April 9, 2010, Redwood City, CA—
The K&L team has just returned from Bordeaux, and we’re excited to share our take on the super-hyped 2009 vintage. Much like our trip to Bordeaux in April 2006 to taste the 2005 vintage, we arrived amid speculation that this was the Bordeaux vintage, that the wines were near-perfect.

We (meaning me—Clyde, Trey Beffa, Ralph Sands, Alex Pross and Jeff Garneau) met at the Compagnie Médocaine des Grands Crus offices for a Saturday tasting of some 2009 Bordeaux before heading to Château Pichon-Baron for our first official 2009 tasting. We spent only seven days tasting the wines this year (normally we spend nine), so we had to put in long days, and a lot of driving, too.

What we found over the course of the week, tasting in somewhat dreary weather conditions (a couple of clear days, a couple of cold and rainy days and a few really windy and damp days) was a vintage that has held up to all the hype. If the 2005s were easy to taste as infants, the 2009s were even more accessible and easier to taste. In fact, sampling the 200 wines at this year’s Joanne tasting was as easy as it has ever been—even easier than tasting the 2007s. The tannin levels in the 2009s are the highest ever recorded at most properties, the alcohol levels are as high as Bordeaux can get, and the wines are as concentrated as we have ever tasted in our 25 years of coming to Bordeaux, before heading to Château Pichon-Baron for our first official 2009 tasting. We spent only seven days tasting the wines this year (normally we spend nine), so we had to put in long days, and a lot of driving, too.

The 2009 Bordeaux Vintage Report:


OR

“PURE CASHMERE”

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In 2009, the brix levels—the amount of sugar in the grapes at harvest—were also higher than any other vintage in recent memory, and the resulting wines were higher in alcohol than most can remember, with many wines reaching 14 degrees and above. And still the wines were easy to taste—so sweet, with such smooth tannins and so much fruit.

“In general, the wines were sweet and lush, with high alcohol and low acidity, which, combined with tremendous ripe fruit flavors to mask the massive tannins, and lingering sweet finishes, made them a delight to drink even at this early stage.”

Okay, so how did all this sweet-fruited perfection come to be? One word: weather. The vintage’s perfect weather conditions lead to perfect ripening and an overall fantastic vintage. It was never too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry. I had a hunch the vintage was going to be great back in June 2009 when I attended VinExpo and the weather was bright and sunny every day, with temperatures in the high 70s.

How do the wines compare to other vintages? The 2009s are in the style of the super-silky 1970s and 1982s—gentle, fat and sweet. Many old-timers say they resemble the 1947s! Noted négociant Bill Blatch describes them as a combination of 1947, with 63 years of winemaking improvements and experience (1947X) and 1982, with controlled vineyard yields...
(1982Y). We agree with Bill, of course, but think some 2005 should be added into the formula (2005Z) because the two vintages have similar power and structure. Remember that 1947 was a vintage where the wines were super-ripe, and many ended up with residual sugar, and that the great 1982 vintage wines had yields in the range of 70-80 hectoliters per hectare (hl/ha). In 2009, the wines were fermented completely dry (most of them, that is) with 13-14.5 degrees alcohol. And the vineyard yields ranged from 20 hl/ha to 45hl/ha, so the concentration is much greater in 2009 than 1982.

As far as we are concerned, the 2009 Bordeaux (the best of them) are like satin, or silk—better yet, they’re like cashmere, in texture. They have strength, and at the same time they are elegant. And they are so good that you want to drink them right now. The alcohol, acids, tannins and fruit are all in perfect balance. Remember one thing about Bordeaux: Great wines taste great when they are young, and they taste great when they are old. Think of the 1929s, 1947s, 1953s and 1982s.

Before giving an overview of the weather conditions that framed the 2009 vintage (thanks to Bill Blatch), I must say a bit about tasting the 2009s during the week of March 27-April 3, 2010. First, as I mentioned above, the weather was not ideal for tasting young reds. They will be really delicious in June.

Speaking of tasting in June, I did that last year, and the 2008s tasted very good during the perfect warm sunny days of VinExpo. The wines were settled down in the barrels and really open. We did not taste many 2008s this year, as most were being racked or they were

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**INFORMATION**
Store Hours/Locations .................
on their finings, but some of the ones we did taste showed very well. Don't dismiss this vintage; the wines will probably be super bargains compared to 2005s and 2009s, and they are solid wines in the vein of 2001.

Now, just to clarify: We found the 2009 vintage to be monumental, but that does not mean that every wine we tasted was great. In fact, there was some variability in the wines, not from one specific region, but from all over Bordeaux. Some of the wines are a bit acidic and green, probably due to worried property owners harvesting too early because they feared the upcoming weather. On the other hand, some wines were overripe and pruney, mainly on the Right Bank, where some vineyardists waited too long to pick their Merlot grapes, and Merlot gets overripe quickly.

We suggest that you rely on wine merchant(s) who have been to Bordeaux and tasted the wines, not someone who is merely quoting points from wine tasters. Of course, we whole-heartedly recommend you engage the expertise of the K&L staff who tasted these wines. We will not lead you astray. We tasted some 350 wines from the 2009 vintage, and this report only includes notes on about 200 of them. Some wines were left off because we only tasted it once, and we felt the sample was not right. Tasting barrel samples is risky business. The young wines can deteriorate quickly, and sometimes there is no opportunity to taste it again to judge the wine fairly. Other times we were able to have the bad bottle replaced, like when we were visiting Cos d'Estournel and Pichon-Lalande, and both times the second sample was perfect. At the Joanne tasting we asked for several new bottles, and all proved better than the original sample. We are able to ask for new bottles because we have been going to Bordeaux to taste the new wines since 1985, and we know most of the best négociants and many of the property owners and winemakers. In fact, a few properties send a “special sample” of their wine to the Joanne tasting just for us! Like Woody Allen once said, “If you stick around long enough, people think you know what you are doing.” We have stuck around for many, many years. We first offered Bordeaux futures for the 1978 vintage, and we have done so for every vintage since then (except 1987)! Not too many of our fellow wine merchants have that kind of record.

THE WEATHER

The winter was cold, with good rainfall in January and April that prepared the vineyards for a textbook budding and a good flowering. Then the dry, hot and, above all, sunny summer and autumn did the rest. All nice and easy, without any excess. The 2009 vintage goes to show, just as in 1982, that gentle conditions make for gentler wines. Of course, there were some minor problems along the way, such as localized hail storms in May and June that wiped out some acreage. There was some other storm damage, and some parcels of vines got stressed and blocked during the summer, yielding grapes that failed to develop properly.

