

2010 Bordeaux

The 2010 Bordeaux described here were first tasted in Bordeaux at the Primeur tastings in April 2011, and then in New York after their *élevage*, at the annual Union des Grands Crus event in January 2013. It is interesting as always to see how the finished wine compares to the initial barrel sample. By the way, I did not consult or even read my barrel notes before I tasted and wrote comments about the finished 2010s, nor did I in any way alter either set of notes afterwards. This, I think, gives the comparison more validity. The criticism that Bordeaux estates show an unrepresentative lot to the trade and press just after the vintage is not confirmed by my own assessments.

POMEROL

Ch Clinet

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 Clinet is opaque black cherry purple and quite reserved aromatically, suggesting ripe red and black fruits with a broad softness. The nose is especially lovely. In the mouth, the ripeness and richness are immediately apparent even though the flavors are rather non-expressive. The mouthfeel is fairly soft, and the finish closes up quickly. **** (*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red. Fantastic aromatic concentration and class albeit youthfully held back. So pure with subtle, budding complexity and beautifully melded oak. Superb presence on the palate, with impressive equilibrium and harmony. There is a seamless marriage of fruit and oak and the promise of complexity in the youthful, undeveloped finish. Beautiful. ****(*)

Ch Gazin

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Gazin 2010 is aromatically nuanced, showing accented, high quality dark red fruits, quite reserved, but with gentle lift. There is ripeness and texture as the wine is tasted, and the wine impresses with its freshness and persistence. This Pomerol, always a high-class example, shows budding complexity and a sensation of elegance and balance. ****(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense dark red. The nose displays focus and subtlety, with a fine, restrained red fruit fragrance. The palate is characterized by elegance rather than density. The wine seems to miss the concentration of some other top Pomerols, but this may be a passing phase. Overall, it offers a lilted impression. The aftertaste shows subtle fruit and oak highlights. ***(*)

Ch La Pointe

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: La Pointe's 2010 may well be the best wine this property has ever made, based on its quality from barrel. Aromatically, it is immediately fresh, clean and very attractive, boasting dark red fruits accented by oak with gentle lift and focus. The palate follows, offering a fresh, focused, positive impression. The wine is rather tightly wound in the mouth at this stage and muted in its expression, but there is very good concentration and elegance. Serious work has been accomplished at this chateau to make a 2010 of this potential quality. *****(+)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Nearly dense dark red with purple rim. The nose is closed at first, revealing masked ripe red fruit with further airing. In the mouth, La Pointe displays attractive poise and balance, yet not the dimension of the best wines. The finish shows greater intensity, suggesting there is more concentration than is immediately obvious. *****(+)**

Ch La Conseillante

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 vintage of La Conseillante is already distinguished as a barrel sample. To the nose, this Pomerol has focus and concentration with a subtle complexity. The aroma is particularly fine and marked by red currant and red cherry fruit and a touch of vanilla. The wine delivers a focused, freshly-defined palate with subtle, ripe, integrated tannins and an overlay of new oak. Although reserved, it is clear that this is a high-class example with a distinctive personality among Pomerol wines ******(+)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red. The aroma is highly expressive and reveals dark red fruits and wild red berries, a signature of La Conseillante. The palate delivers impeccable precision and aromatic complexity. The wine is not full or fleshy but has noteworthy concentration and expression. The finish leaves an impression of freshness, elegance and precision. ******(+)**

Ch Le Bon Pasteur

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red. Expressive, appealing nose of crushed red fruits with a high-toned aspect. The palate is ripe and accessible, with considerable charm. Well-balanced and persistent. An appealing wine with engaging fruit qualities. *****(+)**

SAINT-EMILION

Ch Canon La Gaffelière

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: From barrel, Canon La Gaffeliere's 2010 delivers the promise of an exciting wine. The aroma is quite evidently ripe, clean and pure. There is beautiful lift and an undertone of fully ripe red cherries. Similarly, the palate opens with a ripe, textured feel and presents excellent purity. This wine is flattering and sensual even now, in this primary state. The wonderful mature dark fruits remain for a very long time on the palate, and only at the very conclusion are the ultra-fine tannins and acidity visible. A real beauty. ****(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense black red with purple at rim. The youthful nose shows notable richness together with ripe red fruits and a kirsch liqueur accent. On the palate, the maturity of the fruit dominates. This is a fleshy, generous wine. Ripe acidity and fine tannins are melded into the wine's richness and visible only at the very end. Oak is present but matches the wine's ample fruit qualities. Entirely consistent with the barrel sample. ****(+)

