

2012 Bordeaux Vintage Report



2012 BORDEAUX VINTAGE REPORT FEATURES

- 1 Clyde Beffa Jr. Reviews the 2012 Bordeaux Vintage
- 2 Ralph Reports Back from Bordeaux
- 6 Trey's 2012 Bordeaux Picks

2012 Bordeaux: The Value Vintage

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

At last! Here's the report every Bordeaux lover has been waiting for. Usually this report is published in May (except for the 2008 report, which was out in July), so I apologize for its (*my*) tardiness. Heck, they're picking the last of the 2013 vintage right now, but better late than never.

K&L's Ralph Sands was our lone taster in April at the annual UGC *En Primeur* tastings. He went along with Bill Blatch, who is the best and most honest Bordeaux taster on earth. Together they met the right people and tasted a ton of wines during the week. Ralph also went back again in May to re-taste the wines on his 2013 Bordeaux tour. Ralph's notes will be on pages 2-5. Trey and I went to VinExpo in mid-June, and we were able to attend the Expo UGC tasting then. We also met with many important *négociants* and spent a day tasting at a few select properties. Trey will give you his views on the vintage on page 6. My thoughts and notes regarding this very underrated vintage are here and on pages 7 and 8.

Not every Bordeaux vintage has weather conditions that mirror those of 1982 or 2009—those were exceptional weather vintages in maritime Bordeaux. If there are no problems with the weather, then everyone can make a very good to great wine, depending on the terroir of the property and the expertise of the vineyard manager and winemaker. (If someone didn't make a good wine in '82 or '09 they probably should find another line of work.) Even the properties that make two Euro wines had a good chance to make something special in these years since they did not have to spend any money (of which they have little) on vineyard management and disease treatment.

In 2012, however, the weather was normal—meaning not great—and therefore the vines certainly had their share of problems. Ralph wrote in his vintage report that in 2012 “cold and wet conditions delayed bud break. Uneven flowering spread out for weeks, pushing things almost a month behind schedule. Cool and wet conditions continued, causing worry of mildew.” On July 15th, the weather changed dramatically and sunny conditions persisted through the end of September. “Harvest was late everywhere,” Ralph continued. “Most of the Merlot was harvested at good ripeness and under mostly nice conditions, but a lot of the Cabernet Sauvignon on the Left Bank was picked in the rains of mid-October.” Perhaps 2012 was a bit kinder to the Merlot-based wines because of these late rains. Nevertheless, there were good wines made from all regions of Bordeaux. Ralph will go a bit more into the vintage characteristics as he spent much more time at the properties and in the vineyards than Trey and I did.

We have argued over the years (to no avail) that tasting these young wines in early April is crazy—and some critics and buyers now go in mid-March to be the first to sample the new vintage. But these wines are much too young to evaluate during March and April. In my opinion, the tastings should not be done before May, and I think the wines are even easier to taste in June. By then the young wines have settled down, and it is easier to get a handle on them.

The 2012s are much less expensive than 2009 and 2010, and lower priced even than the 2011s. Some are priced at 2008 levels, and the 2012 vintage is much better than 2008.

(Continued on page 7)



On cover: A horse-drawn plow at Pontet-Canet. Above: Ralph's tasting group at Château Palmer.



Ralph, exhausted after marathon tastings.

2012 Bordeaux: A Fine Right Bank Vintage

By Ralph Sands

My trip to Bordeaux for the *En Primeur* tastings back in April marked my 44th visit to the region and my 23rd vintage evaluation.

After tasting more than 1,000 wines I believe I've wrapped my mind around 2012 pretty well; I understand the style of the vintage and have identified the best wines.

As always, the weather makes the wine. In 2012, the weather was normal, which means very difficult! Near-perfect vintages like 2005 and 2009 are very rare. There are a variety of problems that can occur during the growing season, and both 2011 and 2012 certainly had their share, though the issues affected the vintages differently. In 2011 a warm spring and early bud break led to early and uneven flowering; the weather was a mixed bag from May to June, but mostly cold and wet. The summer was overcast and very cool. The vintage was saved by a warm/hot September and an early harvest ensued.

In 2012 the opposite occurred. Cold and wet conditions delayed bud break. Uneven flowering spread out for weeks, pushing things almost a month behind schedule. Cool and wet conditions continued, causing worry of mildew. On July 15th (on the dot!) it suddenly became very sunny and very warm. These conditions continued through August and September, causing some stress in some plots and continued uneven ripening. Harvest was late everywhere. Most of the Merlot was harvested at good ripeness and under mostly nice conditions, but a lot of the Cabernet Sauvignon on the Left Bank was picked in the rains of mid-October. The rain, and the fact that some Cabernet Sauvignon did not completely ripen by harvest, keeps the 2012 vintage out of the "very good" category. These conditions also resulted in a small crop overall, with most estates making about half the wine the usually do.