Winter 2008-2009

Adapted from Bill Blatch’s 2009 Vintage Report

The winter was colder than recent winters, and there were some frosts in December and January, but all of this is mostly normal, and there were no severe frost days. These frosts kept the sap down low in the vines so that pruning could be done at a leisurely pace. The winter also saw rain showers in November, December, January, February and April, which gave the vineyards plenty of moisture, very important in preparing the vines for what was to come. The only other abnormal winter event was an inconsequential freak hurricane in January.

Spring and Summer 2009

The cold and relatively dry winter ensured that the vines would be late in awakening. The buds on vines planted to warm Merlot soils (Pomerol and Pessac) broke at the beginning of April, but those on cooler Cabernet soils broke much later. This was the beginning of the year’s great disparity in the ripening cycles between the warmer and the cooler soils, a disparity that would later increase when the drought came. The best spring news (weather-wise) was the fact that there was never a hint of frost anywhere in Bordeaux.

May and June became progressively warmer and especially sunnier, with June having 293 sunshine hours compared to an average of 224. I can attest to six days of VinExpo sunshine. Meanwhile, the still wet sub-soil
received a bit more moisture in May and June. Everything was going along smoothly until May 11th when a nasty low-pressure system formed and created a devastating hailstorm that swung south through the Côte de Bourg and Côte de Blaye, then crossed the river and decimated some of the Margaux vineyards in Canaanac and Labarde. Another storm the next day hit the Entre-Deux-Mers and Graves, and then traveled northeast through the eastern part of St-Emilion. The poor vineyard owners that were hit the worst wound up spectators for 2009 and not participants.

The warm weather at the end of June put smiling faces on all of the property owners—they began to realize that a great vintage could be coming if the weather remained good. The weather continued dry and sunny through July and August—not hot, just sunny and dry. Overall the summer was not super-hot like 2003 or super-dry like 2005, but rather gentle in all respects. Just what the doctor ordered for a great vintage. In general, green harvesting was kept to a minimum this year. The grapes were in great shape, and the weather was not scorching.

**September, October and Harvest**

September came and everyone in Bordeaux who survived the hail storms anticipated a fine, if not great vintage. Most of the early September forecasts called for rain that, fortunately, did not materialize, except for a few scattered showers. This allowed the dry white harvest to proceed under almost perfect conditions.

From September 21st until the end of harvest the days remained warm, with no rain. In fact, the weather at end of September and beginning of October was much warmer than normal. This further concentrated the sugars in the already concentrated grapes, accounting for the exceptionally high alcohol levels in the 2009s. The grapes were becoming “technically ripe” (high sugar, low acid), but it would take another week to attain “phenolic ripeness” (totally ripe tannins). A super warm period from September 28th through October 8th softened the tannins, bumping the vintage up to the levels of 1982 or 1947. Most of the Merlot was harvested around October 8th, and the Cabernet came in the week after under cooler conditions.

Thus ended a perfect vineyard year. Nobody could have wished for better. The vineyards did their thing, and the only question left was how the winemakers would handle the high alcohol levels.

**THE WINES**

**Red Wines**

The defining feature of the 2009 vintage is high alcohol, even higher than Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The Merlots came in at 14 degrees on the Left Bank and 15 degrees on the Right Bank, while the Cabernets came in at 13 and 14 degrees respectively. Our English counterparts are a bit more dismissive, calling 2009 and American-style vintage rather than “An Englishman’s Claret” because of the forward fruit and high alcohol. But we feel the high alcohols match the vintage’s extraordinary tannin levels, which were higher than any other previously recorded vintage, and the wines have much more structure than California Cabernets.

The acidity levels are generally on the low side, though the wines taste like there is plenty of acidity—because they are so vibrant, fresh and lively. Together these characteristics make for wines that taste great now, and that will probably taste great for many years to come—à la 1929! I loves vintages like this, because I can drink the wines while they’re young and my grandkids can enjoy them 40 years from now!

As for which region made the best red wine in 2009, that is impossible to say as there were great wines from all over Bordeaux, both Cabernet- and Merlot-based. The strong Left Bank Cabernet Sauvignons were exceptional, as were the great Right Bank Cabernet Francs and the properly picked, massive Merlots. The ripe Petit Verdots were frosting on the cake on the Left Bank. We sure loved the wines from the northern Médoc, with their heavy soils; there should be some great bargains from this region. We also loved the Pomerols, some St-Emilions and other Right Bank properties. There were also some disappointments from both sides of the Gironde. We found some Left Bank wines a bit green, perhaps because the owners picked a bit too soon. Also we found some Right Bank wines too over-the-top—too ripe, too extracted and too tannic, with some whisky barrel notes. Perhaps the Merlots were picked a few days too late?
White Wines, Sauternes
The weather for these wines was fine, especially for the dry whites, which were harvested under ideal conditions. The resulting wines are totally delicious, with a richer texture than 2007 or 2008. Sauternes had another great year, but that's nothing new here. There have been so many great Sauternes vintages of late. These 2009s are a bit more in the style of the 2001s and 2007s, rather than the fatter 2005s.

THE MARKETPLACE AND OUR CONCLUSIONS
So 2009 Bordeaux, in general, seems to be a combination of the 1982, 1947 and 2005 vintages, like we stated earlier in this article. Hence the formula 2009=1947X+1982Y+2005Z. The best of the red wines have a super-silky texture to them, which we think is more like pure cashmere.

“The Bordeaux châteaux owners know they have a special vintage on their hands, and they will probably price it accordingly—though we hope below the stratospheric 2005s. The world economy is not nearly as good as it was in 2006 when they released their 2005 prices.”

The Bordeaux châteaux owners know they have a special vintage on their hands, and they will probably price it accordingly—though we hope below the stratospheric 2005s. The world economy is not nearly as good as it was in 2006 when they released their 2005 prices. The US economy is still in shambles, as is the UK economy, as well as most of Europe and Russia. Japan will buy some wine, and China says they want futures this year, but there is a good amount of wine to sell. We think the First Growths will wait to release their opening prices until after VinExpo Hong Kong, and maybe not until mid-June. Maybe the Super Seconds will come in after that? Whenever they open, this promises to be a long and drawn-out futures campaign, not at all like last year. We would advise all those who can't afford the First Growths or the “Super Seconds” to look at the super second wines for 2009. Many, like the Les Forts de Latour and Alter Ego, are exceptional wines that could represent values during this campaign.

We have heard that the First Growths will sell in a series of tranches—releasing a small percentage of wine on the first and second tranche. While the First Growths will probably sell, we are most worried about the second-tier of wines. If the châteaux price their wines too high, there may be some big resistance. There are so many great wines that will sell for reasonable prices ($29-$79) that many people may opt to buy them instead of $200 Super Seconds. Let's all hope that many Bordeaux lovers will be able to purchase the wines they follow at reasonable prices. Then the Bordelaise will be happy with big profits, and the consumers will get a great buy from this fabulous vintage. What we do not need is another 2005 Bordeaux debacle! We lost many faithful Bordeaux clients when the prices came out so high, and many have not returned, even though 2008 Bordeaux were a relative bargain.