Ch Figeac

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The purity and class of the 2010 Figeac barrel sample are quite evident. There are fully mature dark red fruits with lift, subtle nuances and an overall sense of freshness. In the mouth, the wine impresses even more, revealing a layering of fruit in an elegant format. This is a very fine wine combining the ripeness of the vintage with noteworthy finesse. ****(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Opaque black red. Aromatically, Figeac is particularly rich but controlled with profound, mature, high-class dark red fruits. The palate is similarly rich and textured, revealing a delicate sweet ripeness and a fine acid backbone in the finale. The wine has noteworthy volume and flesh, even more than the barrel sample, together with an elegant structure. Superb quality and cellaring potential. ****(*)

Ch La Couspaude

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Opaque black cherry with a small purple rim, the 2010 Couspaude explodes aromatically with ultra-ripe dark fruits and noticeable oak treatment. The palate is potent and has not come together fully given its immense richness and breadth. This wine has enormous potential and should be outstanding after barrel aging. ****(*?)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red with purple cast. The aroma is intense, flashy and accented, delivering very ripe dark fruits with a sweet note. Oak is present yet does not dominate. Aromatically, the wine shows promising complexity. The palate exhibits ripe fruit, flesh and an expansive quality. The wine has real substance and a generous, warm personality. Ripe acidity is concealed in the flesh. La Couspaude is an exciting St.-Emilion which will appeal to those who enjoy a hedonistic expression of the appellation. ****(+)

Ch Pavie Macquin

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Boasting an aroma of fully-matured cherry and plum joined with notes of smoke, mocha and vanilla from new oak barrels, 2010 Pavie Macquin is flashy and expressive with hightoned highlights of ripe fruits and new oak in the mouth. Nonetheless, the extroverted personality is given definition and focus by a firm acid frame and moderate, mature tannins. This is very well done in an opulent, modern style. ***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red. Immediately warm and scented if young and restrained. Sweet red fruit and a kirsch accent are evident. The aroma exhibits a controlled density and intensity. The palate is comparatively backward and held in by a pronounced acid frame. The wine has a subtle layered quality and considerable weight. Prominent new oak acts to conceal this opulent wine and may be absorbed in time. ***(+)

Ch Troplong Mondot

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Troplong Mondot always tends toward rich, opulent styling, and in vintages with heightened maturity, their wine can be particularly powerful. This super-ripe 2010 fulfills that expectation, being highly concentrated with a heady note of cherry liqueur. Ultrarich, mouth-coating, and possessing bountiful red fruit qualities, this vintage is nevertheless kept under control by the elevated acidity of the year. This provides a refreshing counterpoint to its opulence. ***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red and viscous to the eye. Aromatically, Troplong Mondot delivers very ripe dark red fruit notes and new oak highlights and has a penetrating intensity. The taste is marked by ripe fruit, and there is an underlying, controlled richness. The wine firms up with a well-defined backbone and concludes with toasted oak and wood spice. The finish is long and seductive, but also sinewy at the end. Demands your full attention. Matches the caliber of the barrel sample. ***(*)

Clos Fourtet

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 is an outstanding vintage of Clos Fourtet in its infancy. Concentrated and intense in its aromatics, the nose is fully ripe, but not to excess, and very clean. The palate again shows deliciously mature dark fruits with a sweet tone from start to finish. This is already engaging and deceptively easy even though it is still in a primary stage. The tannins are especially fine-grained, and there is perfectly integrated ripe acidity in the finale. This has all the qualities to become a very high class wine. ****(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Opaque black red. The nose is full and rich but controlled at this stage. There are deep, mature dark red fruits of notable quality and class. In the mouth, Clos Fourtet is similarly well-endowed and enticingly textured, with a subtle sweet fruit undertone and ripe acidity in the finish. The 2010 has above-average volume and substance for this property and is an outstanding, complete wine. The finished wine is exactly in line with the impressive barrel sample. ****(*)

