

Un Train (2009) Peut Cacher Un Autre (2010)

(One Train Can Hide Another)

2010 Bordeaux from Bottle

This is clearly another very great vintage in Bordeaux. When I first discussed the wines in Issue 194 (5-2-11), I didn't think it exceeded in overall quality the Bordeaux that was produced in 2009, 2005 or perhaps even 2000, but I think it's safe to say that, other than 2009, this vintage has turned out slightly better than 2000 and as impressive as 2005.

The Weather

My comments on the impact of the weather in Bordeaux in 2010 from Issue 199 are restated in the following three paragraphs. They have turned out to be remarkably accurate, considering how early they were written:

"It is no secret that the finest Bordeaux vintages are dry (often drought-like) years when there is early, consistent flowering followed by gorgeous weather in September and October. The old saying, 'June makes the quantity, August makes the style and September makes the quality,' has considerable merit, and it could be modified to include October along with September as making the quality. Much of the 2010 was harvested extremely late, some well into the last weeks of October, as more and more producers seek full phenolic maturity.

The only problem 2010 encountered was a poor flowering with the Merlot crop, which reduced yields dramatically. Readers will hear the French use the words *coulure*, which means tiny "shot" berries, and *millerandage*, which is often referred to as "hens and chickens" that results from problematic weather during the flowering. Throughout Bordeaux, in the Médoc, Graves and Pomerol, the Merlot crop was affected dramatically by these conditions in 2010. However, the only effect was to reduce yields and ultimately, based on the weather that occurred subsequently, to increase concentration and extract levels in the grapes. 2010 was another drought year, but unlike 2009, the summer was more similar to 2005, with no dramatic heat waves, only extremely dry weather. Even though June turned out to be a warmer month than in either 2009 or 2005, it was also less sunny. That changed in July, which was warmer, sunnier and drier than both 2005 and 2009. This was followed by three months, August, September and October, that were cooler than both 2009 and 2005, but with drought-like conditions. In short, there was less precipitation from July through September than in 2009, 2005 and 2003. I think these statistics explain why the wines are so concentrated and rich, yet also have higher total acid numbers and lower pHs than 2009, thus giving the 2010s a freshness and precision that is the paradoxical characteristic of this vintage. Normally, incredible ripeness as was achieved in 2010 with alcohol levels averaging 13.8%-14.5% and higher in the Médoc and Graves to 15.5% and higher in Pomerol and St.-Emilion are accompanied by low acidities and suspiciously high pHs. That is not the case in 2010. The pHs are actually quite respectable, running between 3.5 and 3.8, and the total acids are normal as well. Add the extraordinary concentration of flavor and the high polyphenol levels with tannins that are often off the charts in terms of analytical readings, and readers can see that this is a massively concentrated vintage that will be less sumptuous and not nearly as friendly as 2009. In short, if there is any vintage that 2010 tends to resemble, it would be 2005, which was a great vintage of backward, dense, concentrated wines. 2010 has also turned out to be a top-flight vintage for the dry white Bordeaux as they seem to have levels of concentration and fruit that has produced the finest white wines Bordeaux has seen since 2007 (also a top vintage for dry whites).

I do not think it would be fair or prudent to say that 2010 exceeds in overall quality what was produced in 2009, 2005 or perhaps even 2000. However, it is unquestionably another great vintage. While Bob Dylan may have been talking about his own country when he wrote the song *With God On Our Side*, it sure looks as if fate has smiled on Bordeaux in an extraordinary way for much of the last decade with four great vintages (2000, 2005, 2009 and 2010). Moreover, the quality of the other vintages in that decade is very good.*

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the tastings was that the tannins, which were slightly more rugged and apparent before the wines were in bottle, have softened considerably. They're not as sweet and as well-integrated as the tannins in the 2009s, but this is a firmer, more classic vintage, and as most commentators have already indicated and I stated several years ago, the pHs are quite normal and the acidity levels slightly fresher and higher than in 2009. I thought many of these wines would close down and show their firmer structure after bottling, but as of this time, that hasn't happened in any broad sense. These wines have a certain accessibility, no doubt because of the potent alcohols and deeply concentrated, very ripe fruit.

The Global Marketplace

This vintage came out at incredibly high prices, even higher than 2009s, and a number of major merchants throughout the world refused to buy them, or canceled their orders once it was apparent that the recession of 2008 was going to keep many of the big spenders on the sidelines. While there appear to be few 2009s left in inventory, either at the chateau level, the négociant level or at wine retailer shops throughout the world, there is plenty of stock of 2010. It is difficult to forecast what prices will be, but given the greatness of the vintage, it is hard to believe they are going to soften any more than they have already. And if anything, given the less than stellar vintages of 2011 and 2012 coming behind 2009 and 2010, I suspect prices could even firm up and increase, but the global marketplace is dull, anxious, and in places very apprehensive about luxury-priced wines.

About the Tastings

All of these wines were tasted from bottle between January 7, and January 20, 2013.

—Robert Parker

2010 Pressac

A Bordeaux Blend Dry Red Table wine from St Emilion, Bordeaux, France

Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	Current (Release) Cost
Wine Advocate #205 Feb 2013	Robert Parker	89	Drink: 2013 - 2028	\$22-\$39 (35)
<p>Nicely textured, this relatively exuberant, medium to full-bodied wine has plenty of red and black fruits, some high-quality subtle oak in the background, and touches of licorice and Christmas fruitcake. It is deep, round, very pure and well-balanced. It should drink nicely for 10-15 years.</p> <p>One of the most gorgeous fortified chateaux in all of St-Emilion, sitting on a high bluff overlooking much of the appellation, this large property of 90 acres is planted with 72% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Franc, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Malbec and Carmeneré. Proprietor Francois Quenin has turned out one of the best wines I've tasted from this estate, a sleeper of the vintage.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> Add to Print List</p>				
Wine Advocate #194 May 2011	Robert Parker	(88-90)	Drink: 2013 - 2021	\$22-\$39
<p>This is a collaborative consulting effort from two of the top talents from Bordeaux's Right Bank, Dr. Alain Raynaud and Hubert de Bouard. A dark ruby/plum color is accompanied by sweet aromas of berry fruit, licorice and oak. With medium to full body and good depth as well as texture, this 2010 should drink nicely for a decade or more.</p>				