

Wine Spectator

March 31, 2014

Bordeaux 2011 : What to buy ?

2011: 91

Left and right bank provide solid quality in 2011, while dry whites and sweet wines from Sauternes and Barsac soar.

Rating Medoc and Pessac-Léognan Vintages

| Vintage | Score | Comment | Drinkability |
|---------|-------|--|---------------|
| 2012 | 87-90 | Cool start led to uneven crop set, with a dry, hot August and a short harvest window. Reds have abundant tannins; Pessac and Margaux stronger than Médoc. Very inconsistent overall. | NYR |
| 2011 | 91 | Dry and hot early, then cool and wet late. Yields down due to small berries. Fresh fruit and bright acidity are prominent; tannins are strident but ripe, with lower alcohols. | Hold |
| 2010 | 99 | Ripe and powerful, with racy tannins and great acidity for balance. More structure-driven than the opulent 2009, with better definition of fruit; should be very long-lived. | Hold |
| 2009 | 97 | Lush, rich and beautiful polished reds. Top Médoc estates made glorious wines, Pessac also excelled. | Drink or hold |
| 2008 | 87 | Damp, gray growing season led to disease pressure; Indian summer in September saved the vintage. Wines are fresh rather than dense, with sometimes crisp acidity. | Drink or hold |
| 2007 | 85 | Inconsistent; look to top names for delicacy and balance. | Drink |
| 2006 | 90 | Best are solid, tannic and racy; others slightly hollow. | Drink or hold |
| 2005 | 98 | Fabulous aromas and great length; wines with depth, structure and finesse. | Hold |
| 2004 | 89 | Overlooked vintage with supple tannins and charming fruit. | Drink or hold |
| 2003 | 95 | Exotic and powerful, with big, velvety tannins. | Drink or hold |

2011 Bordeaux Standing On its Own

**The vintage produced solid reds
as well as excellent sweet wines and dry whites.
But will anyone notice?**

By James Molesworth – Excerpt from The Wine Spectator (Issue: March 31st, 2014)

With the 2011 vintage, Bordeaux reaches an inflection point.

Now on shelves, 2011 is a **solid vintage**, yielding reds that will cellar well for a decade and provide pleasant drinking while consumers wait for the more monumental recent vintages to fully mature. The **dry whites are superb** and the **sweet** wines enjoyed their **best vintage since 2001**.

But Bordeaux is defined by the quality of its reds, and in 2011 they stand in the long shadow of the 2009 and 2010 vintages. Misperception in the marketplace may have a strong effect on how these new wines sell.

2011 should slowly become a buyer's vintage.

2011 will present a tantalizing opportunity. It's no '09 or '10, but the vintage easily bests 2008, 2007, 2006 and 2002, and is likely to top 2001 and 2004. With the smaller and even more difficult vintages of 2012 and 2013 next in line, consumers may need to wait awhile for their next chance to buy ageworthy Bordeaux.

Overall, the 2011s are **fairly consistent** in style and quality, and should edge out both 2001 and 2004 when they hit their stride after some aging.. Overall, I rate the 2011 vintage for red Bordeaux at 91 points on both the Left and Right Banks.

The Left Bank

Moving from Pessac up through Margaux and into the premier appellations of Pauillac and St.-Julien, the vintage's tannic character is more evident among the reds of the Left Bank, where Cabernet Sauvignon plays the lead role. Finding enough fruit to balance that grip was key in 2011. Most producers sought a gentler extraction during fermentation to avoid overt tannins, then found that the wines soaked up oak during élevage and filled out nicely as they were being bottled.

There will be **lots of values to choose** from in 2011, as **pricing** took a noticeable **drop** from 2010 and 2009.

The Right Bank

The Right Bank, where Merlot is the most prominent grape, was also successful in 2011. The best wines of Pomerol and St.-Emilion have a common thread in the vintage: Cabernet Franc. This supporting grape relished the backward growing season, and where it was used in noticeable amounts, the wines are a step ahead of the pack.