Ch Trottevieille

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Trottevieille always strikes a unique stance among the top wines of St. Emilion due to its limestone-rich terroir and an assemblage with a high proportion of Cabernet Franc. Their 2010 barrel sample is characteristically less dense in color than most, and the nose is at first clean and fresh and without any exaggeration. Red cherry, red currant and other small red fruits and berries are visible with a peppery accent. The palate is similarly focused, fresh, clean and rather closed, and it offers an elegant, well-defined personality. ***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense dark red with thin purple rim. The aroma is pure, engaging and particularly fresh and expressive. There is a complex mélange of red and black fruits with a complementary oak accent. In the mouth, Trottevieille is pure, clean and again especially fresh with aromatic highlights. The palate is focused and framed by pronounced acidity. Lighter rather dense. Oak figures prominently in the finish. A St.-Emilion with, as always, a personality which sets it apart from the other properites. ***(*)

Ch Canon

Tasting notes-January 2013 : Moderately dense very dark red with purple rim. The nose is highly focused with a penetrating, intense core. There is exceptional fruit quality and perfectly judged oak. The taste displays a fine, not exaggerated maturity. Medium weight, Canon delivers an elegant profile and an undertone of sweet red fruit. The aftertaste is long, finely accented and defined by a precise acid frame. A refined wine of high class. ****(*)

Ch Franc Mayne

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense red with a black cast and pronounced purple rim. The aroma is very lovely and shows an inviting ripe red fruit scent with considerable depth. The taste is defined by the same mature fruits along with a caressing texture. The aftertaste reveals budding complexity and very fine integrated acidity. This is a sensual, understated St.-Emilion. ***(*)

Ch Larcis Ducasse

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red with purple edge. High-toned aromatics of mixed red fruits (cherry, currant, plum), particularly inflected and focused. Larcis Ducasse offers notable precision on the palate in a medium-weight style without a sense of viscosity. The taste is held back but there is concentration at the core together with elevated acidity and fine-grained tannins. New oak comes up at the end in a firm, dry finale. ***(+)

Ch La Dominique

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red. The nose is shy at first, then shows crushed red fruits (cherry, cranberry) notes. On the palate, the elegance and equilibrium define the profile. The wine is stylish rather than substantial. The aftertaste reveals a hidden intensity with red fruit and oak highlights. ***(+)

PESSAC-LÉOGNAN

Domaine de Chevalier

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 red wine of Domaine de Chevalier is opaque in appearance and boasts a rich, warm, generous nose of very ripe dark fruits. It is very generously flavored and gains in amplitude, showing seductive, perfectly mature dark red fruit tones and a sensual texture. The generosity is matched by a framework of acidity and tannin of great finesse. This has all the ingredients to be a sublime vintage of Chevalier red. ****(+)

Ch Haut-Bailly

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Haut-Bailly always seems to make one of the best red wines of Pessac-Leognan every vintage, and their 2010 is no exception. Gorgeous, pure, delicately scented black fruits and berries greet the nose. The wine has everything on the palate with the same fabulous, perfectly-matured fruits and a caressing texture. Impeccably balanced, the firm frame seems to be in ideal harmony with the rest of the wine. It is remarkable that Haut-Bailly shows so beautifully at this early point in its life. ****(+)

Ch Pape Clément

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Produced at 32 hectoliters per hectare, the 2010 Pape Clément rouge combines Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in equal parts. The flattering nose offers new oak and is high toned, concealing mature black fruits and berries. Super-concentrated and flashy, this red has been given ample new oak at this stage, yet there are beautiful fruit qualities as well. The wine ends fresh and dry. This 2010 red surely offers enormous potential in a full, opulent style. ***(*)

HAUT-MÉDOC

Ch La Lagune

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Lagune's 2010 is composed of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot and 10% Petit Verdot. The wine from barrel has a muted nose of black fruits and a sense of depth and solidity. The taste is ripe, fullish, soft and textured. There is a long fruit-filled aftertaste with fine acidity and tannin at the end. This is a promising wine with charm and, very likely, early appeal. ***(+)

MARGAUX

Ch Brane-Cantenac

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red. The aroma is fine and restrained, with varied red fruit elements and dusty, green pepper notes in the background. In the mouth, Brane has an elegant feel and nuanced, lifted aromatics. While it offers noteworthy finesse and possesses a persistent, delicate finish, the wine has a thinness of texture. I cannot agree with commentators who have described this wine as “rich,” “concentrated” or “structured” – or, perhaps, the bottled wine does not live up to their initial assessment from barrel. ***(+)