HOW THIS WORKS:
The wines on the following pages were tasted by the K&L team between March 27th and April 3rd, 2010. Tastings were conducted at the Joanne offices, the individual properties (e.g. Pichon-Baron, Ausone, Mouton-Rothschild), the regional UGC tastings, at various négociant offices, or at a combination of these. This report will be available in print on or around May 10, 2010.

Our Scoring System*
(*scores pertain to the 2009 vintage only)

½* to *½+ “Good” to “Very Good” to “Excellent” wine for the vintage.
** to *** “Outstanding” to “Classic” wine for the vintage.
V: Should be a Value, a “sleeper” of the vintage, if you will.

These wines have not yet been released to the public. This is a preview of the vintage put together by K&L to help you wrap your mind around all of the hype surrounding the 2009 Bordeaux. Some prices for the 2009s have already been announced, and more are coming in every day. Once prices are available, the wines will be offered through a futures campaign, with the majority of the wines arriving in our stores for shipping or pick up in 2011 or 2012. If you have any questions or are interested in ordering 2009 Bordeaux or any other wines, contact one of our knowledgeable salespeople at 877.KLWINES (877.559.4637) or visit our award-winning website: KLWines.com.

—K&L Wine Merchants

Clyde Beffa, K&L Co-Owner and Bordeaux Buyer
*(with help from Ralph Sands, Alex Pross, Trey Beffa and Jeff Garneau)*
2009 Bordeaux

WHITE WINES

GRAVES, PESSAC-LÉOGNAN & OTHER WHITE WINES

The dry white wines of 2009 are in the fatter style of the 2005s, with lower acidity. They are the complete opposite of the steely, citrus-flavored 2008s, which will need time in bottle to soften. These, on the other hand, will drink well early on. Both Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc did well in 2009.

Lynch Bages Blanc, Pauillac
White flowers and citric tones. Fairly rich, but in balance.

Château Carbonnieux Blanc, Pessac-Léognan
* Vibrant, round, elegant. Well done.

Château Haut-Brion Blanc, Pessac-Léognan
** Lovely wine and so expressive. The Sauvignon Blanc comes out and the texture is superb. This will be quite expensive.

Château La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc, Pessac-Léognan
½ This used to be Laville Haut-Brion. Toasty aromas and rich, figgy flavors. Fat and lush.

Château Latour-Martillac Blanc, Pessac-Léognan
* Fine richness and citric flavors. Good depth. Long on the palate.

Château Malartic-Lagravière Blanc, Pessac-Léognan
+ Clean, fresh Sauvignon Blanc aromas and flavors. Rich, lush undertones.

Château Pape-Clément Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

Domaine de Chevalier Blanc, Pessac-Léognan

RED

GRAVES & PESSAC-LÉOGNAN

The day we tasted these wines at the UGC, it was stormy and windy, with very low barometric pressure. Many of the wines shut down as a result, and they mostly tasted hard and tannic. We tasted many of them again later in the week where they showed very well—overall a very successful region in 2009.

Tasted at Château Haut-Brion
Château Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan
46% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. Hard to taste on this windy day; they showed much better when tasted again on Friday. Violets on the nose and quite minerally. Elegant style, but seems tannic at back. Alex: This wine was so layered, complex and powerful, with abundant dark fruits and an incredibly floral and seductive nose. Jeff: Exceptional concentration and length. Rich, dark fruit, sweet and ripe. Very fine tannins.

Château La Mission Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan
½+ Deep black fruit and meaty aromas, earthy flavors and a dry finish. Hard to taste on this blustery day. The Friday group loved the wine.

La Chapelle de La Mission, Pessac-Léognan
Licorice flavors with minerals underneath. Smooth, sweet and lively.

Le Clarence de Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan

Château Haut-Bailly, Pessac-Léognan
60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc. Absolutely charming wine, with a cashmere-like texture. Elegant aromas of toasted blackberry pie. Big tannins, but very smooth and masked by superb fruit. Lingering finish. Violets and plums. At UGC: Lots of minerals. Great entry. Alex: Super deep red cherry and a touch of cinnamon. Velvety smooth, with great concentration and structure. Ralph: Lively, bright and silky. Strong and elegant at the same time. Excellent.
Château Carbonnieux, Pessac-Léognan *+ Nice red fruit aromas. Good balance. Soft at back end. At UGC: The wine showed nice earthy red fruits and a long finish. On a roll here.

Château Haut-Bergey, Pessac-Léognan *½ 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% rest. Lush and round. Sweet and toasty. Lovely.


Château Malartic-Lagravière, Pessac-Léognan *½ More earth and plenty of extraction. Good mid-palate texture. Very nice. Good length. You can taste the soil. At UGC: Classic, with tons of mineral notes. Very rich and fresh. Alex: Big, bold, with great tannins. This wine sings with fruit and terroir. Ralph: Fresh, bright, natural mouthfeel. Tasty. I loved it!

Château Pape-Clément, Pessac-Léognan *½+ Red berry fruit. This is very rich on palate. Smooth and long. At UGC: New wave nose and flavors. Very sweet palate impression. Earthy finish. Ralph: Strong and masculine, with lots of coffee flavors. Overdone?


Château Mejean, Graves * Floral aromas. Old school flavors of boysenberry and some toasty oak.

Liber Pater, Graves *+ Incredible nose of toasty oak, Asian spice, clove and coffee. Layers of fruit, with a tannic backbone.

Domaine de L'A, Côtes de Castillon *+V Tons of fruit and chocolate flavors. Some whisky barrel.

Bord’Eaux “Merlot,” Bordeaux ½*V A delicious “bag-in-a-box” Merlot full of blackberry fruit. This will not be offered on a futures basis.

Château Grec-Laroque, Bordeaux Supérieur *+V Sweet, lush aromas of black fruits that follow to the palate. Nice!

Château Gigault “Cuvée Viva,” Côtes de Blaye *+V Black raspberry and toasted cherry aromas. A very sweet palate.


Château Mejan, Graves * Floral aromas. Old school flavors of boysenberry and some toasty oak.

Liber Pater, Graves *+ Incredible nose of toasty oak, Asian spice, clove and coffee. Layers of fruit, with a tannic backbone.

Château Reignac, Bordeaux Supérieur *+V? Very ripe and rich. Ultra-modern style that some will love or hate.

Château Bolaire, Bordeaux Supérieur *V Blackberry and coffee aromas with a splash of tobacco. Toasty, lively. Packed with sweet fruit.

Château de L’Estang, Côtes de Castillon ½*V Alex loves this wine. Raspberry aromas and flavors. Sadly they lost a lot of grapes in the hail storm.

Château d’Aiguilhe Querre, Côtes de Castillon *V This property is doing quite well. Only 1,000 cases produced. Excellent balance and depth of flavor. Could be a good value.

