



Bordeaux En Primeur 2012 Futures Report

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2012 Bordeaux: An Introduction

Regardless of the overall quality of a particular vintage, visiting Bordeaux during primeurs week is always an experience to remember. Along the narrow, meandering roads through the Medoc and Right Bank, we taste and assess literally hundreds of wines from sun-up to sundown at many of the greatest chateaux in Bordeaux. The goal, in the end, is simple: to obtain a clear perspective on the vintage and to identify the best wines in their class.

With respect to the “Class of 2012,” only a few overachievers emerged from the rabble, but certainly the majority of producers who made very good wines understood and worked within their own limitations in this rather challenging vintage. Unfavorably rainy weather in the spring prevented healthy flowering and fruit set, followed by a rather slow and long ripening season. And although a warmer and drier August and September promoted healthy maturation, the harvest was pushed out later than usual, at a time when the rainy weather threatens to return to the region. Some properties had to pick sooner than they would have wished, and as a result, the Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc quality was less consistent overall, while the earlier-ripening Merlot grape was left relatively unscathed.

Not surprisingly, then, Pomerol lead the way as the most consistent appellation, while the much larger and varied terrain of Saint Emilion struggled more in 2012. In Pomerol, Château Petrus made a serious vin-de-garde with all the structure, balance and ripeness one could ask for, while Le Pin, Clinet, and Vieux Château Certan each produced ripe, opulent wines, the latter with a much lower percentage of Cabernet Franc than usual. From the côtes to the plateau of Saint Emilion, Ausone and Cheval Blanc offered up yet another refined and focused example that is very typical of these properties. As is always the case, the top producers with the resources and terroir were among the notable exceptions, and the majority of the crus classés on the Left Bank were mostly able to produce good to very good wines. Château Palmer, whose clay-based vineyards are already well-suited to the Merlot grape, arguably produced one of the best wines overall in 2012. That being said, neighboring Château Margaux turned out yet another elegant Cabernet Sauvignon-based effort, with distinct floral notes and an enormously long finish. In fact, with the possible exception of Mouton-Rothschild, all of the First Growths managed to reaffirm their status in 2012, albeit with varying degrees of success. With a whopping 65.5% Merlot, Château Haut Brion produced a



strong effort, while demonstrating the need to make adjustments to their typical cepage. Other consistent performers, such as Ducru-Beaucaillou, Gruaud-Larose, Leoville Barton, Montrose, and Pontet Canet did not try to do too much with what Nature offered in 2012, and subsequently had little trouble producing the style of wines they are known for.

Sadly, Sauternes and Barsac suffered the most, with minuscule yields, no botrytis, and low acidity--factors that caused d'Yquem, Rieussec, and Suduiraut to opt out of releasing their first wines in 2012. The dry white wines of Pessac were mostly good quality, with notable standouts Haut-Brion, La Mission Haut-Brion, Domaine de Chevalier, and Carbonnieux leading the pack.

While we do feel that there will be many superb values in 2012, the quality varies considerably among all the communes. Alter Ego de Palmer, Monbousquet, Beauregard, Grand Puy Lacoste, le Pressac and Cantenac Brown are just a few of the "relative" values that we encountered in our travels. Much of the conversation in Bordeaux has been devoted to pricing this coming futures campaign, and nearly everyone seems to understand the need to come down considerably from the levels of the past three vintages. This gives us reason to be cautiously optimistic, but we can only wait to see what happens in the near term. Of course, we recommend that consumers wade carefully into the undulating waters of 2012, but our team at Grand Vin is confident that we can help our clients navigate their way to making smart and very worthwhile purchases.

Burton Bradley, Special Consultant to Grand Vin Wine Merchants



Tasting Notes: The Best of 2012

Wine

Alter Ego de Palmer Aromas of black currants wet gravel with precise, structured fruit. Intense, concentrated finish, firm tannins. **93-94**

Angélus Floral hibiscus and sandstone aromas, ripe black cherry with fine, focused tannins and a long, long finish. **94-96**

Ausone Very subtle nose, ripe red currants, hibiscus and wet gravel. Ripe cherries and a succulent long finish++ perfect balance. **95-96**

Branaire Ducru Fruit-driven with plum, black cherry, strawberry and Rainier cherry. Fine tannins and a long finish. **91-93**

Calon-Ségur Brooding nose of tar, black currants. Rich, yet bright black currant fruit, balanced and succulent ripe finish. 78 cs / 20 m / 2 pv **90-92**

Canon-La-Gaffelière Black cherry, mint, dried cherries with broad tannins and moderately long finish. **90-91**

Cantenac-Brown Expressive nose of black and red currants, ripe fruit, with wet gravel and a longer finish. **90-92**

Carbonnieux blanc Lemon and orange zest with lovely round fruit and mineral notes. **90-92**

Cheval Blanc red cherry strawberry sandstone succulent dried cherry very high acidity fine tight tannins long finish. **94-95**

Clerc Milon maraschino cherry nose with ripe red currant and plum, fine tannins and a succulent finish. **90-91**

Clinet Expressive blueberry, boysenberry with dense and succulent black cherry fruit, long finish. 90 m / 9 cs / 1 cf **94-95**



Wine

La Croix de Beaucaillou very subtle nose of tar, leather. Rich, ripe blackberry with soft, almost sweet tannins. 60 m / 38 cs / 2 pv **90-91**

Ducru-Beaucaillou Subtle nose of black currants, wet gravel. Juicy ripe black cherries, firm tannins, and a long finish. 91 cs / 9 m **94-96**