Ch Cantenac Brown

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Cantenac-Brown's 2010 barrel sample indicates that this property has broken through to a very high standard. A blend of 66% Cabernet Sauvignon and 34% Merlot, this Margaux is ripe and high toned, offering dark berries, spice and a mentholated note in the aroma. It follows through with a ripe, fresh and beautifully-defined palate with flair and elegance. This could well be Cantenac-Brown's finest modern vintage in the making. ***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red. The aroma appears very open and exhibits ripe red fruit, tea leaf and a note of green pepper. In the mouth, the accessible profile is repeated. The wine has an appealing charm and precocious drinkability, but misses the concentration to be more impressive. The finished wine is a disappointment compared to the promising barrel sample. ***

Ch du Tertre

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: An assemblage of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot and 10% Petit Verdot, the 2010 du Tertre has a focused aroma of lifted black fruits and berry accents. It is ripe, fresh and clean and gains in expression through a long finish with classic dusty Cabernet notes. There is ripe, integrated acidity and tannin. The 2010 vintage of du Tertre is more concentrated than usual for this property. ***(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red with purple. Du Tertre has an open, accessible aroma of red fruit, spice and tea leaf without notable concentration. The palate is elegant, attractively fragrant, and lighter weight. This 2010 was more impressive as a barrel sample. **(*)

Ch Giscours

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Giscours 2010 is a mix of 71% Cabernet Sauvignon and 29% Merlot and reveals a high-toned aroma of dark berries and black fruits with new oak accents. There are ripe, sweet dark fruits on the palate and an attractive texture. The finish has lasting ripe fruits and an overlay of new wood. This is a Giscours with plenty of flavor interest at this stage. *****(+)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red with purple. Aromatically, Giscours is accessible and nuanced with expressive red fruits and spice accents. The palate is polished and mature but lighter in weight. This 2010 is forward and offers plenty of finesse, yet misses the extra measure of intensity to be more interesting. *****(+)**

Ch Lascombes

Barrel tasting notes-January 2013: Saturated in color, the 2010 Lascombes is concentrated, warm and very ripe in the aroma with notes of fruit liqueur and cocoa. The taste is rich, flashy but controlled with sweet, liqueur-like flavors and ripe, concealed acidity. The 2010 continues the stylistic direction of the property and will no doubt be one of the best modern Lascombes. *****(*)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense black red. Warm and especially ripe dark fruit with a fruit liqueur lift combined with evident new oak. The taste is marked as well by pronounced ripe flavors and is round, fat and a bit blunt. The oak treatment has left a strong imprint. Comparing the finished wine with the barrel sample, it seems that the aging regime has not brought out the best in the wine. There is a forced bitterness at the conclusion. ****(*)**

Château Rauzan-Ségla

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 of this property is an assemblage of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. From barrel, the wine is a dense cassis purple and reveals a complex, seductive black fruit and berry aroma, with flowery and dusty highlights. The polish of the wine at this stage is particularly striking and speaks of ideal fruit maturity and careful selection. Offering great purity and class, it is very long and well-balanced with finely calibrated acidity and ripe, subtle tannins. Superb. ******(*)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense dark red with purple rim. The wine offers a very fine, very subtle fragrance showing notable reserve as well as complex notes of red fruits and skillfully married, high-quality oak. In the mouth, the wine is particularly harmonious and polished for this stage of its life in bottle. It gains in expression and is very long and elegant, revealing great class and breed. Top-notch Margaux. ****(*)

Ch Rauzan-Gassies

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Overwhelmingly Cabernet Sauvignon in composition (85% of the blend, with Merlot and Petit Verdot), the 2010 Rauzan-Gassies is ripe, highly concentrated and reserved, showing muted black fruits, well-married new oak, and an accent of blackberry liqueur. Warm, ripe and expansive, this wine boasts a long, sweet finish with a pronounced fruit expression and cocoa-mocha touches. Based on this barrel sample, this could well be the very best wine from this château in memory. ***(*)

Pavillon Rouge

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Pavillon Rouge represents a selection of 38% of the year's output and is composed of 66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot and 4% Petit Verdot aging in 55% new oak. The nose is muted, then reveals pure, ripe black fruits with considerable depth and hidden strength. In the mouth, the wine reveals concentration backed by fresh, defining acidity and firm tannin, though not at all hard. This wine has real presence and substance, and is certainly one of the most authoritative, promising vintages of Pavillon Rouge. ***(*+)

Ch Margaux

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 Margaux has the highest proportion ever of Cabernet Sauvignon (90%) combined with 7% Merlot and 1.5% each of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. It could easily be argued that the 2010 is the equal of the sublime 2009, yet it has a very different profile. The nose, while restrained, is extraordinarily impressive, offering authority and depth. The palate reveals the black fruit expression associated with Cabernet Sauvignon of the highest caliber and perfect maturity. It is very firmly defined by ripe, fresh acidity and fine ripe tannins, finishing with subtle lingering cassis-black plum fruit. This noble, pure wine will no doubt have a very long life ahead. ****(*)!

