



Green's 2009 Bordeaux Vintage Report (3rd Vintage of the Century in 10 Years?)

You may have noticed the disappearance of my yearly vintage report last year. Ah yes, I had to make my decision on whether to go to Bordeaux to taste the 2008 vintage in late February, early March of 2009. As you may remember, the financial markets were going through some pretty crazy gyrations at the time. Discretion being the better part of valor, I decided to stay home and buy very few 2008 vintage Bordeaux for Green's. It was just too scary out there to contemplate sinking hundreds of thousands of dollars in fine wine at the time.

Things have changed somewhat this year, not that the economy has healed but, at least, I think there will be an economy. There are some downright positives this year too. For whatever reason, the dollar is relatively strong against the Euro as I write this piece. Go figure. This gives me hope that one could pick up the 2009's at a reasonable exchange rate, and thus, a reasonable price. Now as to the quality of Bordeaux 2009, my tastings in early April in Bordeaux revealed some superb wines. I'll leave the technical details such as weather conditions and harvest dates to others, but quality wise, 2009 is at least on a par with the other great vintage of the decade, 2005. Stylistically, it is quite different.

The best 2009's have more supple, opulent fruit than the 05's. They also have great balance, displaying a very refreshing nuance of acidity in their aftertastes. Moreover, there is plenty of tannin, necessary for long cellaring, but the ripe fruit masks its presence at the moment. The wines are absolutely delicious to drink NOW! Will they close up and become tough a year or so after bottling as most vintages do, I am not so sure. There are no easy benchmarks in the past to compare this year's wine against. At each property I visited (about 14) I would ask, "What past vintage does the 2009 remind you of?" I got about 5 different answers!

I do have my own personal theory on how the wines of this vintage might develop. Except for the bottle shock all wine goes through immediately after bottling, these wines may never really close up. They may drink deliciously upon release and evolve, in the case of the best wines, for decades, changing character, but never going through a dumb stage. It will be exciting to find out!

By the way, the petit chateaux, those wines that bear no exalted Grand Cru status, and thus are less expensive (usually \$10-\$20 per bottle), can be absolutely stunning in 2009. Pull the car up and buy the best ones by the case! Be careful though, there is more variation in quality at this level, so get good advice. I have listed many wines in this category below.

Please note that I have listed the wines I recommend based on what I sampled. I was able to taste a rather wide range of wines, 238 to be exact. Just because a wine is not listed, however, does not mean the wine was omitted

because it was inferior. It may mean a sample of the wine did not come my way. But, as with any vintage, no matter how good, some properties made better wines than others. Those listed below are the cream of the crop in its class of the ones I had the opportunity to sample. They are arranged by area.

Written by Michael Bishop
Green's Senior Wine Buyer
April 17th, 2010

P.S. - Green's will sell 2009 Bordeaux on a "futures" basis later on in the spring. Stay tuned for email notices! *If you are not currently not on our email list, please send us your email address.* - Michael Bishop



Michael Bishop
Green's Senior Wine Buyer
For 2009 Bordeaux Info, call
404-321-6232 x 310



MARGAUX:

As usual, the wines of Margaux are the most variable in quality of all the major "left bank" districts. That said, some of the top wines I tasted came from there. Follow the recommended wines below and you can't go wrong.

Recommended Wines:
(52% of Total Wines Sample)

Tour de Mons, Mongravey, Monbrison, du Tertre, Giscours, Brane Cantenac, d'Issan, Malescot St. Exupery, Lascombes, Palmer, d' Angludet

Total Wines Tasted From This Commune: 21



ST. JULIEN

St. Julien, along with Pauillac, as is so often the case, is the very center of consistent quality wines in 2009. Naturally, some are better than others. You will find my recommendations below.

Recommended Wines: (89% of Total Wines Sampled)
Gloria, Talbot, Lagrange, Beychevelle, Branaire Ducru, St. Pierre, Leoville Poyferre, Leoville Barton

Total Wines Tasted From This Commune: 9



PAUILLAC

Home to Lafite, Latour, and Mouton-need I say more? Like St. Julien, it was difficult to find underachievers, but there were a few.

Recommended Wines: (71% of Total Wines Tasted)
Haut Batailley, D'Armailhac, Clerc Milon, Grand Puy Lacoste, Pichon Lalande, Pichon Baron, Pontet Canet, Duhart Milon, Lafite Rothschild, Lynch Bages, Latour, Haut Bages Liberal

Total Wines Tasted From This Commune: 17



ST. ESTEPHE

2009 was very kind to the top wines of St. Estephe. For many, gone are the toughness and rusticity that were often found in past vintages here. In its place, one finds unusual succulence and forward fruit flavors to balance the firmness of the tannins. But there was a lot of variation. The wines were either really good or really not.

