



THE SCORES ARE IN, LET THE CIRCUS BEGIN!

In France's most famous wine region, Bordeaux, some people are touting the 2009 vintage as the mother of great modern vintages. Though the young wines are still aging in the chateau cellars, the year already has been compared to the classic modern vintages of 2005, 1990, 1989 and 1982. Some people go further back to such legendary years as 1961, 1945, 1929 and even 1899". **James Suckling, Wine Spectator**

Chateau hype aside, after descending on Bordeaux to taste the wines, the critics have confirmed 2009 as another yet another exceptional vintage for Bordeaux;

"2009 is an incredibly exciting vintage of opulence, power, and richness, yet the better wines have a precision and delicacy that is unprecedented." **Robert Parker**

"I have never given so many really high scores when tasting En Premier anywhere." **Jancis Robertson MW**

The noughties have been extremely good to the Bordelaise, as **Bill Blatch** reports, it has been: "A decade with no off-vintages - Bordeaux has never experienced that before even those all-time great decades, the 1920s and the 1840s, had a few misses. In this first decade of the new millennium, all have been successful, four made by end-of-season sunshine (2001, 2002, 2007, 2008), two by heat early in the season (2004, 2006), and four of highly concentrated wines from a combination of good summers as well as good autumns (2000, 2003, 2005 and now 2009, each receiving more acclaim than the previous one). That is a total all-time record."

VINTAGE OVERVIEW

The growing season began rather ordinarily, perhaps even a little rockily (after hailstorms in May caused havoc for the right bank; and ongoing early June rain threatened widespread mildew attacks). By the end of June, the weather settled to bestow a rather long, warm and dry period across Bordeaux. This produced quite small but very concentrated berries:

"In 2009, we seem to have reached the extreme limit of Bordeaux concentration. Yet it was not the hottest year by any means that was 2003 nor was it the driest that was 2005. In 2009, there were no



extremes, just good regular heat at the right times, with everything coming in the right order: the vine amply nourished by ground water during its growing period, then, as from 15 June, starved of water very progressively -during the ripening and concentration of its bunches right through the rest of the vineyard year." **Bill Blatch, Vintex**

There is quite a divergence of views on several top wines in 2009, but on the whole, critics have concluded that 2009 was better to reds than dry whites; but with perhaps greater inconsistencies than 2005. However, there has been almost universal acceptance that it has been an all-encompassing exceptional vintage for sweet wines.

NEAL MARTIN ON SWEET WHITES: "After tasting through the wines both blind and then again with identities revealed, I felt a sense of elation with respect to the regularity of quality from top to well "bottom" is an inappropriate word in the case of the 2009s.

So my advice to those who have just completed their 2009 shopping list: just add a case of Sauternes, especially if you have never done so before. Never has there been such a consistent vintage and nothing brightens up or completes a cellar like Sauternes."

CHRIS KISSAK ON DRY WHITES: "Any definition of a great vintage, without stipulating which wines we are talking about, naturally assumes we are talking about the red wines. But we must not forget the whites. In the case of the dry whites, the vintages often do not match, such as 2002 (delicious dry whites, more classically austere reds) and the same is true of the sweet wines, for example 1997 and 2007 (delicious Sauternes, lesser reds).

In the case of 2009, the dry whites are varied, although my tasting is very limited. The flavours in some wines are super and bright, occasionally a touch crystalline. Some have the acidity we crave, but in some it is lower, more like that in 2005. If you value flavour over structure and acidity, this could be a very good vintage for you. If it is zip and vigour you crave most, choose a cooler vintage."

JANICIS ROBERTSON MW ON THE REDS: "The perfect 2009 red Bordeaux, -and there are many of them, at all levels and from virtually all appellations -are exceptionally luscious and were an absolute delight to taste, but still have that quintessentially Girondin raciness, appetising quality, capacity to age and imprint of terroir that distinguishes the best of them from Cabernets, Merlots and Bordeaux blends produced elsewhere.

For us ordinary wine drinkers, as opposed to the doubtless terrifying number of potential investors, there should be many **bargains in 2009** since there are so many delicious wines carrying appellations such as Bordeaux, the recently renamed Bordeaux Côtes and Fronsac, as well as hearteningly many seriously expressive less famous wines within the more famous appellations. These are, encouragingly, the wines below the radar of most fine-wine traders and the wine funds that have been polarising the fine-wine market. Although it may not always be easy to get your hands on them. (Thank heavens for the internet, which may eventually help us to track them down once they are in bottle.) I shall pick out a few obvious candidates on Saturday, but the tasting notes should indicate quite a few of them too.

The wines were, in general, a **huge pleasure to taste**, with luscious ripeness but also in more cases quite enough acidity and heavily disguised, often record levels of tannin. Yes, there was over-extraction, generally in the usual quarters, particularly in St-Émilion and Margaux. But in both those appellations there were some truly gorgeous wines too. At the Cercle Rive Droite tasting (of what one might call right-bank also-rans), unusually, the Pomerols were overall a little more disappointing than the St-Émilions - perhaps because they lacked the freshening influence of enough Cabernet Franc."



So, there you have it - a brief overview of the circus so far. The offers will be released to you as they are released to us. Happy En-Primeur to you all!

WHY BUY EN-PRIMEUR?

'En Primeur' is a French term for buying wine as futures. The wines are purchased prior to release and in many cases are purchased prior to blending. Buying the wine this way enables the purchaser to not only secure wines that are in limited supply but also to take advantage or significant savings. As in the case with any great vintage in Bordeaux, we believe the prices for 2009 will increase substantially when they are bottled and released from the chateau and by buying en-primeur, you can save a substantial amount of money. As the wines remain in the chateau until bottling and are shipped in refrigerated containers you can be assured of the provenance of the wines.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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2. Payment of 50% will be processed upon confirmation of order, the balance payable on Nov 1 2010.
3. All orders are exclusive of freight and insurance, being payable upon delivery in 2012. So if you can pick them up it will save you money!
4. Prices are based on current tax and exchange rates. Any fluctuations in these may result in some additional costs on arrival.
5. All wines are offered in 3, 6 or 12 bottle lots.
6. We offer a further discounted price on full case purchases (full unbroken cases). Full case prices will be included in brackets.
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