In general, the Right Bank reds have filled out quickly after their élevage, and are on a slightly faster track than their Left Bank counterparts.

Barsac & Sauternes

A consistent bright spot in 2011 is the sweet wines of Barsac and Sauternes. Both areas excelled, with a slight edge to Barsac, whose limestone soils generally provide wines of greater freshness and cut, a character that marries well with the style of the vintage. As a whole, I rate the 2011 Barsac and Sauternes vintage 97 points.

Dry Whites

The dry whites of Bordeaux also relished the unusual growing season. The dry whites are energetic and crunchy, with mouthwatering acidity and lively floral, herb and citrus fruit flavors. They have more cut and precision than the riper and slightly more alcoholic 2009 and '10 vintages, and easily match 2007, the most recent outstanding vintage for dry whites.

The Current Marketplace

Despite its wide selection of excellent reds, vintage 2011 may have some trouble moving through the marketplace. The two preceding years made headlines as the most expensive vintages in history, fueled by superior quality and a boiling Asian market.

"I believe 2012 will be seen as the 'go-to' vintage when in bottle. The 2012s are fleshier than 2011 and approachable younger, and many are correctly priced. Their position is actually being solidified with a very short and variable crop in 2013. 2011's are less easy [to understand] at this young stage, but if you're comparing it to 2001 ... well, you know how those turned out."

2001 was a forgotten vintage after the huge 2000, but the wines have aged well. For the most part, it is the best vintage for current drinking from that decade. Most négociants report very few stocks of '01 left, as the year's drinkability has bolstered its popularity.

"Now when you look, you see **there is little available in terms of affordable vintages with very good quality**. And so 2011 sits right there—a very good vintage and at reasonable prices for 90 percent of the wines. I think that over the next 18 months, **the vintage will settle into a sweet spot for the market.** "

James Molesworth's Recommended 2011 Bordeaux

| TOP LEFT BANK RED | SCORE |
|--|--------------|
| Château Latour, Pauillac 2011 | 96 |
| Château Haut-Brion, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 95 |
| Château Mouton Rothschild, Pauillac 2011 | 95 |
| Château Ducru-Beaucaillou, Saint Julien 2011 | 94 |
| Château Lafite Rothschild, Pauillac 2011 | 94 |
| Château Margaux, Margaux 2011 | 94 |
| Château la Mission Haut Brion, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 93 |
| Château Montrose, Saint Estèphe 2011 | 93 |
| Château Pape Clément, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 93 |
| Château Smith Haut Lafitte, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 93 |

TOP RIGHT BANK REDS

| | |
|--|----|
| Château Cheval Blanc, Pomerol 2011 | 95 |
| Château Canon La Gaffelière, St Emilion 2011 | 93 |
| Clos Fourtet, St Emilion 2011 | 93 |
| Château L'Évangile, Pomerol 2011 | 93 |
| Château Pavie Macquin, St Emilion 2011 | 93 |

TOP BARSAC AND SAUTERNES

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Château d'Yquem, Sauternes 2011 | 99 |
| Château Coutet, Barsac 2011 | 97 |
| Château Suduiraut, Sauternes 2011 | 96 |

TOP WHITES

| | |
|--|----|
| Château Haut-Brion, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 97 |
| Château La Mission Haut-Brion, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 95 |
| Château d'Yquem, Sauternes 2011 | 94 |
| Château Bouscaut, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 92 |
| Château Olivier, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 92 |

TOP VALUES

| | |
|--|----|
| Château La Dominique, St Emilion 2011 | 91 |
| Château Brown red, Pessac Léognan 2011 | 90 |
| Château Lilian Ladouys, St Estèphe 2011 | 90 |
| Château La Pointe, Pomerol 2011 | 90 |
| Château Taillefer, Pomerol 2011 | 90 |
| Château Pedesclaux, Pauillac 2011 | 89 |
| Château Puyregaud, Francs Cotes de Bordeaux 2011 | 88 |

Highly recommended :

The issue's most impressive wines. Includes top-scores wines that represent optimal purchases based on their combination of score, price and availability.

