. L'Enclos is made up of 38 plots of vines planted on 3 terraces of the blue clay soil unique to the Pomerol plateau. Le Pin and Petrus are neighbors. Animal, cassis, and blackberry aromas on the nose transition to a focused mid palate with flavors of kirsch, licorice, and tapenade. The natural fruit tannins start off firm and angular then become expansive on the finish, with a clay note emerging after the fruit subsides. Mid-palate could be more substantial and should develop out with a couple of years of bottle maturation. A solid effort that complements the 2010 release. An estate to watch, especially with the Adams Family (owners of Fonplegade in St. Emilion), re-investing in the winery and vineyard. Enjoy 2018-2030. 92-94 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Clemence (Pomerol) - Planted to 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc on a tiny, 3-hectare estate. Soils are a combination of clay and limestone. Aged in 100% new oak barrels. Opaque garnet color with translucent purple rim. Salinity and high toned seashell aromas suggestive of limestone on the nose. Primary raspberry flavors dominate the entry, with cola nut, sweet red licorice, and subtle sweet tobacco joining as the palate unfolds. The angular, bone dry finish features cedar, a hint of minerals, and tea. Pretty and precise now, this will evolve with 2 or 3 years of bottle age. Fewer than 500 cases produced. 91-93 points — Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 La Conseillante (Pomerol) - 82% merlot and 18% cabernet franc. From an 11.8-hectare estate situated at the apex of the Pomerol plateau near Petrus, Vieux Chateau Certan and L'Evangelie. Average vine age is 40 years, planted in gray clay and sandy gravel on red clay subsoil at a density of 6,000 per hectare. Typical yields of 38-40 hl/ha. Dazzling bright purple, with a deep garnet hue. The 2011 is luscious and generous on the nose and palate. Lively peppered plum and vanilla spice jump out on the entry. Blackberry and mocha notes mingle brilliantly in the glass with pepper and cola nut flavors coming to the forefront on the second wave. Generous, lively, and softly enveloping on the back end, this shows sweet creaminess and elegance, with a mouthwatering, mineral-dry finish. Give this a few years and enjoy through 2030. "En Primeur" consensus: a standout for the village! 3,500-4,500 cases produced. 93-95 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Croix de Gay (Pomerol) - 95% merlot and 5% cabernet franc. Three separate parcels near Trotanoy, Le Gay and Nenin comprise this estate. Each parcel is distinguished by different sub-soils, adding complexity to the finished wine. The wine is aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% one-year-old oak. Pretty violet color. Somewhat muted aromatics, with notes of minerals, black licorice, tapenade, and fresh rosemary. The mid-palate suggests dried blackberry and black cherry laced with dried herbs, while the mineral edge continues onto the medium long finish. About 1,500 cases produced. Enjoy 2015-2025. 89-91 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Croix St. Georges (Pomerol) - Anticipated final blend of 88%-94% merlot, with the remainder cabernet franc. Located on the same plateau as Le Pin, Vieux Chateau Certan and Petit Village, gravelly soils dominate with small amounts of clay. Average vine age is 37+ years. Aged in 67% new and 33% one-year-old barrels. Deep garnet color. Although a small percentage in the final blend, the cabernet franc makes itself known with herbal aromas, while the merlot reveals blackberry and blueberry flavors, along with a hint of tapenade and licorice. Tasting the 2011 barrel sample indicates gentle extraction, the key for 2011. Though this is supple and silky, the plentiful tannins need time to mellow. Enjoy 2018-2030. 92-94 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Croix Taillefer (Pomerol) - Planted to 50% merlot, 30% cabernet franc and 5% malbec. This 13-hectare estate is located at the southern end of Pomerol near the St. Emilion border. Average vine age is 30 years, planted in gravel and sand, with some iron veins also found in the property's soil. Light plum color with a pale, watery rim. Succulent red plum aromas, with infusions of tapenade and briary cola nut. A distinctive sweet cocoa

factor at the palate's forefront. The wine displays an excellent balance between fruit and acidity, supple tannins, and medium length. This wine can be enjoyed now, but better to hold for a few years. Drink 2017 to 2027. 90-92 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Fleur de Gay (Pomerol) - 100% merlot grown on a 7.5 acre parcel within the Croix de Gay vineyard. Vines range from 20 to 30 years in age, planted in a unique gravel and clay subsoil. Malolactic and aging takes place in 100% new oak barriques for 6 to 18 months. Under the direction of Alain Raynaud, La Fleur de Gay continues its streak of silky and pure wines. The palate displays smoke and minerality that carries the black raspberry and chocolate notes from the entry through the finish. Concentrated, with a long, silky and polished finish, this displays an elegance not found in many wines from the appellation. Enjoy 2015-2030. 92-94 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Fleur Petrus (Pomerol) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc in gravel soils. This 14.5-hectare estate, adjacent to Lafleur and Le Gay and directly opposite Petrus, was acquired by the Moueix family in 1953. Dark rim with a translucent core. This effort is all about elegance and balance, with substantial but well managed and integrated tannins, equally matched by fruit and acidity. A blueberry pie note makes this somewhat playful, along with hints of cherry cola, truffle, and earthy meats adding an extra layer of complexity. The wood plays out on the finish, so give this beauty some time and enjoy through 2030. Annual production approximately 3,500 cases. 94-96 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 La Grave a Pomerol (Pomerol) - Planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. From an 8.1-hectare estate farmed by the Moueix family, soils are a combination of gravel, clay, and silt. Light to medium, translucent purple. Elegant nose characterized by dried cherry and cranberry notes, with secondary aromas of leather and tar. The palate is more generous than the nose, with similar fruit components infused with tapenade, camphor, cedar spice, and lead pencil. The angular tannins take on a powdery aspect on the lingering, medium-full finish. A pleasing and elegant effort that can be enjoyed on release and through 2029. About 3,000 cases produced. 89-91 points — Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 La Petite Eglise (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. The second wine of Denis Durantou's L'Eglise Clinet. Inviting dark purple hue. Alluring notes of perfectly ripe blueberry and sweet mocha envelop the senses, along with a hint of white pepper. The palate presents a hint of earth, along with creamy, ripe palate-coating berry flavor. The acid and tannins are firm, but the star is the lusciously textured fruit. Great now, this will only improve over the next several years and should cellar well through 2029-2034. A great value from one of the star properties of the vintage. 92-94 points —Roland Hankerson

2011 La Pointe (Pomerol) - 85% merlot, 15% cabernet franc aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% one-year-old barriques. Average vine age is 35 years, planted in differentiated parcels of clay, deep gravel and sand. Medium opaque purple hue. The subtly expressive bouquet features notes of clay, white pepper, and cloves. Shows a core of delicious tangy cherry, with sleek minerality and cola flavor running through from entry to finish. The tannins are full but angular, leaving a balanced, lingering package of elegance. Enjoy 2015-2025. 92-94 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 La Providence (Pomerol) - Planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. One of the Moueix family's most recent acquisitions, this 10-acre estate is situated in the center of Pomerol on a combination of clay and gravel soils. Medium purple color. At first analysis, this is the most 'New World' interpretation of the Pomerol appellation. Candied cherry on entry transitions to cherry pie and subtle cinnamon and clove flavors. Licorice and crab apple notes enter on the juicy, soft mid-palate, with an overlay of earthy minerality. The finish is somewhat closed and slightly bitter, though this could very well be resolved when the final blend is bottled. Not at the level of 2009 or 2010. Only 1,250 cases produced. Enjoy 2015-2025. 91-93 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 La Violette (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. From a 1.8-hectare parcel adjacent to Le Pin on unique blue clay soils found at only a few Pomerol properties including Petrus. De-stemmed by hand, berry by berry. Concentrated purple color. One of the more plush Pomerols of the vintage, this is expressive and elegant from the nose to finish. Blueberry flavors caress the mouth, along with hints of tapenade, licorice, and lead pencil. This is as hedonistic as the 2010, but with a touch more elegance and a tad less stuffing in the middle. A standout for the appellation! Enjoy 2018-2030. Only 416 cases produced. Michel Rolland consults. 94-96 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Lafleur (Pomerol) - 53% cabernet franc, 47% merlot. From a 4-hectare estate located near Petrus, and surrounded entirely by the estate vineyards of Le Gay, Lafleur-Petrus, and La Croix de Gay. Vines are 30-plus years in age, planted in gravel and clay. The cab franc was picked on September 22nd and 23rd. Opaque and purple-black in color, the bouquet here is reserved, dense and compact. Not as obvious at this stage, intriguing aromas of dark tea and iodine mingle with latent, but vibrant black fruit aromas. The backward nature of the wine is evident on the palate, with dense and compressed flavors that are a bit unyielding. But the potential for greatness can be seen in the finely honed structure that comprises the backpalate, the seamless mingling of fruit and fine tannins, and the incredibly long finish. A true vin de garde, this will need at least 5-7 years to show a sense of itself, but can easily go a half a century. Astounding. 97-99 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Lafleur Gazin (Pomerol) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. This 8.5-hectare estate, sandwiched between Lafleur and Gazin on the northern slope of Pomerol's plateau, has been farmed by the Moueix family since 1976. Sandwiched between Lafleur and Gazin on the northern slope of Pomerol's plateau, this has been farmed by the Moueix family since 1976. Soils are mixed silt, gravel and clay. Translucent ruby color. Bouquet of dried cherry and clay. A melange of currant, cassis, and pomegranate flavors seasoned with tobacco and light truffle inform the palate. High toned fruit is tempered with equally high toned acidity, providing lift to the entry and midpalate. Seashells and sleek minerality keep this taut, while precise and angular tannins contribute to the bone dry finish. Best to give this 4-5 years and enjoy over the following 10. Annual production about 3,300 cases. 87-89 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Latour a Pomerol (Pomerol) - Planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc in sandy clay, gravel and sand across 8 hectares of non-contiguous plots. The best of these is the 5-hectare plot which surrounds the church in Pomerol. Average vine age is 35 years. Medium purple-garnet hue. The muted nose reveals some clay and red fruit aromas. The entry and midpalate are juicy, with a harmonious blend of red fruit, tapenade, and black licorice flavors. Good structure. The succulent core is energized by wonderful minerality and acidity, making for a balanced finish. This is tempting to enjoy on release, but will fare well after 10-15 years in bottle. Serious effort. Part of the Moueix stable of wines. 91-93 points —Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 L'Eglise Clinet (Pomerol) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. Denis Durantou was very happy with his 2011, praising Pomerol and his property as an "Island Of Happiness," spared most of the bad weather that plagued the Left Bank. With 6 hectares of gravel clay soils resting on a clay bed, the vineyard retained more moisture than areas with heavy drainage. This is one of the wines of the vintage, with an ethereal and complex nose of chocolate, blackberry liqueur, minerals, wet clay, and loads of violet. Pure, soft, rich, and mouth-filling, this shows superb intensity and length. With lower alcohol than in the previous two vintages, this is an elegant and balanced wine, with ripe fruit, tannins, acidity, and sugars all in perfect harmony. The great news for Bordeaux consumers is that production will be slightly higher than in 2010. Enjoy 2020-2035. 97-99 points — Cory Gowan

2011 Le Gay (Pomerol) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. From a 10.5-hectare estate on the Pomerol plateau, vines average 50+ years in age planted in clay, gravel and limestone. Harvesters pick in blocks, at three different times to ensure optimal ripeness. Polished and expressive nose with cranberry, crab apple, and dark plum aromas, transitioning into licorice and clove. Enticing plum flavors linger on the palate, along with medium-firm tannins, remarkably soft and approachable fruit and good balance. This is one of several fine examples demonstrating why Pomerol is a standout appellation in 2011. About 1,250 cases produced. Michel Rolland consults. Enjoy 2018-2030. 92-94 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Le Moulin (Pomerol) - Planted to 80% merlot, 20% cabernet franc. Average vine age is 35 years, planted in clay and gravel soils. Forceful green herbal note to the nose. Shows kirsch and currant flavors on entry, plus subtle mocha espresso and licorice. A minty note seasons this merlot and cabernet franc blend, while tannins are supple and not overly drying. This is ready to be enjoyed now. A good value proposition best consumed 5-6 years after arrival and over the following 5-10 years. 88-90 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Le Pin (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. This micro-sized property sits on gravel soils, with yields ranging from 30-35 hl/ha. Opaque and impenetrable, the bouquet is precise, focused and relatively high toned with lifted notes of black cherries and currants. Showing incredible poise and balance, the fruit notes carry through on the palate, as integrated acids create tension and a lengthy finish. The pure fruit flavors are persistent and vibrant showing off a moderately broad presence on the palate, reined in

by balanced acidity. As the fruit continues towards the backpalate, finely ground tannins and minerals add structure to the finish. With all the components in seamless proportion, wait a few years to let the wine open up, knowing this will easily peak in two decades and last a few more. Nice new winery, too. 96-98 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Manoir de Gay (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. The second wine of Chateau Le Gay from their 4-hectare estate. Balanced and fresh, with high toned black cherry and blueberry flavors and hints of star anise. Made from younger wines than those used for the grand vin, this has alluring silkiness and ample concentration for a second wine. Will drink well upon release to 2020. 1,500 cases produced. 88-90 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Montviel (Pomerol) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Situated adjacent to Clinet, this 7-hectare plot shares the same gravel and clay of the Pomerol plateau. Average vine age is 30 years. Red plum and cherry pervade the nose, while the silky and juicy palate leans toward cranberry and crab apple flavors. The cabernet franc sings, emitting Provencal herbs and tapenade on the mid-palate, while the finish has a dry talc-like texture enveloped in creamy, sweet oak that allows the succulent fruit to shine. Enjoy upon release through 2019. 1,250 cases produced. 90-92 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Mazeyres (Pomerol) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. A 22-hectare estate with average vine age of 30 years. The wine was aged for 12 months in 40% new oak barriques, the remainder in one-year-old barriques. Displays a light purple core with a paler violet rim. The nose yields white floral aromas. A succulent and juicy wonder with copious cherry pie and cola nut flavors on the midpalate, this is extremely refined and elegant from start to finish. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-90 points — Neil Mechanic

2011 Nenin (Pomerol) - 75% merlot, 25% cabernet franc. 25-hectare estate on gravel and clay, vines average 25 to 30 years in age. The 2011 displays a pretty, translucent purple-violet color in the glass. Somewhat muted bouquet, but the potential is there with a faint clay-raspberry note emerging with air. The raspberry note carries on the palate entry with a blackberry and cassis core that is seasoned with worked leather, black olives and toast. The finish seals the deal with angular tannins on the lengthy finish. A good value minded Pomerol that will develop elegantly and offer excellent near term drinking into the next decade. Enjoy 2017-2025. 90-92 points — Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 Pensees de Lafleur (Pomerol) - 54% merlot, 46% cabernet franc. The merlot was picked on September 17, the cab franc five days later. Not a second or declassified wine per se, this bottling comes from a block of vines situated over a seam of mixed sandy soil. The hedonistic bouquet offers up an incredible array of aromas bordering on the exotic. Cloves, peppers and grilled meats mingle with concentrated dark fruits. With intense, pristine and focused aromas, it's hard to set the glass down. The broadly textured palate continues the thrilling experience marrying sauvage fruits and Mexican spices into a seamlessly flavorsome whole. This wine is an exciting master-class, showing off the balance between power and finesse, with never-ending length and microscopic tannins fit for a grand vin. A wine that leaves one speechless, it's incredible that I have any notes. Why wait to drink this? Yet know this will last 30 years. 92-94 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Petit Village (Pomerol) - 72% merlot, 23% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Aged in a mix of 65% new oak and 35% one-year old barrels. Medium opaque purple color. Soy infused dark fruit with flavors of briary cola nut take center stage on entry, backed up with a hint of iron and clay. Shows balance with palate concentration and a delicate brown spice note. The briary texture comes through in ample medicinal and herbal notes that blend seamlessly with ripe cherry and raspberry flavors, while mouthwatering acidity keeps one coming back for more. The clay, gravel and iron composing the soil, are showcased here. Lay this down for a good 3 to 5 years after release, then hold for another 15 to 20. The new investment group overseeing this property has made tremendous changes, with the same owners managing production at Pichon Baron Longueville. A solid, breakout vintage for this esteemed house. The grand vin was only 30% of production, with optical sorting used to weed out unripe berries. The final blend will be just over 2,000 cases. 92-94 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Petrus (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. 11.5 hectare estate on blue clay soils with a high iron content. Vines average 45 years in age, with yields of 35 hl/ha. Aged in 50% new oak. Opaque with a clay-like tint. Blackberry liqueur and cassis fruit flavors seasoned with fresh brewed espresso and a hint of iron. A licorice, mineral element kicks in on the mid-palate. This merlot is truly world class, with acid and fruit in balance, and its greatest virtue being its spectacularly seamless palate. Drinkable now, yet this is Petrus' most tannic vintage on record. It's a truly confounding effort, and I'm not sure what to make of it. One thing is for sure, it lacks the structure of the 2010 and 2009. The estate director suggests that the 2011 will be aligned with the 2001 and will develop nicely in bottle. Approachable in its youth, enjoy over the

following 20 years. 65% of the production of this iconic estate went into the Petrus bottling this year. 94-96 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Plinec (Pomerol) - Planted to 72% merlot, 23% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. This 10-hectare estate sits opposite La Pointe, close to Nenin. Soils are dark sand with a high iron content. Medium garnet hue. The bouquet has an herbal tinge, with aromas of sweet tobacco and dried red fruit along with a whiff of saltwater from healthy acidity. Core flavors of red cherry and new leather on the palate, with mineralized cola nut on the finish. A light and elegant effort. Part of the Moueix stable. Enjoy upon release and over the following 10 years. 87-89 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Rouget (Pomerol) - Planted to 85% merlot and 15% cabernet sauvignon on 18 hectares. Average vine age is 30 years, planted in clay and gravel soils. A weedy prune-like nose in this sample showed some sappy qualities not indicative of the category. The palate emitted viscous blackberry and currant flavors along with hints of espresso and spicy anise. Medium firm tannins expand, becoming powdery on the finish, an improvement on the nose and entry. Part of the Moueix stable. Enjoy 2015-2025. 89-91 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Taillefer (Pomerol) - 75% merlot, 25% cabernet franc. The Moueix family farms this 12 hectare property adjacent to Figeac. The name Taillefer is a derivative of a French term "to cut iron", a reference to the unique iron soil with an underlying layer of clay. The 2011 was aged in a combination of one-third new and two-thirds one-year old barriques. Detectable iron and iodine-squid ink elements on the nose and mouth are softened by medium tannins, creamy oak, and black plum. Cola nut seasoning on the entry and on the dry, medium-full finish. 89-91 points —Neil Mechanic

2011 Tour Maillet (Pomerol) - 100% merlot. Aged for 12 months in a combination of 50% new and 50% one-year-old barriques. Two-day harvest began on September 27. This pure merlot has a gorgeous black and blue color. Concentrated candied blueberry flavors take center stage joined by plenty of iodine and soy notes. Lots of structure here. The finish nicely incorporates minerals and creamy oak, with medium textured tannins that will flesh out nicely in another five years. Sourced from gravel and mixed sand and gravel plots, this is destined to be a real crowd pleaser. Enjoy 2018-2030. 92-94 points —Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Pomerol

2011 Trotanoy (Pomerol) - Planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc on 7.5 hectares comprised of two major soil types: clay and gravel, both on mixed gravel, sand, and iron-rich subsoils. Average vine age about 40 years. Muted, with woody red fruit driven nose. The woody earthy elements take on added dimension in the mouth when mixed with lively, briary mineral notes that form seasoning for the delicately textured black and red cherry flavors. Notes of camphor, tapenade, and black licorice accent the mid and back palate while hints of truffle bring on the funk factor as notes of garrigue intensify on the finish. The beautiful integration of fruit tannins and acidity on the finish keep this harmonious and balanced. Star of the Moueix stable. Give this one 10 years and enjoy over the following 30. 95-97 points – Neil Mechanic

2011 Vieux Chateau Certan (Pomerol) - 70% merlot, 29% cabernet franc, 1% cabernet sauvignon. A 14-hectare contiguous parcel on the sloping Pomerol plateau next to La Conseillante and L'Evangile. Soils are Pomerol's classic pebbles over clay and iron-rich subsoil. Alexandre Thienpont (from one of the most influential winemaking families on the Right Bank) is in charge. Gorgeous perfume of raspberry and flowers on the nose are mirrored on the palate. This is all about nuance and elegance, with a silky structure and light body that dances across the tongue. The multitude of layers is so compact and finely enmeshed as to be seamless. This has an underlying tautness that will unwind over the next 5-10 years. A wine that provokes contemplation. Enjoy 2020-2040. 97-99 points – Devon Magee

2011 Vieux Maillet (Pomerol) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. Located only 700 meters from the iconic Chateau Petrus, this estate is comprised of a 7-hectare parcel on gravel and sand soils. A deep, rich, and luxurious color. Earth, pepper, and other spices scent the nose. Generously ripe primary blueberry flavors on entry, with hints of fresh brewed coffee and mocha. The overall juicy suppleness is a rarity for the vintage. A sensational value from a high priced appellation. Only 2,500 cases produced. 92-94 points – Neil Mechanic

2011 Vraye Croix de Gay (Pomerol) - Typically 85% merlot, 15% cabernet franc. Medium purple, with concentrated color. Surprising brambly blueberry compote nose, accented with dashes of clove and cinnamon stick. The blackberry flavored core is laced with nuances of pepper, cola nut, tapenade and Provencal herbs. The medium to full tannins are angular for the most part, becoming powdery toward the finish. Enjoy 2018-2028. 90-92 points – Neil Mechanic



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Lalande-de-Pomerol

2011 Chambrun (Lalande de Pomerol) - 60% merlot and 40% cabernet franc. From a 6.5-hectare parcel, average vine age is 35 years, planted in quartz-rich gravel, clay and limestone. Dense opaque core with a medium bright purple rim. Brambly nose of blackberry, fresh picked strawberry, and underbrush scents. The palate is balanced, with subtle red fruits as well as rich dark chocolate flavor. Unlike many of its vintage peers, this one has no tangy streak on the finish although acidity is present. Great texture and overall quality. Really nice stuff. Enjoy 2015-2022. 89-91 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Chambrun 'Le Bourg' (Lalande de Pomerol) - 55% merlot, 40% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. The 'Le Bourg' cuvée is from a .7-hectare section of the estate vineyard. Average vine age is 35 years, planted in quartz-rich gravel, clay and limestone. Deep purple core with a bright violet rim. Fantastic nose of sweet mocha, blackberry, and cassis. Modern and fleshy on the palate with tons of dark black fruit followed by sweet vanilla and baking spice flavors. This is a soft and lush example of Lalande de Pomerol which should drink well from the day it is bottled. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 Grand Ormeau (Lalande de Pomerol) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. Excellent saturated ruby color with a crimson rim. The nose exudes pretty berry scents along with a mix of red and black fruit, leading to some deep mocha and coffee aromas. Soft and supple mouthfeel defined by raspberry, sage, and rose petal extract, with tannins that continue to build through a long and delineated finish. Should be beautiful right out of the gate and drink well for 5-10 years. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 L'Ambroisie du Chateau La Croix des Moines (Lalande de Pomerol) - 100% merlot. Beautiful fuchsia color. Pure, ripe nose is replete with mocha, blackberry, cherry liqueur, and a waft of crushed pebbles. Clean and fresh on the palate with loads of black fruit, berry, and ripe tannins. Pleasant and approachable. 89-91 points — Alex Lallos

2011 La Fleur de Bouard (Lalande de Pomerol) - 80% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Aged in 75% new oak. Purple core with a medium violet rim. Nice bouquet, with complex notes of forest berry, subtle oak, tobacco, and all-spice. Well textured on the palate, with soft tannins and an array of black fruit flavors. Medium-long finish with notes of kirsch and milk chocolate. A very good Lalande de Pomerol. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 La Fleur de Bouard 'Le Plus' (Lalande de Pomerol) - 80% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Aged for up to 30 months in 100% new oak. This modern style blend shows a beautiful inky core with a bright purple rim. Decadent aromas on the nose of black cherry, black currant, and coffee, with a hint of new oak and vanilla bean. Nicely textured right through the finish with notes of boysenberry, cassis, and sweet vanilla extract. Approachable upon release and through 2020. 88-90 points — Alex Lallos

2011 La Fleur Saint Georges (Lalande de Pomerol) - Deep ruby core with a paler rim. A touch of sulfur on the nose, but there is some excellent underlying fruit including red currant, and bright red cherry, as well as a touch of baking spice and chocolate. The medium-bodied palate is defined by fresh strawberry and ripe cherry flavors. A very nice, elegant example. 89-91 points — Alex Lallos

2011 La Graviere (Lalande de Pomerol) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc from a tiny 2.5 hectare vineyard. Delicate aromas of sweet cherry, rose petal, and subtle oak waft from the glass. The mid-palate is soft and delicate with flavors of red cherry, red plum, and Asian spices. Lovely texture leads to a fleshy and long finish, defined by notes of cherry cola, anise, and vanilla extract. Very well made, this will drink well during its first 5-10 years of life. Only 415 cases produced. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos

2011 La Sergue (Lalande de Pomerol) - 85% merlot, 12% cabernet franc, and 3% malbec. Brilliant violet color throughout. Alluring aromas of chocolate, confectionary sugar, and blueberry on the nose with a hint of rosemary on the back end. Supple and soft on the mid-palate with silky tannins through the finish. Shows good concentration as well as a touch of acidity, which should keep this fresh for a few years to follow. 87-89 points — Alex Lallos



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—Lalande-de-Pomerol

2011 Les Cruzelles (Lalande de Pomerol) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. The merlot was harvested between September 5th and 12th, with the cabernet sauvignon on September 19th. The vineyard's deep clay soils retained more moisture than did areas with heavy drainage. A shiny inky ruby, the nose exudes aromas of violet, fresh clay, and ripe blackberry. An alluring spice component informs the mid-palate, with plenty of crisp fruit and a hint of fresh tar. This has an impressively long finish. Around 1,300 cases made. The 2011 builds on the success of the 2010, and Denis Durantou (of L'Eglise Clinet) has again made a wine worth seeking out. Durantou was very happy with his 2011s, which were spared most of the tough weather that plagued some Left Bank AOCs. Drink 2016-2024. 89-91 points —Cory Gowan

2011 Siaurac (Lalande de Pomerol) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Dense ruby core with a deep rim. Freshly picked forest berry aromas on the nose along with a hint of menthol and sage. Sweet and supple on the palate with darker fruit than the bouquet suggests. Good texture. The deep black fruit flavors lead gently into a finish defined by soft tannins and notes of mocha and spice. Well done. 86-88 points —Alex Lallo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

The wines of St. Emilion clearly suffered from the stress incurred in the spring and summer droughts of 2011. Tough tannins, overripe fruit and intense acidity were frequently encountered, leaving many wines unbalanced. Many of the later-picked wines have plenty of intensity, but the flavors lack freshness and verve. The best wines here are balanced and exciting. And like Pauillac, avoiding a heavy-handed approach in the cellar resulting in more balanced, proportional wines. The usual suspects (Pavie, Cheval Blanc, and Angelus) continued making excellent wines but some additional research will be required on the part of the consumer and collector to identify the best St. Emilions from this vintage.