Recommended Wines: (43% of Total Wines Tasted)
Serilhan, Meyney, Phelan Segur, Calon Segur, Montrose. Les Ormes de Pez

Total Wines Tasted From This Commune: 14



PESSAC-LEOGNAN/GRAVES

2009 produced an unusually consistent result for this area, partially because the Cabernet Franc, which is planted in larger proportion here than its northern Medoc neighbor, ripened perfectly in 2009. My personal favorite wine of the vintage, Haut Brion, is located here.

Recommended Wines: (78% of Total Wines Tasted)

Pape Clement, Haut Brion, La Mission Haut Brion, Grand Enclos, Domaine de Chevalier, Malartic Lagraviere, Fieuzal

Total Wines Tasted From This Area: 9



MEDOC & HAUT MEDOC

If the aristocrats of Margaux, St. Julien, Pauillac, and St. Estephe are too pricey for you, consider the “Bourgeoisie” (plus two Grand Cru) of these two districts. In the main, they are priced far below the Grand Cru and offer a lot of pleasure in the 2009 vintage. Be careful though, the quality of the wines in this class is all over the place. Stick with the recommendations below.

Recommended Wines: (48% of Total Wines Tasted)

Bellvue, Cambon La Pelouse, St. Paul, La Tour Carnet, Lanessan, Poujeaux, Beaumont, Cantemerle, de Gironville, Lamothe Bergeron, Larrivau, Maucaillou, Caronne Ste. Gemme

Total Wines Tasted From This Area: 27



ST. EMILION & POMEROL

Generally speaking, the wines of Pomerol are stronger than those in St. Emilion. At least they are more consistent. However, there are great wines in St. Emilion that should not be missed.

Recommended Wines: (68% of Total Wines Tasted)

Lucia, La Confession, La Pointe, Petit Villages, Gazin, La Conseillante, Bellevue Mondot, Pavie Decesse, Pavie, Clinet, Moulinet, Canon, Clos Fourtet, La Dominique, Clos des Menuts, Couspaude, St Hubert

Total Wines Tasted From This Area: 25



“SECOND WINES”

For value, this category may be the best bet of the 2009 vintage. These wines are made from fruit that didn't quite make the final blend for the chateaux's primary wine for one reason or another. Since 2009 produced, for the most part, very good quality grapes, the quality of the wine made here is very good and at a fraction of the price of the “Grand Vin.”

Recommended Wines: (67% of Total Wines Tasted)

Total Wines Tasted From This Category: 9



PETIT CHATEAUX

There are the “little guys.” They are sourced from lesser known appellations from all over Bordeaux. They are the “Rodney Dangerfields”, they get no respect. Even in a great vintage like 2009, you find bad wine in this category. However, Green’s has sorted the wheat from the chaff and come up with some beauties. Even better, many will start appearing in our stores this year, offering you an opportunity to taste a wine from this superb vintage early on.

Recommended Wines: (59% of Total Wines Tasted)

Croix Mouton, Domaine d’La A, Cap de Faugeres, Clos Lunelles, Piochet, D’Argadens, Robin, Montfort de Larmevaille, Roc de Minvielle, de Lavagnac, Haut Piquat, Fleur St. Antoine, Lagrave St. Antoine, Messile Aubert. Jean de Gue, Puygueraud, Birot, Mont Perat, Fleur St. Antoine

Total Wines Tasted From This Area: 32



Dry White Bordeaux

Rich, ripe, supple fruit with good balancing acidity. They are enjoyable now, but the best will cellar very well. An excellent vintage.

Recommended Wines: (100% of Total Wines Tasted)

Pape Clement Blanc, Monbousquet Blanc, Blanc de Lynch Bages, La Mission Haut Brion Blanc, Carbonnieux Blanc, Fieuzal Blanc, Grand Enclos Blanc, Domaine de Chevalier Blanc, Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc

Total Wines Tasted In This Category: 10



SAUTERNES & BARSAC

Sorry, I just slap ran out of time and could not taste many Sauternes. So, for me, judgment reserved. The Bordelaise, however, are very excited about the 2009 vintage for Sauternes. Extreme ripeness is balanced by acidity, they claim. Sounds familiar, one could have said the same for the red wines.

(Please note, not all the wines recommended above will be available for sale at Green’s. These are simply my recommendations based on what I sampled. I will, however, endeavor to acquire and offer as many of these as possible to Green’s customers.- Michael Bishop)



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