97 Château Coutet Barsac 2011

White peach, pineapple, white ginger, orange zest and green fig notes are clear and racy, while green almond, brioche, pear and yellow apple details wait in reserve. Offers stunning range and polish, showing terrific energy and cut on the finish. This just makes you feel special when you drink it. An estate that has been rising steadily for a while now. Best from 2016 through 2035. 2,915 cases made. *-JM*



97 Château Guiraud Sauternes 2011

A large-scale version, with seamlessly layered notes of almond cream, apricot, ginger, mango, piecrust, papaya and toasted hazelnut. The long, spice-infused finish shows ample depth, echoing with an enticing tarte Tatin note. Best from 2016 through 2035. 7,000 cases made. *-JM*

Collectibles

Wines that will improve most from additional bottle age and that show the greatest potential to gain in value



99 Château d'Yquem Sauternes 2011

A lovely, creamy, tropical style, with mango, papaya and guava notes lending a caressing feel, while singed almond and warm piecrust accents blossom through the lush finish. Just when you think that's all there is, toasted coconut, fig, orange blossom and persimmon details kick in, lending length and dimension. The finish is ridiculously long. Best from 2020 through 2060. –JM

97 Château Climens Barsac 2011

Still tight, with an energetic core of white peach, creamed pineapple, persimmon and white ginger flavors. The backdrop of orange blossom and singed almond notes adds extra dimension on the finish. This will go a long way in the cellar. Best from 2016 through 2035. 4,025 cases made. –JM

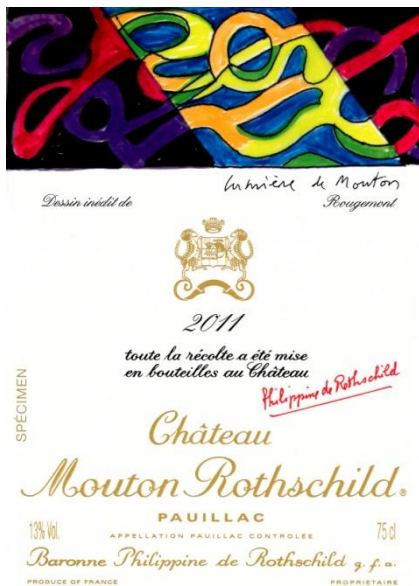
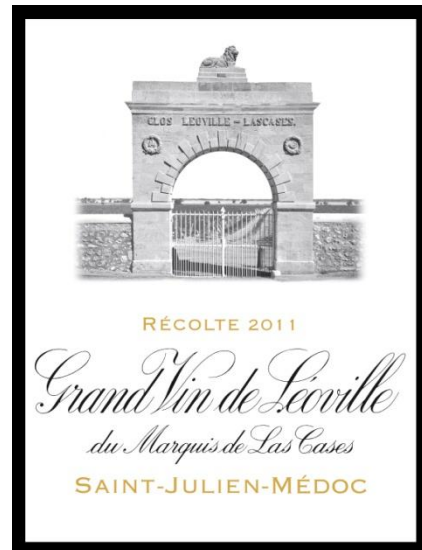


95 Château Haut-Brion Pessac Léognan 2011

This packs some serious density for the vintage, with layers of braised fig, blackberry pâte de fruit and dark currant paste, all inlaid with lively briar, tobacco leaf and roasted apple wood notes. Shows lots of energy through the finish, with the grip generating a mouthwatering feel. One of the stars of the vintage. Best from 2018 through 2035. –JM

95 Château Léoville Las Cases Saint Julien 2011

This has some toast to shed, but retains a terrific core of crushed plum and blackberry confiture. Has a beautiful ripple of charcoal for texture, honest acidity for balance and a bolt of iron that keeps this firmly grounded. A brick-house Cabernet. Best from 2018 through 2030. 8,330 cases made. -JM