Ch Palmer

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Palmer's 2010 is instantly attractive to the eye with its opaque black plum-purple color. A blend which is very similar to 2009 (54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot), the wine exhibits a reserved yet profound aroma with notable concentration and density. There is an immediate impression on the palate of sweet fruit and richness, though youthfully withheld. This is a large-scaled Palmer defined by ripe, superbly integrated acidity and very fine tannins. The wine is noble and harmonious already, with no austerity despite its structure. ****(+)

Ch Marquis de Terme

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 Marquis de Terme is assuredly the finest, most complete vintage from this château for many years. The barrel sample reveals a saturated black plum-purple color and a high-toned nose of penetrating black fruits and berries with a fruit liqueur undertone. It is wonderfully ripe on the palate, very pure and very fresh as well. The flavors are held in but there is elegance and finesse while not missing concentration. A blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot. ***(+)

Ch Siran

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The barrel sample of Siran shows real promise. Concentrated and intense aromatics are marked by dusty black fruits. Fresh and focused as it enters the mouth, the wine gains in generosity in the finish and shows a soft, textured mouthfeel. The flavors are carried by long, fresh acidity and firm tannins. The 2010 is a blend of 47% Merlot, 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 11% Petit Verdot. This vintage follows the highly-successful 2009 and may well be superior. ***(+)

SAINT-JULIEN

Ch Beychevelle

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 Beychevelle is a very pure, clean wine, fresh and reserved with finely-nuanced red and black fruits. While largely closed, it has a polished attack and center and is wrapped up by a pronounced acid frame, with very fine tannins. The 2010 is 54% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Merlot with Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. The alcohol content of 14.3% is not visible.

***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red with purple edge. Ripe, restrained aroma of dark red fruits accented by dusty and tea leaf notes. The palate is ripe, medium-bodied and reserved in the attack. The wine opens slowly, revealing attractive aromatic complexity, then firms up and finishes with moderate tannic grip and elevated acidity along with oak spice. The 2010 is a very successful Beychevelle with a more concentrated, muscular profile. It is fully consistent with the barrel sample. *****(*)**

Ch Branaire-Ducru

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: This is a superbly pure Branaire offering ultra-clean, scented red and black fruits. An assemblage of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 23.5% Merlot with Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc, the wine possesses beautiful focus and is precise and tense. The barrel sample suggests that this is a Branaire of a very high standard. *****(*+)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense dark red with purple rim. The aroma boasts promising complexity, marrying nuanced red fruits, creamy oak and a mentholated accent. The palate is ample and textured with impressive length, combining attractive ripe fruit with creamy oak and a vanilla note. Branaire is harmonious and composed. The *élevage* has enhanced its potential. ******(+)**

Ch Gruaud Larose

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 of this estate is focused and fresh with very good concentration of dark fruits and new oak. It is ripe, pure and firmly defined, and there is excellent concentration and intensity. *****(*)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense very dark red with purple rim. The impressive nose is high toned and complex, revealing a mélange of red fruits, smoky oak and tea leaf. On the palate, Gruaud Larose is very stylish, poised and expressive. The wine shows wonderful balance and length, with lovely aromatic highlights in the aftertaste together with finely calibrated tannins. Every bit as excellent as it was from barrel, if not moreso. *****(*)**

Ch Lagrange

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: This 75/25 assemblage of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot offers a warm, lifted nose of red and black fruits with very good concentration and expression. Clean, fresh and elegant, the 2010 Lagrange has style and poise, a soft center and ripe structure. *****(+)**

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense black red with purple cast. Lagrange's aromatic profile conveys ripe black and red fruits and is warm and generous with a dusty accent. The palate is ripe and poised with very good substance. The wine finishes with well-calibrated tannic grip and ripe acidity. Overall, Lagrange shows harmony, integration and excellent balance. It has improved with barrel aging.

