



Bordeaux 2012 en primeur

Corney & Barrow Bordeaux 2012 – Bulletin

April 2013 - Our Initial Thoughts

Contrary to popular belief, especially for those who stayed in the UK in 2012, there was in fact a very good growing season; with virtually no rain mid-June to mid-September. Having said that, there was a month or two of rain preceding this, when it was just not wanted, leading to flowering problems and a reduced volume down the line. Then there was drought. The results of the vintage suggest that the vines favoured great terroir with the Merlot grape also faring particularly well. This is most eloquently endorsed by so many producers in the Médoc and observed in their 2012 blends. Clearly these conditions favoured the Right Bank in particular. It is worth noting that 90% of Pomerol was picked before the October rains, and also 50% of the much more extensive appellation, Saint Emilion.

This Bulletin is broken down into, what we feel, are useful and concise sections. Please speak with any member of the Corney & Barrow Team if particular wines are of interest as the Releases can be very fast moving and it is best to let us know potential interests in advance, where possible.

Notes on the Vintage

There are really attractive wines in 2012, accessible, pure, fresh, lithe and approachable, deeply coloured and aromatic. Success, in the light of considerable climatic challenges lay in vigilance in the vineyard. De-budding, cluster removal, summer crop-thinning and further thinning out just before harvest were amongst the weapons in the armoury, brought into service at some cost.

Growing Season

2012 will be remembered for its contrasts alternately mild and very cold, wet in the spring and inordinately dry from July to mid-September. The Médoc recorded around 30% less rainfall than usual.

Winter

The winter of 2011/2012 alternated between mild temperatures and exceptional cold spells and periods of abundant rain interspersed with, very dry weather. Mouton recorded its coldest February in the last 50 years.

Spring

Spring was marked by an unstable oceanic climate, resulting in uneven flowering, thereby limiting potential production.

Summer

July was cool, followed by a hot and dry August, dry weather which lasted until the 20th September. The drought stressed the vines, impeding the growing cycle.

Autumn

Early rains in mid-September facilitated a final burst towards complete maturity, revitalizing vines which had stalled, through hydric stress. On the Right Bank this is essentially where the story of the growing cycle

ends, with mild and sunny weather through to harvest, Saint Emilion and Pomerol having real success stories with Merlot safely in the vats, before the rain.

This has echoes of the 1998 vintage, great on the Right Bank. Pessac-Leognan also fared well.

On the Left Bank, new challenges of rain emerged in October and remained, curbing hopes for the last few weeks of ripening. The greatest successes go hand in hand with the efforts spent in the vineyard, ensuring healthy, ripe grapes, rigorous sorting and sensitive winemaking.

Questions answered by Corney & Barrow's Associate Director of Buying, Alison Buchanan

Why should I look at 2013?

The traditional reasons – to secure wines which may not be available later at what ought to be the best price and to secure preferred format . More frivolous – for FUN – not to mention the Amazon/e-bay effect. I cannot be alone in choosing, with a few clicks, something within the capabilities of my wallet and receiving with childlike glee a parcel – which even though I bought the book or whatever - feels like a surprise and a gift. Likewise the “surprise” of taking delivery of wines sometime down the road. But going back to being sensible again - buying en primeur ensures provenance and storage conditions.

In general when will these wines start drinking and how long will they last?

Early drinking in the main but with the potential to last. Aromatic and fresh, they will hit the ground running though the top wines deserve a little patience.

What are the dry/sweet whites like?

Good wines, sometimes very good with better balance, acidity and freshness than some recent years when the wines had lost their verve and become a little flabby and leaden. Very very early to make any solid assessment of the sweet whites. Some stood out, others it would be unfair to denounce at this early stage . Most will be available at a later date.

Where do you think the sweet spot for price vs quality is in 2012?

Customers may not be surprised that we proclaim Pomerol to be the sweet spot. This is in fact something of a no-brainer, 90% of the grapes having been picked before the rain. In Saint Emilion 50% of the harvest was in. Pessac-Léognan also fared reasonably well.

What are the best areas in 2012?

As we see above. In the Médoc, everyone had rain which, to varying degrees, impeded full Cabernet ripeness. Slapping on lashings of new oak and/or adjusting the Merlot balance did not disguise green notes in some cases . We had the most fun in Saint Julien, where wines are so often solid bankers, offering charm and dependability rather than being truly stellar. In 2012 dependability is by no means pejorative.