Duhart-Milon-Rothschild Black currants and tar aromas with ripe black plum, currants. Round mouthfeel with refined tannins and a persistent finish. **91-92**

Durfort-Vivens Subtle nose but lots of fresh blackberry and raspberry fruit with fine, integrated tannins. **90-91**

l'Eglise-Clinet Aromas of ripe blackberry, blueberry and black cherry on the palate with hints of chalk. Very succulent, with firm fine tannins and a very long finish+. **94-96**

l'Evangile Very expressive nose of chutney, plum and wet stone. On the palate, super ripe cherries, fine tannins, very supple and round with a moderate++ finish. **92-94**.

la Gaffelière Mint, black currant medium body persistent finish. **91-93**

la Garde Red currants, wet gravel, ripe cherries, plum. Good concentration fine tannins mod + finish. **89-91**

Gloria Leather, blackberry, game, vanilla and soft tannins med + finish. **89-91**

Grand-Puy-Lacoste Wet gravel, tar, blackberry nose. Rich, supple fruit with black currant and wet gravel minerality. Elegant tannins and a medium+ finish. **91-93**

Gruaud-Larose Wet gravel black cherries blueberry ripe supple yet structured fine firm tannins long finish. 66.5 cs / 27 m / 6.5 pv **92-93**



Wine

Haut-Bergey Black Cherries, Chinese spice aromas with ripe black cherry and currants on the palate. Fine, integrated tannins and a long finish. **91-92**

Haut-Brion Faint Brooding nose, wet gravel, and black currants. Full mid-palate with round supple black currants, cherries and a long finish. **94-95**

Haut Brion Blanc Less forthcoming nose than La Mission Blanc, but a supple, creamy texture, very rich, concentrated, and a finely-balanced long finish. **95-97**

Lafite-Rothschild Tar, wet gravel, brooding black currants on the nose. Full ripe black cherry fruit and currants, very succulent. Long finish, tight tannins still lacking a bit of the concentration found in top vintages. **93-94**

LaFleur Blackberry, mint, strawberry and wet rock aromas. Dense and focused black cherry fruit with more linear structure, and a long, long tightly-wound finish. **95-96**

Latour Blueberry, wet stone, hibiscus aromas with supremely-balanced, ripe red and black currants, blueberry fruit. Very broad mouthfeel and long finish. **94-96**

La Gaffelière Mint, black currant medium body persistent finish. **91-93**

La Garde Red currants, wet gravel, ripe cherries, plum. Good concentration fine tannins mod + finish. **89-91**

Léoville-Barton Blackberry, wet stone aromas with fresh, juicy black cherries and a medium++ finish. **92-94**

Margaux Floral nose with hibiscus flower, red and black currants. Elegant, yet supremely-balanced with very broad ripe tannins and a long, long finish. 87 cs / 10 m / 2 cf / 1 pv **95-96**

Meyney Rich, dense black cherry dark chocolate. Finely balanced finish. **90-91**



Wine

Ia Mission Haut-Brion Wet gravel, bruised plum, with juicy red and black currants, cherries. Mineral finish, with ripe tannins and a medium++ finish. **92-93**

Monbousquet Expressive nose with ripe blackberry and leather. Full mouthfeel with black cherry, fine tannins and a long finish. **91-93**

Montrose Brooding nose of black currants, dried cherry, and mint. Voluptuous yet racy black currants, plum, tar. Full, round with a long finish. **92-94**

Palmer Blackberry, cacao, ripe red currants on the nose. Powerful concentration with black cherries, and a very long succulent finish. Delicious. **95-97**

Pavie Nose of blackberry and wet stone. Ripe red and black currants, fine tannins and a long finish. **92-93**

Pavie-Decesse Blackberry, boysenberry, tar on the nose. Very concentrated with blackberry kirsch, broad firm tannins, and a long, powerful finish. **93-94**

Pavie-Macquin Ripe cherry, strawberry aromas with succulent black cherry, raspberry fruit. Medium+ finish. **92-93**

Pavilion Blanc Lemongrass, lime zest, beeswax aromas. Plush, velvety texture with papaya very opulent and round with great balance. **93-95**

Peby Faugeres Rich, ripe blackberry, black cherry. Balanced and delicious. **94-96**

Pétrus Aromas of crushed raspberry, blueberry, wet stone, and orange peel give way to dense blackberry and ripe currants. Firm ripe tannins and a very long, succulent finish. **95-97**

Le Pin Incredibly complex and expressive nose of bruised plum, orange peel. Raspberry, plum, blackberry with hints of espresso and dark chocolate. Very broad mouthfeel and the powerful finish goes on and on. **95-97**



Wine

Pontet-Canet Bruised plum, blackberry aromas with supple black cherry fruit. Extremely well-balanced with fine tannins and a long finish that really carries. 65 cs / 20 m 4 cf / 1 pv **94-96**

de Pressac Subtle nose of wet stone and black cherries with round, ripe and fresh blackberry. Broad mouthfeel features integrated tannins and a long finish. Vineyard specialist Claude Bourguignon advises also for Ausone and DRC. **93-94**

Rauzan-Ségla Beguiling nose with complex and fascinating layers of black cherries, leather, wet stone. Superbly-balanced with fine integrated tannins. **93-94**

Vieux Château Certan Pure and expressive black cherry aromas. Very supple mouthfeel with plump ripe blackberry, soft and very round yet balanced and a long finish. **93-95+**