It is common to refer to a Bordeaux vintage as either a Cabernet Sauvignon vintage or a Merlot vintage, and 2012 is definitely a Merlot vintage, one where the clay soils of the Right Bank produced better fruit. The Right Bank commune of Pomerol made fantastic wines across the board, while quality was very good and consistent in

St-Emilion. Wines from Pessac-Léognan and the Médoc were very uneven, with many showing aggressive dryness and green notes on the finish. That being said, there were some fine successes in 2012 from the Left Bank that do not have those green and drying notes.

I returned to Bordeaux in late May, and I am happy to report (though not surprised) that the Left Bank Cabernet blends showed much better with extra time to develop. The overall lateness of the harvest meant everything else was late—from fermentations to barreling—meaning that the wines we tasted at *En Primeur* had a month less than usual to develop before we tasted them in early April. That, coupled with the cold weather while we tasted, made for raw wines. Six weeks later the wines showed fewer raw elements and more flesh, focus and charm. There are definitely some very nice wines and some fine values.

On my second visit I found that 2012 produced riper wines than the previous vintage, with a darker core of fruit and more flesh, so I prefer 2012 to 2011. Where does 2012 fit in comparison to other vintages? Well, while it is not in the same league as great vintages like 2010, 2009, 2005 or 2000, I like it at least as well as, if not more than, 2008, 2006 and 2007. At this early stage I find the wines to be most similar to those from 1998, also a late and very fine Merlot vintage.

I have learned over the years not to dismiss the "tough to taste young" vintages on the Left Bank too soon. These wines develop slowly, and vintages like 2004, 2002 and 1998 have turned out much better than most of the scores and reviews reflected at the time of their release. At recent blind tastings in Bordeaux, many of us have been fooled into thinking that many of these wines were from outstanding vintages.

The Blancs

The white wines from Pessac-Léognan showed very well. They were refreshing and floral and more on the elegant side. The petite châteaux and inexpensive Blancs also showed very well. Overall, 2012 is a nice vintage for dry white wines.

The Sweeties from Sauternes and Barsac

This is a confusing vintage for lovers of sweet wines. Château d'Yquem publicly stated before the En Primeur tastings that they would make no wine in 2012, which led many to assume that no sweet wine was made anywhere. This is simply not the case. While it is true that in the slow-growing gravel soils of d'Yquem, and in the neighboring village of Fargues, where Rieussec, Guiraud, Suduiraut and Raymond-Lafon are, little to no wine was made. The grapes were so far behind that when good conditions for botrytis finally happened, the rains and humidity took over. However, just north, in the sandy, clay and limestone soils of Barsac, the grapes were further ahead maturity-wise, and they handled the conditions just fine in between periods of rain, resulting in some lovely wines. These wines are not in the big, thick and powerful style; instead they are sweet, elegant, fresh and charming. While tasting these wines I could not help but think about how nicely they will drink, even by themselves, on a warm summer afternoon or evening because they are so refreshing. Lovely wines were made at Climens, Doisy-Daëne, Doisy-Védrines, and Sigalas-Rabaud, to name a few.

The Prices

Finally, we address the question of pricing. This will be a key factor in the success of the vintage sales-wise. We firmly told all the Bordeaux who would listen that 2012 presented a great opportunity to get people back to loving Bordeaux by offering this good vintage at steeply reduced prices, giving everyone a reason to buy and stimulate the marketplace. I judge the overall pricing by the cost of the great classified growths excluding the First Growths, Pétrus and Cheval, with the prices of the Pichons, Cos d'Estournel, Montrose, the Léovilles, Pontet-Canet, Smith-Haut-Lafitte and Haut-Bailly key in forming my opinion. And in the end, I would say the châteaux listened. Prices have come down significantly, making the vintage a good value.

Postscript

While it is true that 2011 and 2012 are not great vintages (although the Right Bank wines come close), every vintage has its style, drinking window, longevity and price point. That is why we go to Bordeaux every year, to evaluate the entire vintage regardless of hype *or* negative advance press. If there is one thing I have learned in 45 visits to Bordeaux it is that the great/hyped vintages are indeed fine, but they can also be expected to come with big price tags. If you only buy wine by vintage charts and scores, you miss the boat on some wonderfully drinkable wines. Improvements in machinery, farming techniques, severe selection and the treatment of perfect fruit at the winery have enabled Bordeaux to make pretty darn good wine in difficult weather years; 2011 and 2012 are great examples of that and they will offer good value!