2011 Angelus (St. Emilion) - 50% merlot, 47% cabernet franc, and 3% cabernet sauvignon. From a 26-hectare parcel on the lower slopes of the south-facing St. Emilion cote, soils vary from top to bottom, but are largely clay and limestone. Average vine age is over 30 years. Aged 18-24 months in 100% new oak. Dark purplish red at core and rim. A rich gamey, spice, and tea leaf nose merges with tobacco, crushed stones, and bounteous red fruit on the back end. The palate is extremely full-bodied, with mammoth tannins and high toned acidity, yet the wine is well-integrated. This wine will need 5-8 years to come around, and can age for another 10. Drink 2017-2030. 94-96 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Ausone (St. Emilion) - 55% cabernet franc, 45% merlot. Vines are planted on 7 hectares of predominantly limestone soils, with a density of 6,500 vines per hectare. Always a perfectionist, Alain Vauthier meticulously sorted his 2011 harvest berry by berry in order to keep quality high. He compares the 2011 to a hypothetical blend of 2006 and 2008. Inky purple color. Pretty primary out of barrel, with aromas of fresh tar, ripe purple fruit, violets and minerals. Extremely elegant and smooth on the palate with loads of red fruit and sweet tannins. The tannic structure is evocative of Ausone's trademark length. When combined with the fully ripe, old vine cabernet franc there is fragrance and structure in spades. This is all finesse, not power. Enjoy 2020-2030+. 94-96 points —Cory Gowan

2011 Barde-Haut (St. Emilion) - Planted to 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. The compact bouquet expresses mostly stone and minerals, with fruit aromas subservient to the structural notes. Fresh flavors of cherry compote are intense, tangy, and vibrant. Some mellow tannins come into play underneath the slightly viscous texture in the background. The finish is juicy, as the tannins become spicy and peppery, all reined in by that vibrant acidity. Give the components 3-5 years to harmonize, and enjoy through 2025. From the Garcin portfolio. Tasted twice. 92-94 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Beau-Sejour-Becot (St. Emilion) - Planted to 75% merlot, 20% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon on 16.5 hectares of mixed clay and limestone soil. Vines average 35 years old,

with a planting density of 6,200 vines per hectare. Aged in 80% new oak. Purplish pink color. Prune, plum, cassis, and floral notes emerge first with chalky minerality and chocolate following. Medium to full bodied with nice persistence of tannin and acidity and a wonderfully rich and long finish. This will need a few years to gain its equilibrium, but I am confident that it will do just that. Enjoy 2017-2030. 93-95 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Beausejour (Duffau-Lagarosse) (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot, 20% cabernet franc. This 6.5-hectare estate sits on the northwest side of the top of the St. Emilion plateau, overlooking the slope that becomes the Pomerol shelf. Average vine age is 35-40 years, planted in clay top soil and classic St. Emilion limestone underneath. Fresh, perfectly ripe, red fruit – raspberry, strawberry, plums – lead the nose and are the core of the wine on the palate. A citrus freshness – typical of these limestone soils – adds lift to the red fruits and to the wine itself. Beyond the subtleties of the fruit, this wine is all about balance and texture, perfectly poised and all silk. A genuine expression of 2011 and certainly one of the successes of the vintage in St. Emilion. This will need 5 years after release to unwind, and will plateau between 2025-2030. Nicholas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt consult. 95-97 points —Devon Magee

2011 Belair Monage (St. Emilion) - Planted to 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc on 7.5 hectares of limestone soils at a vine density of 6,600 vines per hectare, the majority on south-facing slopes near Ausone. Average vine age is 40 years. Yields have been significantly reduced for the most recent vintages. Dark purple core, yet the wine saw little extraction time. Aromas of red and black fruits, jasmine, and saddle leather, along with Asian spice and licorice. Layers of chocolate and cigar box flavor the midpalate as the fine grained tannins develop and the acidity keeps things moving. There is a wonderful balance to the palate, showcasing the terroir. A nice follow up to the 2010. From the Moueix family of wines. Enjoy 2015-2025. 92-94 points —Jeff Loo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Bellefont Belcier (St. Emilion) - 76% merlot, 17% cabernet franc, and 7% cabernet sauvignon from 13 hectares on the south-facing, limestone plateau between Larcis Ducasse and Tertre Roteboeuf. Aged in 80% new and 20% once-used barrels. Ripe fruits on the nose are followed by a rich, lifted palate texture. Definitely a richer version for this estate. The fresh acidity does help to keep the liqueur-like fruit and body high-toned, while the sweet fruit continues onto the finish. Enjoy on release and over the following 10 years. Tasted twice. 91-93 points —Devon Magee

2011 Bellevue (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc on a 6.2 hectare parcel of south-facing limestone slopes neighboring Angelus and Beausejour Duffau. Dark, opaque in color. The aromas of fresh herbs and caraway seeds highlight the varieties' aromatic spectrum. Additional hints of light fruit unfold with air. Medium in weight, the black cherry flavors are ripe with round textures that continue onto the back-palate. The short finish is punctuated by firm, cedary tannins. Best enjoyed through 2025. 91-93 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Bellevue Mondotte (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, 5% cabernet sauvignon. 14.5% potential alcohol. Vines are planted on 2 hectares of limestone soil. Aged in 100% new oak. Inky purple color. Root vegetables, plum, cassis, mocha, and vanilla flavor the palate first, with flowers and minerality following. Grippy tannins are noticeable right away, with enticing acidity showing up on the midpalate and providing lift to the very long finish. One of the top wines of St. Emilion, this is a highly concentrated beast! From the Gerard Perse portfolio. Give this baby some time and enjoy 2020-2030. 93-95 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Berliquet (St. Emilion) - 75% merlot, 22% cabernet franc, and 3% cabernet sauvignon from an 8-hectare, southwest-facing slope in Mazerat near Angelus. Average vine age is 40 years, planted in clay and deep limestone. Very ripe, seductively sweet raspberry and blackberry fruit is primary here, with a touch of menthol. A citrus-driven acidity with salty elements carries the weight of the wine, leading to a tannic finish. Nicolas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt consult here. Give this some time to come together and enjoy 2017-2025. Tasted twice. 90-92 points —Devon Magee

2011 Boutisse (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot, 15% cabernet franc. This 25-hectare vineyard is located on the southeastern facing slopes of the limestone plateau. Soils are largely clay-limestone. Ruby red color. Red fruits, flowers, cherry, currant, and plum flavors on the palate, with very ripe tannins and racy acidity.

Finishes with chocolate and coffee notes. Enjoy 2014-2024. 86-88 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Canon (St. Emilion) - 70% merlot, 30% cabernet franc from one of the oldest properties in St. Emilion, between Clos Fourtet and La Magdelaine. 21.5 hectares of vines are planted in primarily limestone, with very poor to non-existent topsoil. The wine is aged in 60% new oak. Purple with a reddish pink hue. Black fruits, grilled meat, and spice pair nicely with graphite, truffle, and cheese rind on the palate. Fine grained tannins alongside firm acidity that provides lift on the midpalate and leads into the flavorful but grippy finish. The house of Chanel made great strides in this vintage. Enjoy 2019-2029. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Canon La Gaffeliere (St. Emilion) - 60% merlot, 32% cabernet franc, and 8% cabernet sauvignon from a 19.5-hectare parcel on the slopes of the limestone plateau. Vines are over 45 years old, planted in a mixture of limestone, clay and sand. Purple pinkish color. Aromas of roasted vegetables, blackberry, and earthy mushroom are complemented by grilled meat and sweet vanilla. The palate reveals fine grained tannins along with a high level of acidity, yet remains balanced. Lovely flavors of truffle and sweet red fruit inform the lengthy finish. Enjoy 2015-2035. 92-94 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Chapelle d'Ausone (St. Emilion) - 60% merlot, 30% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. Vines are planted on 7 hectares of predominantly limestone soils, with a density of 6,500 vines per hectare. Always a perfectionist, Alain Vauthier meticulously sorted their 2011 harvest berry by berry in order to keep quality high, and he compared 2011 to a hypothetical blend of 2006 and 2008. The second wine of Ausone shows a dark, inky red and very primary at this young stage. Taut and tight on the nose before revealing aromas of tar, red fruits, crunchy minerals, violets, and lilacs. Very soft on a palate entry, this had a soft cooling mouthfeel. Loads of fine, silky tannins give it some decent length. Enjoy on release and over the following 10 years. 90-92 points —Cory Gowan

2011 Chauvin (St. Emilion) - Planted to 75% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Located close to Cheval Blanc, this has emerged as a sleeper in this vintage. Rich red color. Enticing nose of plum, rock salt, tandoori spice, and cinnamon backed with a frame of mocha and freshly crushed rocks. On the palate, dark fruits, good acidity, but high levels of tannin. This will be a dynamic wine in 5-6 years time, and will be at its best from 2016 to 2030. 87-89 points —Jeff Loo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Cheval Blanc (St. Emilion) - 52% cabernet franc and 48% merlot off the gravel, sand, and clay soils on the gentle slope that runs north towards Pomerol. 100% new, medium toast oak from 7 different coopers. Fresh yet reserved on the nose with cola and cherry nuances. The palate is all about texture and absolute elegance. The weight of the wine and shade-grown depth to the red fruit imparts a lovely sense of purity. The tannins are balanced and add a refreshing saline quality. A top Cheval Blanc. Will be exceptional as it opens up over the next 5 years, and will be worth holding onto over at least the next 10-15 years. Drink 2017-2032. 94-96 points —Devon Magee

2011 Clos Badon (St. Emilion) - 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc. Located between Pavie and Canon La Gaffeliere, this property is run by the producers of Chateau Valandraud. Dark, nearly opaque purple color. Aromas of cassis, fresh earth, and rosemary, complemented by figs and sweet plum. This St. Emilion has racy acidity with structured tannins to back it up. The refined finish will show better with a little age. Best after 2018. 90-92 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Clos de l'Oratoire (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. From a 10.3 hectare estate northeast of the town of St. Emilion. Average vine age is over 30 years, planted in sandy topsoil over clay. Aged in 60% new oak. Purple-black in color, aromas of juicy fruit also show off some fresh earth as the wine airs. Offering up pure and concentrated black cherry flavors, the succulent palate has enough salivating acidity to avoid overripe textures. Broadly textured, finely grained structural elements provide support to well proportioned flavors. Crisp acidity ensures a vibrant finish. Highlighting a fresh and balanced approach while avoiding density on the palate, this will drink well between 2017-2027. 90-92 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Clos des Jacobins (St. Emilion) - Planted to 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc. Rose red color. Rich aromas of cassis, cherry, and spicy pepper, framed in currant and tobacco. Low tannins and high acidity are the dominant textural elements, along with lingering flavors of strawberry compote and rich mocha. This needs another year or two after bottling and should drink well early in its life. Enjoy 2015-2020. 88-90 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Clos Dubreuil (St. Emilion) - 3.5 hectares planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. Opaque purple color. A very expressive nose of plum, mocha, flowers, coffee, and truffle, and mint. The palate is very balanced, with lengthy tannins and acidity. Layers of vanilla and cherry flavors abound, leading to a rounded finish. This is a sleeper! Stephane Derenoncourt consults. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Clos Fourtet (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot, 10% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% cabernet franc on 20 hectares just outside the town of St. Emilion to the west, and just to the north of Chateau Canon. After two outstanding performances in 2009 and 2010, expectations were high and given the vintage, Clos Fourtet has put forth a very good effort. Aged in 75% new oak barrels. Purplish red color, with an expressive nose of ripe red and black fruits, fresh earth, smoked meat, and mineral aromas. The palate is medium-bodied, but with grippy tannins and balanced acidity. A top notch effort that will age for two decades or more. Enjoy 2020-2030. 92-94 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Clos la Madeleine (St. Emilion) - 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc. The 3.2-hectare property on limestone soil is situated directly south of Belair Monange near Chateau Ausone. Average vine age is 35 years. Aged in 100% new oak. 14% potential alcohol. Deep concentrated red at the core with slight garnet hue. Bright aromas of cherry, sweet cranberry, and roasted mushroom, mixed with spicy pepper and fresh mineral. On entry, flavors of plum, chocolate, and roasted coffee present themselves alongside high-toned acidity and moderate tannins for a balanced experience. This will be enjoyable within a year of release and provide pleasure for 10-15 years. Drink 2015-2030. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Clos St. Julien (St. Emilion) - Planted to 60% cabernet franc and 40% merlot on 1.2 hectares. Purple color. Aromas of prune, cassis, licorice and truffle, highlighted by smoky earth and spring flowers. The palate features lively acidity with low tannins. Dark chocolate and red fruits flavor the finish. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Give this 2-3 years and enjoy over the following ten. Drink 2016-2026. Tasted twice. 88-90 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Clos St. Martin (St. Emilion) - Planted to 75% merlot, 15% cabernet franc and 10% cabernet sauvignon on a micro-sized estate of just 1.3 hectares. Average vine age is over 35 years. Garnet red with pink hues. A very pleasing and fruity nose, complemented by aromas of fresh earth and truffle. The palate is peppery and layered with grippy tannins and high acidity, yet has a very smooth, balanced finish. This will need 2-3 years in bottle before drinking, and can age for the following 15+ years. Drink 2016-2031. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Corbin (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. From a 12.6-hectare parcel north of the town of St. Emilion. Average vine age is 30 years, planted in sand, sandy clay and clay mixed with *crasse de fer*. 13.8% potential alcohol. Aged in 40% new oak. Purplish red core and rim. Aromas of violet, currant, and plum jam mix with chalk and spice notes. On entry, prominent acidity with low tannins. Cinnamon, scorched earth, and sweet pepper flavor the mid palate, leading to a sharp, racy finish. Give this 2 to 3 years after bottling and enjoy for the following 10-15. Drink 2015-2029. 86-88 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Côte de Baleau (St. Emilion) - Planted to 70% merlot, 15% cabernet sauvignon and 15% cabernet franc on 8 hectares. Average vine age is 30 years, planted on the clay-limestone plateau. The fragrant bouquet is filled with ethereal notes of cherry and herbs. Moderately intense flavors of black fruit inhabit most of the palate with a round, creamy texture. The equilibrium continues onto the medium-length finish, with firm but balanced tannins. Drink through 2022. Tasted twice. 87-89 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Croix Cardinale (St. Emilion) - Planted to 70% merlot, 15% cabernet franc and 15% cabernet sauvignon. From a 7.5-hectare estate adjacent to Fleur Cardinale, average vine age is 40 years, planted in clay and limestone soils. The grapes were harvested by hand between September 30 and October 20, with yields of 28hl/ha. Opaque, purple-black at the core. The well-proportioned bouquet is balanced and complex with dark fruits and smoky charcoal. The palate is ripe, generous and broad in texture, yet still vibrant thanks to well-appointed acidity. Black cherry and dark fruits mingle with milk chocolate flavors, filling out nicely on the backpalate. Fine, granular tannins roll out on the finish, along with lingering black fruit flavors. A new wine from a parcel recently acquired by the Decoster family who, also own Fleur Cardinale. Jean-Philippe Fort consults. Drink 2017-2030. Tasted three times. 92-94 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Croix de Labrie (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot from a tiny 2.5 hectare vineyard. Production is a mere 300 cases. Deep purple red. Blackberries, motor oil, licorice, and spice box mix with red fruits and fresh earth aromas on the nose. The flamboyant palate has lively acidity, medium tannins, and flavors of earthy black truffle and anise. A real beauty. This will benefit from aging for 5-7 years after bottling, and drink well into 2030+. 92-94 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Dassault (St. Emilion) - Planted to 65% merlot, 30% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Aged in 80% new oak.

Opaque purple color. Initial dark flavored aromas of plum, prune, and cherry lead into tobacco and pencil lead scents. High level of acidity, framed in soft tannins. Will this ever balance out? 84-86 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Destieux (St. Emilion) - Planted to 66% merlot, 17% cabernet sauvignon, and 17% cabernet franc. This 8.12 hectare estate dominates a beautiful landscape with a 360° view of the Dordogne River valley up to the hilltops of Montagne Saint-Emilion. Pinkish red color. Fresh game, pepper, minerals, and spice dominate the nose, along with accents of cherry and plum. The rich palate features ultra hefty tannins and high-toned acidity that seems to linger before flavors of mocha and graphite emerge on the finish. This needs to age for a couple of years after bottling, but should be enjoyable for 8-10 years. Michel Rolland consults. Drink 2015-2025. 86-88 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Edmus (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc. From a 6 hectare plot, once part of Chateau Lescours. American owners. Dark purple color with pick accents. Ripe red fruits on the nose along with violet and fresh earth. The palate has fresh tannins with ample acidity to match. Cherry and cardamom flavors lead the finish. Will be enjoyable upon release and for another 10 years. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Drink 2014-2024+. 89-91 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Faugeres (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot, 10% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. From a 49-hectare parcel east of the town of St. Emilion, soils are clay-limestone. Average vine age is 35+ years. Purple core with a red rim. Plentiful cardamom and other spices on the nose, along with red fruit and limestone aromas. Medium bodied, the palate features ripe cherry and strawberry flavors, somewhat grippy tannins, and a consistent backbone of acidity that carries through to the finish. Needs time. Try in 5-6 years and over the following 10 years. 89-91 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Faurie de Souchard (St. Emilion) - 70% merlot, 24% cabernet franc, and 6% cabernet sauvignon. Opaque purple with a slight pinkish rim. Lovely aromas of lavender, tar, and black raspberry jump out of the glass with secondary mineral and bell pepper notes. The palate has refined tannins that really balance the acidity, and a finish that tastes like chocolate and coffee. A sleeper for this vintage, this will be ready upon release and remain so for 10+ years. Drink 2014-2024+. 87-89 points — Jeff Loo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Ferrand Lartigue (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon from a 6-hectare estate. Purple with reddish hues. The nose opens with candied cherry, strawberry, and licorice aromas, paired with fresh earth and grilled meat. The tannins build progressively on the mid-palate, buoyed by racy acidity, and last through the rich, chocolate-flavored finish. This nice effort should be enjoyed on the younger side. Drink 2014-2019. 87-89 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Figeac (St. Emilion) - 35% cabernet sauvignon, 35% cabernet franc, and 30% of merlot. Aged for 18 months in 100% new oak. Purplish red color. The nose offers aromas of flowers and fresh botanicals, mixed with black fruit and olive tapenade. The medium-bodied palate showcases a high level of tannins and acidity that seem more prominent than this wine's rich fruit. Perhaps it will resolve itself once in bottle. As of now, this is a less than average showing for Figeac. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-90 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Fleur Cardinale (St. Emilion) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. 15% potential alcohol. From a 20-hectare property on a high point to the east of the town of St. Emilion. Average vine age is 35 years, planted in rich clay atop limestone. Soils are primarily clay-limestone. Grapes are sorted by hand before and after de-stemming, with fermentation in small stainless steel vats. The wine is aged in 100% new oak. Crimson core with a garnet rim. The wine opens with aromas of smoked meats, plum, red currant, and spice, complemented by prune, chocolate, and a soft floral accent. Full-bodied and showcasing the vintage with racy acidity and subdued tannins. Roasted coffee, mocha, and lavender flavors lead to an elegant yet powerful finish. Give this 3-5 years after bottling and enjoy for the following 10-15. Jean Philippe Fort consults. Tasted three times. Drink 2016-2030. 93-95 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Fombrauge (St. Emilion) - Planted to 77% merlot, 14% cabernet franc and 9% cabernet sauvignon. Owned by Bernard Magrez of Pape-Clement. Rose red color with a hint of pink. Initial aromas of herbs and earthy roasted vegetables, with secondary scents of cherry, cinnamon, and smoked meats. Nicely balanced with persistent mouthwatering acidity and low levels of tannins. Drink on release and enjoy over the following 10 years. 88-90 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Fonbel (St. Emilion) - 63% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, 10% petit verdot, and 7% carmenere. Winemakers are Alain and Pauline Vauthier of Ausone fame. Fragrant and elegant on the nose with notes of blackberry, raspberry, blueberry, and violet. It continues to show off its youthfulness on the palate, with fresh

fruit over a silky, delicate structure. Lovely right out of the gate, but lacks real substance. Enjoy on release and over the next 5-7 years. 85-87 points — Devon Magee

2011 Fonplegade (St. Emilion) - Planted to 90% merlot, 5% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon on 18.5 hectares on the south hillside of St. Emilion. This bottling is sourced from the oldest vines on the property which date to 1954, planted in limestone, clay and sand. Purple core with a red rim. Aromas of blueberry jam, graphite, and spice shape the nose, along with fresh earth and mocha scents. The palate proves superb, showing balance, grippy tannins, and racy acidity. Dark ripe plum and vanilla flavors drive the finish. Give this 2-4 years after bottling and enjoy for the following 10-15. Drink 2015-2030. 91-93 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Franc Mayne (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. Very dark purple color. The nose leads with fresh flowers, cinnamon, and cherry, enhanced with sweet earth and plum notes. The palate features racy, yet balanced acidity and structured tannins. Fresh earth, plum, and graphite flavors lead the way to a brooding finish. With time, this should prove to be a great vintage effort. Enjoy a couple of years after release and over the following ten years. 90-92 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Godeau (St. Emilion) - 95% merlot and 5% cabernet franc. Purple color. Sweet aromas of ripe blackberry, plum, and florals, complemented by pencil lead and cassis. The palate has good texture and balance, with medium tannins and lingering, lively acidity. Vibrant flavors of spice and mocha lead, backed up by tangy cherry and licorice on the easy going finish. Stephen Derenoncourt consults. Enjoy 2015-2025. 89-91 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Gracia (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. 14.4% potential alcohol. From a tiny 1.9-hectare micro-parcel of clay-limestone soil, average vine age is 39 years. Aged in 50% new oak. The yields in 2011 were only 24 hl/ha and just under 500 cases produced. Purple, nearly opaque core. Aromas of smoked meats, flowers, plum, hoisin sauce, and rich soil mingle with aromas of toasted marshmallow and earthy beet. The palate is full-bodied and powerful, with high-toned acidity and supportive tannins. Rich flavors of truffle and sweet cherry linger on the mid-palate through to the long finish. This will require 3-5 years in bottle and should be enjoyed for the following two decades. Tasted three times. Drink 2016-2036. 94-96 points — Jeff Loo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Gracia 'Les Angelots' (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot, 20% cabernet franc. 14% potential alcohol. Aged in 50% new oak. The yields for this cuvee were a meager 21hl/ha and only 125 cases produced. Dark purple color. This second wine of Gracia is rich and ripe, belying its status. Notes of grilled meats, pair with cinnamon and black fruits on the nose, enlivened by intense minerality. The palate is firm and powerful, with balanced tannins and high acidity. Coffee and truffle flavors emerge on the finish. Give this a year or two after bottling and enjoy for the following 10 years. Drink 2015-2025. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Grand Barrail Lamarzelle Figeac (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Reddish purple color with pink hue. Aromas of plum, quince, cassis, crushed rocks, and minerals. On the palate, the tannins surprise, then racy acidity kicks into high gear, continuing through to the chocolaty, spicy finish. Give this a year or two after bottling and enjoy for the following 5-8 years. Drink 2015-2023. 87-89 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Grand Corbin Despagne (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Situated on the northern border of St. Emilion, abutting Pomerol. Dark purple core with a reddish rim. Flowers, turned earth, licorice, and spice lead on the nose, followed with game and truffle. Medium-bodied with round tannins and balanced acidity. Rich, with good texture and a pleasurable finish. Drink 2017-2032. 89-91 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Grand Corbin Manuel (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Purple core with a pinkish hue. Aromas of smoked meats, plum, and cassis transition to dried tobacco leaf and tea. As with most 2011 St. Emilions, the palate features high-toned acidity and somewhat firm tannins. Wonderful flavors of smoked paprika and cherry drive the finish. Enjoy 2015-2022. 87-89 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Grand Mayne (St. Emilion) - 75% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Deep purple core with pink hints. The nose opens with plum, mocha, cassis, and brown sugar aromas, paired with pencil lead and grilled meat. Featuring racy acidity, this showcases power with minimal restraint as the tannins build and linger. Fresh fruit flavors intermixed with coffee and mocha give this wine a lovely finish. Needs 3-5 years in bottle and then enjoy through 2025. 89-91 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Grand Murailles (St. Emilion) - Predominantly merlot, with a touch of cabernet franc. Opaque purple with a slight pink hue. Very floral nose with crushed rock and red fruit aromas. The palate features round tannins and bright acidity with solid mid

palate weight and a delightfully smooth finish. Owner Sophie Fourcade of Clos St. Martin has crafted a pleasant 2011. This can be enjoyed upon release. 85-87 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Grand Pontet (St. Emilion) - Planted to 70% merlot, 15% cabernet sauvignon, and 15% cabernet franc. Reddish pink color. This opens with dried rose petal aromas, loads of black pepper, and herbs, complemented by mocha, cranberry, and plum notes. The palate is very light in body, with low levels of acidity and tannins, leading to a rather simple mid palate and finish. Drink on the early side. 85-87 points —Jeff Loo

2011 L'Arrosee (St. Emilion) - 60% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, 20% cabernet franc. Reddish purple core. Wild game, rose petal, and lavender scent the nose, progressing to herbs and red fruit. Discreet tannins slowly build toward the finish. This is a balanced and well-crafted wine that will benefit from extended aging. Drink from 2018 on. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo

2011 La Bienfaisance (St. Emilion) - 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc from a 4-hectare site. Dark purple color at core and rim. The nose opens with prune, fig, leather, and tobacco aromas, mixed with fresh bell pepper. The palate is full-bodied, with lots of fine-grained tannins and high acidity, finishing with an additional note of citrus laced Oolong tea. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Drink this from 2016. 87-89 points —Jeff Loo

2011 La Commanderie (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc from a 6-hectare vineyard. Purple red color. Full aromas of cherry, plum, chalk, and tar mix with spice and leather. The palate is medium-bodied, with high toned acidity and weighty tannins. Cherry cola, mocha, and lead pencil flavors lace the finish. Drink 2015-2025. 88-90 points —Jeff Loo

2011 La Confession (St. Emilion) - 69% merlot, 31% cabernet franc. 13.9% potential alcohol. From a 7.5-hectare estate, average vine age is 42 years, planted in clay-sand and clay-limestone soils. 59% of the harvest made it into the grand vin. Aged in 80% new oak. Deep red color with violet hue. The perfume is magic, with grilled meat and rich fruit mingling with mocha, truffle, and raspberry kirsch aromas. The palate is concentrated, with good depth and fruit concentration. Crushed mineral and an interesting note of hazelnut drive through to the long and pleasurable finish. Drink 2016-2034. Jean Phillipe Fort consults. 92-94 points —Jeff Loo



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 La Couspaude (St. Emilion) - Potential blend of 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. Dark purple color. Ripe plum, mocha, and espresso on the nose along with roasted mushroom and quince. Racy acidity provides lift as tannins slowly build on the palate, leading to a leathery and tobacco flavored finish. Try after 2015. 89-91 points — Jeff Loo

2011 La Croix Figeac (St. Emilion) - A potential blend of 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Dark red core with pink hues on the rim. The nose opens with rose, cherry, plum, and rich mineral aromas, enveloped in mocha. Medium-bodied with lengthy, grippy tannins and racy acidity. Earth and coffee flavors come in on the round, smooth finish. Drink 2015-2025. 86-88 points — Jeff Loo

2011 La Dominique (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot, 15% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. This 25-hectare estate is located on the western edge of St. Emilion near the border of Pomerol. Average vine age is 30+ years, planted in deep gravel and sand over clay. Aged primarily in new oak. Expressive, natural bouquet with floral and earth notes, aromas of raspberry, and a hint of caramel. A high-toned, limestone minerality gives the wine a lifted, structured feel on the palate with underlying turned earth and cranberry nuances. This is a well-built, terroir-driven expression of the 2011 vintage, and will certainly benefit from 5-10 years of age. Enjoy 2015-2025. Jean-Phillipe Fort consults. Tasted twice. 90-92 points — Devon Magee