Domaine du Bouscat “La Gargone,” Bordeaux Supérieur *V Blackberries abound. Powerful wine, with tons of chocolate and cedar flavors. 20% Malbec here. The wine is fantastic, if a bit new wave.

Château Pétrus-Gaia, Bordeaux Supérieur *V Stephane Derenoncourt and his team consult here, and it shows. A vibrant, delicious wine. Fresh and lively, and in fine balance. Black fruit flavor and a long finish.

Château Arnauton, Fronsac *+V Should be a great buy. Packed with blackberry fruit, with hints of cedary oak. Lingering finish.

Château La Dauphine, Fronsac *V Old school winemaking here. This is a solid wine with a fine mid-palate. Long on the finish. These guys are making serious wines of late.

BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR, CÔTES DE FRANSAC, CÔTES DE CASTILLON, FRONASC & CÔTES DE BLAYE

This category covers a large swath of Bordeaux, with wines ranging from underripe to perfectly-balanced to overripe, with everything in between. There are some great bargains here, especially to buy when they arrive in the bottle. Some hail in the spring resulted in significantly reduced yields.


Château Croix-Mouton, Bordeaux Supérieur *V Very fruity and elegant. Some layers. Should be a good drinker.

HAUT-MÉDOC, MÉDOC, MOULIS & LISTRAC

If the châteaux owners in these regions waited to pick their grapes until they were phenolically ripe, the wines turned out well. If they picked too soon, the wines had a green edge on the palate.

**Château Beaumont, Haut-Médoc**

Spicy nose and sexy entry. Lovely middle. Good richness and length. Ralph: Elegant, fresh and honest.

**Château Bernadotte, Haut-Médoc**


**Château Camensac, Haut-Médoc**


**Château Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc**

Sweet fruit and forward on the palate. Better at property where it showed a blackish color and bright red currant fruit flavors. Super-rounded tannins engulfed by superb fruit. Long and lovely. Ralph: ** Outstanding! Expressive, juicy, grapey wine, with hints of raspberry, cassis and passion fruit. Best value of the vintage!

**Château Caronne Ste-Gemme, Haut-Médoc**

Solid wine. Well made and a value, with blackberry flavors and a sweet palate impression.

**Clos Manou, Médoc**

56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% (very ripe ) Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot. The vineyard’s northern location shines through here. Very nice richness and texture.

**Château Coufran, Haut-Médoc**

Ripe and soft on the palate. Full-flavored with a lush finish. Value.

**Château La Tour Carnet, Haut-Médoc**

Woody on nose, with raspberry and sandalwood flavors. Fine middle.

**Château Latour de By, Médoc**

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. An outstanding wine from a well-situated property north of St-Estèphe, overlooking the Gironde. Very elegant, with exceptional finesse and depth. Should age well. Superb value and a must-buy for 2009.

**Château Lamothe Bergeron, Haut-Médoc**

Hubert de Bouard is consulting here now, and it shows. Smoky, toasty aromas and flavors. A semi-new wave wine for this old school property. Lush mid-palate and toasty finish. Clyde loves it.

**Château de Gironville, Haut-Médoc**

50% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Petit Verdot. From a property near the Golf du Médoc in the Le Pian de Médoc. Black color, tarry nose, with tons of black fruit flavors. Superb length on the palate. This will be a fabulous value.

**Château Potensac, Médoc**

More structure than usual from this château. At property: Good core of fruit, but harsh.

Château La Lagune, Haut-Médoc

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 15% Petit Verdot. The high proportion of Petit Verdot really lifts this wine. Tons of black licorice on the nose and palate. Lush wine, but it has good grip. Fresh and vibrant. Jeff: Deeply colored, aromatic, floral and spicy. Loads of dark, sweet fruit. Unbelievably bright and fresh. A superb effort.

Château Chasse Spleen, Moulis

More blackberry aromas and flavors. Fine structure. This is a big wine, with great depth of flavor. Ralph: Spicy cherry, linear.

Château Poujeaux, Moulis

Lovely texture and length—a delicious wine, as usual. Ralph: ** Good firm sweet fruit, with fine balance. A great value!

Château Malmaison, Moulis

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. Lots of blackberry and spice. A jammy style. Value.

Château Clarke, Listrac

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Toasty new oak aromas and flavors. Quite rich and more modern in style. Nice length and depth. These guys are doing well. Ralph: Big solid fruit; long and serious.

MARGAUX

We were worried about the lighter soils of this large region being a problem as far as moisture for the vines. Surprisingly, we found some of the nicest wines of the 2009 vintage right here. Some late rains helped a lot, but hail damage from the spring storms lowered yields at some properties.

**Château Palmer, Margaux**

This is a big wine, with laser-like focus and mineral undertones. Tons of blueberry flavors. Super-concentrated, but elegant at the same time. Lingering finish. Will it be affordable?

**Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux**

51% Merlot, 49% Cabernet Sauvignon. Black currant and blueberry aromas lead to mineral flavors, with black fruit overtones. Fresh, vibrant and lively wine. Alex: Top value. Black currant and boysenberry fruit, with tons of integrated tannins and oak. Trey: Exotic nose, with sweet crushed berry fruit, hints of licorice and a ripe, fresh finish. Ralph: ** Deep wine with super-attractive blackberry-grapey fruit, lovely texture and no hard edges. Mind-blowingly good wine!

**Clos des Quatre Vents, Margaux**

This Thiépont wine really sings in 2009. Super-rich and concentrated. Fantastic richness and freshness on the palate. Great sweet finish.

**Château Brane-Cantenac, Margaux**

Superb aromas of red fruits and a lush mouthfeel. Cherry cola. At UGC: Great aromas of black cherry and fine texture on the palate. Ralph: The epitome of elegance! Lovely cherry-raspberry fruit and a great mouthfeel. Superbly balanced. I love it!
Château Cantenac Brown, Margaux  
A minty wine with notes of whisky and chocolate. At UGC: Strong oaky aromas and some whisky barrel nuances. Big wine. Hard to evaluate?

Château d’Angludet, Margaux  
55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 10% Petit Verdot. Again, the Petit Verdot shines here in 2009. Black licorice nose and flavors. An intense, mouthcoating wine with precise tannins and superb concentration. Long and lush. Fabulous value! These guys are on a roll. Thanks Ben, James and Charles.

Château Dauzac, Margaux  

Château d’Issan, Margaux  
A very elegant wine, with forward fruit flavors. Well made. Ralph: Soft, elegant, easy-drinking wine.

Château du Tertre, Margaux  

Château Durfort-Vivens, Margaux  
Lavender and rose aromas and an elegant entry. Good structure. At UGC: Perfumey nose of black licorice and spice. Lush and long on the palate. Very well made. One of their best to date. Love their old style label. Ralph: Attractive grapey fruit. The best I’ve had from them.