Please feel free to contact me anytime with any questions or for advice on the wines of Bordeaux. I can be reached at x2723 or by email at Ralph@KLWines.com.

Cheers and Go 49ers!

Note: All wines in this newsletter are Pre-Arrival.

Key

* I would buy it for me and I recommend it; ** Outstanding wine. I would definitely want this as part of my collection; *** A classic wine.

Croix Mouton, Bordeaux Supérieur (\$12.99) * Classic dark fruit; a great value!

Lanessan, Haut-Médoc (\$16.99) * A very fruity and tasty style.

Poujeaux, Moulis (\$26.99) * A little rustic, but lots of wine. Serious.

Cantenac Brown, Margaux (\$39.99) * Nice, dark, racy, sleek fruit.

Langoa-Barton, St-Julien (\$49.99) * Solid, firm, red-fruit driven, with good acidity.

Branais-Ducru, St-Julien (\$46.99) ** Really nice, lovely fruit. Round, elegant and attractive.

Léoville-Poyferré, St-Julien (\$69.99) * Another winner! Rich wine with good, long tannins.

Pedesclaux, Pauillac (NA) * Lots of nice, forward cassis fruit. Will be a good early drinker and a value from Pauillac.

Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Pauillac (NA) ** Tasted twice, at the Château and at négociant Joanne, and I wrote almost the exact same note both times! Classic strong red fruit, not overextracted, very bright, zesty and a little spicy. Textbook Cabernet, fine balance and freshness, with a touch of oak and a long finish. A great comeback to quality here at GPL. From a brand new cellar.

Pichon-Baron, Pauillac (\$99.99) ** Possibly three stars! Tasted twice. No question, this is one of the top wines of the vintage. A big wine that's 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot. Strong, very sweet dark middle fruit, but not over-extracted. Expressive and rich on the palate. Fine tannins and a long finish. This will be one of the longest-lived wines of the vintage. Just outstanding!

Montrose, St-Estèphe (\$89.99) ** This is more of a fruit forward Montrose that will be an early drinker (for a Montrose), featuring attractive, glossy fruit and beautiful texture. An incredible new cellar and administration that wants to welcome visitors. What a concept!

Ausone, St-Emilion (\$569.99) *** Bright crimson red, great floral aromas of roses, violets, passion fruit and mango. Long, perfectly pure wine. This has it all, and it damn well should for the price!

Canon, St-Emilion (\$59.99) ** A beautiful and elegant wine with good freshness. Nice sweetness, with lovely texture and a natural feel to it. A great drink that people will love.

Figeac, St-Emilion (\$76.99) * Not a blockbuster in style, but nevertheless complex, tasty and easy-drinking Figeac.

Clos de L'Oratoire, St-Emilion (\$34.99) * Super fruity. Loaded with blue fruit. A soft wine that people will love. An early drinker.

Canon-La-Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$59.99) * Much more restrained. Stiff and more classic in style than its stablemates Clos de L'Oratoire and La Mondotte.

RIGHT BANK RECAP!

St-Emilion and Pomerol were definitely the highlight of my 2012 vintage evaluation trip. Merlot on the Right Bank did very well, and this was evident right from the start. Most wines featured beautiful and very natural tasting sweet fruit, which means they did not come off as pushed or over-extracted.

Monday, April 7th

We began our first day sampling more than 130 wines at the St-Emilion Syndicate Tasting. It also included the wines of Fronsac, Lalande-de-Pomerol and Côtes de Castillon. Some of my favorites included La Couspaude, De Ferrand, Couvent de Jacobins, Bellefont-Belcier, La Dominique, Pipeau, Roylland, Sansonnet, Boutesse and Brun. From Fronsac: Dalem, La Dauphine, Villars, Vinea and Haut-Chagneau topped my list.

After the Syndicate Tasting was an unplanned stop at Le Dôme, which made a fantastic wine. Lunch was at Fombrauge, where owner Bernard Magrez brought in famed Chef Joël Robuchon from Paris to cook a four-course lunch. Next was a tasting of the wines from “Bad Boy” Jean-Luc Thunevin before our 4 p.m. appointment at Ausone. I was excited to end the day at L’Eglise Clinet to taste the great wine of Denis Durantou.