2011 La Fleur d'Arthus (St. Emilion) - Planted to 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc, this 11-hectare parcel sits on gravel soils, with vines up to an incredible 70 years in age. This wine will see 100% new oak. Big and up front on the nose, with blackberry, cassis, Chambord, and mocha notes. This richness continues on the palate. Will need time in bottle to integrate. Enjoy 2017-2025. 88-90 points — Devon Magee

2011 La Fleur Morange (St. Emilion) - 50% merlot, 50% cabernet franc. This 1.51 hectare vineyard to the east of the town of St. Emilion boasts an incredible average vine age of 100 years, planted in sandy clay, limestone, and iron soils. Grapes are harvested and de-stemmed by hand and the wine is aged in 100% new oak. Exuberantly pretty nose, with pure, ripe raspberry notes. Rich on the palate with lovely, long length and plenty of acid to carry the concentration of the wild red fruit. A benchmark example of the Right Bank in 2011 that feels fresh and really showcases the vintage. Showy when young, and will be exciting to taste in 5-7 years and over the following 15-20 years. Claude Gros consults. 93-95 points — Devon Magee

2011 La Fleur Morange 'Mathilde' (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot from 50-year-old vines on this tiny 1.51 hectare estate to the east of the town of St. Emilion. Soils are sand-clay with limestone and *crasse de fer* (iron content). Deep ruby in color, with earth, spicy cinnamon, and cranberry notes on the nose. Rich, supple red fruit on the mid-palate adds to the creamy texture. Accessible, pretty, and showy as a young wine, enjoy this upon release and over the following 10 years. 91-93 points — Devon Magee

2011 La Gaffeliere (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot, 20% cabernet franc on 22 hectares just to the south of St. Emilion (overlooked by Ausone and Magdelaine). Average vine age is 35 years, planted in clay and chalk soils at a density of 5,400 vines per hectare. Seductively sweet fruit from the south-facing cabernet franc adds weight and richness to the palate, while remaining deftly balanced with firmness and limestone minerality. A touch of wild, sweet herbal character adds complexity. One of the more balanced, ripe examples of the appellation. Approachable early and will continue to improve with age. This is a top La Gaffeliere. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Enjoy 2015-2030. Tasted three times. 94-96 points — Devon Magee

2011 La Gomerie (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot. Pinkish purple at the core with slight pink hues at the rim. Owned by the Becot family of Beau-Sejour-Becot, this performed well in this vintage. Opens with aromas of rose petal, smoked meats, strawberry, and spice, with scorched earth and vanilla in the background. The palate is balanced with good levels of acidity and tannins, leading to a flavorful finish. This needs time to develop. Drink 2018-2030. 91-93 points — Jeff Loo

2011 La Marzelle (St. Emilion) - Planted to 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc and 10% cabernet sauvignon. From an 11-hectare vineyard soils are sandy gravel over clay. Black cherry and wild pine notes inform the nose. Rich and liqueur-like texture on the palate with more black fruit notes and hints of mocha. An opulent style, and will be approachable in the next 3-5 years. 89-91 points — Devon Magee

2011 La Mondotte (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot, 20% cabernet franc. Count von Neipperg's crown jewel atop the "Pavie slope" overlooking the St. Emilion plateau, this 4.8-hectare property is comprised of clay and limestone soils. Aged in 100% new oak. A sexy nose of red cherry and Chambord. The fruit flavors are dense and layered with an underlying freshness from the vintage's high acid. Hedonistic on the palate, with mocha, chocolate, and orange citrus notes, all buttressed with controlled, soft tannins. One of the richer Right Bank 2011s, though it was done well with a skilled hand. This wine will be fun to drink young, and will be at its best between 2025 and 2033. 94-96 points — Devon Magee



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 La Reserve de Louis (St. Emilion) - 100% Merlot. From a 2.1 hectare section of the Château Louis vineyards, average vine age is 45 years, planted in clay and limestone soils. The wine is aged in 50% new and 50% once-used oak barrels. Spicy wild fruit makes up the nose, with notes of raspberry and strawberry. This purity of fruit also leads the palate, along with controlled, moderate tannins. The limestone soils give the wine a graceful lift, and a fine acidity, which together culminate to make a seductively silky texture. Enjoyable right out of the gate and will certainly age effortlessly through 2017 and beyond. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. 90-92 points —Devon Magee

2011 La Serre (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Located just east of the town of St. Emilion atop the plateau on chalk, clay, and sand soils, this vineyard is managed by the extremely capable Moueix team. An elegant, seductive nose of red fruit, violets, and strawberry leaf. Lovely, pure, genuine fruit on the palate with a simple elegance and long length. The underlying structure suggests this will be beautiful in the next 3-5 years. This soft-handed, delicate style is well-suited for the 2011 vintage. Enjoy 2015-2020. 89-91 points —Devon Magee

2011 La Tour du Pin (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. This 8.9-hectare estate, formerly known as La Tour du Pin Figeac, was purchased by Cheval Blanc from the Moueix family in 2006. Close to the Pomerol border and neighboring both Figeac and Cheval Blanc, soils are gravel-based and the vineyards are farmed biodynamically. Expressive notes of cranberry, orange zest, and hints of caramel on the nose illustrate the polish of the merlot, as does the juicy, creamy texture through the mid-palate. The fine tannins on the finish have a leafy, stalky freshness. Youthful, elegant, and balanced. Approachable on release and best through 2020. Tasted twice. 87-89 points —Devon Magee

2011 La Tour Figeac (St. Emilion) - Planted to 60% merlot and 40% cabernet franc. This 14.5-hectare property sits on gravelly-sand soil on the St. Emilion-Pomerol slope near Cheval Blanc. Exhibits fresh fruit and a mint and menthol brightness on the nose. The fresh, tangy fruit continues on the palate with a caramel nuance. Tight with lots of structure and grip, this wine exudes the earth-driven Burgundian qualities that are present in many 2011s. Balanced and racy, it will become much more elegant over the next 3-5 years and can be enjoyed through 2023. 88-90 points —Devon Magee

2011 Laforge (St. Emilion) - Planted to 90% old-vine merlot and 10% cabernet franc on 6 hectares of vineyards spread out over the three terroirs of St. Emilion: clay, limestone, and sand. Re-

served and muted on the nose, this comes to life on the palate with broad, horizontal width. Mineral purity and cool black and blue fruits lead the pure silk texture. This wine is all about polished style and weighty mouthfeel, the signatures of owner Jonathan Malthus. Will be approachable young after decanting and through 2028. 93-95 points —Devon Magee

2011 Larcis Ducasse (St. Emilion) - Planted to 78% merlot and 22% cabernet franc. This 10.85 hectare vineyard sits on the limestone-based soils of the south/southwest exposed Côte Pavie. Notes of cranberry and spice on the nose. The palate is up-front, with rich, deep, juicy ripe blueberry fruit and a tannic texture. Hedonistic and long with its fresh acidity, this will need 2-3 years in bottle to integrate. Top Right Bank enologists Nicolas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt consult. Enjoy 2017-2025. Tasted twice. 92-94 points —Devon Magee

2011 Lassegue (St. Emilion) - 62% merlot, 30% cabernet franc, 8% cabernet sauvignon. This assemblage sees 85% new oak. Purple-black in color, the bouquet emphasizes very ripe fruit aromas with notes of figs and blackberry jam. Thick and viscous, the wine avoids a ponderous presence on the palate thanks to some tart acidity. The flavors, nevertheless, border on overripe with the acidity creating a sharp note on the finish. After all this, come some finely structured, very firm tannins creating a disjointed finish. Drink sooner rather than later before the fruit dries up. 87-89 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Le Carre (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc, this 1.5 hectare vineyard which abuts Clos Fourtet was purchased by Jonathan Malthus from Chateau Canon. The vines date back to the 1950s, planted in clay and limestone soils. Sweet black fruit on the nose continues on the palate and an earthy undercurrent that continues through to the finish. Medium-bodied and balanced, this will need a bit of time to integrate. Another wine produced with care by Jonathan Malthus. Enjoy 2015-2022. 91-93 points —Devon Magee

2011 Le Dome (St. Emilion) - Planted to 75% cabernet franc and 25% old vine merlot. The 3-hectare vineyard is situated next to Chateau Angelus on sandy soils over ironstone. A sensual, nuanced nose with red plum, raspberry, and mocha notes. This Le Dome is all silk on the midpalate with chalky, powdery tannins on the long finish. A citrusy freshness underlines the body. Very finessed. Approachable early, and will continue to unwind through 2030. From the Jonathan Malthus portfolio. 94-96 points —Devon Magee



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Le Dragon de Quintus (St. Emilion) - 54.3% merlot, 45.7% cabernet franc. This is the second wine from Chateau Quintus, a domaine known as Tertre Daugay prior to its recent purchase by the Dillon family, owners of Chateau Haut-Brion. Clear purple color with a broad magenta rim. Aromas of fresh, leafy herbs and spices waft freely. Crisp and focused on the palate, with spice and pepper notes infusing the precise, light cherry flavors. Light in body, this is a fresh, herb-laced wine that will be at its best in 5-7 years. Drink 2017-2022. 87-89 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Le Petit Cheval (St. Emilion) - 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc from a selection of young vines off the Cheval Blanc estate. 50% new oak. A little more expressive on the nose than the grand vin, with cherry, cranberry, mocha, caramel, and floral notes. Rich and creamy palate texture with powdery tannins. All of the elegance of the grand vin with a touch more opulence right out of the gate, this will be a hedonistic indulgence in its youth, and will certainly continue to evolve through 2022-2027. 90-92 points – Devon Magee

2011 Le Prieuire (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc from the 6.25 hectare, south-facing, St. Emilion limestone plateau. Will be aged for 14 months in 50% new oak. Raspberry and Chambord liqueur nose with rich red fruit and turned earth on the palate. A big 2011 with lots of dry extract and high tannins on the finish. Needs a few years in bottle to integrate. Enjoy 2015-2025. Tasted twice. 89-91 points – Devon Magee

2011 Les Asteries (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc from a tiny, one-hectare vineyard between Château Fonroque and Clos Fourtet just north of the town of St. Emilion. Vines here are as old as 80 years, planted in rock limestone soil. The nose is punctuated by black fruit, which continues on the palate in rich, plush layers. As is Jonathan Malthus' style, this wine is all texture—creamy from start to finish. There is a saline lift underneath, and the wine manages to be deft while rich. Simply yummy. A great Malthus success. 95-97 points – Devon Magee

2011 Les Gravieres (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot. This 4.5 hectare vineyard is comprised mostly of sand and gravel soils, with an average vine age of 50 years. Notes of violet, blackberry, blackberry leaf, and black olive come across on the nose. With laser-like fruit purity up-front, the midpalate offers cracked coffee beans and turned earth while mineral-driven tannins drive the finish. A product of the cool, dry vintage, this wine has the potential to age and will be most balanced between 2017 and 2022. 90-92 points – Devon Magee

2011 Louis (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. Situated on the 5.2 hectare Fombrauge property on the north-facing, clay and limestone slopes of the Saint-Christophe-des-Bardes commune. Aged in 60% new oak and 40% once-used barrels. Reserved on the nose with notes of strawberry compote, the richness of the wine reveals itself on the palate with opulent black fruit and violet flavors, balanced by the vintage's fresh acidity. Will be up-front right out of the gate, and will certainly benefit from 7-10 years of age. Founded by the late Thierry de la Brosse, co-owner of the famous Parisian restaurant L'Ami Louis. Stephane Derenoncourt consults here. Enjoy 2018-2030. 92-94 points – Devon Magee

2011 Lucia (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc. From 3.06 hectares on sand, gravel, and clay, the average vine age is 45 years, plus a one hectare plot that was planted in 1901. Tiny yields of only 25 hl/ha. Aged in 50% new oak and 50% once-used oak. Red cherry fruit, herbal, and spice aromas leap from the glass. The cherry carries through onto the palate in a kiss of sweet fruit. The wine is quite lifted and has a nice freshness and long length. Will drink beautifully young. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Just under 2,000 cases produced. Enjoy this beauty on release and over the following 15 years. 92-94 points – Devon Magee

2011 Lusseau (St. Emilion) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc from the 2-hectare, sandy, clay St. Emilion flats just under La Gaffeliere. Aged in 70% new oak. Cassis and mocha on the nose lead to a super plush mid-palate. This release is all about depth of fruit and richness in its youth, with showy, hedonistic merlot at its most opulent. Drink right out of the gate. Made by M. Lusseau, who looks after the wines of Gerard Perse. Enjoy on release and over the following 12 years. 89-91 points – Devon Magee

2011 Lysolence (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot. Aged 18+ months in 100% new oak. From 6.5 hectares of gravelly sand over deep gravel and iron subsoil. Average vine age is 50 years. Opaque purple color. The aromatic nose highlights spice notes with some latent dark fruit aromas lurking in the background. Dark, black fruit flavors laced with hints of chocolate are broadly textured, yet reined in by appropriately integrated acidity. Overall, this emphasizes structure over fruit, and the lengthy finish has some firm and fine-grained tannins. Enjoy 2017-2030. Tasted twice. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Magdelaine (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. This 11.3-hectare estate is situated at the break of the limestone plateau, neighboring Ausone, Belair-Monange and Canon. Soils are limestone and clay-limestone. Opaque at the core. The concentrated bouquet highlights notes of cherry and blackberry. Asserting a balanced and elegant profile, the creamy mid-palate highlights medium weight fruits that are clean and soft. The flavors fade gently into the finish where fine-grained tannins provide some lacy structure. Slightly closed now, the palate should unfurl over the next three years and provide easy drinking for the next decade. From the Moueix family of wines. Drink 2015-2025. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Magrez-Fombrauge (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc, this tiny 2.4 hectare estate is owned by Bernard Magrez of Pape-Clement. Average vine age is 30 years, planted in calcareous and limestone soils. Very deep, glass staining color. The aromas have considerable depth and concentration. Fruit intensity shows through in the ripe, plummy fruit flavors on the palate. Lighter than might be expected from this estate, the core of fruit shows elegance and freshness. Tannins are light, but those present are enough to form a firm finish. Will benefit from some bottle age and enjoy through 2028. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Monbousquet (St. Emilion) - 60% merlot, 30% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. 13.9% potential alcohol. From a 32-hectare estate on the St. Emilion cote just south of the town of St. Emilion. Soils are sandy clay with a significant iron component. Average vine age is 30+ years. Aged in 60% new oak. Dense, opaque purple. Revealing little initial bouquet, the barest hint of fruit appears with air. The palate is balanced, with round, densely textured black cherry fruit. With subtle tannins, the deep, medium to full-bodied fruit continues on toward a fine, subtly firm finish. Will provide great drinking for the next two decades. From the Gerard Perse portfolio. Tasted three times. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Pavie (St. Emilion) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. 14.3% potential alcohol. Planted on 37 hectares of limestone, mixed clay and limestone, and alluvial sand soils. Vines are harvested by hand and yield 30 hl/ha. Aged in 80% new oak. Dark as night, this St. Emilion is one of 2011's top wines. Rich chalky aromas mix with violet, plum, and other red and black fruit on the nose. Full of power and grip on entry, this has fine-grained tannins and high acidity levels, with a fruity mid-palate and a long, rich, and firm finish. This will require 10 years in the cellar, and should be enjoyed for two to

three decades. Wow! From the Gerard Perse portfolio. Tasted three times. Enjoy 2024-2044+. 95-97 points – Jeff Loo

2011 Pavie-Decesse (St. Emilion) - Planted to 90% merlot and 10% cabernet franc, this smaller sibling property of Chateau Pavie encompasses 9.1 hectares on chalk-limestone soils. Average vine age is well over 40 years. Aged in 80% new oak. Opaque purple color. The bouquet is subtle at first, with understated fruit and herb notes, slowly opening to riper fruit aromas. The palate veers towards the riper end of the spectrum as shown by blackberry and Raisinet flavors. The backpalate is compact, with some firm yet finely grained tannins. Wait five years for the tannins to meld and drink for the following decade or two. From the Gerard Perse portfolio. Drink 2017-2030. Tasted twice. 92-94 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Pavie-Macquin (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot, 14% cabernet franc, and 1% cabernet sauvignon from 15 hectares of low yielding vines planted directly atop the St. Emilion plateau. Average vine age is 40 years, planted in clay and limestone soils over deep limestone bedrock. Seductive freshly-picked strawberries, plums and blackberry on the nose carry with perfect ripeness onto the palate. A lot of structure with fine tannins, this is a full-bodied expression of the vintage. Approachable 2-3 years after release but will continue to improve over the next 10-15 years. Both Nicolas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt consult. Enjoy 2015-2030. Tasted twice. 93-95 points – Devon Magee

2011 Peby Faugeres (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot. Aged 18 months in 65% new oak. From a 9-hectare estate near Valandraud, Fleur Cardinale and Rol Valentin. Average vine age is a high 50 years, planted in limestone soils with yields of 25 hl/ha. Dark in color. The nose is dominated by very ripe black fruit aromas with notes of warm stones and smoke. Initially a bit syrupy in texture, the dark black fruit flavors transition toward crunch ripe cherry on the backpalate. Fresh acidity and firm tannins need to integrate for a harmonious finish. Wait a few years after release and enjoy between 2017-2030. Tasted twice. 93-95 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Pierre de Lune (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet sauvignon. Average vine age is 30 years, planted in sandy gravel over deep gravel soils. The bouquet expresses a melange of aromas including herbs, celery, and dried leaves. With creamy textures showing a hint of fat, the herbaceous notes carry on and form the palate's spine mixed with some mild cherry flavors. Low in acidity, the fruit fades gently to reveal structured tannins in the background. Enjoy 2015-2025. 90-92 points – Chuck Hayward



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Pindefleurs (St. Emilion) - Planted to 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc. The complex bouquet initially highlights some lifted, aromatic notes of herbs and high-toned spice with cherry fruit notes taking some time to unfold. Elegantly styled with a refreshing and pure cherry fruit expression that emphasizes balance over power. With barely noticeable tannins, this fine wine will drink well over the next ten years. A nice drop indeed. Drink 2015-2025. 88-90 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Quinault L'Enclos (St. Emilion) - 15 hectares planted to 80% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, 5% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% malbec. The vines have an average age of 45 years. Aged in 100% new oak. Pretty, shade-ripened fruit flavors of plum and cherry, backed by a gripping, strong structure and fresh and earthy mineral notes. Approachable on release and through 2020. 89-91 points – Devon Magee

2011 Quintus (St. Emilion) - 50.5% merlot, 49.5% cabernet franc. Chateau Tertre Daugay was recently purchased by the Dillon family of Haut-Brion fame and renamed Chateau Quintus. Vibrant purple color with a magenta rim. The open and aromatic bouquet is filled with soft aromas of chocolate-laden fruit accented with aromas of coffee grounds. Round and medium-bodied, the backpalate fades towards a refined finish that wanes gently, with barely noticeable tannins. Enjoy on release and over the following ten years. 90-92 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Rol Valentin (St. Emilion) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet franc from 7.5 hectares on the northwestern edge of the St. Emilion plateau. Average vine age is 35+ years planted in clay-limestone soils. Very deeply colored. The bouquet exhibits ripe aromas of black fruits including blackberry and blueberry. With tight structure, flavors of black cherry and other dark fruits coat the palate and are supported by a substantial amount of fine-grained tannins. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Enjoy 2015-2025. Tasted twice. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Sanctus (St. Emilion) - Planted to 70% merlot, 30% cabernet. This cuvee is sourced from a 3.5-hectare portion of the La Bienfaisance vineyard. Average vine age is 43 years, planted in clay and limestone with *crasse de fer*. Opaque and darkly colored, with aromas of ripe, dark fruits with hints of chocolate. Showing deep and plush dark fruits, the palate is almost a bit over the top but avoids being overblown thanks to a restrained backpalate. The lively fruit carries through to the long finish with a fine layer of fuzzy, cocoa-laced tannin. Tasted four times. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Sansonnet (St. Emilion) - Planted to 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc on 7 hectares located northeast of the town of St. Emilion on the highest point of the limestone clay plateau across from Trotteville. Average vine age is 35 years, planted in thin clay and limestone. Opaque and purple-black in color. The closed nose reveals hints of minerals and blackberry jam. The medium weight palate highlights ripe, pure, and round black fruits with some underlying firm structural components. The ripe fruit is also evident on the lengthy finish thanks to some integrated acids. The fine tannins, while not hard or firm, contribute structure. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Tasted three times. 91-93 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Secret de Cardinale (St. Emilion) - 100% merlot. From a 1.4-hectare parcel owned by Fleur Cardinale, this is not a second wine but a luxury cuvee in its own right. Average vine age is 35 years. A very complex and exotic bouquet, with notes of cassis, black cherry, and blackberry with some stone and roasted meat aromas. Intense milk chocolate mixes with black cherry candy flavors that are not overripe thanks to perfectly integrated acidity. The tannins are present on the finish but are not too grippy. Drinkable on release and through 2022. Tasted three times. Jean-Philippe Fort consults. 92-94 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 Soutard (St. Emilion) - 70% merlot, 30% cabernet franc. Herbaceous, green fruit notes mingle with some understated cherry fruit aromas. Medium to full-bodied, with fresh, crisp fruits that leave an attractive elegance on the backpalate. The tannins are refined with a downy texture and the acidity on the long finish leaves a lively, citrus impression. Will be approachable on release and through 2024. Tasted twice. 87-89 points – Chuck Hayward

2011 St. Georges 'Côte Pavie' (St. Emilion) - Planted to 80% merlot, 20% cabernet franc. Opaque with a garnet robe. The bouquet is concentrated and backward, showing just a hint of chocolate atop latent fruit. Broadly textured, the palate shows simple and straightforward flavors, though it is balanced and elegant with some depth and complexity appearing toward the back. The long finish mimics the entry with primary black cherry flavors. With a thin layer of firm tannins, there's lots of potential for evolution here. This should blossom over the next 5 years and be enjoyable through 2020. 87-89 points – Chuck Hayward



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Tauzinat l'Ermitage (St. Emilion) - Planted to 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc. This 9-hectare estate is owned by Catherine Moueix, who also owns Chateau Taillefer in Pomerol. Average vine age is 30 years, planted in clay-limestone soils. Lightly aromatic with medium intensity, the bouquet highlights fresh herbs and green spices. While the mild fruit has creamy texture on the mid-palate, this mingles with noticeable vegetal and unripe nuances. The fruit fades quickly before some firm tannins kick in on the finish. Best consumed through 2020. 87-89 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 3 de Valandraud (St. Emilion) - Sourced from a collection of vineyard parcels owned by garagiste "bad boy" Jean-Luc Thunevin, 3 de Valandraud is the third wine of Chateau Valandraud. Plantings are 75% merlot, 25% cabernet franc and 5% malbec with an average vine age of 30+ years. With a bouquet dominated by high-toned florals, the delicate and straightforward fruit is laced with herbs and spices but lacks density or richness. While there are some broad textures, this needs a bit of charm or flavor interest, especially on the backpalate and finish where some fine-grained and spicy tannins leave a lasting impression. Enjoy 2015-2020. 85-87 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Teyssier (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc. Purple pinkish color. The nose offers ripe red apple skin, bell pepper, coffee, and currant aromas with an underlying chalky minerality. Healthy tannins and racy acidity mingle with candied fruit on the mid-palate, while cranberry and strawberry flavors blend with soft tobacco and chocolate on the finish. From garagiste rock star Jonathan Malthus. Drink 2016-2026. 88-90 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Troplong Mondot (St. Emilion) - 85% merlot, 10% cabernet sauvignon, 5% cabernet franc from a 33-hectare parcel situated on a high escarpment over Chateau Pavie. Soils are clay and limestone with some flint. Opaque purple color. Mildly intense pepper and spice aromas with ripe black cherry fruit notes in the background. The intense fruit carries onto the palate where nicely proportioned flavors show liqueur-like texture that still maintain tension and grace. The wine shows great length on the finish. Incredibly complex with some of this estate's classic minerality underneath, and fine-grained, balanced tannins. Tasted three times. Enjoy 2017-2030. 93-95 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Trottevieille (St. Emilion) - 50% merlot, 48% cabernet franc, 2% cabernet sauvignon. Next to Troplong Mondot and Pavie Macquin. Subtlety is in order here as understated aromas of cherry and fresh earth emerge gracefully with air. The balanced bouquet is reflected in the palate's intensity as the moderate and

elegant profile highlights vibrant and pristine fruit flavors. The fresh fruit flavors carry on to the backpalate and the finish thanks to just the right amount of acidity. Subtle tannins complete the experience. A good example of why medium-weighted, balanced styles were so successful in 2011. Should provide fine drinking through 2025. 89-91 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Valandraud (St. Emilion) - Sourced from a collection of vineyard parcels owned by garagiste "bad boy" Jean-Luc Thunevin. Plantings are 75% merlot, 25% cabernet franc and 5% malbec with an average vine age of 30+ years. Opaque purple color. The beguiling bouquet seduces with a melange of soft, black fruit aromas. Juicy with broad textures and soft edges to the fruit-filled palate, there's a bit of chocolate infused with the black fruit flavors. Firm tannins shape the finish, with no hard textures or tanginess. Needs five years to soften and gain some breadth, then will be at its best from 2025-2030. 93-95 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Vieux Chateau Mazerat (St. Emilion) - 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc. From a small parcel of old vines near Angelus and Beausejour Duffau. Purple red color. This features aromas of game, cigar box, sweet cherry and other ripe red fruit. On the palate, big structured tannins are a match for the acidity, while dark chocolate and espresso bean flavors come through on the lengthy finish. Everything is in balance. From the Jonathan Malthus portfolio. 93-95 points — Jeff Loo

2011 Villemaurine (St. Emilion) - 95% merlot, 5% cabernet franc. Opaque purple color. The bouquet highlights vibrant, fresh dark fruits. Broadly textured, fine acidity helps to focus the palate. The black fruit flavors are crisp and fresh and show more dark fruits toward the backpalate. This finishes with good length, and a fair amount of fine-grained tannins provides some structure. Enjoy 2013-2020. 88-90 points — Chuck Hayward

2011 Virginie de Valandraud (St. Emilion) - Sourced from a collection of vineyard parcels owned by garagiste "bad boy" Jean-Luc Thunevin, "Virginie" is the second wine of Chateau Valandraud. Plantings are 75% merlot, 25% cabernet franc and 5% malbec with an average vine age of 30+ years. Opaque purple color, the closed nose initially radiates a focused aroma of intense yet firm and compact fruits. The dense and focused bouquet slowly evolves to reveal beets, cloves, and blackberry. The palate, however, shows a bit more breadth as the dense and firm fruit flavors starts to reveal some texture. A medium long finish supported by granular, fine tannins. This will need 2-3 years and can be enjoyed over the next ten years. 91-93 points — Chuck Hayward



2011 TASTING NOTES

Right Bank Reds—St. Emilion

2011 Beausejour '1901' (Montagne St. Emilion) - 70% merlot, 30% cabernet franc. From a 110-year-old vineyard planted in chalky-clay soils over a base of limestone. Fragrant bouquet of ripe plum, spicy cherry and licorice aromas. Pushing the envelope and a bit tart. Enjoy 2015-2020. 85-87 points – Eddie Wolowski

2011 de Lussac (Lussac St. Emilion) - 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc from a 28 hectare vineyard. The average age is just over 30 years and is planted to 73% merlot and 27% cabernet franc. Brilliant, dark purple core. Ripe and concentrated plum and black cherry flavors on the palate show tarry phenolics of fresh pavement and creosote. Fine-grained tannins that balance the ultra-ripe fruit. The Laviale family, owners of Chateau Franc Mayne, purchased this property in 2000. Enjoy upon release, through 2022. 88-90 points – Andy Frieden



2011 TASTING NOTES

Other Right Bank Reds—Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux

The so-called 'lesser appellations' of the Right Bank fared particularly well in 2011. With vineyards that were slightly less exposed and prone to heat damage from the hot weather of the spring and summer, these merlot-dominant regions learned many lessons from the previous two harvests, where merlot achieved very high alcohol levels. The best wines of 2011 are delicious, approachable wines emphasizing finesse, balance and elegance. The overripe and tannic characteristics found in 2011 St. Emilions are hard to find here. The moderate climates of these terroirs did wonders for the quality of these wines and they should be a source of many excellent, affordable, and drinkable wines.