Château Ferriere, Margaux  
At UGC: Boysenberry aromas and some violets on the palate. Good now with some air. Ralph: Attractive grapey fruit. The best I’ve had from them.

Château Giscours, Margaux  
At UGC: Subdued nose, but fine structure on the palate. Very rounded tannins and a good finish. Reserved right now. Will need some time. Ralph: Masculine and firm, though a bit tight?

Château Labegorce, Margaux  
Rustic style. Old school. At UGC: Earthy aromas and gritty tannins.

Château Lascombes, Margaux  
50% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot. At UGC: Toned down compared to previous vintages, with more fruit and less oak. Fine mid-palate. Blackberry flavors. This is in balance this year, and the 100% new oak does not show. Ralph: Super-ripe and very soft. An early drinker.

Château Malescot-St-Exupéry, Margaux  
55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot. Intriguing nose of toasty oak and spice; this wine has it all. Heavenly flavors. Bright and super-fresh. Perfect balance. At UGC: Well-near perfect, and the best at the tasting. Jean Luc Zuger has a star of the vintage. BUY IT! Alex: Wow! Seductive and rich on the nose, with blackberry liqueur and rich oak. Layered, with immense depth and power. The greatest Malescot ever produced. Trey: Another exotic wine, with loads of minerals, blackberries and a fleshy mouthfeel. Jeff: Richly textured. Full-bodied. Damn sexy wine.

Château Marquis de Terme, Margaux  
At UGC: Their best in a long time, perhaps ever? Super-ripe and sexy, with tons of everything, and a silky finish. Not shy on alcohol.

Château Marquis d’Alesme-Becker, Margaux  
Super sexy entry—soft and elegant. Clyde likes it. Ralph: Dark purple fruit. Rich, full and long. By far the best I’ve ever tasted from this estate!
Château Pouget, Margaux
*½V?
We haven’t ever carried the wines from this small property, but their 2009 sings. Sweet black raspberry aromas and flavors. A bit new wave, but in fine balance. Easy to drink now.

Château Prieuré-Lichine, Margaux
*+
Very ripe red fruit flavors. Mid-palate? At UGC: Our bottle was not showing well. Ralph: A ripe, soft, easy Margaux to drink young.

Château Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux
**
A huge wine, with tons of fruit and spice. Very fine. Ralph: ** Effusive, with a perfumey nose and cool dark fruit. Elegant and flashy.

Château Desmirail, Margaux
Forward fruit, and a soft palate impression. Easy-drinking.

Château Rauzan-Gassies, Margaux
*?
Deep color. A tight wine, with pomegranate undertones. Quite nice for the estate.

Château Siran, Margaux
*+V
46% Merlot, 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc. Lovely aromas of licorice and blackberry fruit. So sweet and elegant, but well-structured. Super satiny-like tannins. Best ever! Edouard Miallhe has a winner. Jeff: A standout at the UGC tasting. All the elements are here. Beautifully balanced. A complete wine.

Château Tour de Mons, Margaux
*V
Tons of fruit. A good length. Some chocolate and black fruit. Ralph: Elegant blue fruit; one of the great values in Margaux wine.

ST-JULIEN

The very solid St-Julien region turned out some exceptional wines, and some exceptionally good value wines (at least we hope they’re priced as such). The Léovilles and Ducru are on a high plateau, and their neighbors have also done quite well.

Château Beychevelle, St-Julien
*+
Soft wine, with a dry finish. At UGC: Perfumey nose and an elegant mouthfeel. Sweet and lovely. Can enjoy it now. Ralph: Fresh, elegant blueberry fruit, with good minerality.

Château Branaire-Ducru, St-Julien
*½

Tasted at Ducru-Beaucaillou

Château Ducru Beaucaillou, St-Julien
***½
Intriguing, exotic nose of Asian spices mixed with toasty oak. A very sensual wine, but so different from the Ducrus of past great vintages. Satin-textured with a lingering finish. Trey: Super-long, with great depth, a plush middle and a ripe, spicy finish. The tannins were fine and well-integrated.

Croix de Beaucaillou, St-Julien
*+V
Lovely wine. Ripe tannins and earthy nuances on the palate.

Château Lalande Borie, St-Julien
*V
Blueberry aromas and flavors. Sweet and lush.

Château Gruaud Larose, St-Julien
*+

Château Gloria, St-Julien
½*
More gritty and smoky, with integrated tannins. Quite nice.

Château Lagrange, St-Julien
*½V
Super sweet and lush. Lots of well-integrated oak. At UGC: Great oaky aromas and flavors. Sweet, sexy, spicy. Alex: Pretty nose, with tons of fruit. This wine smells wonderful and the fruit is omnipresent. Ralph: Very pure. High tone raspberry fruit. This is gentle, sweet and elegant. Jeff: Superb presence and mouthfeel. Full-bodied and ripe. Fine tannins.

Château Langoa-Barton, St-Julien
*½+
At property: Red berry-cherry aromas and flavors. Plenty of grip. At UGC: Cranberry and cherry cola aromas and flavors. Super sweet mid-palate impression, with rounded tannins and a lingering finish.
Château Léoville-Barton, St-Julien **
Closed at first. Big and brooding. Age it. At UGC: Red berry aromas and flavors. A big wine here with a tannic edge; it should age well for many years. At property: Huge wine that's closed and unyielding. Seems to have all the right elements, but hard to taste here. Ralph: Deep, grapey, masculine wine. It was really good the second time we tasted it.

Château Léoville-Poyferré, St-Julien **
Good entry, but dry at the back end. Was it the sample? At UGC: Didier Cuvelier has a winner again. A lush wine that is sweet, sexy and full of silky undertones. Excellent intensity and depth. Ralph: Deep red cherry fruit, sweet, with fine balance. Far better the second time we tasted it.

Château Léoville-Las Cases, St-Julien **½+
Sexy wine. Red currant flavors. Power and elegance together. Tons of lush, decadent fruit. Alex: Easily a candidate for wine of the vintage; this wine is huge, but so smooth. Its deceptive power almost goes by unnoticed. Trey: This was one of the most concentrated wines of the trip, though it shows fantastic finesse, balance and freshness. Ralph: All of the above, with a powerful strike on the palate and great freshness!

Clos du Marquis, St-Julien *½+V
Great entry. Plummy aromas and flavors. Superb length. Alex: This wine was drop-dead gorgeous! A stunning wine with such purity of fruit and depth it left me speechless. Ralph: Deep blood red, with thick mid-palate fruit. It will be one of the great values of the vintage! Jeff: Elegant and intriguing. 2009 is the “vintage of the second wine.” This is easily one of the best.