Tuesday, April 8th

We started our second day tasting 80 wines at the outstanding Pomerol Syndicate Tasting. I would buy 33 of them, so fine was the showing. The UGC tasting at La Conseillante produced five solid winners: **Petit-Village (\$64.99)**, **Gazin (\$64.99)**, **Clinet (\$69.99)**, **Beauregard** and **La Conseillante (\$92.99)**. After a short lunch, it was off to taste the wines made by Hubert de Boüard and his daughter Coralee. The **Fleur de Boüard (\$29.99)** was a great value, while Le Plus and the flagship wine Angelus were both very good, though I wasn’t pleased that the Angelus price increased 30% over 2011.

The next two hours were incredible! At 3 p.m. we visited Alexandre Thienpont at **Vieux-Château-Certan (\$149.99)**. The wine is the epitome of elegance and was, as always, delicious. Brickish in color, not deep red, it displayed perfect ripeness and was loaded with charm, like a fine piece of jewelry. The 2012 comes from the estate’s smallest harvest in 20 years—only 2,800 cases made (4,000 is the norm). By 3:30 we are at **L’Evangile (\$169.99)**, where we were warmly greeted by winemaker Charbel About at their brand new fermentation facility. If VCC was like fine jewelry, the wine of L’Evangile roared like a Ferrari! The rich black/red fruit was sexy and dark, perfectly polished, long and persistent on the finish. It tasted like a wine from a great vintage!

Five minutes later we were at **Pétrus (Inquire)**, where the visit almost felt like a religious experience. Their 2012 displayed rich, sweet red fruits with integrated toffee-caramel flavors, an elegant mouthfeel and fine, round tannins. It had a long, black fruit finish with a little grip. A great wine; hard to spit. Five minutes later we were at **Cheval Blanc (\$499.99)**. The entire renovation of this estate is now complete and it’s beautiful. The 2012 is 46% Cabernet Franc and 54% Merlot. It showed fantastic aromas of ripe cherries and spice, textbook Cheval Blanc silkiness and a solid backbone. Also a racy wine with a touch of roundness, kind of like K&L’s Clyde Beffa Jr. behind the wheel of his red Jaguar.

We finished with the powerful wine of **Pavie (\$279.99)** from Gerard Perse. It had a very fine nose followed by very dark, masculine fruit. But this was no fruit bomb! Sleek, but a bit raw, it had some dusty dry tannins to resolve. It will be one of the longest lived wines of the vintage.

From the most delicate, elegant and refined, to smooth and silky to bold and powerful, these wines represent the greatest quality and diverse style the Right Bank has to offer the world.

Ralph Sands

The Wines of Jean-Hubert Delon

Nenin, Pomerol (\$47.99) * A very nice, fruity entry, with lovely raspberry fruit. The wine gets firmer and more serious on the mid-palate and finish. One of the best values in all of Pomerol.

Potensac, Médoc (NA) ** Big juice! Very dark, black wine, with only red tinges. Powerful Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with some hints of black licorice and round, but firm tannins. Consistently a serious wine. Fantastic! Gets two stars from me for phenomenal value.

Clos du Marquis, St-Julien (\$47.99) * Always very close in quality to Las Cases. Everything is meticulously done here. Perfectly ripe and never overdone or pushed. The blood red fruit has good thickness; it’s redolent of ripe raspberries and has a touch of dusty earth.

Léoville-Las Cases, St-Julien (\$129.99) ** Intense flavors of deep raspberry fruit hit you right off, followed by outstanding, thick middle fruit and great length on the finish. The perfectly round tannins give this more early drinking charm than normally found from this great estate.

From my second visit

Mouton Rothschild, Pauillac (\$379.99) ** Brisk, high-toned aromas of spicy Cabernet with a hint of dark chocolate. The tannins are tame, a key element in 2012. It has very natural freshness. A nice, very elegantly styled Mouton.

Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux (Sold Out) * This is a very sleek, dark wine with good freshness. Strong and elegant, with perfect balance.

Valandraud, St-Emilion (\$129.99) * Tight dark purple and black fruits; very concentrated and linear. One of the most difficult wines to taste at this early stage, but all the elements are there. Very nice that they have lowered the price in this very good Right Bank vintage. May merit a higher score.

Lynch Bages, Pauillac (\$99.99) * A big mash of Cabernet fruit and structure, and exactly what I expected of it. Classic claret!

Lafite Rothschild, Pauillac (\$549.99) ** 91% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8.5% Merlot and .05% Petit Verdot. Perfectly ripe Cabernet. This is always strong and tightly wound. The bright

red/purple-hued fruit screams of violets and is sleek, with great focus and length. The wine is strong and elegant at the same time, without a hint of overripeness.