2011 Carignan 'Prima' (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, and 10% cabernet franc from a 30 hectare vineyard. Yields are 45 hl/ha. Opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. The nose offers pervasive and primary black and blue fruit scents. Ripe and medium to full-bodied, the blueberry and other dark fruit flavors are concentrated. Ripe tannins make this a great value proposition. Drink upon release and over the following 6-8 years. 87-89 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Clos Chaumont (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 53% merlot, 25% cabernet sauvignon, and 22% cabernet franc from a 12 hectare vineyard. Fairly young vines with an average age of 10 years. Opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. The somewhat muted bouquet displays primary black fruit aromas. Beautifully concentrated black plum and cherry flavors are overmatched by the grippy tannins, however. Hubert de Bouard consults. 86-88 points – Andy Frieden

2011 de Birot (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 78% merlot, 17% cabernet franc, 5% cabernet sauvignon from a 21 hectare vineyard planted to clay, limestone, and gravel soils. Average age of vines is 25 years. The wine is aged for 18 months in a mix of 50% oak barrels and 50% concrete vats. Opaque purple core. Perfumed with cherry blossom, clay soil, and tobacco leaf aromas, leading to a palate full of black cherry flavors and juicy acidity framed in a medium body. A nice little wine, this offers very good value for its price point. Enjoy upon release and over the following 5 to 7 years. 87-89 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Le Doyenne (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, and 10% cabernet sauvignon from a 7.5 hectare vineyard. Harvested from 29-year old vines. Nearly opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. This is a somewhat backward wine with soil and tertiary flavors dominating the sparse fruit and tannins that dominate the finish. Enjoy from 2014-2019. 85-87 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Mont-Perat (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - Merlot dominant with small percentages of cabernet sauvignon and cabernet

franc from a 100-hectare vineyard. Opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Cherry blossom scents the nose, along with black cherry and coffee grounds, earthy tobacco scents, and mineral, clay soil aromas. Tangy red cherry flavors balanced with broad, medium-grained tannins. Enjoy upon release, through 2019. 87-89 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Reaut (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - Typically 58% merlot, 37% cabernet sauvignon, 5% cabernet franc. This 26-hectare property was purchased from Champagne Roederer by Yannick Evenou of Chateau Fayat who shortened the name from Reaut la Graviere. Deep red color. Shows a distinctive nose of red fruits, complemented by cloves and cinnamon. Baking spice notes and red cherries flavor the palate. This is a well-integrated wine with fine tannins and a lingering finish. Very nice. Enjoy 2015-2025. 88-90 points – Eddie Wolowski

2011 Reynon (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 85% merlot, 9% petit verdot, and 6% cabernet sauvignon from a 20.5 hectare vineyard. Nearly opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Blackberry and plum fruit scents dominate the nose. Lean primary fruit flavors gain precision from high acidity, with a slightly disjointed aspect due to grippy tannins. Enjoy upon release and over the following 5-7 years. A Denis Dubourdiu property. 86-88 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Ricaud (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 45% cabernet sauvignon, 41% merlot, 14% cabernet franc. Cadmium red in color. Floral fruit notes and brown baking spices are present on the medium-bodied palate. Shows some finesse and should be a nice little find upon release. Enjoy 2014-2019. 86-88 points. – Eddie Wolowski



2011 TASTING NOTES

Other Right Bank Reds—Côtes de Castillon

2011 Ampelia (Côtes de Castillon) - 95% merlot and 5% cabernet franc from a 4.75 hectare vineyard. Average vine age of 30 years with yields of 43 hl/ha. Brilliant purple core. Perfumed nose with blackberry and cassis scents rounded out with underlying complex soil, fresh pavement, and tar. Supple entry of ripe black fruits drive the palate, supported and balanced with broad, powdery tannins. Drink upon release for a decade plus. 87-89 points — Andy Frieden

2011 d'Aiguilhe (Côtes de Castillon) - Vineyard planted to 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Aged in 45% new oak barrels. Opaque and inky in color, with a deep crimson rim. Smoky dark ripe fruit on the palate is enhanced with subtle mineral undertones. Very finessed in style, with sexy up-front fruit and terrific balance. A complete and balanced wine. Will drink well on release and can be enjoyed over the next decade. 88-90 points — Eddie Wolowski

2011 d'Aiguilhe 'Querre' (Côtes de Castillon) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc; 26-year old, 2.40-hectare vineyard situated at the top of the clay/limestone plateau in Saint Philippe d'Aiguilhe. Net yields of 38 hl/ha in 2011. Aged in a combination of 60% new and 40% once used barrels. Almost opaque ruby verging on garnet. Persistent perfume of flower blossoms with red and black fruit aromas and an underlying earthy soil note. Tangy and juicy with primary flavors of red cherry, good structure, and finishing with some grippy tannins that need a couple of years to mellow. Otherwise a really nice wine. Enjoy 2015-2025. Tasted twice. Only 1,000 cases produced. 88-90 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Cap de Faugeres (Côtes de Castillon) - 85% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. This 30 hectare vineyard is planted on the limestone plateau and clay and limestone hillsides. Average vine age is 30 years. The wine is aged 12 months in new oak from five coopers. 14% alcohol. This inky purple colored effort has good intensity of perfumed spring flowers and cherry blossom with red and black fruits and some soil aromas. Ripe black plum and black cherry flavor the mid-palate, However, the finish turns a bit tannic and bitter. Tasted twice. Michel Rolland consults. 10,000 cases produced. 86-88 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Clos Les Lunelles (Côtes de Castillon) - 80% merlot, 10% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. 8.5 hectare vineyard with an average vine age of 41 years. The fruit was harvested September 26-28. Aged in 60% new oak barriques. Opaque purple core. Perfumed with scents of spring flowers, black, and blue fruits, tobacco, and fresh earth. Powerful and intensely con-

centrated fruit. Another great effort and value from the Perse family of Chateau Pavie. Drink upon release and enjoy for another 6-9 years. 90-92 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Clos Puy Arnaud (Côtes de Castillon) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc from a 10 hectare vineyard. Yields of 35 hl/ha. Brilliant beet purple core with a vibrant fuchsia rim. Perfumed nose of violet and flower blossom transitions to black cherry and cassis with an underlying mineral aroma. Sweet entry of pretty black cherry builds to a crescendo on the concentrated mid-palate. Medium to full bodied, with supple texture, this sleeper of the vintage finishes with long, round tannins that are resolved. This will drink well upon release and for a decade plus. 88-90 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Côte de Montpezat (Côtes de Castillon) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon from a 28 hectare vineyard. Brilliant purple core. Pervasive black fruit aromas on the nose dominate subtle pen ink notes. Soft entry of ripe fruits leads to soil flavors on the mid-palate, with manicured tannins completing this medium to full bodied wine. Tasted twice. Drink upon release for a decade plus. 85-87 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Côte de Montpezat 'Cuvee Compostelle' (Côtes de Castillon) - The vineyard is planted to 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. The average age of the vines in this cuvee is over 30 years old and planted to clay and limestone soil. This cuvee is based upon a selection of grapes that also see aging in used barrels from top grand cru estates in the Haut Medoc. Showing a ruby core with a pale crimson rim. The floral nose transitions into a palate revealing ripe, red cherries and hints of subtle mineral notes. Tightly knit, with lots of tannins. Stephane Deroncourt consults. Give it a couple of years and enjoy over the following 3-5 years. 84-86 points — Eddie Wolowski

2011 Domaine De L'A (Côtes de Castillon) - 60% merlot, 25% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon from a 5.3 hectare vineyard planted on clay and limestone slopes. The average age of the vines is 35 years old. The wine spends 18 months in barrels on the lees without racking. Inky purple core with a vibrant fuchsia rim. Simple nose of cherry blossom, tobacco leaf, and coffee grounds progressing to flavors of red Bing cherry on the palate. The pleasant entry quickly leads way to a big and powerful tannin structure. Home estate of Stephane Deroncourt. Enjoy from 2015 to 2020. 87-89 points — Andy Frieden



2011 TASTING NOTES

Other Right Bank Reds—Côtes de Castillon

2011 Joanin Becot (Côtes de Castillon) - 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc. 14.4% alcohol. The 12-hectare vineyard is situated just 300 meters west of St. Philippe d'Aiguilhe on thin clay atop deep limestone similar to those that characterize the Saint Emilion plateau. Average vine age is 38 years. Aged in 65% new oak and 35% once-used barrels. Nearly opaque purple core. Pervasive aromas of spring flowers, along with ripe black fruits and a touch of fresh turned earth round out the aromatic and perfumed nose. Extremely ripe black plum and cherry flavor the entry, with a juicy, mouthcoating, mid-palate offers the rich supple texture that has been signature of this wine in the past four vintages. Tannins are supple and polished. A major sleeper of the vintage. Jean-Philippe Fort consults. Enjoy upon release and for the following ten years. 91-93 points – Andy Frieden

2011 La Croix Lartrigue (Côtes de Castillon) - 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc. The vines are planted on a 7-hectare estate that has clay soils mixed with limestone and gravels. The wine came in at 14% alcohol. Bright fruit, with clove and raspberry flavors. Good mouthfeel that's quickly trumped by lots of tannins on the finish. Stephane Derenoncourt consults and shares ownership in the property. Enjoy from 2015-2019. 86-88 points – Eddie Wolowski

2011 La Roncheraie (Côtes de Castillon) - 75% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% cabernet franc, with 14.5% alcohol. In 2011, the vineyard was enlarged from 1.34 to 3.8-hectares, with the inclusion of three select blocks, all atop the hills in Belves-de-Castillon, facing due south over the Dordogne Valley. The average vine age is 25 to 30 years. Shallow clay soils sit atop a limestone base. All fruit was harvested by hand and quite late: with merlot on October 1-3; cabernet franc on October 10, and cabernet sauvignon on October 17. Yields were 17 hl/ha. Nearly opaque purple core. Later harvest dates and super low yields allowed for full phenolic maturity. Black fruits dominate, with plum and cassis leading to super ripe, weighty blackberry and cherry flavors that offer a glycerol laced mid-palate. Tannins are light in grip and are well integrated, supporting the huge fruit. Claude Gros has consulted since the first vintage in 2010. Drink upon release for a decade plus. 88-90 points – Andy Frieden

2011 Lagrave-Aubert (Côtes de Castillon) – The vineyard is planted to 75% merlot, 20% cabernet franc and 5% cabernet sauvignon. The 20 hectare vineyard has sand and gravel soils with vines averaging 25 years of age. Showing a rustic, burnt nose, the palate has ripe fruits, low acidity, integrated with black

fruits, BBQ spices, and plums. On the verge of being over done but maintains its balance. Michel Rolland consults. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years. 85-87 points – Eddie Wolowski

2011 Laussac (Côtes de Castillon) - Planted to 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc on clay-limestone soils, this 15 hectare estate is managed by the same group as Rol Valentin and Vieux Taillefer. Vines average 40 years in age. Deep dark red core, nice forward fruit are complemented by pepper and spice on the nose. The palate shows similar flavors along with a nice hit of chalk, leading to a long, caressing finish. Good value. Michel Rolland consults. Enjoy on release and through 2020. 87-89 points – Eddie Wolowski

2011 Montlandrie (Côtes de Castillon) - 75% merlot, 25% cabernet franc, from 25 year-old vines. Vibrant violet hue. Floral, perfumed aromas of rose petal define the nose. The medium-bodied palate shows excellent balance, with subtle tannins that are already integrated. Light on its feet, this shows excellent fruit and finesse. Delicious. Load up! Owned by Denis Durantou of Chateau L'Eglise Clinet since 2009. Enjoy upon release and over the following 5-8 years. 91-93 points – Eddie Wolowski

2011 Veyry (Côtes de Castillon) - 95% merlot and 5% cabernet franc from a 4-hectare vineyard. The soils are dominated by clay with infusions of limestone and sand. Opaque purple core. Persistent black plum and cherry aromas on the nose carry through to the palate. Sweet and fruity on entry, then powerful tannins take over. Founded in 1997, this estate is owned by Christian Veyry who has worked with Michel Rolland. Enjoy 2014 to 2019. 86-88 points – Andy Frieden



2011 TASTING NOTES

Other Right Bank Reds—Fronsac & Canon-Fronsac

2011 Arnauton (Fronsac) - 90% merlot, 8% cabernet franc and 2% malbec with an average vine age of 30 years. The 24-hectare vineyard is situated on south-facing hillsides just to the east of the Fronsac appellation and is planted to a mix of clay and limestone soils. 13.5% alcohol with yields of 51 hls/ha. The wine sees one-third new oak and spends 12 months in barrel. The restrained bouquet shows off moderately intense aromas of earth and black raspberries. Simple and straightforward cherry fruit flavors occupy a small space on the palate showing off some juicy textures. The medium-bodied wine is backed up by some firm tannins, so give this quaffer a couple of years and enjoy over the following 5-7 years. 88-90 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 de Carles (Fronsac) - 85% merlot and 15% cabernet franc. 10 hectares from this 20-hectare estate go into the Chateau de Carles. Average vine age is 35 years, planted in clay-limestone soils. Deep and inky purple color throughout. Shows an aromatic, floral bouquet, along with aromas of ripe blackberry, chocolate and vanilla bean. Sleek and lush on the palate, with ripe black fruit flavors and a touch of liqueur. Medium in body, the palate is structured, with slightly sweet tannins. A very supple and inviting wine all the way through to the velvety finish. Very nice. Stephane Derenoncourt and Alain Raynaud consult. Enjoy 2014-2024. 90-92 points —Alex Lallo

2011 Fontenil (Fronsac) - 90% merlot, 10% cabernet sauvignon. Owned by Dany and Michel Rolland, this 9-hectare estate is planted in clay and limestone soils. Average vine age exceeds 40 years. Fermentation takes place in small stainless and wooden vats before aging 12 to 15 months in 60% new oak. Deep dark core with violet rim. This is a big, ripe wine with spice and game notes complemented by chalky minerality. Noticeable tannins emerge on the otherwise pleasantly oaked finish. Enjoy 2015-2025. 87-89 points —Eddie Wolowski

2011 G Acte 3 (Fronsac) - 56% merlot and 44% cabernet franc. The Acte series is a side project of the Guinaudeau family of Chateau Lafleur in Pomerol, who also work with vineyards in Fronsac. Different combinations of grapes and soils are explored, and each Acte bottling represents a different approach. The first two bottlings were dominated by cabernet franc. Dark in color but reveals little on the nose. The flavors are lithe and subtle before they quickly build to a crescendo as pure dark fruit gains intensity towards the mid-palate. Denser in the back, there's a cool tone here, as the pure fruit expression builds some underlying structural elements. Balanced and seamless now, it will peak in 8-10 years as the wine sheds its puppy fat and the savory elements come to the fore. Enjoy 2015-2025. 91-93 points —Chuck Hayward

2011 Haut Carles (Fronsac) - 90% merlot, 5% cabernet franc, 5% malbec. This 10-hectare estate is part of the larger holdings of Chateau de Carles. Inky black core with crimson rim. Shows ripe black fruit and chalky minerality with good concentration and structure. Stephane Derenoncourt and Alain Raynaud consult. Enjoy 2014-2024. 90-92 points —Eddie Wolowski

2011 La Dauphine (Fronsac) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Spends 12 months in oak, one-third of which is new. A deep inky color. Fruity aromas leap from the glass. Good acidity and firm tannins help provide plenty of structure, along with black fruit and mineral flavors. The finish shows nice lift. Enjoy 2014-2020. 85-87 points —Eddie Wolowski

2011 La Vieille Cure (Fronsac) - 75% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, and 5% cabernet sauvignon. Vineyards are located over 20 hectares in the south-east of the appellation, on a clay-limestone bedrock. 14% alcohol. Opaque core with a magenta rim. Very floral, violet-driven nose, while the palate exudes black cherry flavor and hints of creamy espresso. Great mouthfeel, excellent balance, and classic structure. Enjoy 2015-2025. 91-93 points —Eddie Wolowski

2011 Moulin Haut Laroque (Fronsac) - 65% merlot, 20% cabernet franc, 10% cabernet sauvignon, 5% malbec. Sourced from two plots, the original being Le Moulin and the second Haut de Laroque which adjoins Chateau de Carles. A floral nose leads to a medium-bodied palate with really nice fruit concentration. Finishes long with subtle complexities. Good stuff. Enjoy on release and over the following 10 years. Michel Rolland consults. 89-91 points —Eddie Wolowski

2011 Villars (Fronsac) - 73% merlot, 18% cabernet franc, 9% cabernet sauvignon aged in one-third new oak. This 30 hectare estate is nearly 200 years old, situated over the valley of the River Isle on clay-limestone soils. Vines average 35 years in age. Deep purple core with violet rim. This fruit forward effort shows an intriguing bouquet with a touch of sweet tobacco. Good concentration on the midpalate leads to a long, fruit-laden finish. Enjoy 2015-2025. 91-93 points —Eddie Wolowski

2011 Vrai Canon Bouche (Canon-Fronsac) - 83% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, and 2% malbec. Aged for 18 months in 40% new oak. Ripe, red fruit dominates the nose and carries over to the fruit-forward palate, along with flavors of ripe spicy berry, milk chocolate, and a prune note. Good acidity but lacks balance. Enjoy on release, through 2019. 86-88 points —Eddie Wolowski



2011 TASTING NOTES

Other Right Bank Reds—Côtes de Blaye, Côtes de Bourg & Côtes de Francs

2011 Bel Air La Royere (Côtes de Blaye) - 79.7% merlot, 14.5% malbec, and 5.8% cabernet sauvignon. This 12.5-hectare vineyard planted on clay and limestone soils has a vine density of 5,500/ha with an average age of 45 years. For this, the estate's top wine, the grapes come from the best four-hectare section of vineyard, planted to 55% malbec and 45% merlot. The grapes were entirely hand harvested, with yields of 45 hl/ha. Aging is in a combination of 50% new, and 50% once used barrels for an anticipated 24 months. Dark purple core with a fuchsia rim. Perfumed spring flowers, red berry, and blackberry compote aromas with an undertone of clay soil rounding out the pretty and complex nose. Super juicy on entry, the mouth-watering mid-palate is truncated by heavy dry tannins, making this a bit disjointed. Tannins will need to round out and lengthen for a couple of years before this is ready to be fully enjoyed. Christian Vevry of Michel Rolland's lab consults. Enjoy 2015 to 2022. 86-88 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Belle Coline (Côtes de Blaye) - 90% merlot and 10% malbec. The average age of the vines on this 11-hectare vineyard is 33 years, while the malbec is from rare 60-year old vines. Aged for an estimated 12 months in a mix of 44% new, and 44% once used barrels from Taransaud, Ermitage, Ana Selection, and Darnajou. Dark garnet color with a nearly opaque purple core and a vibrant fuchsia rim. Perfumed flower blossom, super-ripe blueberry and black fruit along with aromas of earthy loamy soil. An extracted and ripe offering, this shows concentration of dark plum and berry compote flavors. A new entry from Christophe Reboul-Salze, owner of Châteaux Les Grands Marechaux and Gigault. "Coline" is named for Christophe's daughter. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Enjoy 2014 to 2019. 85-87 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Gigault (Côtes de Blaye) - 100% merlot. An 18 hectare property located in the highest part of the village on clay-limestone soil. Soft entry, very floral, with bright fruit and gentle tannins. Good length, complete and delicious wine. 86-88 points — Eddie Wolowski

2011 Haut Bertinerie (Côtes de Blaye) - 60% merlot, 40% cabernet sauvignon from a 19 hectare vineyard. Purple with a purple rim. Primary blackberry and plum aromas on the nose plus some spring flower scents. Nice entry of black fruit flavors combined with an excellent earthy soil accent. Small tannic grip is balanced with acidity and juicy fruit. Drink 2014 to 2024. 86-88 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Les Grands Marechaux (Côtes de Blaye) - 88% merlot, 8% cabernet franc, 4% cabernet sauvignon. A 20 hectare vineyard planted on clay and limestone soils. Bouquet of zesty cherries, with a nice touch of chalk. It is fruit forward with lots of charm and a nice long finish. A sleeper. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. Enjoy on release and over the following 5-7 years. 89-91 points — Eddie Wolowski

2011 Roland La Garde (Côtes de Blaye) - 74% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, and 6% malbec from a 29 hectare vineyard. Purple core. Primary black fruit aromas on the nose with an underlying earthy soil note. Powerful and concentrated fruit entry slightly overshadowed by aggressive tannins. Enjoy from 2014 to 2019. 86-88 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Fougas Maldoror (Côtes de Bourg) - Planted to 75% merlot and 25% cabernet sauvignon. This 17-hectare estate is planted at a density of 5,500 vines/hectare and boasts an average vine age of 41 years. Planted in sandy alluvial soil resting on a subsoil of red and blue clay mixed with limestone. Yields were just 39 hl/ha. The vineyards were certified organic in 2010 and are in the process of gaining biodynamic certification. Dark purple core with a fuchsia rim. Perfumed cherry blossoms and black plum aromas dominate this fruit-forward wine. The entry is juicy and light with primary red cherry flavor, balanced with some tannic structure. Enjoy on release and over the following 3-5 years. 85-87 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Marsau (Côtes de Francs) - Deep in color, the 2011 shows vibrant fruit and excellent flavor while retaining freshness. Balanced and finessed with a lingering finish. Great value for the "The Petrus of Côtes de Francs". Excellent. 86-88 points — Eddie Wolowski

2011 Puygueraud (Côtes de Francs) - 60% merlot, 25% cabernet franc, 10% cabernet sauvignon, and 5% malbec. The vines in this 23-hectare vineyard are planted on clay and limestone soils with are on average 30-years old. Aged for 12 to 16 months in 25% to 30% new barrels. Nearly opaque purple core with a fuchsia rim. Primary aromas of blackberry and plum with some earthy, loamy soil and pain grille aromas on the nose. Concentrated black fruits dominate the palate, with good persistence and powerful intensity. The finish is exceptional for the price point, showing resolved and extremely fine tannins. Nicolas Thienpont consults. Enjoy on release and over the following 5-7 years. 89-91 points — Andy Frieden



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Superieur

2011 Balthus (Bordeaux Superieur) - 100% merlot. This is a luxury cuvee from the owners of Chateau Reignac. Very tight on the nose, not currently offering much of a bouquet but for subtle notes of black cherry, coffee, and gravel. On the palate, the texture is very refined and elegant for a wine of such massive concentration. Medium-grained tannins and a medium-to-long finish. Time will reveal its true potential, but this looks to be another successful vintage for Yves Vatelot's Balthus. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Beaulieu Comtes de Tastes (Bordeaux Superieur) - 60% merlot, 30% cabernet franc, and 10% cabernet sauvignon. From a 33-hectare vineyard northwest of Libourne, the average 25 year-old vines are planted on clay and limestone soils. Hand-harvested and aged for 10 months in 30% new French oak. Deep ruby core with a bright rim. Notes of purple and red fruits, coffee, and toasty oak on the palate. This wine is impressively concentrated and has a fairly tannic profile which suggests it will age nicely. Enjoy 2017-2022. Alain Raynaud consults. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Bolaire (Bordeaux Superieur) - 45% merlot, 40% petite verdot, 15% cabernet sauvignon. Average 41 year-old vines. Approximately 12 months of aging in a variety of French oak barrels. The vineyard is situated next to the Gironde and the grapes were harvested between September 10th and October 1st. This wine is a great value and well over-delivers for its modest price. Deep ruby, almost purple at the core. The nose offers a good dose of oak, black cherry, plum, and coffee. This is a very modern, rich, and extracted wine that shows richly upfront on the palate with well-integrated tannins. Give this a few years to fully integrate and fill out in the mid-palate. Enjoy 2014-2020. 88-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Bouscat 'Cuvee Caduce' (Bordeaux Superieur) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet sauvignon, 5% malbec, and 5% cabernet franc. From an 8-hectare, south facing, hillside vineyard just west of Fronsac. The grapes were harvested between October 9th and 18th and the average age of the vines is 37 years-old. This entry level cuvee is aged in all used barrels. This wine is very red fruit-driven with cherry, licorice, and espresso notes. Bright acidity and a big, but smooth tannic profile. Enjoy over the next 5-7 years. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Bouscat 'Cuvee La Gargone' (Bordeaux Superieur) - 60% merlot, 20% malbec, 18% cabernet franc, and 2% cabernet sauvignon. Produced from a single, south-facing, hillside vineyard of

just 3.3 hectares just west of the Fronsac appellation. Average vine age is 38 years. The 2011 was hand harvested on October 8th & 9th and aged in 95% new French oak. Yields in 2011 were 24 hls/ha. Very dark almost opaque in color this is a very spicy, chewy, and rich wine. Notes of black fruit and cherry dominate as do the fairly aggressive tannins and high acid. Needs time to resolve and will hopefully mellow out a bit with some further age. 88-90 points — John Sweeney

2011 Bouscat 'Les Portes de l'Am' (Bordeaux Superieur) - 50% merlot, 25% malbec, and 25% cabernet franc. 38 year-old vines planted in south-facing, hillside clay/limestone soil harvested on October 7th. Yields of just 24 hls/ha after being triple sorted and aged in 50% new oak. Essentially an old vine 'top of the line' cuvee from Bouscat. This is an absolutely delicious wine and a truly amazing value. Very modern and rich, with blueberry, blackberry, and vanilla that dominate on the nose and palate. Spicy, with well-integrated tannins and a very smooth, complete mouthfeel. A 'wow' wine for me! 92-94 points — John Sweeney

2011 Croix Mouton (Bordeaux Superieur) - 92% merlot and 8% cabernet franc. Situated in Lugon, near Fronsac; owned by the dynamic Jean-Philippe Janoueix (of La Confession and La Croix St. Georges). A 55-hectare property with vines averaging 36 years-old, the wine is aged in one-third new French oak. A dark yet pretty wine, the nose has aromas of red and black fruits, crushed rock, and touch of oak. Chewy on the palate, with medium-grained tannins and a medium-plus length finish. Balanced acidity and an overall very nice wine. Enjoy on release and over the following 6-8 years. 89-91 points — John Sweeney

2011 Grand Village (Bordeaux Superieur) - 83% merlot, 17% cabernet franc. This estate is owned by the Guinaudeau family who also own Chateau Lafleur in Pomerol. A classically opaque purple color, the bouquet is a clear transmission of the palate's pure fruit expression. The ripe flavors of Bing cherries and berries sing true with a freshness and purity that is almost ethereal. Yet this is no simple wine as the palate shows hints of density and texture indicating there is some concentrated fruit underneath the primary flavors. The acids in this medium-bodied wine are in perfect balance and serve to lengthen the finish that is supported by talc-like tannins. Enjoy over the next 15 years. 90-92 points — Chuck Hayward



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Superieur

2011 Hostens Picant (Bordeaux Superieur) - 70% merlot, 20% cabernet franc from a 30 hectare vineyard in Sainte-Foy. Brilliant purple core. The nose was muted and the palate was simple, showing only primary fruit at this stage. 86-88 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Jean Faux (Bordeaux Superieur) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. From a 25-year old, 10.8-hectare, south-facing vineyard planted in clay and limestone soil. Aged in 50% new oak. Deep ruby in color, the nose exudes super-sweet aromas of red fruit, vanilla, and spice. On the palate, this wine is very spicy, modern, and rich. There is a pretty aggressive tannic profile but the wine's chewiness maintains its relative balance. Give this a few years to come together and drink over the next 10-15 years. 87-89 points — John Sweeney

2011 Le Pin Beausoleil (Bordeaux Superieur) - 80% merlot and 20% cabernet franc. Aged in one-third new oak. 4.6 hectares planted in clay and limestone soil with the average vine age is 35 years. Harvest began on September 10th and finished up on October 2nd. The nose shows a very traditional style, with notes of pretty red fruit, subtle floral aromas, and only mild wood influence. This is elegant, balanced, and pleasant, with well integrated tannins, acidity, and oak. Nice length on the finish, this is a wine that will drink well on release and over the next 10+ years. 88-90 points — John Sweeney

2011 Marjosse (Bordeaux Superieur) - 85% merlot, 8% cabernet franc, 5% cabernet sauvignon, and 2% malbec from a 48 hectare vineyard planted on clay and limestone soils. The average age of the vines is 21 years. Aged in 50% new oak. Opaque purple core. Perfume of cherry blossoms and black cherry fruit reaches a peak of flavor, with cassis flavoring the mid-palate of this medium to full-bodied wine. The ripe and lengthy tannins are well integrated. Pierre Lurton is the proprietor. 88-89 points — Andy Frieden

2011 Reignac (Bordeaux Superieur) - 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc. The 80 hectares of vineyards are planted in gravel soil over clay and limestone. The wine is aged in 100% new oak for 16 to 20 months. Incredibly deep and dark in color, virtually opaque. The aromas are very intense and powerful, with a nose of blackberry, blueberry, cassis, and toasty oak. Still very primary, this looks to be another successful vintage for Reignac. A full-bodied effort with a pretty serious tannin profile, this needs time to fully integrate. Cellar for several years and enjoy the following 10-15 years. 90-92 points — John Sweeney



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Blanc

Pessac-Leognan is where some serious wines are being made today, and 2011 will do nothing more than boost the image of wineries who take their whites seriously. Aside from the releases at Haut-Brion and La Mission, who have clearly elevated their game to another level, the classic producers of white Bordeaux are fashioning wines more akin to Burgundy than the classic dry white examples of the past. Pape-Clement, Malartic-Lagraviere and Domaine du Chevalier set the standards for their neighbors, but other wineries are knocking at their door. Whites from the grand cru classé properties of the Haut-Medoc also merit some serious attention.