Château Saint-Pierre, St-Julien *+
More power. Nice flavors. Hot on the palate. At UGC: A big wine that is holding back now, but with tremendous potential. Ralph: Deep, tasty dark purple fruit; a touch rustic but long on the finish.

Château Talbot, St-Julien ½*
Nice entry and good fruit. At UGC: Cherry fruit. Elegant style. Very forward and sweet.

PAUILLAC

The five of us thought that Pauillac turned out some of the best wines in 2009. Heck, some of the most famous châteaux in Bordeaux are in Pauillac, and we’re not even counting the three First Growths.

Château Croizet-Bages, Pauillac ½*V
Decent flavor, but the nose appears to be holding back. Quite nice. Ralph: Deep fruit, a bit rustic, but the best I’ve ever had from Croizet!

Château Grand-Puy-Ducasse, Pauillac
Tough and tannic. Was it the sample?

Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Pauillac *½
Good length and depth—superb.

Château Haut-Bages Libéral, Pauillac *V
At UGC: A very ripe wine, with mint and orange zest undertones. Exotic to a point. Samples were variable.

Château Duhart-Milon, Pauillac ½*+
Red bell pepper aromas with toasted oak nuances. Fine texture and nice spice on the finish.

Carruades de Lafite, Pauillac *
Ripe blackberry aromas and flavors. Will be expensive. (Most of this goes to China.)

Château Latour, Pauillac ***
91% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep, brooding and super-concentrated on the nose. Packed with ripe fruit, which conceals the high tannin content. So fresh, it seems very high in acid. Long, long, lingering finish. Seems more forward than most Latours of late. Alex: Black walnut, dark cherry kirsch and lush, beautiful tannins. Reminiscent of the 2000, but a bit more approachable. Ralph: Dense, thick but not heavy. Dark chocolate and pomegranate notes. Flesher than the 2005.
Château Haut-Batailley, Pauillac ½*
Red fruit flavors. A nice texture and good length.

Château Lafite-Rothschild, Pauillac **½+
Blackish color. A touch closed on the nose. Layers of fruit on the palate. Black cherry, mouthcoating wine. Opens with air. Should be great, but very expensive. Ralph: The grapey black-crimson fruit is a bit rounder than usual, and with a bit more silkiness. Still very precise and focused, with just the right amount of tannin. A classic!

Les Forts de Latour, Pauillac **+
Big and rich. Great balance and lots of depth. At the property: Pepper and spice and everything nice. Lively, fresh and vibrant. An excellent second wine. Ralph: Great second wine with charged up dark raspberry and sweet Bing cherry fruit. Zesty and fresh.

Château Lynch-Moussas, Pauillac *
Nice sweetness and cranberry flavors. Vibrant. Alex loved it. Ralph: Best I’ve ever tasted from this property.

Château Lynch Bages, Pauillac **
At UGC: Big and brooding, with tons of ripe tannins, blackberry fruit and fine acidity. Very dense. At property: Pencil lead and cedar aromas. Very spicy.

Château Pedesclaux, Pauillac *½+
Big wine, with lots of lead pencil and a good finish. Tons of chocolate, spice and flowers on the nose. Packed with loads of ripe black fruits and a freshness never achieved by this property. Bravo, if price is reasonable.

Château Pichon-Baron, Pauillac **
Powerful and very rich—quite nice. Tons of evolved fruit. At UGC: Great body and sweetness on palate. So pure. At property: Red currant aromas, with fine texture and mouthfeel. Seamless and silky. Fine depth. Ralph: Very serious, deep and lively, with sweet fruit and classic structure. Will be one of the longest lived ’09s.

Tasted at Mouton-Rothschild

Château Mouton-Rothschild, Pauillac ***
88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot. Great, perfumey aromas of cassis and currants mixed with tobacco and cedar wood. Super-concentrated wine, with a finish that lasts a minute or more. Alex: The “iron fist in a velvet glove” analogy strikes again. Ralph: Spicy and lively black fruit with an elegant and very long finish.

Château Clerc Milon, Pauillac *½+
Black fruit. A great middle, with lots of pure fruit. This wine really sings. Lush and sweet, with tons of blackberry fruit.

Château d’Armailhac, Pauillac *+ Light red fruit. Good length. At UGC: Very sweet aromas of cherry and good palate impression. At the property: A touch of whisky barrel? Ralph: Very nice; a fine value.

Château Pibran, Pauillac ½*V
Nice blackberry aromas and a fine palate with round tannins. Well made.

Château Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac ** 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. A more masculine style of Pichon, but with great aromas of cedar and cassis. Tons of ripe fruit and a very sweet middle. Great texture. On the bigger side for Pichon. Ralph: Elegant. Great freshness with sweet middle fruit. Tasty even now!

ST-ESTÈPHE

St-Estèphe’s heavier clay soils nourished the vines throughout the dry summer. There were three fabulous wines from here in 2008, and many great values such as those from Meyney, Ormes de Pez, Phélan-Ségur and Lilian Ladouys.

Tasted at Cos d’Estournel

Château Cos d’Estournel, St-Estèphe **½

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc. Ripe red currant aromas from the first bottle. The second bottle was much better, with fabulous, rich aromas and tons of super-concentrated red berry flavors. A huge wine, with plenty of alcohol, but balanced and long.

Pagodes de Cos, St-Estèphe *½V

Huge blackberry fruit and plenty of extract. Lush. This could be an excellent value.

Château Goulée, Haut-Médoc ½*

80% Cabernet Sauvignon. Another Cos property. Bready nose and plenty of red berry fruit flavors. Quite elegant for the property.

Château Calon-Ségur, St-Estèphe **+

90% Cabernet Sauvignon. Great wine. Superb balance. Fabulous. Jammy nose of sweet black cherry. Thick texture and layers on the palate. Sweet red licorice flavors. Sexy, elegant wine. Delicious. Alex: This wine is gorgeous, with incredible, complex red fruits that feel almost Burgundian in style. Such delineation! Ralph: I agree. This is their best since 1995. When Calon is good, it’s really good.

Château Le Crock, St-Estèphe *V

A blast from the past now under the watch of Didier Cuvelier (of Poyferré fame). A big, powerful wine, brooding and complete under its veil of tannin. Best ever from them. Should be great buy!

Château Lilian Ladouys, St-Estèphe *½V

Remember this property from 1990 and 1989? Well, it is back and fit as a fiddle. Red raspberry and black cherry aromas and flavors. Long and lingering on the palate. Great value! If you can find it.

Château Montrose, St-Estèphe ***

Great concentration and power—excellent. This is a new style of Montrose that’s more user friendly, but still big and deep. Super-concentrated, with ripe, silky tannins. Alex: Gigantic. Bursting at the seams with fruit, along with rich oak and tannins. The wine still manages to be remarkably balanced. Ralph: Deep ripe Bing cherry fruit, an excellent middle and a powerful finish. This will be a classic!