Carraudes de Lafite, Pauillac (\$159.99) * Bright, zesty and much more open knit on the nose and palate than the *grand vin*. The 42% Merlot really shows in the texture and softness. This will be a lovely, early drinking wine.

Duhart-Milon, Pauillac (\$89.99) ** Lovely ripe but restrained fruit hits all areas of the mouth, followed by good, sweet middle fruit and richness. The wine has fine, elegant tannins and a nice hint of spice on the finish. Really delicious!

L' Evangile, Pomerol (\$169.99) ** 93% Merlot, 7% Cab Franc. This is one of the greatest wines of the vintage! The rich, black fruit is sexy, polished and persistent, like a Ferrari. Just fabulous tasting wine in any vintage, and this tastes like a great one. May merit a higher score.

The Perfect Trifecta of Wines and Communes

In my opinion the three Super Second Growths—Ducru-Beaucaillou, Cos d'Estournel and Pichon Comtesse de Lalande—were second to none in 2012, delivering flat out delicious wines that will not require 25 years of cellaring to be enjoyed. The second time I tasted the **Ducru-Beaucaillou (\$109.99)** it had opened up and was showing the purity of fruit, elegance and balance it is famous for.

Pichon-Lalande (\$89.99) was fantastic. The aromas blew me away, with the ripe old vine Merlot in the forefront along with spicy herbal notes from the Cabernet Sauvignon and new oak in the background. Lovely, rich fruit with a fleshy mouthfeel; a love to drink!

The great **Cos d' Estournel (\$139.99)** made a more powerful statement. Its dark black fruit was cool and racy, but very long and elegant on the palate. Very similar to the wine of next door neighbor Lafite.

Bourgneuf, Pomerol (\$39.99) * This is a deep wine with nice mid-palate fruit that is a little meaty. Nice, complete mouthfeel and tannins. Good wine and a fine value!

Hosanna, Pomerol (\$139.95) * The bright purple fruit is nice, fresh and clean and a touch on the herbal side. Does not possess the deep exotic fruit of many vintages, but it will still be a good early drinker.

Angludet, Margaux (\$27.99) * Super fresh! Sweet but firm, with raspberry flavors that continue throughout the middle of the wine. This is a wine that is classic in style and will drink well young. Value!

Les Carmes Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan (\$52.99) * Very intense black fruits with firm structure frame this wine. Compact but really well balanced; good!

Palmer, Margaux (\$249.99) ** 48% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Petit Verdot finished in 60% new oak. This is another very fine Palmer and proof there are some outstanding wines from 2012. The classic red/black fruit has great aromas of Merlot, roses and violets. Good firmness and grip without any hard edges. Superbly balanced and fresh, with a long Cabernet finish.

Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux (\$59.99) *½ The second wine of Palmer; it's terrific. Flashy, ripe Merlot in the forefront. Fresh and deep. Much softer than the first wine. I love the wine *and* the price.

Haut-Bages-Libéral, Pauillac (NA) Like many wines from the northern Médoc this wine was extremely tight and unyielding. I will reserve judgment until I taste this wine again.

Pavillon Rouge, Margaux (\$119.99) * 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot and 1% Cabernet Franc. This year the Pavillon is 28% of the crop. The bright red fruits are effusively floral coming from the young vines. This is mid-weight and elegant Pavillon but has exciting freshness; it should provide nice drinking young.

Margaux, Margaux (\$379.99) ** 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. Lovely aromas of red roses and warm spices. Much rounder and deeper than the Pavillon. May not possess the weight and length of a great vintage, but does have the velvety texture the château is famous for. Lovely, charming and will drink well young.

Angelus, St-Emilion (\$279.99) *½ As usual this is an exotic wine with deep black fruit that screams of boysenberries, but it lacks some middle flesh and sweetness in that fruit. The problem for me is that the finish is somewhat dry. Huge and well deserved congratulations to Hubert de Bouard and his team for their elevation to Premier Grand Cru Category A.

Pavie, St-Emilion (\$279.99) * The other St-Emilion estate to elevate to PGC Category A. The terrior here is phenomenal. This has a fine nose of expressive Merlot; it is dark, super sleek and not a fruit bomb. Always a tough wine to taste young, so I will reserve final judgment.

D'Armailhac, Pauillac (\$39.99) *½ Nice, sweet, round red fruit with round tannins make this wine easy to love and set it apart from most in 2012. This property has been on a great roll. One of the 2012 vintages's greatest values!