2011 Aile d'Argent Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 43% semillon, 56% sauvignon blanc, 1% muscadelle. Planted on sandy gravelly soils. Tank fermented and aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% 1-year old oak. Straw color with a slight green tinge. This is a rich, yet fresh wine with notes of lemon curd, quince, orange zest and sea breeze and an underlying waxy, honey character. At first it hits the mouth with broad melon and fig flavors, then comes back into focus with a long, tropical fruit inflected finish. Shows moderate acidity and good persistence. Produced by Mouton-Rothschild. Enjoy 2015-2021. 93-95 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Blanc de Lynch Bages (Bordeaux AOC) - 66% sauvignon blanc, 22% muscadelle, and 12% semillon. A rich tropical explosion on the nose, with notes of honey, lemon curd, and white pepper, complemented by white peach, lychee, and pear. The palate has wonderful vibrancy and lively, lingering acidity. One of Lynch Bages' best releases of this unique wine. Will drink well upon release and age for 8-10 years. 91-93 points —Jeff Loo

2011 Bouscaut Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% semillon, 50% sauvignon blanc. Aged in 40% new oak. Vines are planted in gravel and clay atop limestone subsoil. This shows a little richer style on the nose with honey, toasted coconut, and vanilla bean aromas underscored by lemon peel and citrus notes. This has a nice rich texture showing a more nutty, waxy style. Flavors of white peach and pear are underscored by peach pit and lemon rind. Focused and long, with a persistent finish. Enjoy upon release and over the following 7-8 years. 90-92 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Caillou Blanc de Chateau Talbot (Bordeaux AOC) - 80% sauvignon blanc, 2% semillon. Vines are planted on gravel soils. Barrel fermented and aged in 100% new oak. Nose is ripe with quince and citrus aromas, plus an undercurrent of grass. Soft acidity and ripe flavors of white stone fruits, peach and nectarine, under scored by notes of lemon. Produced by Chateau Talbot. Enjoy upon release and over the following 6-7 years. 87-89 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Carbonnieux Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 65% sauvignon blanc, 35% semillon. Aged in a combination of one-third each of new, one-year and two-year old oak. Planted on deep gravel soils atop clay. Filled with lemon oil and grapefruit aromas, plus loads of high-toned focused citrus. Hits the palate with clean bright and focused notes and shows a surprisingly long and vibrant finish with lots of crushed sea shell flavor and chalky minerality. Enjoy upon release and over the following 7-8 years. 91-93 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Chantegrive Blanc (Graves) - 50% semillon, 50% sauvignon blanc. The vines are planted in sandy soils mixed with gravel and galets, set atop a clay and limestone subsoil. Aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% 1-year old oak. On the nose, this exhibits notes of lemon peel, grapefruit, and orange marmalade. Fresh and clean, but a little on the lean side with dominant flavors of white grapefruit. Enjoy upon release and over the following 5-6 years. 86-88 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Chateaufort de Roquetaillade Blanc (Graves) - 70% sauvignon blanc and 30% semillon. Planted in clay and limestone soils, mixed with some surface gravel. Fermented and aged in tank. A bright, lively, and very expressive wine. Loads of citrus and gooseberry flavor with a beautiful note of wet stone minerality and hints of oyster shell and saline. Clean, fresh, and quite enjoyable, this is a pleasure to sip. Enjoy upon release and over the following 6-7 years. 89-91 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Clos Floridene Blanc (Graves) - 50% semillon, 50% sauvignon blanc. Aged in 25% new, 75% one-year-old oak. The vines are planted on red clay and sand soils atop a limestone bedrock. A richer style, white with aromas of melon, beeswax, marzipan, and toast. On the palate this shows more vivacity, with citrus-dominated notes leading to creamy, waxy textures and flavors of orange marmalade and lanolin. A well-balanced wine with good fruit and fresh acidity, medium weight, and a refreshing finish. Owned by Denis Dubourdieu. Enjoy upon release and over the following 5-6 years. 89-91 points —Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Blanc

2011 Cos d'Estournel Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 67% sauvignon blanc, 33% semillon. Barrel fermented and aged in 100% new oak. Pale straw color, with green notes. Grass, green pepper, and classic sauvignon blanc aromas combine with the richer semillon textures and flavors. Rich and aromatic, green and vibrant citrus notes permeate the palate with just enough acidity for a crisp finish. Enjoy upon release and over the following 7-8 years. 91-93 points – Cory Gowan

2011 Côte Montpezat 'Cuvee Compostelle' Blanc (Bordeaux Superieur) - Waxy and fat, but a little lacking in fruit flavors through the mid-palate. Dominated by toasty oak flavors, with subtle hints of orange blossom. Drink now. 83-85 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 de Fieuzal Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 70% sauvignon blanc, 30% semillon. Aged in a mix of 60% new, and 30% one-year old oak. Planted atop mostly gravel soils with a clay-limestone sand substrate. Bright and focused on the nose with dominant notes of beeswax followed by high-toned citrus aromas. On the palate, shows a little leanness but fresh white grapefruit flavors and high-toned notes of gooseberry, culminating with a moderate clean finish. Enjoy upon release and over the following 5-7 years. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 de France Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 80% sauvignon blanc, 20% semillon. Barrel fermented and aged in 50% new oak. The vines are planted on deep gravel soils. A rich, fat example of Pessac white. Ripe notes of honey, quince, and orange marmalade with brighter sauvignon notes of lemon and grass emerging from underneath. This is medium-bodied, with moderate length. Enjoy upon release and over the following 4-6 years.. 88-90 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Doisy-Daene Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 100% sauvignon blanc. Planted on limestone soils. Barrel fermented, then aged in 25% new oak. A cloudy, green-tinged pale straw color. Very ripe and expressive nose of apricot, pear, and citrus oil. Opens with a wonderfully rich and luxurious texture, and full flavors of melon and yellow stone fruits. Fresh, clean, and juicy this is delicious already and should drink nicely for the next five years. Owned by Denis Dubourdieu. Enjoy upon release and over the following 3-4 years. 88-90 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Domaine de Chevalier Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 90% sauvignon and 10% semillon. Planted in gravel soil atop clay and sandy-gravel subsoil. Barrel fermented and aged in a combination of 35% new, and 65% 2-year old oak. The nose leads with

high toned citrus and beeswax aromas, all tightly wound but well-delineated, with a light touch of white peach underneath. Big and richly textured, with loads of persistent sea shell and crushed rock flavors. Vibrant acidity really keeps this lively. This is classic Pessac white. A brilliant young wine that should age for decades. Stephane Derenoncourt consults. 94-96 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Ferran Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 30% semillon, 30% sauvignon blanc, 20% muscadelle, and 20% sauvignon gris. Planted on mixed clay and limestone, and clay-rich soils. Fermented and aged in stainless steel. Pale and slightly cloudy color with green flecks. Light and fresh with lots of lemon peel and gooseberry flavor, gaining some lift from orange blossom and a slight touch of coconut custard with a chalky minerality underneath. Fresh and enjoyable, this should drink well over the next five years. 88-90 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Ferrande Blanc (Graves) - 60% sauvignon blanc, 40% semillon. Planted in gravel soils. Aged in 50% new, 50% one-year-old oak. Light and fresh, with gooseberry and citrus aromas on the nose. This has a nice, fleshy mouthfeel, with medium weight and flavors of grapefruit and orange rind along with a touch of crushed sea shell and fresh cut grass. Enjoy upon release and over the following 3-5 years. 87-89 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Fombrauge Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 40% sauvignon blanc, 40% semillon, and 20% sauvignon gris. The vines are planted on mixed clay and limestone soils. Notes of toasty coconut and passion fruit hit up front, joined by fresh cut grass and citrus fruits. Moderate length and good acidity keep things fresh and lively. Drink now. 88-90 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 'G' de Guiraud Bordeaux Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 80% sauvignon blanc, 20% semillon. The vines are planted on gravel, over sand and clay subsoil. Fermented in oak vats, then aged in 1-year old oak barrels. The nose is bright with lemon citrus notes and an almost sappy quality. Bone dry and mineral laden with light stone fruits, this shows richness on the palate, with lots of lemon curd and melon flavors and a nice crisp snap in the finish. An exceptional dry white from a house better known for its sweet wines. Enjoy upon release and over the following 7-8 years. 91-93 points – Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Blanc

2011 Girolate Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 50% semillon, 50% sauvignon blanc. Vines are planted on clay soils atop limestone subsoils. A pale straw color with hints of gold. This shows notes of orange rind and fig, progressing to riper aromas of quince and toast. The palate mirrors the nose, and shows a classic barrel fermented semillon profile, with softer pear notes and a nutty quality. Fat, waxy, and rich, this still maintains a nice fresh edge. Should drink well for the next 5-7 years. 88-90 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Haut-Bergey Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 80% sauvignon blanc, 20% semillon. Fermented in stainless steel, then aged in 30% new, 70% one-year old oak barrels. Vines are planted on gravel with a clay silica subsoil. The nose is closed, but shows light touches of fresh citrus and beeswax scents. While still tightly wound, this is a touch more generous on the palate, with notes of white stone fruits and pear, along with a fatter waxy character, coming to a slightly short finish. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Haut Bertinerie Blanc (Côtes de Bordeaux) - 100% sauvignon blanc. Showing a bit more weight than its more straightforward sibling, this balances citrus and melon flavors, with medium weight and a waxy texture. Enjoy now. 87-89 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Haut Bertinerie 'Elegance' Blanc (Côtes de Bordeaux) - 100% sauvignon blanc. A lean, light, and crisp example of sauvignon blanc. Easy drinking and simple with no hard edges. Enjoy now. 86-88 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Haut-Brion Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 42.1% sauvignon blanc, 57.9% semillon. Aged in 47% new oak. Lemon yellow color with green hints. Bright citrus notes dominate backed up by gooseberry and beeswax. This is closed down and tight, but with great complexity and dominant lemon curd and vanilla bean flavors, supported by citrus rind, all enveloped in persistent, fresh acidity. Though not quite as delineated and expressive as the La Mission, this has serious, serious potential. 97-99 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Hostens Picant 'Cuvee Demoiselles' Blanc (Bordeaux Supérieur-Sainte Foy) - 60% semillon, 30% sauvignon, 10% muscadelle. The vines are planted on mixed sand and clay soils over limestone subsoil. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. A leaner white, despite the barrel fermentation, this shows grassy notes along with gooseberry and lemon citrus flavors. A touch of orange rind is evident on the short finish. Drink now. 84-86 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 La Clarte de Haut-Brion Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 22% sauvignon blanc, 78% semillon. Aged in 47% new oak. Planted on gravel atop limestone subsoil. Slightly cloudy pale straw color with a green tinge. A hugely expressive sauvignon blanc nose underlain with classic semillon notes. Gooseberry, peach, and fresh cut grass aromas are complemented by honey, beeswax, and light tropical notes and a streak of wet stone. The palate mimics the nose, showing some additional darker notes of orange rind with a great, rich texture and a long persistent finish. Bright acidity keeps this lean, fresh, and rather enjoyable. This is the second wine from Chateau Haut-Brion. Drinking wonderfully right now and should age very nicely over the next 10+ years. 92-94 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 La Louviere Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 85% sauvignon blanc, 15% semillon. Fermented in vat, then aged for 10 months in a mix of one-third each of new, one-year and two-year old oak. Planted on mixed gravel and silica soils atop limestone subsoil. An almost honeyed character to the nose, with rich waxy citrus and grapefruit rind aromas. This is mineral-driven, with a round texture, and grapefruit and passion fruit flavors, before finishing with good length. Should drink nicely for the next 5-10 years. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 27.1% sauvignon blanc, 72.9% semillon. Aged in 47% new oak. Planted on gravel on a limestone subsoil. Clear pale straw color. Shows a bright nose of high-toned citrus, lemon peel, grass, and stone. Tight and closed, but still delineated and complex, this hits the mouth with precise flavors of citrus rind and lemon curd juxtaposed against more savory sea breeze and crushed sea shell notes. Medium to full bodied, but still vibrant, this dances on the tongue with beautifully fresh, zippy acidity. The fantastically long and complex finish lingers for minutes. Should age effortlessly for decades to come. 95-97 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Latour-Martillac Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 65% semillon, 35% sauvignon blanc. Fermented in barrel, then aged in 40% new oak. Planted on large gravel soils. A lovely mix of lemon rind, grapefruit, and other bright citrus aromas, balanced with deeper notes of orange marmalade, quince, and a touch of beeswax. This is deliciously fresh and wonderfully focused, with loads of grapefruit, passion fruit, and citrus. Medium to full in body, with a long, mineral-laden finish that gains verve from persistent and lively acidity. Enjoy upon release and over the following 10 years. 93-95 points – Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Blanc

2011 Larrivet-Haut-Brion Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 90% sauvignon blanc, 10% semillon. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. Vines are planted on gravel soils. This shows a fat, leesy, rich nose with hints of blood orange marmalade, quince, and lemon curd. Rich, with complex texture, this has notes of spice, and finishes with white pepper. This has wonderful weight and good balance, with bracing acidity. Enjoy upon release and over the following 7-8 years. 92-94 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Le Thil Comte Clary Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 50% semillon and 50% sauvignon blanc. Planted on surface gravel soils atop a rich mix of clay and limestone. Fermented in tank, then aged in a mix of 50% new, 50% one-year-old oak. The muted nose shows orange rind and brighter lemon and citrus aromas. This is persistent and fresh on the palate, with lemon peel flavor and a pulse of crushed rocks in the background. Moderate in complexity and tightly wound, but still very vibrant and fresh, with medium weight. A beauty. Enjoy upon release and over the following 6-8 years. 91-93 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Lespault-Martillac Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 85% sauvignon blanc, 15% semillon. Stainless steel fermented, then aged in 33% new oak. Loaded with intense white floral aromas, with white grapefruit, orange rind, and a touch of grass playing backup. Medium in weight, this shows a bright, focused structure of ripe tropical fruits and high-toned citrus, with notes of crushed sea shells. Long and persistent with bracing, bright acidity. This should drink well for 5-10 years. 91-93 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Mont-Perat Blanc (Premieres Côtes de Bordeaux) - 78% sauvignon blanc, 20% semillon, 2% muscadelle. Aged in a mix of one-third each new, one-year and two-year old oak. An expressive nose of gooseberry, cut grass, and lemon peel, along with orange blossom notes. A waxy and full-bodied palate, with a fine balance of richness and freshness. Loaded with lemon oil and grapefruit flavors, progressing to deeper notes of fig, melon, and smoke. A delicious wine that should be a pleasure on release and hold nicely over the next 5+ years. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Malartic-Lagraviere Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 80% sauvignon and 20% semillon. Planted on deep gravel atop a complex mixed clay and limestone subsoil. Barrel fermented in 50% new, and 50% one-year-old oak. Packed with aromas of honey, beeswax, lemon oil, white peach and orange rind. Beautifully complex and richly textured on the palate, this is layered, with notes of fennel and chalk, but still bright and focused. Vibrant and

fresh, with persistent acidity driving lingering mineral flavors. Wow! Drink now and over the next 10+ years. 96-98 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Monbousquet Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 70% sauvignon blanc and 30% sauvignon gris. Day bright, straw yellow color. Wonderful aromas of lime, lemon, flowers and spice, with a frame of lanolin and honey. The palate features high toned acidity and a vibrant mouthfeel. Can be drunk upon release, and enjoyed for another 5-8 years. From Gerard Perse of Chateau Pavie. 91-93 points – Jeff Loo

2011 Olivier Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 78% sauvignon blanc, 20% semillon, 2% muscadelle. Vines are planted in deep, compacted gravel atop marl, clay, and limestone bedrock. Fermented in vat, then aged in 30% new oak. This is a lean, crisp wine for this vintage. Light and fresh, but the flavor profile is not exceptionally delineated. Should be consumed over the next 3-5 years. 87-89 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Pape-Clement Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 45% sauvignon blanc, 35% semillon, 15% sauvignon gris, and 5% muscadelle. Planted on gravel soils. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. Sappy, almost piney nose with notes of orange rind, toasted coconut, and beeswax underscored with lemon rind. This is fat and toasty on the palate, with a waxy texture, showing notes of walnut oil, crushed sea shell, citrus rind, and coconut cream. Focused and well delineated, with wonderful texture and a backbone of fresh acidity. This is approachable now, but will gain complexity with more time in bottle. At least 20 years of life ahead of it. 95-97 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Pavillon Blanc du Chateau Margaux (Bordeaux AOC) - 100% sauvignon blanc. Tank fermented, then aged in a mix of one-third each new, 1-year and 2-year old oak. An exciting wine, showing sauvignon blanc characteristics of lemon peel, gooseberry, white grapefruit, and orange peel veering into fatter notes of melon. This shows moderate acidity on entry with more exotic, tropical flavors, including passion fruit and orange marmalade. On the back palate the freshness expresses itself in lemony acidity that make for a clean and lively finish. Enjoy over the next 10-15 years. 94-96 points – Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Blanc

2011 Penin Blanc (Bordeaux Superieur) - 100% sauvignon blanc. Aged in 50% new oak. Pale straw color with flecks of green. Precise notes of lemon peel and fig with a touch of beeswax. The palate is bright with gooseberry and a cut of grass, before finishing with a touch of white pepper. An interesting white for early consumption. 85-87 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Picque Caillou Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 60% sauvignon blanc, 40% semillon. Vines are planted on gravel soils. Fermented in stainless steel tank, then aged in 20% new oak. Clean and fresh, with lots of striking minerality, plentiful exotic fruit, and lively citrus flavors. Medium bodied, with persistent acidity and lingering flavors, then a focused a mineral-laden finish. Drink over the next 5-10 years. 91-93 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Rahoul Blanc (Graves) - 70% semillon, 30% sauvignon blanc. Planted on sandy gravel with a clay and gravel substrate. Aged in 20% new oak. Initially very closed, this reveals light lemon curd and citrus rind notes. On the palate, more depth and delineation with nice texture, additional notes of grapefruit and lemon grass, and a long mineral-driven, focused finish. Enjoy upon release and over the following 4-6 years. 90-92 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Reignac Blanc (Bordeaux Superieur) - 60% sauvignon blanc, 35% semillon, 5% muscadelle. Planted on mixed clay and gravel soils. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. Pale straw color, with green accents. Aromas of cantaloupe and fig. The palate reveals marzipan and ripe fig palate, with medium weight and moderate length. Drink now. 86-88 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Reynon Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 100% sauvignon blanc. Fermented in vat, then aged in 20% new oak. Vines are planted on deep gravel over clay and sand subsoils. Pale greenish straw color. The ripe exotic nose exhibits top notes of passion fruit underscored with melon and fig paste. Richly textured, with a medium body and delicately persistent acidity, this is loaded with grapefruit, gooseberry and white peach flavors, plus a striking underlying minerality. Owned by Denis Dubourdieu. Drink over the next 3-5 years. 89-91 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Sainte Marie 'Maladay' Blanc (Entre-Deux-Mers) - 56% sauvignon blanc, 22% sauvignon gris, 22% semillon. Planted on clay and limestone soils. Barrel fermented, then aged in one year old oak barrels. Deep straw color. Notes of quince and toasted coconut, with a touch of sea breeze on the nose. This is lean, showing moderate acidity, and flavors of melon and fig, with

lemon nuances contributing a crisp finish. Drink now. 86-88 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Sainte Marie 'Vieilles Vignes' Blanc (Entre-Deux-Mers) - 64% sauvignon blanc, 28% semillon, 8% muscadelle. Fermented and aged in stainless steel tank. Vines are planted on clay and limestone soils. Nearly transparent straw color. Light and fragrant, with notes of melon and citrus oil. Lean, crisp, and fresh with a short finish. Drink now. 84-86 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Smith Haut-Lafitte Blanc (Pessac-Leognan) - 90% sauvignon blanc, 5% sauvignon gris, 5% semillon. Fermented in vat, then aged in a combination of 50% new and 50% one year old oak. The vines are planted on gravel soils. An exotic, tropical nose of pineapple, lemon peel, and passion fruit, with good ripeness and lots of focus. On the palate, the precise fruit lingers, underscored by chalky minerality and notes of wet stone. Fresh and vivacious, this is a superb young wine that will be a pleasure on release and should age gracefully for decades to come. 94-96 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Thieuley Blanc (Bordeaux Superieur) - 50% semillon, 50% sauvignon blanc. Fermented and aged in stainless steel tank. A wonderful, naked expression of fruit and minerality. Dominated by the passion fruit, grapefruit, notes of orange rind, and mango flavors typical of sauvignon blanc. On the palate, this is crisp and citrus driven, followed with notes of fig. Vibrant, fresh and persistent acidity builds structure, and leads the way to a long clean finish. A real pleasure to drink now. 88-90 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Thieuley 'Cuvee Francis Courselle' Blanc (Bordeaux Superieur) - 50% sauvignon blanc, 50% semillon. Barrel fermented, then aged in 70% new oak. Filled with crisp citrus and tropical notes like its smaller sibling, but this takes on additional weight and richness with flavors of toasted coconut and more of ripe fig character. A fat, waxy texture coats the palate. Well done! Drink now. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Tour de Mirambeau Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 70% sauvignon blanc, 30% semillon. Fermented in stainless steel, then aged in one year old oak barrels. This is made in a crisp lean style with notes of citrus oil and melon. Simple, but pleasant and fresh. Drink now. 86-88 points – Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Bordeaux Blanc

2011 Valandraud Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 50% semillon, 30% sauvignon blanc, 20% sauvignon gris. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. Loaded with peach, nectarine, and white stone fruits, followed by gooseberry and a touch of melon, making for a rounder character. The nose mirrors the palate, with excellent precision and deliciously fresh acidity. Medium-bodied and with moderate length, this should hold nicely for 5-7 years. From Jean-Luc Thunevin. 90-92 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Virginie de Valandraud Blanc (Bordeaux AOC) - 50% semillon, 50% sauvignon blanc. Fermented and aged in a mix of 50% new and 50% one-year-old oak. Light and crisp, with grass and gooseberry accents, light citrus notes, and a touch of white flowers. Pleasant and drinking well now. From Jean-Luc Thunevin. 87-89 points –Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Barsac & Sauternes

2011 sees Sauternes add another year to a string of successful vintages. The moderate growing season allowed for even ripeness, with intense fruit flavors and balanced acidity. The favorable weather continued as conditions for botrytis began to develop, and there was even development of the famous mold across the area. Wineries we spoke with were stunned to see pickers return to the crushpad with fully botrytised bunches instead of berries, and the harvest was over quickly and with few troubles. An elegant d'Yquem highlights the standout nature of the Sauternes vintage, but Barsac overachievers Coutet and Climens join Guiraud in fashioning richly textured wines that will win many new converts.