95 Château Mouton Rothschild Pauillac 2011

This delivers a gorgeously pure beam of cassis and cherry compote, with singed apple wood, graphite and iron notes hanging in the background for now. Long and polished through the finish, showing serious depth in reserve. Best from 2018 through 2035. -JM

A large selection of Bordeaux wines

Margaux

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|--|
| 94 | Château Margaux 2011 | 90 | Château Kirwan 2011 |
| 93 | Château Palmer 2011 | 90 | Château Labégorce 2011 |
| 92 | Château Rauzan Segla 2011 | 90 | Château Lascombes 2011 |
| 91 | Château Giscours 2011 | 90 | Pavillon Rouge du Château Margaux 2011 |
| 91 | Château Marquis de Terme 2011 | 90 | Château Prieuré Lichine 2011 |
| 90 | Château Marquis d'Alesme becker 2011 | 89 | Château La Gurgue 2011 |
| 90 | Château Brane-Cantenac 2011 | 89 | Château Siran 2011 |
| 90 | Château Cantenac Brown 2011 | 89 | Château Monbrison 2011 |
| 90 | Château d'Issan 2011 | | |

Pauillac

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|---|
| 94 | Château Lafite Rothschild 2011 | 91 | Château Pichon Longueville Lalande 2011 |
| 92 | Château Lynch Bages 2011 | 90 | Château d'Armailhac 2011 |
| 92 | Château Pichon Longueville Baron 2011 | 90 | Château Haut Bages Libéral 2011 |
| 92 | Château Pontet-Canet 2011 | 89 | Château Duhart Milon Rothschild 2011 |
| 91 | Château Clerc Milon 2011 | 89 | Château Grand Puy Ducasse 2011 |
| 91 | Château Grand Puy Lacoste 2011 | 89 | Château Haut Batailley 2011 |
| 91 | Les Forts de Latour 2011 | 89 | Château Pédesclaux 2011 |

Pessac-Léognan

90 Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion 2011

90 Château de Fieuzal 2011

89 Château Olivier 2011

89 Château Carbonnieux 2011

88 Château Lespault Martillac 2011

88 La Réserve de Malartic 2011

Pomerol

90 Château La Pointe 2011

90 Château Taillefer 2011

Saint-Emilion

91 Château La Dominique 2011

90 Château Dassault 2011

90 Château Fleur Cardinale 2011

90 Château Quintus 2011

90 Château La Tour Figeac 2011

89 Château Grand Corbin-Despaigne 2011

88 Château Fombrauge 2011

88 Château Fonroque 2011

Saint-Estèphe

93 Château Montrose 2011

91 Château Calon Ségur 2011

90 Château Cos d'Estournel 2011

90 Château Lafon Rochet 2011

90 Château Ormes de Pez 2011

90 Château Phélan Ségur 2011

89 Château Calon Ségur 2011

88 Marquis de Calon 2011

87 Château Cos Labory 2011

Saint-Julien

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 94 | Château Ducru Beaucaillou 2011 | 91 | Château Langoa Barton 2011 |
| 92 | Château Branaire-Ducru 2011 | 90 | Château Gloria 2011 |
| 92 | Château Léoville Barton 2011 | 90 | Château Saint-Pierre 2011 |
| 92 | Château Léoville Poyferré 2011 | 90 | Château Talbot 2011 |
| 91 | Château Beychevelle 2011 | 87 | Château Lagrange 2011 |
| 91 | Clos du Marquis 2011 | | |

Other red

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 89 | Château Siaurac 2011 | 87 | Château Poujeaux 2011 |
| 87 | Château Maucaillou 2011 | | |

White and Dessert Wines

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--------------------------------------|
| 96 | Château Suduiraut, Sauternes 2011 | 92 | Château Olivier, Pessac-Léognan 2011 |
| 92 | Château Lafaurie Peyraguey, Sauternes 2011 | | |