Clerc Milon, Pauillac (\$49.99) * Clerc has crunchy Cabernet fruit that is zesty and bright with good, firm tannins. A very attractive, classic claret that will drink well relatively young.

Troplong Mondot, St-Emilion (\$79.99) ** An absolute success! Ripe but not over-extracted; soft, with silky red fruits and round tannins. This is a tasty wine that people will love and that will give great pleasure young; 2012 at its best. Hats off to TM for reducing the price from 2011 even though this is a better wine. A great value!

Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$96.99) ** There is no stopping Pontet-Canet! The perfectly ripe blueberry and blackberry fruit is focused and amazingly fresh. Firm but round tannins and new oak are the framework for this accessible and invigorating wine. One of the best wines of 2012 and one-third the price of his '09 and '10. Great value!

Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan (\$369.99) ** 64% Merlot. This wine is delicious, rich but not heavy and seriously grapey. Perfectly extracted with a lovely, long finish. I love it.

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) **V One of the hottest wines in Bordeaux today and for good reason: Cantemerle is a lovely blend.



The barrel room at Léoville-Barton.

BORDEAUX 2012 *Trey's Quick Picks*

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) One of the pleasant surprises this vintage! Cantemerle is on a roll with their recent wines, and the 2012 is no exception. It shows pleasant, upfront fleshy fruit that is focused and clean. Tannins are integrated and ripe, with just a touch of spice and cedar hints that linger on the finish. This wine should show well upon release and develop well in a cellar for 10 years after bottling.

Poujeaux, Moulis (\$26.99) Another solid effort in 2012, Poujeaux shows a very dark color and flavor profile. Hints of tobacco and licorice dance around the deep and intense core of black currant fruit. Tannins here are big but still integrated and in balance. This wine will be at its best several years after bottling and develop well seven to 10 years after.

Angludet, Margaux (\$27.99) A great value buy from 2012, the Angludet shows tons of dark coffee flavors, black cherries and sweet undertones of currants, lavender and spice. Tannins are present but balanced. This wine should come together nicely after bottling and drink well for at least the first 10 years of its life.

Haut-Bailly, Pessac-Léognan (\$69.99) The 2012 Haut-Bailly will provide pure pleasure five to seven years after release. It shows flavors of black currant and black cherries that are surrounded by hints of cedar, mineral and licorice. The tannins are present but should round out nicely by the time this wine is bottled. A solid effort in a difficult vintage!

Léoville-Barton, St-Julien (\$69.99) The 2012 Barton shows classic Léoville-Barton color and flavor profile. Dark, with almost black fruits, the 2012 has a purity of fruit that I like, along with an almost velvety mid-palate. Tannins are definitely present and the wine shows

a firm structure, which leads me to believe this will be a good wine to cellar for the mid- to longer-term for the vintage.

La Conseillante, Pomerol (\$92.99) I only tasted a limited number of wines this vintage, but this is for sure one of my favorites. The La Conseillante shows an intense core of fleshy fruit, hints of cola, black cherry and spice, which seem to melt into your mouth. Tannins are ripe and integrated.

Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$96.99) When we tasted this wine I thought it was a bit shut down on the nose, but the palate was showing everything it had. Very rich and intense, the fruit showed a bit of a meaty quality along with flavors of black cherry, smoke and cassis. It is a darker, juicier style wine that does show some bigger tannins on the finish. Still balanced, this wine should be a good early- to mid-term drinker.

Margaux, Margaux (\$379.99) A seductive nose with floral aromas leads to a fine, elegant and polished wine. The 2012 Margaux shows some power but this wine is defined by its elegance and purity. Tannins are integrated and supple. This wine should show well upon release but still manage to develop in a cellar for up to 20 years.

Mouton Rothschild, Pauillac (\$379.99) A blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Merlot and 2% Cabernet Franc, the 2012 is loaded with sexy red fruits and hints of cola, along with a juicy, sweet, layered mouthfeel. On the finish this wine shows hints of spice, graphite and ripe, sweet tannins. It appears that this Mouton will be approachable young and would be a good mid-term cellar candidate.

Clyde "Trey" Beffa III

(Continued from page 1)

In fact, there are quite a few values from 2012. Do not miss them.

I tasted about 70 wines from the 2012 vintage, and my notes are listed below. Also included are scores from various wine critics.

Pomerol

La Conseillante, Pomerol (\$92.99) ** Sweet and lovely. Plenty of black fruit flavors. Elegant. 92-95 points *WS*, 92-94 points *RP*, 91-94 points *ST* and 92-93 points *JS*.