Château Lafon-Rochet, St-Estèphe ½*

Ralph and Alex found this wine to be finely made, with plenty of fruit and good balance.

Château Meyney, St-Estèphe *½V

Nice richness and power. A very spectacular value. This property is making great value wines these days.

Château Les Ormes de Pez, St-Estèphe *½V

At UGC: Chunky, but with very sweet black fruit aromas and flavors. Fine balance and long on the palate. Their best? At property: Intense spicy blackberry aromas. Round, rather soft tannins hidden by fruit.

Château Tronquoy-Lalande, St-Estèphe ½*V

Black fruit and licorice. This wine demonstrates great complexity and length. Terrific value!

Château Phélan-Ségur, St-Estèphe *½V


ST-EMILION

As usual this region, with its thousands of small properties, had some stars and some less than stellar wines in 2009. If the Merlot was left to ripen too long, the wines showed “Jack Daniels” or “whisky barrel” characteristics caused by overripe grapes that produced wines with too much alcohol and not enough acidity, combined with too much new oak. Cabernet Franc was the star here. Hail hit some of the properties and lowered yields. We did not taste Cheval Blanc.

Wines From the Team at Château Ausone

Château Ausone, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé ***

55% Cabernet Franc, 45% Merlot. 16,000 bottles produced. An incredible nose dominated by Cabernet Franc spice, clove and toasty blackberries. Silky, satin texture, like actual cashmere. Heavenly wine, with layers of fruit. Alex: Blackberries, subtle spice and a hint of herb. This wine demonstrates gorgeous, bright red fruits. Ralph: Sweet, perfect fruit; lovely, silky mouthfeel. Everything in perfect balance. Will be legendary.

Chapelle de Ausone, St-Emilion Grand Cru **

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc. Can’t afford Ausone? Try this. Lush and sweet, with great density and length. Chocolate and spice and all that is nice.

Château Moulin St-Georges, St-Emilion Grand Cru *+

Sweet and lovely wine. Allspice and some licorice.

Château Fonbel, St-Emilion Grand Cru *V

Black licorice and fine depth of flavor. Good value property.

Château Angélus, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé **+

A big, sweet wine. Long and lingering. Super. Everything is together here, with lots of black fruits and toasted oak. Ralph: A big sweetie. Exotic fruit; powerfull and serious!

Château Beauséjour, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé *+

Fat, sweet and lush wine. They are back to 1990 standards.
Clos Saint-Julien, St-Emilion Grand Cru *+ 60% Cabernet Franc (40-year-old vines), 40% Merlot (80-year-old vines) Impressive wine. Chocolate and mint aromas and flavors. Semi-new wave, but well-balanced.


Château Figeac, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé ** 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot. At UGC: Outstanding wine, with red fruit aromas and hints of chocolate and plum. Much different than most of its neighbors because of high Cabernet Sauvignon content. Powerful finish, but perfect balance. Ralph: Nice sweet fruit amid all the usual structure. Very good.

Château La Gaffelière, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé *+ At UGC: Sweet and lovely wine, quite ripe but in fine balance. Some red currant and black fruit undertones. Ralph: Elegant red fruit. Terroir-driven, not the fruitball style. Very good.

Clos Fourtet, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé ** Super-balanced wine. Wonderful! At UGC: Fine rich texture, silky, with layers of fruit. Elegant! Ralph: Loved it every time we tasted it. Sweet, silky dark purple fruit.

Château Pavie, St-Emilion 1er Grand Cru Classé ** Big wine. Super balance. Very exciting and in control. Extracted but in such harmony, with so much ripe fruit, high alcohol and round tannins.

Château Beau-Séjour Bécot, St-Emilion 1er Cru Grand Cru Classé At UGC: Sweet and very ripe, with an almost whisky barrel aspect.


Château Larcis Ducasse, St-Emilion Grand Cru **+ At UGC: Fabulous wine. Silky texture. Elegant and sweet, with great depth and length. Only a few thousand cases made to share with the world. Ralph: Excellent, elegant and very tasty!

Château La Dominique, St-Emilion Grand Cru Classé *+V At UGC: Boysenberry nose and flavor. Some dark chocolate nuances. Could be a value.


Château Pavie Macquin, St-Emilion Grand Cru **½+ 80% Merlot, 18% Cabernet Franc, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon. At UGC: One of the stars of the vintage! Ripe blackberry aromas. Jammy, super-layered wine, with tons of round tannins, fine acidity and a fabulous, lingering finish. Stunning wine. Their best ever! I will buy this. Will age well and tastes great now. Ralph: Natural, honest and elegant, with good focus.

Château Troplong Mondot, St-Emilion Grand Cru **½+ At UGC: Only 10,000 cases of this elixir made. One of best of the vintage. Black color. Lush chocolate aromas and flavors. Fabulous texture, like cashmere on the palate. Elegant and powerful at once. Alex: Super-silky and so seductive. Exotic and rich. Fantastic! Ralph: One of the greatest wines of the vintage!

Clos Saint Martin, St-Emilion Grand Cru *½+ Precise wine with super length and depth.

Château Pavie Dècesse, St-Emilion Grand Cru ** Lush chocolate nose and palate. Quite good. One of our samples of this wine was bad.

Château d’Aiguilhe, Côtes de Castillon *+V Impressive blend of 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. At the property: Outstanding wine. Clean as a whistle. Quite pure, with fine concentration and forward fruit flavors. So easy to drink. Ralph: Super-sweet with a little grip; lovely.

Château Canon-La Gaffelière, St-Emilion Grand Cru *½+ 55% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Fine structure, with great mid-palate impression. Very round tannins and a long finish. Solid.

Clos de L’Oratoire, St-Emilion Grand Cru *+ 90% Merlot from 20hl/ha vines. Plum and black cherry aromas. Easy-drinking. Nice middle.

Château La Mondotte, St-Emilion Grand Cru ** 80% Merlot from 17hl/ha vines. A super sexy and hedonistic wine. Long and concentrated. Will it be affordable?


Château Barde-Haut, St-Emilion Grand Cru *½ Ripe blackberry fruit. Super fine. Lost 50% of their crop to hail.

Château Bellevue Mondotte, St-Emilion Grand Cru Over the top with a bit of that whisky barrel aroma.

Château Bellevue, St-Emilion Grand Cru Owned by Angélus now. Great terroir. The wine is semi-old school, with fine acid balance, though a bit dry at the end.

Clos la Madeleine, St-Emilion Grand Cru *+V Hubert de Boüard’s hand is evident here. Sexy, toasty Asian spice aromas, and some blueberry fruit flavors. Great mouthfeel. Lovely.

Château Fleur Cardinale, St-Emilion Grand Cru *½+ Black fruit aromas. Spicy, sexy, lively wine. Could be a great value!