***(*)

Ch Léoville Barton

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Opaque cassis purple, Leoville Barton's 2010 barrel sample is very rich and very pure, offering wonderfully ripe, high class black fruits and berries with a note of fruit liqueur. Its concentration is impressive as is its generosity and structure. This Saint-Julien is largely closed at this stage, but highly promising. The blend is 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 21% Merlot and 2% Cabernet Franc produced at 40 hectoliters per hectare, and the wine is aging in 60% new oak barrels. ****(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red with purple rim. The aroma is striking for its immediate warmth, followed by a menthol accent, and then submerged dark fruit concealed by oak. The taste is full and possesses evident ripe fruit, but is mute. There is ample substance, but the wine does not appear fully integrated at this stage. Certainly in need of time to come together and live up to the high potential of the barrel sample. ***(*)?

Ch Talbot

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: 2010 Talbot is an assemblage of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot. The wine drawn from barrel reveals ripe red and black fruits with a textured palate, which has a soft, sensual feel with sweet fruit at the end. There is well-matched ripe acidity and well-managed tannin. ***(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense dark red with purple. The nose shows warm lift but the fruit qualities are not expressive. The palate has obvious ripeness yet lacks expression and precision for now at least. Perhaps just an awkward phase. ***(?)

Ch Ducru-Beaucaillou

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Ducru's 2010 is extremely impressive and promising. Composed of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot, this Second Growth has a striking, expressive nose of ripe black fruits which have reached

ideal maturity. The aroma is already complex, suggesting black plum, cherry, and boysenberry. The wine is extraordinarily expansive on the palate, very generous with notable complexity, ending with a subtle touch of high caliber new oak. This is a full-bodied, rather powerful Ducru which does not lose its customary grace and harmony. ****(*)

PAUILLAC

Ch Clerc Milon

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: With a dense dark cherry-purple color, 2010 Clerc Milon reveals an aroma of ripe berries and red fruits with spice accents which is particularly layered and concentrated. Ripe and polished from entry to finish, the palate has great presence and purity and is very long and fresh with fine acidity and tannin. This high-class, beautifully composed wine is a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot and 11% Cabernet Franc, with a small addition of Petit Verdot and the rarely seen Carmenère. ***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense black red. The nose is high toned and rather reticent and does not seem to have come together. The palate is similarly a bit out of joint, yet there is clearly the promise of budding complexity and length. Given the track record of this property and the talented team behind it, there is reason to be optimistic about this wine's potential. ***(*)?

Ch D'Armailhac

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Dense black plum purple as a barrel sample, Armailhac shows a composed, pure nose with reserved strength and muted black fruits, quality oak and a faint spiciness. The palate offers ripe, sweet black fruits and is supple, harmonious and beautifully balanced. At the end, fine-grained tannins and a defining edge of acidity are noticeable. The 2010 blend is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot.

***(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Moderately dense dark red with purple. There is lifted, nuanced fruit and spice along with a coffee note in the aroma. The palate delivers excellent volume and dimension which is amplified from attack to finish. There is an appealing underlying richness and reserve. Shows far better now than its stable mate Clerc Milon. ***(*)

Ch Grand-Puy-Lacoste

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Opaque blackish plum purple, the 2010 Grand-Puy-Lacoste is largely closed from barrel, with ripe, dense black fruits and evident concentration and depth. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon (83%) with Merlot (17%), this vintage was produced at 42 hectoliters per hectare and is aging in 75% new oak barrels. While reserved overall, the wine shows underlying flesh and power with a firm but not aggressive tannic frame. The 2010 will join other highly successful vintages from this chateau which show magnificently after two decades or more of bottle aging. ****(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Nearly dense very dark red. The nose is very inviting if very youthful: immediately warm, rich, ample. There are marvelous dark fruits and a faint pepper note. The palate stands out for its volume and substance. There is considerable richness, largely in reserve. A hidden, beautifully integrated frame of acidity and mature, very fine tannins surface in the finale. Exhibits all the attributes of the very promising barrel sample. A benchmark Grand-Puy-Lacoste. ****(*)