Gazin, Pomerol (\$64.99) * Black color. Powerful wine with good grip. An ager. 93-95 points *RP*, 90-93 points *WS*.

St-Emilion

Beau-Séjour Bécot, St-Emilion (\$49.99) * Oaky, spicy aromas follow to palate. Flashy style, but in balance. 92-95 points *RP*, 93-95 points *WE* and 92 points *JS*.

Canon-La-Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$59.99) ** Lovely aromas of sweet blackberries. Long and lush on the palate. *Sooo* good. 92-94 points *RP*, 93 points *JS*, 90-93 points *WS* and 90-92 points *WE*.

Clos Fourtet, St-Emilion (\$69.99) * Ripe, sweet black fruit aromas. Some tannins at back end, but overall a very good wine. This property is solid. Their 2012 is less than a quarter of the price of their 2009. 93-95 points *RP* and *WE*, 91-94 points *WS*, 93 points *JS* and 90-92 points *ST*.

Figec, St-Emilion (\$76.99) * Red fruit flavors here—much different than most Right Bankers. Tannins at back end. I like it for the long run. 93-94 points *JS*, 92-94 points *WE*, 91-94 points *WS*.

Tropelong Mondot, St-Emilion (\$79.99) ** Black, black color. Layers of blackberry fruit and toasty oak. So lush on the palate. Great balance. Superb. 94-96 points *RP*, 91-94 points *WS*, 93 points *JS* and 91-93 points *ST*.

Pessac-Léognan

Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac (\$49.99) *+ Tons of mineral aromas and flavors. Earthy style, but plenty of forward red fruit flavors. 92-95 points *RP*, 93-95 points *WE*, 94 points *JS* and 90-93 points *WS*.

Haut-Bailly, Pessac (\$69.99) **+ Wow! One of the best wines I tasted from 2012. 60% Cab and 40% Merlot. Silky wine with mineral undertones. The finish goes on and on. A must-buy at this low price. 93-95 points *WE*, 94 points *JS*, 91-93 points *RP*, 90-93 points *WS* and 90-92 points *ST*.

Haut-Bergey, Pessac (\$21.99) *V Superb value for the vintage. Sweet and fruity with plenty of toasty oak. Almost new wave, but balanced. 90-93 points *RP* and 90-92 points *WE*.

Pape Clément Rouge, Pessac (\$79.99) *+ These guys are on a roll. Earthy aromas mixed with toasty oak. Lovely, elegant. Perfect balance. 92-95 points *RP*, 92-94 points *WE* and 92-93 points *JS*.

Smith-Haut-Lafitte Rouge, Pessac (\$64.99) *½ Tremendous sweetness on the palate and lots of minerals evident. Red fruits abound

here. One-quarter the price of 2009. 94-95 points *JS*, 92-94 points *RP* and *WE*, 91-94 points *WS* and 90-92 points *ST*.

Margaux

Angludet, Margaux (\$27.99) *½V What a value—perhaps the best of the vintage that I tasted! Tons of cinnamon spice and cassis on the nose and palate. Great mouthfeel. A must-buy by the case. A sleeper of the vintage. 89-92 points *WS*, 89-90 points *JS* and 88-90 points *RP*.

Cantenac Brown, Margaux (\$39.99) * Lovely wine with lots of red berry flavors. Good grip. Cabernet shines through here. 92-94 points *WE*, 91-94 points *WS*, 90-93 points *RP* and 91 points *JS*.

Brane Cantenac, Margaux (\$46.99) * Black fruits abound. The Merlot really shines through here. Superb balance. 92-94 points *WE*, 90-93 points *WS*, 90-92 points *RP* and 91 points *JS*.

Giscours, Margaux (\$39.99) *+ Delicious. Elegant style. Soft, forward and fruity. 93-95 points *WE*, 90-93 points *WS* and 92 points *JS*.

Labégorce, Margaux (\$25.99) *V Another great value from a château to watch. Pure and elegant. Classic Margaux. Lovely. Sleeper. 89-92 points *WS*, 89-90 points *JS* and 88-90 points *RP* and *WE*.

Margaux, Margaux (\$379.99) **½+ Only 34% of Margaux's production went into this first wine, no wonder it's so good. Violets on the nose, very floral. Very elegant mouthfeel, but the tannins are there in the background. First Growth all the way. 94-96 points *WE*, 93-96 points *WS*, 93-94 points *JS*, 92-94 points *RP* and 90-93 points *ST*.