2011 Bastor-Lamontagne (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvignon blanc. Aged in 30% new oak. Planted on gravel and mixed gravel and clay soils. Pale green-gold color. Abundant lemon rind and Meyer lemon curd aromas underscored with spice on the nose. Medium in weight, this is on the brighter side, with a moderate concentration of sugars, strong but not overbearing botrytis flavor, and lots of clean fresh acidity on the finish. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 89-91 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Broustet (Barsac) - 75% semillon, 15% sauvignon blanc, 10% muscadelle. Aged in 40% new oak. Almost transparent yellow green color. The nose shows lots of ripe yellow stone fruit. This has a thick texture and shows ripeness on the palate, with lots of sweet, yellow stone fruit, finishing with ginger spice. Moderate acidity is present on the slightly sweet finish. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 88-90 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Caillou (Sauternes) - 100% semillon. Vines are planted on red sand atop mixed clay and limestone sub soils. Fermented in tank, then aged in 100% new oak barrels. Beautifully vibrant yellow-gold color. Notes of candied citrus, pineapple, and spice lead the way on the nose. Loaded with spice, ripe stone fruits and citrus notes, this has good complexity and wonderful balance. Broad and rich character, moderate sweetness is held in check by mouthwatering acidity. Enjoy now through 2025. 92-94 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Cantegril (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvignon blanc. The vines are planted on clay and sandy soils over limestone bedrock. This is a lighter and brighter style of Sauternes with an almost banana yellow color and notes of pineapple, honey, and subtle citrus oil. Rich and bright, with intense acidity and moderate amounts of botrytis, this has light apricot flavor and gobs of citrus notes. Clean and fresh with a lithe texture and moderate length. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 89-91 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Clos Haut Peyraguey (Sauternes) - 95% semillon, 5% sauvignon blanc. Vines are planted on a gravel sand mix on top of a clay subsoil. Barrel fermented, then aged in 60% new oak. This

displays a fat, toasty character, and an almost marshmallow-like texture. Moderate acidity checks the intense sweetness. Heaps of ripe stone fruits, marzipan, and quince flavor, along with touches of toasted coconut on the palate, lead to a finish filled with spicy ginger flavor. Lots of stuffing here. Enjoy over the next 10-15 years. 92-94 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Climens (Barsac) - 100% semillon. Aged in a mix of one-third new, 1-year, and 2-year old barrels. Climens does not present classic barrel samples as the final assemblage is yet to be determined. But we did taste a number of parcels, six samples representing six different tries or harvest days, directly from barrel. Each portion highlighted a different profile, ranging from clean, bright, and fresh to richer and more textured. #1 - Sept. 8: Exotic and ripe tropical notes with an emphasis on elegance and freshness. Pure and vibrant. #2 - Sept. 12: Showing more depth, concentration and richness, verging on honey, with more noticeable spice. #3 - Sept. 15: Hitting more marmalade and citrus rind flavors, with moderate weight, spice, and fresh acidity. #4 - Sept. 18: Represents 40% of the harvest. A deeper gold color than earlier samples, showing lots of spice and honey, with vibrant citrus and mineral characters, and a slightly fat and nutty element. Superb complexity. #5 - Sept. 21: Brilliant yellow gold color. Marzipan and orange rind. Mouthwatering, really rich, and buttery, with coconut crème and lemon curd flavors. #6 - Sept. 28: Returning to a leaner profile and more citrus elements, plus clementine, floral, and vanilla bean flavors, all while showing a rich nutty character that expresses bright citrus and mineral notes. Symmetry on all levels, with not one sample evidently out of proportion or balance. One can only imagine the potential of the final blend, but based on these samples this promises to be a truly outstanding wine that will last for decades to come. 96-98+ points —Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Barsac & Sauternes

2011 Coutet (Barsac) - 90% Semillon, 8% sauvignon blanc, and 2% muscadelle. Planted on silica-rich gravel and mixed clay and gravel soil resting on the signature limestone bedrock. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. This shows stunning freshness and focus from start to finish. Packed with crushed rocks and a chalky minerality supporting wonderfully fresh and ripe fruit. Well evolved and focused, with white and yellow stone fruit, orange rind, coconut, and tropical fruit notes. A complex fruit driven, yet wonderfully spicy wine. Enjoy over the next 10-25 years. 95-97 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 d'Arche (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvignon blanc. Vines are planted on mixed clay gravel soils atop limestone bedrock. Barrel fermented, then aged in a combination of 66% new and 33% one-year-old oak. A deep gold color, this shows ripe pineapple, apricot, and peach aromas, with accents of mango and coconut. This is large in scale on the palate with powerful ripe stone fruits, and marmalade, quince paste, and ginger spice on the finish. Nice acidity keeps the richness this in check. Drink now through 2025. 90-92 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 de Fargues (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvignon blanc. Barrel fermented, then aged in 15% new oak for 30-36 months. The vines are planted on mixed clay and gravel soils. Light greenish gold color. Exotic nose, with mango, vanilla bean, and beeswax aromas, plus a touch of saffron spice. This has a wonderful, thick texture that coats the mouth yet maintains fresh lemon acidity that gives precision to the richness, with riper notes of apricot, orange marmalade, and hints of spice from the botrytis. Enjoy over the next 15 years. This chateau is owned by the Lur-Suluces family, former owners of Chateau d'Yquem. 94-96 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 de Malle (Sauternes) - 64% semillon, 36% sauvignon blanc. Fermented in tank, then aged in 20-25% new oak. Planted on sand and sandy gravel, with a silica-based subsoil. This shows lots of high toned citrus scents on the nose with touches of more exotic mango and guava. Lean, clean, and bright, this shows lots of zippy acidity along with medium weight, a nice creamy texture, and abundant citrus dominated flavors. Enjoy over the next 10-12 years. 91-93 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 de Myrat (Barsac) - 88% semillon, 8% sauvignon blanc 4% muscadelle. Barrel fermented, then aged in 33% new oak. Vines are planted on clay and limestone soils over a limestone base. Beautiful vibrant gold color. This shows lots of yellow stone fruits, accented with vanilla bean and citrus rind and a spicy botrytis note. Vibrant and fresh, with well-contoured fruit and

good length. This is well developed and delineated with a rich creamy texture and acidity that carries the flavors through a long mineral-laden finish. Enjoy over the next 10-20 years. 93-95 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Doisy-Daene (Barsac) - 100% semillon. Fermented and aged in 100% new oak. The vines are planted atop mixed clay and limestone soils. Beautiful light gold with hints of green. The nose is packed with honeyed spice, decadent apricot, and peach aromas. Ripe and rich, with an almost marshmallow-like texture. Fat and rich up front, with well-delineated yellow stone fruit showing good persistence, and refreshing acidity that brings the wine into sharp focus. The long finish has brighter citrus notes and lemon curd flavor, all underscored by nice botrytis spice. Enjoy over the next 10-25 years. 93-95 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Doisy-Daene 'L'Extravagant' (Barsac) - 60% sauvignon blanc, 40% semillon. Barrel fermented, then aged in 100% new oak. This differs from the grand vin with the noticeable presence of sauvignon blanc. Beautiful golden color with the slightest hint of green. This is a very large scaled and luxurious cuvee that emphasizes ripeness while still showing stunning mineral verve and freshness. Closed, but very precise. Ripe stone fruit flavors, rich apricot preserves, and orange marmalade along with tropical notes of pineapple and toasted coconut. Mouth coating and luxuriously textured, displaying additional notes of passion fruit, citrus, and white flowers enveloped in a long fresh finish. This is a baby and will need ample cellaring to really open up. 96-98 points –Geoffrey Binder

2011 Doisy Vedrines (Sauternes) - 80% Semillon, 15% sauvignon blanc, 5% muscadelle. Fermented and aged in oak barrels, of which 60% are new. The vines are planted on mixed clay and limestone soils. Slightly cloudy light gold color. The nose is expressive, with lemon oil, orange rind, and ripe yellow stone fruit aromas. The palate mirrors the nose, adding a wonderful background streak of wet stone along with ample notes of saffron and spice from the botrytis. A great combination of ripeness and freshness. Enjoy over the next 10-20 years. 92-94 points –Geoffrey Binder



2011 TASTING NOTES

Barsac & Sauternes

2011 d'Yquem (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvignon blanc. Barrel fermented and aged in 100% new oak. Vibrant orange gold color. A powerful, but tightly wound nose of orange rind, citrus, white flowers, cloves, and saffron. This is exceptionally complex and powerful, hitting the palate with a luxurious texture undercut by vivacious, crisp acidity. This shows loads of ripe stone fruit, quince, and mango flavors, along with a background snap of ginger, all enfolded in striking, chalky minerality. Drink now and over the next 30 years. 97-99 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Filhot (Sauternes) - 60% semillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc, 4% muscadelle. Fermented in steel, then aged in oak, with 30% new. Vines are planted on deep gravel soils on top of a mixed clay and sand subsoil. Light golden color. This shows spice and apple aromas on the nose plus buttery pineapple and chalk notes. Rich and fat initially, with loads of ripe exotic fruits and a spicy botrytis element on the finish. This is zippy and fresh with a good citrus cut to the finish, along with good balance and weight. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 90-92 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Guiraud (Sauternes) - 90% semillon, 8% sauvignon, 2% muscadelle. Barrel fermented, then aged in oak, with 30% new. Brilliant yellow color with a gold undertone. This strikes a deft balance of rich and creamy texture with beautiful freshness and vivacity. Loads of ripeness, quince, pineapple, and other tropical fruits, followed up with white peach, apricot, and striking citrus flavors, as well as orange rind to provide definition. Extremely precise and complex, all encased in notes of fresh sea shell with an underlayer of minerality. Enjoy over the next 10-25 years. 95-97 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 La Tour Blanche (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 15% sauvignon, 5% muscadelle. Planted on gravel and mixed clay and limestone soil. The semillon is aged in 100% new oak, while the sauvignon blanc and muscadelle are aged in stainless steel. A leaner style, this shows chalky minerality, good vivacity, and less ripe, exotic fruits. Bright citrus notes take center stage, complemented nicely by moderate amounts of botrytis. Clean and fresh with a nice element of spice. Enjoy over the next 10-20 years. 92-94 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Lafaurie-Peyraguey (Sauternes) - 90% semillon, 8% sauvignon, 2% muscadelle. Planted on siliceous gravel and mixed clay and gravel soils. Barrel fermented, then aged in 30% new oak. Expresses moderate complexity, with notes of coconut cream and baking spice. Fresh and clean, with vibrant acidity that masks the sugars nicely for a wonderful balance, this shows

some notes of marmalade and has moderate length. Enjoy over the next 10-15 years. 90-92 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Lamothe (Sauternes) - 85% semillon, 10% sauvignon blanc, 5% muscadelle. Fermented and aged in vat. Vines are planted on mixed clay, sand, and gravel soils. Deep gold color with flecks of green. Very ripe notes of apricot, quince, and orange rind on the nose. Simple and rich, with moderate acidity and a fat, broad texture. Acidity comes through in the end, keeping this fresh. Enjoy over the next 10 years. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Lamothe-Guignard (Sauternes) - 90% semillon, 8% sauvignon blanc, 2% muscadelle. Vines are planted on mixed gravel and limestone soils. Fermented in steel vat, then aged in two-year-old barrels. Light green-gold color. A bright, high-toned style with lots of fresh floral aromas, ripe stone fruit, and spice. The palate also features abundant ripe stone fruit mixed with spicy ginger. Sugars are well-integrated and masked nicely by the creamy, fat texture. Enjoy over the next 15 years. 91-93 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Nairac (Barsac) - 92% semillon, 4% sauvignon blanc, 4% muscadelle. Vines are planted on mixed soils of sand, gravel, and clay atop a limestone bedrock. Barrel fermented, then oak aged, with 50% new. Yellow-gold with a green tinge. Exotic and ripe, with lots of tropical fruit accents along with toasted coconut and vanilla bean flavors. A creamy rich, fat texture gains focus from ample acidity which creates only a moderate perception of sweetness despite the mouthcoating texture. Enjoy over the next 10-15 years. 91-93 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Rabaud-Promis (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvignon blanc. Barrel fermented, then aged in oak, with 66% new. Light green gold color. Displays ripe tropical notes underscored by white orchard fruit. This is clean and fresh, with lots of lively acidity keeping it light and focused. Medium in body with moderate sweetness. Developing nicely, but not yet fully integrated at this point. Enjoy over the next 10-15 years. 89-91 points – Geoffrey Binder

2011 Raymond-Lafon (Sauternes) - 80% semillon, 20% sauvi-



2011 TASTING NOTES

Barsac & Sauternes

ignon blanc. Vines are planted on deep gravel soils. Aged in 100% new oak. Notes of apricot and baking spices on the nose. The palate shows clove and plentiful spice as well as ripe apricot and stone fruit flavors. Moderate in complexity and full-bodied, this has a long almost feathery finish with lots of ripe yellow stone fruit. Moderately sweet, with just enough acidity to stay fresh. Enjoy over the next 15-20 years. 91-93 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Rayne Vigneau (Sauternes) - 74% semillon, 24% sauvignon, 2% muscadelle. Half the wine is aged and fermented in steel while the remainder sees 100% new oak. The vines are planted to a sand and gravel mix with clay subsoils. A pale straw, yellow-green tinged color. Shows quince and lemon citrus on the nose. A rich mouthcoating texture, showing notes of marmalade, orange zest, and quince with a touch of vanillin oak, followed by citrus notes that bring everything into focus. Good delineation of fruit and fine balance of sugars and acid. This will be enjoyable young and drink nicely over the next 15-20 years. 92-94 points — Geoffrey Binder

2011 Rieussec (Sauternes) - 84% semillon, 12% sauvignon blanc, 4% muscadelle. Barrel fermented, then aged in 24% new oak. Vines are planted on mixed gravel and limestone soils. Vibrant yellow-green color. The nose has complex aromas of mango, vanilla bean, and toasted coconut along with brighter notes of Meyer lemon. This has broad, rich texture with layer upon layer of well-delineated and refined fruit, nice ginger spice on the finish, and vibrant acidity. This will have a long and generous life ahead of it. Drink over the next 20+ years. 93-95 points — Geoffrey Binder

2011 Romer (Sauternes) - 100% semillon. Barrel fermented, then aged in two-year-old oak barrels. Vines are planted on gravelly clay soils. Bright yellow gold color. Butter, lemon curd, honey, and acacia scents fill the nose. This has a touch of a toasted coconut and pineapple character, transitioning into creamy lemon curd, ginger and spice flavors. Simple and forward with moderate complexity. Drink now. 88-90 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Sigalas-Rabaud (Sauternes) - 85% semillon, 15% sauvignon blanc. Vines are planted on gravel and sand on top of clay. Barrel fermented, then aged in oak, with 33% new. Yellow gold with hints of green. Honey and citrus notes dominate the nose, underscored by apricot and nectarine. Weighty and broad on the palate, this shows lots of citrus flavor accentuated by a nutty quality and a mouthwatering finish. Good tension from start to finish. Enjoy now through 2030. 91-93 points —Geoffrey Binder

2011 Suduiraut (Sauternes) - 90% semillon, 10% sauvignon blanc. Fermented in stainless steel tanks, then aged in one year old barrels. Vines are planted on mixed clay, sand, and gravel soils on a bed of limestone. The nose shows notes of saffron, vanilla bean, and beeswax with light touches of lemon and orange rind. On the palate, displays slightly more tropical flavors of pineapple and mango with a rich, round texture, and good persistent acidity. Medium to full-bodied, with nice spice from the botrytis and a long, fresh finish. Enjoy over the next 30 years. 94-96 points —Geoffrey Binder



BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Pomerol - Good Things Come From Small Parcels

Rising Star

It is now clear that in 2011, Pomerol rose above other regions in Bordeaux to make some of the best wines of the vintage. This is the continuation of a four-year streak which has seen the appellation crank out some compelling, even superlative, wines. This small region of 750 hectares plays host to some 150 wineries who produce an average of 1000 cases per winery. Its' recent run of success over the past few decades is clearly evidenced in the large number of cranes hovering over vineyards. This year alone saw construction apace at Petrus and La Conseillante as well as a newly finished winery at Le Pin. All of this suggests that Pomerol's success is being plowed back into efforts to further improve their wines.

So what is it about Pomerol that has made the last few vintages so exciting?

Pomerol's Past

Given the appeal and popularity of Pomerol today, it's hard to imagine that the region has only recently begun its ascendancy. The region's wines were obviously so below the radar that they were not even classified in 1855. The lack of old bottles in cellars or on restaurant wine lists are less a statement of their scarcity, but rather a testament to a previous lack of interest in their cellaring potential. Indeed, pre-World War II bottlings of Pomerol are exceptionally rare.

Another reason for the relative obscurity of Pomerol was due to historical and commercial factors. With the British

wine industry firmly ensconced in the business of Left Bank chateaux, and with commerce centered in the city of Bordeaux, it was difficult for the wineries of the Right Bank to generate much attention. And since the British trade focused on the wineries that provided claret to their market, there was also little interest amongst the writers of the day to investigate Pomerol. Even today, the distance between the heart of the Haut Medoc and the center of Pomerol is fairly substantial.

Accordingly, Pomerol's wineries sought out other markets and found them in Belgium, Switzerland and Germany. The strength of their presence in the Benelux countries can be evidenced in the large number of Belgian bottlings of Pomerol, by merchants who bought barrels and bottled them later. The popularity of these practices peaked during the post-World War II era, at a time when negociant bottling in England was on the decline. With most of their wine sold in Belgium and other mainland European countries, there was little impetus for Pomerol wineries to expand their markets.

The improvements that laid the foundation for Pomerol's success occurred from the post-war period through the early 1980s. These changes came about as the result of new, enterprising generations, who took control of their families' estates and made slow but necessary improvements in their vineyards and cellars. Jean-Pierre Moueix, father of Christian Moueix, did the most to elevate the stature of the region's wines when he started his work at Chateau

Petrus in the 1950s. His subsequent success over the next few decades allowed him to create a portfolio of domaines that thrives to this day.

The historic lack of consumer demand meant that there had been little interest among the many small families of the region to keep their vineyards and cellars au courant. The wines were generally rustic and old-school, both in how they were made and how they tasted. The improvements of the second half of the 20th century laid the foundation for Pomerol's future success.



BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Pomerol - Where good things come from small parcels

The Region

Pomerol is roughly shaped like a rounded rectangle, about 2 by 2.5 miles in size. The best vineyards are located on a plateau that sits a few feet above the rest of the district. Its legendary clay soils are located here, in the center of the appellation. Many of those sites also have gravel and it is there where Pomerol's most famous estates can be found. Rivers form some of Pomerol's boundaries, and those estates nearer these borders rest on sandier soils and produce less distinctive wines.

Merlot is the definitive Pomerol grape. Viticulturists have said that merlot vines prefer "wet feet," which is another way of saying that their roots prefer

moist soils. This is in stark contrast to vines from the cabernet family, where access to well-drained soils is essential to curtail the vine's vegetative tendencies. The clay soils of Pomerol, with their water holding capacity, are perfect for merlot.

While a number of Pomerols are comprised of 100% merlot, cabernet franc is the classic secondary component that can be found in many of the region's wines. If this variety does play a role in an estate's wine program, it will be planted in percentages between 10-20%, although a few domaines have planted higher percentages. Given the grape's inherent weedy and herbaceous flavors, cab franc must be planted in just the right places to fully ripen.

Those soils that have a good percentage of gravel mixed in with clay are best suited for cabernet franc in Pomerol. It is rare when the grape fully ripens and even when it does, many wineries will add that component to their second wine or sell it off, if it does not meet the standards for the grand vin.

Cabernet sauvignon also has a small presence in Pomerol, though it is seen less and less these days as it struggles to ripen even more than its cousin. Malbec and petit verdot, two other Bordelaise varieties that require even more warmth than the cabs, are scarce, and are only planted as curiosities.



BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Pomerol - Where good things come from small parcels

Pomerol Today

Today's Pomerol has emerged from its agricultural past to become one of the most sought-after regions in all of Bordeaux. The combination of small production wines garnering critical attention and acclaim has raised Pomerol's profile and propelled these once obscure wines to the forefront of the Bordeaux market.

Decades of hard work in the vineyards and cellars paid off with the 1982 vintage. Robert Parker highlighted a number of properties, attracting some long overdue attention to the region. The rest, as they say, is history. As the popularity of the best wines rose and demand increased, other estates followed and took the necessary steps to improve their wines. The three decades since can be characterized by the familiar story of individual estates making the transition from mediocrity to excellence.

The nature of Pomerol's rise has also contributed to its image of an insider's region. Since it is relatively new and has no formal classification, the consumer has to learn a bit more about the area and actively seek out the wines of these small producers. This mystique has only added to Pomerol's allure, where having some inside information may help discover the region's next new star. It is a pursuit that will become increasingly important as the global demand for Pomerol continues to rise.



Barrel room at Lafleur, April 2012

BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Sauternes: Sweet Liquid Gold

In the world of Bordeaux, the region of Sauternes is an outlier. Not just because it is renowned for its luscious sweet wines while surrounded by regions that only produce dry wines. Sauternes is also separate from Bordeaux's core geographically and historically. During an intensive visit this year, I got the clear sense that even though Sauternes is well known for what it does, there are many stories that have not been told. It seemed quiet, the roads narrow and framed by shuttered houses as if everyone had left for vacation. It looked as if it would require some effort to dig a bit deeper and find out what the region was all about. So I started digging....

The Region

Sauternes is tangibly different from the Haut Medoc and the Right Bank appellations. Driving around, you get the sense that things move more slowly, that they are done in the same way they always have been. The villages of Sauternes and Barsac are so small and quiet that they don't have the boulangeries or post offices that form the center of life in the country. As you drive the narrow roads surrounded by lush vegetation, you see collapsed roofs and walls among the barns and old buildings. It's a different place. Many of the vineyards around Barsac are intimate and enclosed by high walls, but as you travel toward Sauternes proper, the plots become broader and more expansive. Here, the chateaux date back to much earlier times than do those of the Haut Medoc. Up north in the Medoc you think chateaux. In Sauternes you think

castles. I am talking ancient castles, 13th century stuff. Every time I walked into a winery, I ended up getting a lesson in French history. The sense of mystery and history surrounding Sauternes gives context to its wines. Wines that are unique and have few peers.





BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Sauternes: Sweet Liquid Gold

Production

The mechanics of Sauternes production have been well known for some time. The occasional bouts of moist mists that arise from the confluence of the Garonne and Ciron rivers give rise to conditions that favor the growth of molds in the surrounding vineyards. If conditions are right, the appearance of the fog, in tandem with just the right amount of sunlight and drying winds, allows specific molds to grow at a slow pace. When grapes reach a particular level of ripeness, spores from the most desirable mold, *botrytis cinerea*, puncture the skin of an infected grape, dehydrating it and concentrating the sugars. This provides the necessary foundation for making these famous desert wines.

And conditions must be perfect. If the moist weather arrives too early, when the grape skins are too hard, it is difficult for the spores to penetrate the grape. If it arrives too late, the grapes lose the desirable acidity to age and are susceptible to bad molds that create bunch rot rather than the noble rot that *botrytis cinerea* produces. When the grapes are just right, the presence of the *botrytis* mold sets off an alarm of sorts in the vine. It then creates an enzyme that attacks the infection. That enzyme, in combination with the *botrytis*, combines to create the specific flavors that are so prized in the finished wine. It is at that optimal point that the grapes should be picked. Pick too early or too late and you can make acceptable wine but it will not possess the unique and essential flavor of these distinctive wines.

In addition to what nature provides, there are a number of lesser known, yet just as important aspects of Sauternes production that are essential. Most importantly, *botrytis* follows its own timetable, it is neither predictable nor regular. To counteract the uncertainty, wineries in other countries induce its presence by mixing spores with water and spraying the combination over a vineyard. Other wineries pick grapes and spray them with the mixture in a warehouse. These techniques, while offering consistency and stability, are forbidden in Sauternes, yet are increasingly popular in Napa Valley and other regions around the world. As the harvest approaches, it is necessary to continuously monitor vineyards for any sign of infection. The spread of *botrytis* can be quick, some vineyards can see a full blooming of the mold in less than four hours. Constant assessment of the vines and the ability to send a group of pickers to descend on the vineyards at a moment's notice are required. A few owners proudly mentioned that their pickers work on weekends, typically days off for workers in France.

Picking fruit is also an exacting art. Many winemakers we spoke with noted that women are preferred for vineyard work. According to them, this is not only due to their attention to detail but also because of their smaller hands *vis-à-vis* men's. When sent to the vineyards for harvest, pickers are instructed to select grapes that show a certain level of *botrytis* infection. This may be a whole bunch, a certain portion of it, or even individual berries. A great deal of precision is required to harvest the right



fruit. Maintaining a dedicated picking crew is essential and expensive. Once again, the wineries we visited discussed the benefits of having a trained crew that was well versed in accurate picking. Constantly training new employees to select the right fruit results in a wide variation in the quality of berries arriving at the cellar door, often requiring more work at the sorting table. Pickers are usually assessed by the amount of discarded berries they deliver to the crush pad. High numbers of rejected berries result in a picker's dismissal from the crew. For some estates, vineyard work is assigned to a particular employee who is responsible for tasks on a specific plot throughout the entire season. Chateau d'Yquem estimates that 50 different tasks are performed on each vine during the growing season. Again, the highly specialized nature of work in Sauternes means that dedicating a group of workers to certain plots creates many added benefits. The vineyard work that occurs behind the scenes is just one of the factors required to make Sauternes. An expensive and labor-intensive investment is also essential as is the combination of good fortune and good luck common to many of the world's wonders.

BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Sauternes: Sweet Liquid Gold

Sauternes & Barsac

The production of sweet wines is not limited to the wineries of the Sauternes region. Nearby AOCs such as Loupiac, Cadillac, and Ste. Croix du Mont, located on the eastern side of the Gironde River directly across from Sauternes also produce “stickies”. But the quality of Sauternes and the accumulated history of its fabled properties has done much to solidify its place at the top of the hierarchy of sweet wine appellations. The Sauternes appellation contains five communes that are eligible for AOC approval. But of those, it is Barsac that has carved out its own identity. It covers a small, flat area within the eastern portion of the commune, close to the Gironne and Ciron rivers and covered with rich, alluvial soils. The domaines of Barsac are more modest and unassuming and lack the grandiose statements of their neighbors in Sauternes. Towards the southwest, a band of limestone appears that is credited with giving Barsac's best wines its distinctive qualities. Barsac's wines are said to be racier, with more finesse and tension than those of Sauternes. The minerality perceived by many tasters comes from the limestone subsoils' influence which exerts an effect similar to that of Burgundy's famous soils on its wines. The wines from the four other communes that make up the Sauternes appellation are richer and more voluptuous than those of Barsac.

In fact, Sauternes is almost the antithesis of Barsac. As was common in the past, the hills were the preferred sites for castles as farmers worked the lower, flatter lands. So the famed castles of

Sauternes are located on small hillocks that dot the landscape a short distance southwest of Barsac. The region shows the power of its beauty and majesty, with vineyards sloping away from the wineries for better drainage and sun exposure. These estates are quite large,

leaving breathtaking impressions that stand in sharp contrast to the more rural, down home feel of Barsac.



100ml tubes of Chateau Guiraud

BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Sauternes: Sweet Liquid Gold

Aging

The popular thinking is that Sauternes ages well and for extended periods of over 100 years. Ancient bottles with orange hues frequently populate the covers of auction catalogs and the shelves of wine cabinets in stores and restaurants in an attempt to validate that claim. Yet often when drinking old Sauternes, even more than a glass of wine you are drinking a glass of history. Younger Sauternes are best appreciated for their freshness and vibrancy. With lifted, primary aromas of citrus and lively expressions on the palate, they work very well with fresh fruits and lighter pastries. The fresh acidity leaves

a refreshing presence on the palate with textures that are just starting to gain breadth while avoiding bulk. But even among the best examples, some wines can be disjointed and will not show all the latent power and complexity they will revealed in a few years. As Sauternes approach middle age, the flavors and textures begin to change. The citrus portion of the flavor spectrum disappears as the palate starts to develop notes of spice and quince with tangerine and other tropical fruits starting to appear. Richer and broader textures also come to the fore, covering up the acidity levels so present in younger Sauternes. The best older Sauternes possess seamlessly integrated flavors and textures.

However, these wines run the risk of drying out and losing freshness along with their purity of fruit. Wines past 15-20 years old seem to be most at risk for losing many of their youthful qualities. The best examples highlight advanced flavors of dried apricot and peach, notes of molasses, and crème caramel. At the same time, textures spread across the palate, extending their presence on the back end with a full, creamy finish the order of the day.



Corks from a Climens vertical tasting.

BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Sauternes: Sweet Liquid Gold

Market

It's no secret that this is not the best of times for the Sauternes market. Sales have slowed and tastes are shifting. Low demand has kept prices down, which means that producers are not making any money. Today, all of the wineries are making varied yet concerted efforts to increase sales and raise awareness of the category. Yet it wasn't that long ago that almost all European sweet wines commanded prices that were higher than the reds and whites from any region of France. And as Sauternes enthusiast Bill Blatch recently noted, an analysis of Cellar Tracker's entire database indicates that Sauternes wines have the highest scores of those of any Bordeaux appellation. So it looks like all is not lost.