Château La Confession, St-Emilion Grand Cru * Restrained wine with a nice mid-palate.


Château Franc Mayne, St-Emilion Grand Cru ½* A lot of cherry aromas and flavors. Quite ripe and forward. Feminine.

Château La Couspoud, St-Emilion Grand Cru A powerful wine that was quite over the top. Sample?

Château La Tour Figeac, St-Emilion Grand Cru ½* Soft and easy to taste. Nice texture.

Château Larmande, St-Emilion Grand Cru *V Easy drinker. Superb texture. Lovely to drink young.

Château La Fleur Morange, St-Emilion Grand Cru *½+ Spicy aromas, with tons of clove on the nose. Asian spice flavors and black fruit on the finish. Clyde loves this wine.

Château Quinault L’Enclos, St-Emilion Grand Cru * Spicy wine, with Asian spices. A good effort.

Château Soleil, St-Emilion Grand Cru *V 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. Clyde loves this. Toasty, meaty aromas. A delicious, fruit-forward bargain.
POMEROL/LALANDE DE POMEROL

These were some of the most successful regions in Bordeaux in 2009. The heavy clay soils really held the moisture to nurture the Merlot vines, while the Cabernet Franc got perfectly ripe in most places. We did not taste L'Evangile or Vieux-Château-Certan. The question remains: Will these wines be affordable?

Château Clinet, Pomerol *
Black fruits and a fine palate entry. Lush and lovely wine. This property is back after a few years of problems.

Clos L'Eglise, Pomerol *½+
Some chocolate and black cherry aromas and flavors. While they use 100% new oak, it does not show through all the great fruit. Ralph: Very big, dark wine, with super-sweet, exotic fruit. Firm finish.

Château Feytit-Clinet, Pomerol *+V
I bought eight cases of Feytit-Clinet's 1970 vintage for $4 per bottle. The '09 price will be higher, but so is the quality. Should be a great value. Chocolate aromas. Seamless, with a black licorice finish. Pure Pomerol.

Château Gazin, Pomerol *½
90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Cabernet Franc. Fine blackberry aromas and flavors. A lush and lingering finish. Bright and lively. Always a solid wine.

Château Hosanna, Pomerol **
Sexy wine, with Asian spice aromas. Tons of fruit, tannin and alcohol.

Château La Conseillante, Pomerol *½
Great red fruit aromas and flavors. Superb length. Sweet and sexy. Big bottle variation here.

Château La Croix St-Georges, Pomerol **
Tons of sweet fruit. A fabulous value. Long and lingering.

Château La Pointe, Pomerol *++V

Château Lafleur, Pomerol **½+
47% Merlot, 53% Cabernet Franc. 10,000 bottles produced. The Cabernet Franc shines through here, but the wine is huge and brooding at the moment. We know it has everything, and it will age magnificently. Super long, lingering finish.

Pensées de Lafleur, Pomerol *½
50% Merlot, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon. Not a second wine. From the same part of the vineyard every year. Only 5,000 bottles produced. Lush, lovely and balanced.

Château La Fleur-Pétrus, Pomerol *½
A great spicy nose and palate impression. This is quite racy, with fine depth of flavor.

Château Latour à Pomerol, Pomerol *½
Sweet blueberry aromas. Lush, long and lovely. Small production.

Château Le Gay, Pomerol **+
Outstanding terroir and winemaking. Intense blueberry and blackberry aromas follow to the palate. Super-delicious, with a one-minute-long finish. Ralph: Super-sweet. Loaded with dark cherry fruit and lovely tannins. Superb!

Château La Violette, Pomerol **½+
Only 5,000 bottles of this elixir made from 20hl/ha production, picked berry by berry. Staggering wine. Alex: Sexy. Beautiful nose, with pomegranate and floral notes, as well as violet and lavender accents. Dark cherry fruit. This wine is right up there with Pétrus and Trotanoy as far as the best wines coming from Pomerol.

Château Montviel, Pomerol *+V
80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc. A spicy wine that's quite focused and linear. It could be a value.

Château Nenin, Pomerol **
Tons of ripe fruit. Lush on the palate. Black raspberry jam and chocolate. Alex: One of my Top 10. This wine has amazingly pure fruit. Delicate and complex. Ralph: Exactly right. The best I've ever had from here.

Château Pétrus, Pomerol ***
So good words can't begin to describe it, but we'll try. Seamless. Cashmere. Alex: A substance softer and more plush than velvet. Deep rich chocolate, perfectly integrated oak, with some of the finest tannins I have ever tasted in a young wine. Ralph: Perfect. I don't know how it could be any better.

Château Petit-Village, Pomerol *½
17% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, 75% Merlot. Big and powerful. Nice. Quite good. Jammy, with sexy upfront fruit. Lush and lovely. Ralph: Big, sweet boysenberry fruit. A mouthwatering wine, with fine tannin integration and some power. By far the best Petit-Village I've ever tasted. Outstanding!

Château Rouget, Pomerol Very sweet and a good length. Fat and sweet.

Château Trotanoy, Pomerol **½+
A huge wine full of tannins that are smooth but evident. This will take a long time to come around. Alex: Wow! I tasted this at Jean-Pierre Moueix, and this wine absolutely blew away every other St-Emilion and Pomerol in the room. Ralph: A perfectly balanced wine, with delicious deep raspberry fruit and long finish. Outstanding.

Château La Fleur de Boüard, Lalande de Pomerol *

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Left: The vineyards at Château Lafleur. Right: The K&L team with Baptiste Guinaudeau (back center), son of Château Lafleur owners Jacques and Sylvie Guinaudeau at Lafleur.
SAUTERNES

Another great vintage for Sauternes! So what's new? There have been so many good-to-great vintages over the last 10 years. Much of the crop was picked in one week at the end of September/early October. Fine acidity balances the very ripe, sweet fruit flavors. More like 2001 and 1989 than 2005 and 2003. The question is: Will they sell with so much sweet wine on the market and declining sales in the category? A big crop here, so prices must be reasonable. We did not taste d’Yquem or Rieussec.

Château Coutet, Sauternes
Great upfront lemon notes. Tart. Ralph: Lovely lemon tart flavors!

Latour Blanche, Sauternes
Intriguing nose. Great balance. Superb wine. Ralph: Zesty and fresh, with tingling acidity!

Château de Fargues, Sauternes

Château de Myrat, Sauternes

Château Doisy-Daëne, Sauternes

Château Doisy-Védruines, Sauternes
Fabulous acidity. This displays less sweetness than the Daëne. Focused. Ralph: Elegant, with lemon-honey notes.

Château Filhot, Sauternes

Château Guiraud, Sauternes

Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Sauternes
Great flavors of pineapple and citrus. Fine acidity here.

Château Suduiraut, Sauternes

“2009 was another great vintage for Sauternes...A big crop here, so prices must be reasonable.”