Pavillon Rouge, Margaux (\$119.99) Twenty-eight percent of Margaux's crop went into this wine. Margaux also made a third wine in 2012 simply called Margaux, and then they sold off the rest of their juice in bulk. A powerful and tannic wine right now; it needs to settle down. 92-94 points *WE* and 90 points *JS*.

St-Julien

Brancaire-Ducru, St-Julien (\$46.99) This sample at the UGC was a bit off. Must re-taste. 93-95 points *WE*, 90-93 points *WS*, 88-91 points *ST* and 88-90 points *RP*.

Gloria, St-Julien (\$34.99) An overachieving property. Super elegant wine. Very forward and fruity. Great balance on the palate. 92-94 points *WE* and 88-91 points *WS*.

Langoa-Barton, St-Julien (\$49.99) Should be good, but hard to taste at the moment. Must re-taste. 92-94 points *WE* and 90 points *JS*.

Léoville-Barton, St-Julien (\$69.99) * Big wine. Powerful and full-bodied. This wine will need some years in the cellar, but it should be great. 94-96 points *WE*, 90-93 points *WS*, 91-92 points *JS* and 90-92 points *RP*.

Léoville-Poyferré, St-Julien (\$69.99) *+ Sweet and lovely. So pure. Sweet edge of red fruits. Tannins at the back end. 94-96 points *WE*, 92-93 points *JS*, 90-93 points *WS* and 89-91 points *RP*.

Talbot, St-Julien (\$44.99) * Fine value. Great entry. Toasty oak and red fruit flavors. 92-94 points *WE*, 90-92 points *RP*, 90-91 points *JS*.

(Continued on back page)



Château Lafite Rothschild.

(Continued from page 7)

Médoc

Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$29.99) *V This property makes the best value wine every year. Black fruit flavors and great balance. Sleeper of the vintage. 91 points JS, 89-91 points RP and 87-90 points ST.

La Lagune, Haut-Médoc (\$54.99) * La Lagune keeps making great wines. Red fruit flavors. Sweet core. Quite good. 90-92 points RP.

Poujeaux, Moulis (\$26.99) *V Another sleeper. Great upfront fruit. I always love this. Buy it. 91-93 points WE, 88-91 points WS.

Pauillac

The Mouton Stable for 2012

Clerc Milon, Pauillac (\$49.99) *½ Red fruit flavors abound. Tons of ripe cassis on the palate. This is very good. Great for the cellar. 93-95 points WE, 91-94 points WS, 93 points JS and 88-90 points ST.

D'Armailhac, Pauillac (\$39.99) ½* Licorice aromas and flavors. Good richness on the palate. 90-93 points WS, 90-92 points WE, 91 points JS.

Mouton Rothschild, Pauillac (\$379.99) **½+ So good. So elegant on the nose and full bodied on the palate. Many layers and about one-third the price of their 2009. 96-98 points WE, 95-97 points RP, 93-96 points WS, 94-95 points JS and 92-94 points ST.

Lynch Bages, Pauillac (\$99.99) * Lots of Cabernet showing through. Big and powerful. 93-95 points WE, 93-94 points JS, 91-94 points WS.

Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac (\$89.99) *½ Another fantastic property. Solid and so easy to drink. Superb balance with a great core of black fruit and cassis. 94-96 points WE, 92-93 points JS, 91-93 points RP.

Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$96.99) **+ Ho hum, another great Pontet-Canet. We're not surprised at all. Meaty and thick on the palate. Layers of sweet fruit. Lovely texture. Buy it. 96-98 points WE, 94-95 points JS, 91-94 points RP.

2012 Bordeaux For Sale (Not Tasted by Clyde or Trey)

Barde-Haut, St-Emilion (\$26.99)

Beauséjour (Duffau), St-Emilion (\$76.99)

Fleur Cardinale, St-Emilion (\$36.99)

Fonplégade, St-Emilion (\$36.99)

Pavie Macquin, St-Emilion (\$59.99)

Certain de May, Pomerol (\$82.99)

Clos l'Eglise, Pomerol (\$64.99)

Rouget, Pomerol (\$36.99)

Branon, Pessac-Léognan (\$64.99)

La Mission Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan (\$229.99)

Malartic-Lagravière, Pessac-Léognan (\$35.99)

Brane-Cantenac, Margaux (46.99)

Malescot-St-Exupéry, Margaux (\$49.99)

Calon-Ségur, St-Estèphe (\$59.99)

La Dauphine, Fronsac (\$17.99)

Doisy-Védrines, Sauternes (375ml \$17.99; 750ml \$34.99)

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