Ch Lynch-Bages

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: This classic Lynch-Bages is broad, dense and brooding but also pure and high class. Very large-scaled with profound black fruits, this 2010 barrel sample is very full-bodied with a muscular structure. The acidity and tannin are concealed in the mass of fleshy, chewy fruit. The 2010 has the makings of a great Lynch-Bages and is made up of 79% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot (matching the highest proportion since 1995) and a minor addition of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. It is being matured in 70% new oak barrels. ****(*)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense black red with purple rim. The nose is very full and warm and reveals rich dark fruit. Very much in reserve. In the mouth, Lynch-Bages is mouth-filling and fleshy though non-expressive. The richness is backed by a powerful structure, with elevated acidity and tannin. The finish is undeveloped and leaves a dry, oaky imprint. Characteristically backward and loaded with keeping potential. ****(*)

Ch Pichon Baron

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: This assemblage of 79% Cabernet Sauvignon and 21% Merlot is opaque cassis purple in appearance with a concentrated, deep, pure nose of black fruits. In the mouth, the 2010 boasts solid maturity along with freshness and an imposing, powerful presence. This is a highly impressive Pichon Baron which has great nobility and potential. ****(+)

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red. Pure, full and remarkably ample nose of impressive, mature dark fruit skillfully married with oak. Faint pepper accent. The taste delivers plenty of substance and is very well calibrated. The flavors are held in reserve and wrapped up by a ripe backbone of acidity and strong tannins. A stunning and classic Pauillac which matches the standard of the barrel sample. ****(+)

Ch Pichon Comtesse de Lalande

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The utterly convincing Pichon Lalande is a marriage of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc and 3% Petit Verdot. Concentrated and very subtly complex, the aroma of this 2010 has great intensity and reserve with an inviting mix of red and black cherry, plum, and black currant. It has amazing focus on the palate with ample sweet fruit along with a well-calibrated backbone of elevated acidity and firm, gripping tannin. The wine possesses extraordinary length despite its youthful state. The 2010 Pichon Lalande will certainly be a monumental vintage of this property. ****(*)!

Tasting notes-January 2013: Dense very dark red with purple rim. Sensational, multidimensional aromatics for such a young wine. There is warmth, dried spices and complex ripe dark fruits. The taste is surprisingly backward. There is very good weight and the wine is fleshy and textured. The structure is in perfect unison, with very fine acidity and exceptionally fine-grained tannin melded into the wine's flesh. A superb wine with great potential, exactly what the barrel sample promised. ****(*)!

Les Forts de Latour

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 Forts de Latour is opaque and almost black to the eye. Nearly three-fourths Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine is impressively concentrated although reserved as a barrel sample, with a suggestion of black plum and boysenberry. In the mouth, it appears full and dense with the structure to match, finishing with fresh acidity and muscular tannic grip.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich, MW

This is an outstanding vintage of Les Forts which will no doubt reward lengthy cellaring. ****(+)

Ch Latour

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Impenetrable and nearly all black in color, the 2010 Latour is immense, powerful and broad-shouldered. The assemblage in 2010 is 90.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8.5% Merlot, and .5% each of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. The nose hints at black fruits (plum, blackberry, black currant) with a note of creme de cassis. The palate is massive and muscular with an imposing structure. The tremendous potential of this vintage is obvious even though the wine is largely non-expressive as a barrel sample. This is a Latour which is likely to demand many years in bottle to come around, and it will surely have decades of life. A great classic in the making. ****(*)!

SAINT-ESTEPHE

Ch Lafon-Rochet

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 of this Saint-Estephe chateau shows excellent concentration and focus. While rather restrained, the wine is polished from attack to finish with noteworthy balance and definition. Highly promising, the 2010 has elegance and intensity. ***(*)

Ch Phélan Ségur

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: The 2010 Phelan-Segur blends Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in a 51:49 ratio and is aging in 50% new oak. Black in color, the wine has a sweet, high-toned aroma with appealing ripe black fruits and berries. The palate follows, showing a full, mature, generous center. This wine has a great deal of early charm and does not have an aggressive structure. ***(+)

Ch Les Ormes de Pez

Barrel tasting notes-April 2011: Opaque cassis purple, Ormes de Pez 2010 is very concentrated and very ripe but not excessively so. The nose shows liqueur-toned black fruits with an attractive overlay of oak. Blended from 57% Cabernet Sauvignon and 34% Merlot with additions of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, this wine commands attention with its volume in the mouth, despite being mostly closed, and the fruit is matched by a firm frame. Ormes de Pez continues a series of exceptional vintages with this well-endowed 2010. ***(*)