In general what were the key decisions producers needed to make to ensure good wines in a challenging vintage?

Most of the decisive factors revolved around viticulture, leaf stripping and discarding underdeveloped grapes – flowering having been irregular due to rain – often more than once.

How prevalent were over-extraction and high alcohol levels in 2012?

This was not a year for over extraction and although we found plenty of examples, we were heartened at the number of producers who had played to the vintage aiming at charm, rather than muscularity.

How to Follow the Releases and Additional Information on the Campaign:

- **EMAIL** – News of individual Château releases will be circulated by email. **Sign up to receive Bordeaux updates by email [here](#).**
- **TWITTER** – The quickest form of communication. Prices and other observations will be released on [@corneyandbarrow](#).
- **WEBSITE** – All wines released, along with scores and tasting notes, will be available in this section.
- **Corney & Barrow BLOG** - We will regularly update our Blog www.CandBscene.co.uk during the campaign. You can currently find videos and blogs of our eight days of tasting in Bordeaux as well as lots of profiles of visits to our other favourite producers.
- **Corney & Barrow YouTube Channel**-Visit our [YouTube](#) channel to hear all about Bordeaux 2012.

If you know of friends and colleagues who may like to receive our information, please feel free to forward this bulletin or contact your sales person directly.

How the Wines will be Released

The wines will be released in various ways. Please see below the breakdown, followed by the list of wines with their specified 'Release' type.

- **General Releases** – Communicated as wines are released onto the market, where possible, by email but some may not be if interest is so high that they may be oversubscribed. Those where this may apply are marked with an asterisk (*).
- **Ets. J-P Moueix Release** – This offer will have a start and finish date with an allocation process for almost all wines - May (TBC depending on pricing). (UK only)
- **Mitjavile Release** – Tertre Roteboeuf, Roc de Cambes and Domaine de l'Aurage, the wines of François Mitjavile and his son, Louis - May
- **Ch. Trotanoy Release** – Released on its own, in June. (UK only)
- **Ch. Petrus Release** – Released on its own and sent out at C & B's discretion, in July. (UK only)

Our Top Wines

We have outlined the following:

- Our "best of the Best" by Commune wines
- Our "Best Value (Potentially)" by Commune wines

[Click here to view the selection](#)

Corney & Barrow Scoring

The Corney & Barrow team taste in silence. It is so easy to lead the witness with an unintentional grimace or a raised eyebrow registering a pleasant surprise. We taste individually and record notes in alphabetised, indexed notebooks for ease of comparison later.

All scores are entered into a spreadsheet and we look for a mean spread, relating to the wine's potential to achieve a higher mark – it is almost impossible to give such young wines a definitive score.

Wines are tasted within the context of the vintage and by peer group.

These are our guidelines:

14–16 A very good to excellent wine.

16–18 An excellent to outstanding wine.

18–20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a ‘spread’ (e.g. 14–16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A ‘plus’ adds further to that potential.

General FAQ's

Why buy wines en primeur? There are generally three main reasons to buy a wine *en primeur* : firstly, to secure a wine that may not be available later; secondly, to be able to get a wine at the best possible price; and thirdly, to secure the wines in the format (bottle size) you wish. These are the factors to consider when buying. We would add two more: excitement and provenance. It is exciting to be buying wines as they are released and it is important to have wines that have been stored in perfect conditions in one place from the initial shipment of the wines. Finding mature wines of impeccable condition become harder over time.

How does Corney & Barrow's scoring system work? As above

Why does Corney & Barrow's not include other critics' scores? There are many answers but, simply put, because we back ourselves and our own thorough tasting. We select which wines we offer and give our own opinion as informed by [The Bunch code of conduct](#) . We acknowledge that there are several very good critics writing up wines but we back our judgements with stock and money, and stand behind that with our guarantee. We would not expect a customer to buy a wine because of a press write-up one vintage and then our glowing report the next.

What is the best way to get the wines I really want? Speak directly to one of the team and explain what you want and how we can best communicate with you.

Can I wait until all the wines are out and buy then? This totally depends which wines you want to buy. The internet has meant that prices of the top wines are communicated instantly and, consequently, they disappear in a flash. If you are looking for value wines then you can wait, but for names you follow each year, you are best to let us know now and we can keep an eye out for you.

Please click here to see our Bordeaux Glossary

To receive email updates on Bordeaux 2012, please update your email preferences [here](#) or call 0207 265 2430 for full details or information at any time.