The biggest challenge for Sauternes, from the perspective of the producers, is to rethink its place in the hierarchy of a dinner. Many producers are challenging the trade to reconceptualize Sauternes as an aperitif rather than the designation "just a dessert wine." I even heard one representative on our recent trip say that it's perfect for sipping by the pool. A few others murmured their agreement. Others seek to place Sauternes in the middle of the meal with courses featuring white meats or fish, while other producers hold out hope that ingredients and dishes from Asia will bring excitement to the category. This all seems well and good but traditions and customs of the dinner table are hard to change. After some excellent meals at

a few wineries in Sauternes where we had the fortune to taste an assortment of older vintages with each course, we all agreed that desserts made the best matches. Other wineries seek to change the nature of Sauternes itself. More than a few estates are repositioning the traditional Sauternes model as they attempt to make lighter and fresher styles. The essential goal is to make a new style of wine with reduced sugar and acidity levels while also encouraging its consumption in more diverse settings. Some examples of this new approach from Chateau Suduiraut are due to arrive in the United States shortly.

Any attempt to change a product with the acclaimed history and presence of Sauternes would not be complete with-

out some efforts from the world of packaging and marketing. The theory is that classically styled labels don't resonate with younger audiences so contemporary designs are necessary to bring in new consumers. A few wineries are thinking about smaller sizes such as a 187ml bottle to get the wine into more hands in more places. Chateau Giraud came up with a very interesting and clever concept, a three vintage vertical e of its Sauternes in 100ml tubes that are sold to retailers and potentially to night-clubs. The package is quite impressive, with an appearance more akin to a shampoo product. But in the end, whether new packaging or innovative wine styles can save Sauternes is still a matter for debate.



Castle ruins at Chateau de Fargues, April 2012.

BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

Sauternes: Sweet Liquid Gold

The Real Deal

All these efforts are well intentioned and in some cases show clever, out of the box thinking. But like many similar efforts to revive such moribund wine sectors as port or Madeira, they will have some impact on the margins but cannot steer the entire region to new levels of success. And for good reason, because they do not speak to the essence of Sauternes—its rich history, the sheer fortune that brings the fog and mists, ugly molds, and mature grapes together, let alone the unique flavors that are almost otherworldly and unmatched by other regions. These are just a few of the reasons that Sauternes has maintained its place as one of the world's great wines, and no amount of marketing can change that. Celebrating the special place of Sauternes in the firmament of the wine industry and letting its wines speak to what the region is all about is the story that will ultimately resonate. With some great vintages in the hopper, this seems to be the time to let the wines do the talking.



The line-up of Chateau Climens



BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

The White Houses of the Left Bank

Bordeaux has always produced a plethora of red and white wines from appellations across the region, along with a smattering of roses and sweet wines. Interestingly however, a total of 89% of the wine produced in Bordeaux is red. Nevertheless, white Bordeaux remains a popular category, especially in America.

For years, even decades, the concept of "White Bordeaux" has meant wines from Graves, today designated as Pessacs or Leognans, or in the case of less expensive wines, labeled simply generic Bordeaux. But as I have frequently argued in many blog posts and reports, Bordeaux is never really static, change comes slowly but new concepts appear on a regular basis. And so it is with the increasing number of white wines being produced by the cru classes of the Haut Medoc.

What little white wine production there is has been confined to the areas south of Bordeaux, but the estates that dominate the Haut Medoc have often made a bit if only for their own consumption, and maybe a small amount for occasional sales to friends and neighbors. Produced in infinitesimal quantities, many of these wines have a long history while others are fairly recent creations. They also vary considerably in style and assemblage.

Despite their differences, the wines share three unique traits. First, each wine is classified as a generic Bordeaux AOC. Haut Medoc white wines cannot be granted AOC status from their individual communes within Bordeaux. Secondly, they are extensions of powerful, internationally recognized brands, meaning

we can expect to see more of them in the future. Finally, and most importantly, they are simply delicious.

Yet most of these wines remain obscure and hard to find. Of the seven highlighted in this essay, three have never been reviewed by the Wine Advocate. In the case of one winery, Parker reviewed only nine vintages in 20 years. And many of the wines scored have no tasting notes!!

The dry whites of Graves and Pessac-Leognan are distinguished by their high semillon content. Combined with the crisper and more high-toned sauvignon blanc, these semillon-dominated wines have a certain richness and texture that allow for some barrel fermentation and aging in oak, while providing the stuffing that enables them to age easily. The whites of the Haut Medoc differ in that sauvignon blanc dominates the final blends and, in a few cases, comprises the entirety of the assemblage. Semillon plays a minor role in most wines and muscadelle is rarely found. As in the Graves and Pessac, barrels are frequently used for fermentation and aging. Most are ready to drink upon release and will reward another five to ten years of cellaring.

The following pages offer brief introductions to the wineries that are part of this developing segment of Bordeaux.





BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

The White Houses of the Left Bank

Lynch-Bages

Lynch Bages' white wine is probably the most well known of its type in America after Chateau Margaux's Pavillon Blanc. It was first produced in 1990, from the classic varieties of sauvignon blanc (40%), semillon (40%), and muscadelle (20%) planted in eight different parcels totaling 11 acres. The vines are situated amongst Lynch Bages' other vineyards. The finished wines, partially barrel fermented and aged for six months, show a fine balance of crisp fruit, understated oak, and mineral undertones. Fairly tight, with the components not yet fully integrated, this would probably be best enjoyed after a few years once it has developed some integrated textures.

Cos d'Estournel

Cos d'Estournel is the newest entrant to this category having made its first white wine in 2005. The vineyards are not in St. Estephe, but are planted further north in the villages of Jau-Dignac and Loirac where the grapes for the winery's Goulee project grow. This exposed area is affected by the weather and cool breezes from the nearby Atlantic ocean. Production has increased from 250 cases in 2006 to 1000 in 2011. Their style is quite different from that of other Haut Medoc whites and stands out among that array. With vibrant sauvignon character despite being fermented in barrel, the wine shows lots of crisp, zippy textures and leaves a vibrant impression.

Margaux

The most famous white Bordeaux made in the Haut Medoc, Pavillon Blanc du Chateau Margaux, also has one of the category's richest histories. First made in the 19th century, Pavillon Blanc, as both a label and a brand, has been in existence since 1920. Sourcing from a 29-acre block of sauvignon blanc located just outside the boundaries of Margaux AOC, the estate prefers a style that focuses on fruit rather than herbal notes. In recent years, the winemaking team had pushed ripeness levels to the point where alcohol levels hit 15%. Grapes are being picked a bit earlier now in an effort to create a more balanced and fresher style and alcohol levels have dropped recently.

In addition to its lengthy history, Pavillon Blanc has a great track record for aging. A recently tasted 2001 in magnum was a stunning wine from an excellent vintage that stood up to a rich lobster dish prepared at the Chateau. The more recent barrel sample of the 2011 was an exhilarating experience that will turn out to be one of the best wines from the estate. Already showing considerable complexity on the nose and palate plus a sense of tension, this vintage will prove to be the centerpiece of many dinner table conversations in the next 5-10 years.



BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

The White Houses of the Left Bank

Mouton-Rothschild

The Aile d'Argent from Chateau Mouton-Rothschild is also rare, especially given its recent history. In an effort to hearken back to an earlier period when the winery produced white wine, Mouton planted 10 acres of classic white Bordelais varieties, with the first wines released in 1991. About 1200 cases are produced each year but unlike the Pavillon Blanc from Margaux, Mouton's wine has very little presence in the American market and maintains a very low profile overall. So low that Robert Parker has only reviewed it once, some eight years ago!!

Once again, sauvignon blanc dominates the blend which is barrel fermented in 50% new oak. An additional nine months of oak aging takes place before bottling. Having rarely presented this at en primeur, this year Mouton's owners discreetly poured the 2011. It was an exceptional wine and deserved more attention among the wines presented that day. Here's hoping we see more of it in the future.



Prieure-Lichine

The first Blanc de Château Prieuré-Lichine was produced in 1990. The grapes come from a small parcel located in Arsac, a nearby village that houses a block separate from the domaine's main vineyards. It is planted to 60% sauvignon blanc and 40% semillon and aged in Burgundy barrels a third of which are new. The latest rendition showed fresh apple flavors with oak subsumed in the background. I have little experience with older vintages but this would make a fantastic aperitif.



BORDEAUX 2011 SPOTLIGHT

The White Houses of the Left Bank

Palmer

Perhaps the rarest wine discussed in this section, Palmer's white, is also the most intriguing. Utilizing a surprising assemblage of 65% muscadelle and 25% sauvignon gris, with the remainder a mix of merlot blanc and lauzet. The latter is an obscure variety found in the Jurancon. Accordingly, the wine cannot be granted AOC Bordeaux status and is designated as a simple vin de table.

It's well known that Chateau Palmer made a white wine in the 1920s, and pictures of bottles dating back to that era are easy to find. The chateau, however, has no records of its production. It was not until 2007 that it decided to revive the wine as it endeavors to produce new offerings based on those made in the past. Another wine made by Palmer sees a syrah blended with cabernet and merlot, as was made in the 19th century when syrah from Hermitage was added for color and strength.

The wine has never been offered for sale, only used as gifts for the property's shareholders. Nevertheless, the usual 75 case annual production swelled to 200 in 2010 and a small portion was sold to negociants with the proceeds earmarked for charity. Some of it may actually make it onto the market. Stay tuned.



Talbot

The vines designated for the Caillou Blanc du Chateau Talbot are located in its St. Julien vineyards. Planted to 80% sauvignon blanc and 20% semillon, the wine traditionally sees a blend of new and old oak. The cuvee has been a perennial favorite of the Cordier family, the prestigious Bordeaux negociants who owners Talbot. Typically round and soft with some appreciable texture, this has made its way to the American market from time to time.

STORIES FROM THE ROAD

A “Cos” for celebration

by Cory Gowan

It’s no secret that Cos d’Estournel has been on a qualitative roll, but when Robert Parker awarded 100 points to the 2009 vintage, Cos squarely placed itself among the Left Bank elite. Delivering what its winemakers deem as First Growth quality wines from St. Estephe, Cos has worked hard to place its name on every Bordeaux lover’s wish list.

With that in mind, you can imagine the anticipation was high for my third visit to Cos d’Estournel to taste the 2011s. With a private, first-look tasting of the new vintage and a special dinner invitation from director Jean Guillaume-Prats, we motored our rental Peugeot up the D2 highway eager to spend our first night in Bordeaux delving into the 2011s.

Visiting Cos d’Estournel is always a grand affair. After parking in the gravel driveway under our honorary American flag, we found ourselves in a brand new tasting salon (finished in 2008), more reminiscent of a hip Manhattan night-spot than an historic winery (the name Cos d’Estournel dates back to 1810). After a quick trip around the nippy barrel room where we viewed the 2011s in barrel (the 2010 vintage had already been moved for blending), we popped back upstairs to taste.

We had only been off the plane a few hours when I picked up my first 2011 Bordeaux – a glass of 2011 Goulée, a wine that is eminently familiar to many of our Bordeaux lovers for its price-value relationship, and produced by Cos. A blend of 70% cabernet sauvignon with the balance merlot, Goulée has made a name for itself as a terrific Left Bank value – with all of the care that goes into a Grand Vin for a fraction of the price. While tasting the 2011 Pagodes de Cos (Cos d’Estournel’s second wine), Jean Guillaume-Prats told us about the vintage. In his words, 2011 for Cos had higher yields than 2008 and 2009 with very early ripening. With really no spring season (winter went straight into sum-





STORIES FROM THE ROAD

A “Cos” for celebration, cont.

mer), Cos experienced its earliest harvest since 1893.

There will be a good amount of 2011 Pagodes for the Bordeaux consumer to enjoy. A blend of 65% cabernet sauvignon, 33% merlot, with 2% petite verdot thrown in for good measure, Guillaume-Prats and his team declassified a large number of blocks of the Grand Vin that will now make their way into Pagodes. While that means that the Grand Vin will be the smallest level of production since 1991, all of that top juice that graced previous vintages now goes into the Pagodes.

After tasting the opaque purplish/ruby grand vin we got a special treat – a small pour of the 2011 Cos d’Estournel blanc, a 833 case cuvee that Cos has produced since 2005. A blend of 67% sauvignon blanc with the balance semillon, it’s a rich white that’s harvested early (August) and is 100% barrel fermented. In Guillaume-Prats’ words, 2011 is an “extraordinary vintage for whites” and he recommends that they be enjoyed on the younger side.

After our tasting we adjourned for Champagne (2004 Cristal), light snacks, and lively conversation before heading to dinner. Once we were seated, we enjoyed an extraordinary dinner of simple melon and prosciutto, a main course

of simple roasted cod and vegetables, and then the obligatory round of fine cheeses before dessert. Complementing our meal were selections from the Cos cellar – 2008 Cos d’Estournel blanc, 2007 blanc, 2005 rouge, and then a special bottle of the 1985 rouge, straight from Cos’ cellars. Dessert was just as special, with a gâteau a la noise de coco (coconut cake), accompanied by a selection of 2001 Domaine Imperiale de Hetszolo Tokaji and followed with the ultra-rare Tesseron Extreme cognac. What a way to kick-off en primeurs in 2012!



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

A Different Kettle of Fish: Dinner at Ducru

by Devon Magee

When I think of popping open a bottle of Left Bank Bordeaux with dinner, I typically think of medium rare steak. But tonight, Bruno Borie, owner of Second Growth Ducru-Beaucaillou, dared us to think outside the box, pairing his lineup of Cab-based reds with seafood. It makes sense, really, with the bounties of the Atlantic – and especially the Bassin de Arcachon – only a stone’s throw away, eating local here is seafood. Except that drinking local here means structured, tannic Cabs.

And for a producer whose latest release – the ‘09 – was just awarded 100 Points by Robert Parker, the prize of the night was not necessarily the wine, but the fish! We caught a glimpse of the enormous, flat fish through the side door just as we arrived. We watched as the two women manning the kitchen, together hoisted the turbot off the ice and into the oven. I looked at my colleagues in wonderment. Could it be? Fish with Ducru?

Yes! We never saw the Bordeaux staples – duck breast, confit, or even foie gras. Instead, Bruno poured us a Magnum of 2000 Dom Perignon with a side-by-side comparison of Spanish “Pata Nega Belota” jamón – 5-year aged, acorn-fed ham – and French “Pate Noire” jambon. As we chewed on the juicy question, Bruno hopped into the open kitchen in front of us to sauté clams and mussels.

Just as I concluded that – sorry Bruno! – the Spanish Pata Negra was a head and shoulder above the French, he dropped a plate each of the clams and mussels onto the island countertop that bordered the kitchen. I refilled my glass, but the shellfish stole the show – both were from the Bassin de Arcachon, sautéed in their own juices, and the absolute freshest shellfish I have ever tasted.



Finally, we sat down for dinner at a rectangular table that faced the open kitchen on one side, and the lovely spring night in St. Julien on the other. So far so good – Champagne with shellfish, and now, surely, Bruno would serve us something meaty with his reds. Not so. The seafood theme continued with a “consommé de poisson” – fish soup – procured, as Bruno explained, from his local connection in Cap Ferrer – at the tip of the peninsula that encloses the Bassin. Bruno’s Fourcas-Borie – his “third wine”, a term he hates because it comes from a completely separate inland parcel planted in a sandy and white stone vineyard – paired beautifully. As he said, “Seafood goes well with younger wine.” And it did – Fresh and high-toned, and not your typical blockbuster Medoc Cab, the texture of this young-vine ‘09 was perfect with the coriander seafood broth.



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

A Different Kettle of Fish: Dinner at Ducru, cont.

Next, Renée, Bruno's cellar master, and a walking encyclopedia of Medoc lore (Can you tell me the meaning of Beychevelle?), served us '95, '00, '01, '03, and '05 Ducru, as Bruno, wearing hot mitts, arrived tableside with the 7-kilo turbot fresh out of the oven in a roasting pan. I wondered if his reaction to his 100-point '09 matched his enthusiasm tonight for this 15+ pound white fish, as he stood before us. He explained that the turbot, which he estimated to be over 20 years old, came from another one of his passionate mariner buddies, who also works the Bassin de Arcachon and sells his salt water treasures at the "Lucide" fish shop in Cap Ferret. This particular fish, the one we saw as we entered, was driven over from the Cap earlier today.

I followed Bruno's advice and drizzled Spanish olive oil and "piment d'espelette" - the dried red chili flakes from the Basque country - on my fish, with no regrets. And I conducted my own experiment on the red wine with fish conundrum: 2 servings of turbot with each vintage. The result? I turned to Bruno to ask his opinion, and he, looking for support for his unorthodox pairings, turned to his neighbor, Master of Wine Jeannie Cho Lee with this question: Which vintage pairs best with the turbot?! Looking back, it's funny how he danced around the real question, and assuming that his wines did complement the turbot, inquired as to which



worked best. (For video evidence of this debate, check out youtube.com/jjbuckleywines.)

Yet I, too, had already jumped to the same conclusion. All I had to do was look at the glasses in front of me. My glass of '00 was empty. For me, this vintage was at the perfect midpoint between developing and young. Bruno, apt to compare his wines to women -

the '09 is Beyoncé, the '10 Charlise Theron, and the '11 Nicole Kidman - might say the '00 is a current day Sharon Stone, or maybe the Franco-English actress Kristin Scott Thomas. And I would agree.

Jeannie liked the '03 with her turbot. She returned to the textural theme, comparing velvet to velvet (coincidentally, she wore a velvet jacket), and since my glass of '00 was empty, I reached for the '03, and couldn't agree more.

Bruno sent us off with Tesson XO Cognac from 1929, and, in orchestrating such a perfect, effortless dinner with so much apparent spontaneity, showed me the heart of his Second Growth, a wine linked to the land and the region, best served with the freshest local fare available gracing your dinner table, and especially fish!



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Homage à Bages: Dinner with Jean-Charles Cazes

by Alex Shaw

Not surprisingly our trip to Bordeaux is not ALL about the wine: this is France after all. During the day, our entire focus is on tasting wine (upwards of 100 on this day alone). But once the sun sets, we get treated to some of the greatest food in the world. Typically our dinners are in chateaux: with their grand rooms, high ceilings, and Renaissance art, they certainly inspire awe. But this evening, a few of us were fortunate to dine with Jean-Charles Cazes from Chateau Lynch-Bages.

After our tasting of Lynch-Bages' four 2011 releases (Les Ormes de Pez, in St. Estephe, Lynch Bages, Echo de Lynch Bages, the house's second wine, and Blanc de Lynch Bages) at the chateau, we drove around the corner to Cordeilan-Bages, the property's Michelin-starred restaurant. It's not a stretch to say that this was the single greatest meal I've had out of my three trips to Bordeaux for en primeur.

Rather than going straight to our table we were led to an intimate lounge-like space, with deep couches and comfortable chairs surrounding coffee tables. A bottle of Krug Grand Cuvée was poured (nothing is quite as refreshing as Champagne after a long day of tasting barrel samples), and conversation quickly began to flow about the history of Lynch-Bages and of JJ Buckley. We were handed menus, and once the Champagne was finished, we were escorted to our table.



The magnificence of great French restaurants, Michelin-starred restaurants in particular, is the service. Every detail was perfect. Glasses filled, silverware changed, bread offered, all at exactly the right moment without ever distracting from Mr. Cazes's absorbing company. From our erudite host, to the place settings, to the food, to the wine (2009 Senechaux Blanc, from Domaine des Senechaux, Lynch-Bages' Chateaneuf property, 2005 Les Ormes de Pez, and 1996 Lynch Bages), the meal was the

epitome of elegance, executed flawlessly.

Although I'm a die-hard food fanatic, I find it impossible to describe the quality of Chef Jean-Luc Rocha's cuisine with the accuracy it deserves. Each course was more stunning than the next. Oysters and caviar, foie gras, lamb, sweetbreads, and stunning desserts, all enjoyed while dining with Jean-Charles Cazes, easily one of the most interesting and intellectual chateau owners in the Medoc.

When the night finally drew to a close, the six of us from JJ Buckley could barely contain ourselves on the drive back to our hotel. You get accustomed to, and hopefully not jaded by, the great food at en primeur: succulent beef, incredible cheese, local fish, pâté and all the wonderful things that make up French cuisine. But every now and then, a night far exceeds your wildest expectations. This was one of those nights. And we all knew it.

Thank YOU Mr. Cazes!



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

No One-Trick Pony: Recapturing Rusticity at Pontet-Canet

by **Roland Hankerson**

The cool breeze of a spring day in Bordeaux carries with it wisps of dust, which settle between the forty-year-old vines that line the gravelly vineyard of Pontet-Canet. The hoofs of horses drawing plows kicked up the dust, as they are charged with turning the earth on this stately property. The “old ways” of producing classic Bordeaux are new again in a vineyard accustomed to producing world class wine of power and elegance in a manner that preserves its piece of earth with great care.

Alfred Tesseron, proprietor of Pontet-Canet, is on a quest to provide a world class wine that adheres to his environmental ethics. He turns to his long-time winemaker, Jean-Michel Comme, (a 22-year veteran of the estate) to not only make the wine, but also head a program of certified organic and biodynamic viticulture on the property. No expense has been spared on this project, and Jean-Michel was handed complete autonomy with which to transform the vineyard over the course of several patient years. By now, he has transformed vineyard operations in a manner that allows the grapes to express in his words, “...the true identity of themselves in terroir while caring for the future of the earth the grapes come from.”

The reintroduction of true horse-powered vineyard equipment at Pontet-Canet, came at Jean-Michel’s behest. The methodical tradition of animal and man working side by side to till the earth eliminates the carbon footprint left

behind by gas-powered tractors and tools. Fertilizers (when actually used) are uniquely organic, and winter pruning is managed by skilled, salaried workers to ensure that each every vine is treated with special consideration.

In addition to the gentle methods that are now commonplace on the estate, the elimination of excess clusters of grapes that bud early (in a practice known as green harvesting) has also been discontinued. Many vineyards around the world use this technique to focus soil nutrients, sugars in the grapes, and fruit density into results that are more intense at harvest. Jean-Michel’s philosophy here is unique: “The earth will produce what it will. We will take the best of it to produce our wine. To cut the early fruits for the sake of the later blooms is not exactly natural. It is not the true identity of the life of the vine; and therefore not the truest form the fruit we wish to use.”

This philosophy and methodology is not a common practice amongst other winemakers and chateaus. Few others, if any, in Bordeaux follow the same practices. In truth, the resulting wine is softer than one might expect as a result of allowing such natural growth in this method, without training back

the vines. However, the wine’s overall balance, ripe red and dark fruits, subtle tannins, and depth of finish has inspired widespread agreement that there may be something to Jean-Michel’s methods.

Unlike the stellar 2009 and 2010 vintages of Bordeaux, where almost everything was “buy,” the 2011 vintage had a tricky growing season that challenged the production of many of the great houses. In considering the 2011 vintage, Bordeaux lovers are going to need to be a bit choosier in their selections. 2011 Pontet-Canet shows serious potential where many selections of the vintage are lacking. After visiting the estate, it is clear why. Commitment to green viticulture certainly factors in, but such promise is due entirely to the painstaking effort that goes into the long-term preservation of such a classic vineyard as Pontet-Canet.





STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Bottomless Pours at Chateau Margaux

by Alex Shaw

Here in Bordeaux, two words inspire more reverence than any others: First Growth. Thanks to the 1855 classification system, there are only five First Growths (Lafite, Latour, Haut Brion, and Margaux, with Mouton added to the group in 1973), and they are widely considered to produce the finest wines from the Left Bank. We were lucky to taste all five on Monday, an excellent exercise that shed some light on the possibilities of the top end of the 2011 vintage. For many, including myself, the First Growth that inspires the most passion, even reverence, is Chateau Margaux, so it was with great anticipation that I looked forward to dining there that evening.

Many who visit Bordeaux will recognize Margaux – the chateau and the grounds were constructed 200 years ago (from 1810 to 1815), and many have gazed through the gate, 100 or so yards up the driveway, at this monumental chateau. I'd tasted the wines and toured the cellars multiple times, but the chateau, sitting majestically behind the gate, was

always a thing of untouchable beauty. It would not be a stretch to call it the grandest of all the Bordeaux chateau.

A chill ran down my spine as I saw the famous gate open for us. As we drove up, we were greeted by Margaux's Technical Director, Paul Pontallier, who for several decades has been in charge of making one of the world's greatest wines. Following a tour of the cellars and a tasting of Margaux's three wines: Margaux – soft, supple and complex, with classic elegance; Pavillon Rouge – the best second wine we've tasted thus far; and Pavillon Blanc – a stunning example of the heights attainable for white Bordeaux, we were led into the chateau.

Walking up the massive front steps was an experience I'll never forget, and looking around at my colleagues, I knew I was not alone. The evening would prove to be unforgettable on every level. We were joined by Margaux's owner, Ms. Corinne Mentzelopoulos, and her lovely daughter Alexandra, which was rare and exciting. We dined on lobster with foie gras, rack of lamb, cheeses and sweets. And the wine...oh the wine!



We enjoyed a glass of Krug Grand Cuvee with hors d'oeuvres, then turned our attention to the wines chosen to accompany dinner: the 2001 Pavillon Blanc, 1999 Chateau Margaux, and the 1989 Chateau Margaux. They were absolutely outstanding – the Blanc had multilayered flavors of seashell and vanilla that unfolded throughout the evening. And the reds were exactly what you'd expect of Margaux: mind-blowing. The 1999, just beginning to reach maturity, was vibrant and elegant with red fruit and a silky texture. The 1989, with secondary notes of cassis and violets, was a wonderful example of how gracefully and elegantly Margaux's wines age.

Tasting two vintages of a First Growth side by side is an event, but this was above and beyond. We never saw any of the actual bottles because the staff kept our glasses full. Everyone was drinking and appreciating these great wines, and as the meal went on laughter got louder, conversations became more animated, as if someone had turned up the volume in the room.

Bottomless Chateau Margaux...how many times in your life does that happen!





STORIES FROM THE ROAD

First Growths First: Harbingers of the Vintage

by **Chuck Hayward**

Let the madness begin! Save for the elite critics who arrived in Bordeaux one or two weeks ahead, en primeur week officially opened on Monday. We arrive early enough to get acclimated and rested up, as that first day offers an important opportunity get a sense of the vintage before later diving into the really big tastings hosted by negociants and the Union des Grand Crus (UGC).

So with schedules in hand and cars revved up, we headed north on the Route du Chateau (after a slow slog through downtown Bordeaux's unfailling traffic jams), to make the most of our fresh, day one palates by tasting the First Growths. Sampling the crème de la crème of Bordeaux first is helpful, as it usually sets the standard for the wines tasted throughout the rest of the week.

From our initial tastings over the weekend, it became clear that the weather during the 2011 growing season had an especially powerful impact on the quality of each estate's wines. This is certainly the year of the winemaker, as the ideal conditions of '09 and '10 could not be counted on as auxiliary to technique. It is easy to discern that the wines of 2011 were dependent on how different wineries

responded to the hot drought of spring and early summer and the rains right before the harvest. Those estates with clay soils had the most success with their grapes throughout the drought conditions thanks to the clay's capacity for water retention. Harvesting dates will definitely be a predictor of success in 2011, favoring those who waited until



after the September weather passed and were thus rewarded with ripe fruit.

With all this in mind, it seems that 2011 is a year where quality will run the gamut from disappointing to exceptional, and my feeling is that the First Growths illustrated this broad range. The grand vins from each of the premiers grands crus mirrored their respective house styles perfectly: Lafite was elegant and precise, Latour showed its traditional power, Haut Brion displayed its compacted and dense concentration. The vintage conditions seemed to dial back the levels of intensity and complexity from what the last two vintages achieved. In addition, while the flavors showed some vibrancy and precision, they also lacked a bit of length.

This is not to say, however, that these wines are in any way below average. They are classical interpretations of each estate's terroir and style, with special emphasis on fresh varietal qualities and some nice, spicy tannins. What they may lack in power, they will definitely compensate in approachability and drinkability. And what was the top estate? Well, Mouton-Rothschild was looking like an early favorite to me, showing impressive richness and balanced tannins - two qualities of the '11s that, when achieved, will be well worth seeking out.



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Terroir and the Art of Assemblage: Vieux Chateau Certan

by Devon Magee

2011 is decidedly not 2010 or 2009, yet from our week of intensive tastings in Bordeaux, it is clear that Pomerol is at the least, one of the standouts of the appellation and the vintage. Might cabernet franc play a role? According to Alexandre Thienpont, Vieux Chateau Certan's owner and winemaker, yes. Here in the gravel and clay soils of Pomerol, fully ripe cabernet franc gives the wine a distinctive violet perfume. And for the first time in more than a decade, the variety ripened fully and uniformly. Its success in Pomerol is a defining characteristic of this singular vintage.

At the top estates, we've noticed a higher percentage of cabernet franc along with a remarkably pronounced violet note. While a signature trait of Pomerol wines, the scent seems to take on wonderful extra depth in 2011. VCC's assemblage contains 30% cabernet franc, the highest proportion since 2000. In addition to aromatics, the variety adds acidity and structure, and at VCC (and



some other Pomerol estates) where soft, gentle extraction was the order of the day for this cooler, extremely dry vintage, these are hallmark characteristics.

The best examples are elegant, silky, and sexy with enough acidity and structure to allow them to age for a long time. Says Alexandre of his 2011, "It is less easy to reach and more intellectual." He compares a vintage centered on

cabernet franc to haute cuisine.

"Everyone likes barbecue, but haute cuisine needs more knowledge to appreciate."

Alexandre calls 2011 a "typical Vieux Chateau Certan year," and compares it to 2000, 1996, 1988, and 1983. Cabernet franc likes cooler ripening seasons (it languished in the heat of 2009 and 2010), can withstand drought, and thrives in a long, sunny fall. And in 2011, all four of these conditions materialized.

Although we still have dozens of tasting notes and impressions to digest, in my book, VCC 2011 could be a contender for wine of the vintage, as might Lafleur's offering – also in Pomerol and also predominantly cabernet franc. Coincidence? Maybe. But Petrus, whose 2011 was also floral and simply ethereal, must be included in the conversation. The assemblage? 100% merlot. One of Right Bank consultant Stephane Derenoncourt's partner's, Frederic Massie, offered a slightly different interpretation: "in Pomerol, it's not necessarily the variety that expresses that floral character, but the terroir, whether it be cab franc or merlot."

Go figure. One thing is for sure – something unique and special happened in Pomerol in 2011.



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Higher Ground Offers More Than A Good View at Pichon Lalande

by **Eddie Wolowski**

We arrived at Pichon Longueville Comtesse De Lalande, commonly referred to as Pichon Lalande, on a sunny afternoon for a lunch appointment. As we walked up to the estate, we nodded to former stable-mate Pichon Baron across the road (scene of tomorrow night's dinner for some of us). The two estates were once united, but were split amongst siblings in 1850 and classified as Second Growths five years later.

After a Champagne toast with Chateau Director Sylvie Cazes, I sat down to lunch and a chat with Monsieur Philippe Moreau, the new technical director. Previously employed by Chateau de Pez and Chateau Bernadotte, Philippe completed his first vintage at Lalande last year. He was very generous in answering my questions. I have always wondered why Lalande's wines take on a certain characteristic that is not reflected in the wines of its close neighbors Baron and Chateau Latour. The disparity between Lalande and Baron has always been particularly interesting, not just because of their proximity, but their common heritage alone should warrant more similarity. Philippe first agreed that while yes, the terroir is nearly identical for all three properties, one contrast lies in the technical winemaking style of Lalande – the way that grapes are pressed gently for finesse and not heavily extracted for power.



However, he went on to explain that perhaps the most critical difference is how some Lalande parcels are on higher ground and slightly closer to the water. This variance has a moderating effect, keeping its grape temperatures cooler than surrounding properties during hot days and warmer during the cold months. That, coupled with strict grape selection and severe sorting under Philippe's guidance, may help explain why Lalande had such an outstanding vintage this year. Whatever the reason, all these factors helped produce one of the top wines of Pauillac for 2011.

Indeed, the 2011 Pichon Lalande was impressive, displaying the consistent characteristics for which Lalande is known. It showed real elegance and finesse, a silky texture and floral fruit, with just a touch of mint. It managed to have concentration and deep color while beautifully reflecting its terroir. I may prefer this vintage over the 2009.

Lunch perfectly complemented the ambience – unpretentious and delightful, and ranged from snapper to braised lamb with boiled potatoes. Bottles of 1975 and 1995 Pichon Lalande stood in rows for guests. Both vintages were exquisite, especially the 1975, with its enduring freshness, complexity, and length. Before we left, our generous hosts topped us off with one last refill of both vintages, sealing the afternoon's celebratory mood. Under its current management and direction, the future for this chateau looks very bright.



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Shall I Compare Thee to Another Vintage? Drawing Parallels at Haut Bailly

by **Devon Magee**

After five days of touring Bordeaux, it's clear that the burning question aimed at leading producers has been: "To what vintage would you compare your 2011s?" It's only natural – after back-to-back "vintages of the century," we are all looking for a foothold in 2011. The market cannot support a third other-worldly vintage here, yet early murmurs suggest that, while the industry is cautious to overtly praise '11, it is far from panning it. In fact, the earliest critic reports – from Parker and Suckling, who both just finished tasting here – are surprisingly optimistic.

So where does 2011 fit in a fifteen-year-plus string of vintages that has redefined Bordeaux with a relative average of warmer, dryer weather? Veronique Sanders invited us into her tasting room at Chateau Haut Bailly in Leognan yesterday evening to candidly discuss. Her family has been in charge of the Chateau since 1955, and she offered, in my opinion, the most poignant remarks of anyone about 2011.

To cut right to the chase, which she had no trouble doing, 2011 reminds her of 2000. All week, we heard safe parallels between 2011 and 2001, with some even claiming comparison to a combination of '01 and '08. Yet this was the first time I heard someone compare '11 to '00.

Tannin management has been the most important variable. In a vintage that shows the highest acid levels of the last ten years, yet lacks the ripeness of 2009

and 2010, coaxing fruit in 2011 has been a delicate balancing act. Those who extracted the most, squeezing body out of the grape skins and pips, also traded freshness for higher tannins. And those who pushed ripeness levels on the vine traded fresh fruit notes for raisin-esque flavors. Yet the opposite is also true, and those who were too careful risked turning out wines built entirely on tart acid and under-ripe fruit.





STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Shall I Compare Thee to Another Vintage? Drawing Parallels at Haut Bailly, cont.

The fresh summer in 2011, Veronique says, reminds her of 2000. Spring temperatures were warmer than normal, which pushed an early bud break, yet weather cooled during the heart of the growing season and, overall, the spring and summer were exceptionally dry.

As we have learned, dry summers typically benefit clay soils – those soils that can retain water – which we predominantly see in St. Estephe and Leognan on the Left Bank. And indeed, we saw higher levels of merlot – the Bordeaux variety that prefers clay – in the Left Bank wines. At Haut Bailly, Veronique used 50% merlot in her '11 Grand Vin, a wine that is typically composed of over 65% cabernet.

“If we had 2011 ten years ago, people would consider it a fabulous vintage,” Veronique says as we taste the '11. Indeed, Veronique appears to have deftly pulled off the balancing act – her '11 displays fresh cranberry, cherry, and raspberry fruit, yet fine tannins and high acid, and is certainly one of the silkiest, freshest interpretations of the vintage that I have tasted.

The tannin levels are somewhere between 2009 and 2010, she explained, and, with high acid and a purity of fruit, she describes the 2011, overall, as a “2008-plus.”

We listened to winemakers discuss vintages all week, yet as the saying goes, ‘the proof is in the pudding,’ and we wonder aloud if we might taste the 2000 Haut Bailly. The most difficult part of

tasting en primeur is to imagine where the wine will be in the future. If the 2000 and 2011 are as similar as Veronique suggested, we thought the 2000 might give us a clear indication of 2011's potential.

Veronique smiled. The terrific success of Haut Bailly over the last 10 years is partly owed to her dynamism, and that evening she was predictably one step ahead of us. “Aha! Do not worry – you will taste the 2000 with dinner!”

We eagerly left the tasting room, and walked across the courtyard to the Chateau – one last chance to take in the late afternoon sun as it blanketed Haut Bailly's east-facing plateau before disappearing behind the town of Leognan.

Over dinner, we went in descending order from the '03 and '02, and finally, the '00. My favorite – twist my arm, Veronique – was the 2000. The heightened acidity highlights the sweet fruit, and, like Veronique's strawberry blond hair and blue eyes, adds an undeniable youthfulness. And the tannins? Integrated and silky, proof-positive of the alchemist that is aged Bordeaux.

If Veronique's crystal ball is correct, then we have a lot to look forward to.





STORIES FROM THE ROAD

The Count of Canon La Gaffeliere

by **Eddie Wolowski**

My invitation to a tasting and dinner with Count Stephan von Neipperg at Canon La Gaffeliere was a sort of homecoming for me.

For the past decade, I've been a huge fan of the Count's wines, especially Chateau d'Aiguilhe. The success of d'Aiguilhe is credited with putting Côtes de Castillon on the map, and indeed the wine drinks like its St. Emilion neighbors. Its beautiful, distinctive nose alone would give it away in any blind tasting lineup and it always displays inky black fruit, followed by a lifted mineral quality towards the finish. A big wine for the buck, it was my go-to bottle when I was a struggling artist on a limited budget.

I first met Count Stephan von Neipperg roughly four years ago, at a tasting in New York. Then, I was just a fan of Bordeaux, and I found myself confronted with a perilous lack of spittoons. As I tried to find one, I noticed a friendly gentleman with a moustache, a bright orange sweater tied over his shoulders, holding an instantly recognizable bottle. I blurted something that, by that point in the evening, bore only distant linguistic similarity to "d'Aiguilhe?!" Count Stephan replied animatedly, "So, you know d'Aiguilhe?" The bottle turned out to be his similarly labeled Canon La Gaffeliere, and served as a wonderful introduction to Neipperg's other wines. We shared a lively conversation, and despite my state, he extended an invitation to tour d'Aiguilhe.

Four years, and a few convivial state-side Neipperg reunions later, I was thrilled to finally take that short trip down the road from St. Emilion to meet the Count on his turf, at Canon La Gaffeliere.



We were greeted with a lineup of 2011 samples from of Neipperg's portfolio. The most impressive were Clos De L'Oratoire, Canon La Gaffeliere, La Mondotte, and of course, Chateau d'Aiguilhe. Both the red and white from Clos Marsalette were some of the best 2011s from Pessac-Leognan, and Chateau Guirard blanc sec proved it will be a great value wine. The JJ Buckley team agreed that Neipperg's lineup might be the best stable of 2011 wines with regard to consistency and quality.

Many of the wines include quite a bit of cabernet franc in the blend, a grape which excelled in the 2011 vintage. The extra attention paid to the variety only added to the lush, sensational quality of Neipperg's wines that he describes as ranging from "intellectual to sexy," while handsomely reflecting their terroir.

After the tasting we dined at the Chateau, which doubles as the Neipperg's residence. The menu of quail and baked beef with potato-carrot cheese fondue was paired with 2003 d'Aiguilhe, the 1998 Clos De L'Oratoire, a 2000 Canon

La Gaffeliere, and the 2001 La Mondotte. All were exquisite, showing very well. As a special treat during dinner, we were served a wine from a decanter and asked to guess the vintage. Most of the staff settled on the early 1980s, due to the wine's freshness and balance, but were all floored when Count Stephan revealed it to be a Canon La Gaffeliere from 1950!

Following dessert, we continued our way upstairs to the living room, where we shared some Cuban cigars and a few games of billiards. The artist in me was particularly enthused by the paintings done by Count Stephan's lovely wife, Sigweis Grafyn. We topped the night off with coffee and more conversation, until we realized it was about 12:30am and the end of a special evening. The whole night, Neipperg showed us the same warmth and charm I witnessed all those years ago in New York. It is no surprise his charisma has made him, and his wines, a Right Bank legend.

STORIES FROM THE ROAD

2011: *The Sauternes Vintage*

by Alex Shaw

The sweet wines of Sauternes are undoubtedly wonderful, but they've always remained something of a mystery to me. I certainly knew the basics about botrytis (aka "noble rot"), the grape varieties, (primarily Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc, with a bit of Muscadelle at some properties) and of course their great aging potential. They'd always appealed to me, primarily due to the incredible juxtaposition of sweetness and acidity achieved in the greatest Sauternes. But aside from a lone visit to Yquem two years ago, I'd never spent any time in the region or met any of the producers.

It was thus on the last day of our week at en primeurs, when three of my JJ Buckley colleagues and I found ourselves with an entire day to spend in Sauternes and Barsac. We visited eight of the top producers: Doisy Daene, Climens, Yquem, Suduiraut, de Fargues, Rieussec, Coutet and Guiraud. At each stop, we received more insight into soil types, harvest techniques, production methods, and the wines' versatility. We were treated to two meals paired with Sauternes, each highlighting the ways in which these wines can be enjoyed with any course, from starters to dessert, and – surprisingly – everything in between.

One of the more thought-provoking stops of the day was our second, at Chateau Climens, in Barsac. These wines of Barsac, separated from Sauternes by the Ciron River, tend to show more acidity and minerality thanks to the limestone

soil. During harvest, Climens teams of workers harvest small bunches, sometimes even individual berries, that are ripe and show ample botrytis. Teams make multiple passes, or tries, through the vineyard, looking for the best berries. Each day's harvest is pressed separately and put into its own barrels, so as we wandered through the cellar, it was obvious which day of the harvest each barrel contained.



With 2011 still in barrel, Virginie Achou-Lepage from Climens offered the rare treat of tasting not only directly from the barrels (a first for us during en primeur), but also provided tastes of the harvest from 5 different days. Beginning with September 8 and ending with October 3, we tasted the progression of the harvest, in order to understand how each day's yield would eventually provide something unique from the final blend. The final blend at Climens is a 'barrel selection' (as opposed to the Medoc's classic 'vineyard selection'), so our tasting was akin to sitting at an audio mixing board hearing individual

instruments perform solos that will eventually be performed together as a symphony. Certain days' harvests showed more minerality, others more richness; while some brought incredible length, and others contributed structure. It was an amazingly instructive exercise.

It was also a treat, as this was our first and only opportunity to taste the 2011 Climens during en primeur. With the final cuvee not yet blended, Climens declined to provide any samples to negociants or to the UGC Sauternes tasting, a decision I applaud them for. What good would it do to taste a blend that might be different from what goes into the 2011 finished wine? Tasting the individual components gave us a sense of how this wine may ultimately develop, and it certainly makes me look forward to tasting the final 2011 blend.

Following this unforgettable experience, we were treated to a vertical tasting of five vintages of Climens: 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, and 2005. Neither I nor any of my colleagues had ever had the opportunity to taste a vertical from an individual Sauternes producer like this, so it was a real learning experience to discover the nuances of each vintage and their evolution during the early stages of development. Some showed notes of white peach and white pineapple, while others revealed rich apricot and mango flavors. Each had varying levels of acidity, while some had prominent notes of salinity or seashells. With 2011 poised to be an excellent vintage for Sauternes, I highly encourage palates of all stripes to take full advantage when these wines hit the market.

STORIES FROM THE ROAD

“Islands of Happiness” at L’Eglise Clinet

by Cory Gowan

As we packed our three cars and made our annual migration from the Left Bank over to the Right for our last days in Bordeaux, we put together the mosaic of the 2011 Bordeaux vintage. Although weather patterns can tell part of the story, there is no substitution for one-on-one conversations with vigneron, and, of course, tasting the actual wines. It was at a negociant tasting where Denis Durantou’s wines singlehandedly confirmed our suspicions that Pomerol may be appellation of the vintage. So directly afterwards, we did what any savvy Bordeaux buyer would do – we squished three into the back seat and made the long trek across the Gironde and Dordogne rivers into Pomerol.

Aside from a quick trip to Chateau Le Gay in 2010 and one ill-advised “back roads” (long story) journey to Cheval Blanc last year, I had actually never been to the village of Pomerol - and I almost missed it once again. The only business of note in the tiny town was a small office of La Poste, and what I can only describe as an open-air junk shop with a man in overalls tinkering away. The rest of the landscape was all low slung buildings and a gentle sea of vines.

It’s long been said that the quality of Pomerol vines directly correlates with how close they are to the church at the top of the Pomerol plateau. If this is the case, then Denis Durantou’s L’Eglise-



Clinet must be the best of the best as its main vineyards stretch directly from the church grounds to the doorstep of the small farm building that acts as his Chateau (I couldn’t help feeling that the word “Chateau” in L’Eglise-Clinet’s name is an attempt at humor considering I had just been to dinner at Margaux a few nights before!). In fact, this small building sits right next to a very old cemetery which at one point in time was attached to the Pomerol church that was demolished in the 19th century. So in reality, these vineyards lie directly between both Pomerol church sites!

It was immediately apparent that there was indeed a big difference between this property and the grand Left Bank estates. After Margaux’s Downton Abbey, this was way more gardener’s tool shed. As we pulled up, we spotted a small group of journalists outside, sipping samples out of a wine thief and spitting in the vineyards. It was here where we met Denis Durantou and commenced one of the best tastings of

our 2011 Bordeaux en primeur visit.

I was told Denis spoke practically no English, but as it turned out, this was not the case. As his shyness and quiet demeanor peeled away, we learned a great deal about his wines and his philosophy towards winemaking. In addition to making L’Eglise-Clinet and its second wine (Le Petite L’Eglise), Durantou also crafts the St. Emilion label Saintayme, Montlandrie from the Côtes du Castillon, as well as La Chanade and Les Cruzelles (both from Lalande de Pomerol). All these fresh samples were showing beautifully and should provide exceptional values for 2011. It was our second time tasting them that day, and both times they showed terrific purity of fruit and a seamless quality that could prove to be the hallmark of Durantou’s 2011s.

Durantou grew more conversational the longer we were there, so I asked him to expand on the “Islands of Happiness”



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

“Islands of Happiness” at L’Eglise Clinet

philosophy that was inscribed at the top of our tasting sheet. With a sheepish grin, he told us that this was his way of explaining why Pomerol produced such good wines in 2011. Pomerol, you see, was his “island of happiness.” While everyone else focused on the drought, odd weather patterns, and the lack of a cool spring season, he found it easy to produce great wines. Part of this was due to the clay soil which has very good water retention, and also makes up most of Pomerol. In a vintage with little rain, those vines planted in soils with good drainage shut down due to lack of water. But not in Pomerol, where the clay soil retained moisture and allowed the vines to fully ripen.

Durantou explained that another factor contributing to Pomerol’s success was

the fact that there were no storms in the immediate region that damaged the grapes. His final reason for likening his 2011s to an “island of happiness” is because his cabernet franc vines (15% of the vineyard) became fully ripe, a rarity for his vineyards and a reason the wines had such intense aromatics. “I respect the berries and only extract the best,” he summarized.

For him, these factors produced grapes with great tannins and a good level of sugar with great acidity in the berries. He quickly dismissed the idea that 2011 is a “classic Bordeaux vintage,” claiming it has negative connotations. Instead, he said the vintage produced Pomerols of impeccable balance, and that Bordeaux drinkers are really always on the hunt for this equilibrium. According to Du-

rantau, no one wants the wines to be “too much.” For him, 2011 proved to be an “easy vinification,” with the same level of tannins as 2010 but with better balance. He then echoed a common theme we’d heard throughout our tastings – that 2011 is a modern-day 2001 vintage. To prove his point, Denis disappeared for a moment and came back with a bottle of 2001 L’Eglise-Clinet which he uncorked and poured for us to taste.

At 13.5% alcohol (the same as 2011), the 2001 was absolutely divine. Sweet and evolved, but with terrific density to the fruit, it was very balanced and easy to enjoy. A rich, potent wine, in Denis’s words, it was “better than 2008.”

As we marveled over this bottle of 2001, a small tray of finger sandwiches appeared at the table and we split off in small groups to focus on the tasting. After our glasses were empty, Denis generously brought out a bottle of what he called the grape that “is the best translator of terroir:” A 2009 German Riesling Kabinett!

Side note: Denis’s wife is an artist (he calls himself “her sponsor” with a sweet chuckle), and her colorful artwork is on display around the small tasting room as well as in their business cards which fold out to reveal a shiny silver “no drip” foil circle used to pour wine. There is certainly no shortage of charm at L’Eglise-Clinet!



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Sweet Relief at Chateau d'Yquem

by **Devon Magee**

After seven consecutive days of tasting the 2011 Bordeaux reds from morning to night, nothing was more soothing on my palate than a trip south to Sauternes to taste the vintage's deliciously sweet (and tannin-free!) whites. Amidst a week of rumblings regarding the patchiness of 2011 reds compared to '09 and '10, I found the persistent voice of an extraordinary vintage in Sauternes after visiting eight of the top chateaux.

To talk vintages in Sauternes is to talk botrytis, and in 2011, this noble rot spread quickly and uniformly, allowing growers to start picking early (at peak ripeness), to pick quickly, and to finish early. The result is evident in the purity of expression and freshness in the top examples that we tasted.

And I'll start at the top, with Chateau d'Yquem. Apart from the wine, the Chateau itself is worth a visit in and of itself, as sits atop the highest hill in the expansively flat region (80m altitude!). From here, I can see the myriad greens of well-watered trees and grass (this is not the endless, bare-but-for-vineyard Medoc slope). Everything seems to be growing, from moss on the vines to grass between the rows, and as you breathe in the humid air, it's easy to imagine those noble

spores populating and thriving on the skins of the semillon and sauvignon blanc grapes.

Lungs full of this thick air, we entered the Chateau to taste the 2011 Yquem barrel sample. To summarize our findings, Yquem's signature opulence and poise are present, yet more striking is the absolute balance and precision. The citrus notes run the gamut of Meyer lemon to clementine and on to orange blossom, and the high acidity provides a refreshing lift that defines the vintage. My palate and gums, fatigued from a week of nonstop red wine tannins, reveled in the '11's rich freshness.

Our host, Renaud Ruer, Yquem's commercial director, called the 2011 Yquem the best since 2001. In Sauternes, unlike their Medoc neighbors an hour north and a world away, the en primeur buzz was so quiet that you could hear a botrytized berry fall. Producers appeared cautiously optimistic (we were, after all, tasting these wines only six months after harvest, and well before the final blend!). They called the vintage "great," yet held back from "vintage of the generation" declarations.

I, for one, am a little more than cautiously optimistic. The freshness of the vintage belies the wine's richness,



STORIES FROM THE ROAD

Sweet Relief at Chateau d'Yquem, cont.

which, trust me, is still there. Most of the wines measured 140+ grams of sugar per liter. I was surprised to find that with so much freshness, I could imagine the 2011s pairing with spicy cuisine, much like a German Spatlese, and much to the delight of Sauternes producers who consistently preach the versatility of Sauternes with food.

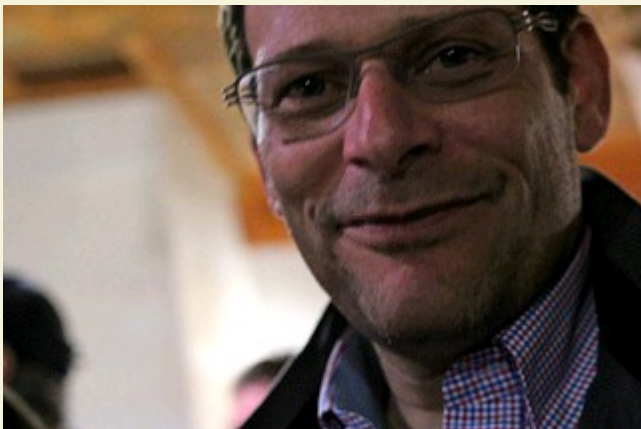
Another surprise was Y'grec, Yquem's dry white (technically a Bordeaux Blanc), which I tasted for the first time. The 2011, unfortunately, was not available to sample, so Renaud poured us the 2010 instead. The '10 is two thirds sauvignon blanc and one third semillon, picked before botrytis hit the vineyard. It reminded me of a Northern Rhone white meeting a Grand Cru white Burgundy. Tight and reserved in its youth, with mid-palate weight and muscular mineral structure, it still expressed lemon and lime citrus nuances.



Renaud admitted to us that Y'grec, produced since 1959, has remained somewhat of a mystery in the wine world, as Yquem has always focused more on its Grand Vin. Last year, he and his team met to determine the future of this singular wine. The decision, as Renaud told us, was between abandoning production and focusing more energy into it – all or nothing. The voice of reason came from Yquem's 25-year veteran of vineyard management. He reminded everyone of the quality and potential in the superior land to which he tends every day – that of Yquem's singular 360-degree hillside vineyard. There was no denying this point, and Renaud promised us that we will be hearing much more about the 2011 Y'grec this fall.

On a side note, across the Ciron River in the limestone soils of Barsac, it was at family-owned Chateau Coutet where we had, hands down, one of our favorite visits. Proprietor Aline Baly and her uncle Philippe graciously unveiled the first vintage (2010) of their Blanc, called Opalie. It carried a similar weight to the Y'grec, along with a chalky minerality and a powerful underlying structure. And like the Y'grec, it bore little resemblance to its white neighbors to the north in Graves. I can't wait to taste both of these 2011s.









ABOUT THIS REPORT

Acknowledgments

This report could not have been put together without the assistance of our marketing team, including Paige Granback, Deborah Adeyanju and Alex Fondren. My co-workers worked diligently under stressful deadlines to edit and layout the content and tasting notes, and I cannot offer enough thanks for their efforts.

Our friend and colleague-in-wine Hardy Wallace took most of the pictures that are part of this report, along with the pictures and videos that accompanied the blogs about our trip to *En Primeurs* week. The JJ Buckley team would like to offer him our deepest thanks for his contributions, as well as the insightful opinions he made during our visit to Bordeaux.

I also want to acknowledge a few of our suppliers who have provided us with much valuable information. In particular, I would like to thank Jeffrey Davies of Signature Selections who, as always, gave us great insights into the vintage and current trends in the Bordeaux market.

Finally, I would like to thank JJ Buckley founders Shaun Bishop and Michael Stajer for their support in taking our team to the 2011 *En Primeurs* tastings, as well as the commitment of resources necessary to prepare and complete this report.

I encourage everyone to visit our 2011 Bordeaux web page, jjbuckley.com/2011-bordeaux-futures for more information about our campaign, and to enjoy the pictures and videos that are entertaining and informative additions to this content.

— *Chuck Hayward*

About this report

The tasting notes published in this report were assembled in April 2012 by JJ Buckley's team of fine wine specialists and are attributed accordingly. Wines were tasted non-blind during private appointments at chateaux and negociants, as well as at industry-organized tasting events.

The essays and articles found here were written by Chuck Hayward and Shaun Bishop except where otherwise attributed.