

## Bordeaux Vintage Comparison

### Society of Wine Educators' Annual Conference – August 2017

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## Question to think about as we taste

Wines 1 to 9 are divided into 3 groups of 3 wines.

Each group is made by the same producer and includes 3 different vintages.

The same vintages are represented in each flight

- a. Think about how you might identify the three different vintages using evidence from three wines
- b. For each group of 3 wines (1-3, 4-6 and 7-9) think about how you might identify the origin as closely as possible and the vintages using evidence from all three wines
- c. For each wine think about quality and ability to age.



# 2010 Growing Season

LATE START + TRICKY EARLY  
DRY, WARM, SUNNY

- Jan-April – very dry, below avg' temps ≈ late start to growth cycle
  - BUT helped avoid March frost damage
- Late vegetative cycle – bud-break, flowering, veraison, harvest
- \_Flowering = uneven + slow, cold, wet, changeable June
  - Millerandage + coulure (Merlot most affected) ≈ reduced yields
- July – temp spikes + drought - hot and dry
  - July temps hotter than 2009, 2008 and 2005 + drier than 2009  
and 2005 – water stress & some photosynthetic blockage



## 2010 Growing Season (cont')

- August – late *but* an even quick veraison
- August and Sept – one of the driest in past 30 years
- August/Sept – KEY: Warm but not hot and good diurnal differences  $\approx$  preserved acidities and freshness
- September - overall dry, some light rain– enough to kick start vine metabolism  $\approx$  anthocyanin build-up
- But cooler September temps led to some variation in quality of ripening
- Harvest started somewhat later + yields down



# 2010 Growing Season Impact

- Low disease pressure
- A Cabernet year
- Small bunches + concentrated berries – high skin to juice ratio
- Acidity, freshness, aroma purity
- High alcohol – especially with Merlot
- Some green/ vegetal notes + hard tannins – sorting necessary
- Cellar techniques: to manage the concentrated juices – More gentle extraction preferred and moderate fermentation temp



# 2010 Vintage Characteristics

- Wines considered very good to excellent
  - opinions vary whether 2009 or 2010 was better!
- Considered a 'Cabernet' year
- Tannins – firm + structuring – though angularity and astringency in some wines
- 2010 wines
  - Structure, acidity, freshness, purity, complexity and fruit concentration
  - Deeply colored, rich, dense, tannic, high alcohol,
  - Need time – but already enjoyable to some!
  - Some over-ripeness, some greenness, some portly, some harsh tannins



# 2012 Growing Season

Season of ups and downs  
Merlot Year

- 2012 started out crisp & dry – wet, cold spring delayed bud-break.
- Wet March, April & early May (May slightly warmer than April)
- Late flowering + June rain and cold weather ≈ uneven flowering
- Coulure (Merlot & CF) + millerandange (CS) ≈ crop reduction
- Cold July
- August – hot and sunny ≈ extreme heat spikes blocked veraison, berry scorch – drawn out veraison
- Water stress in August ≈ unripe polyphenols ≈ harsh green tannin
- Early September dry and warm but latter part marred by heavy showers ≈ more of a left bank Cabernet ripening challenge than right bank & Merlot
- Situations varied by site and by vine age - older deep rooted vines faring better.



# 2012 Growing Season Impact

- Late harvest for reds
- Berry breakage and very high disease pressure
- Uneven maturity between bunches and within bunches
- Human intervention key – in the vineyard + the cellar
  - strict selection to eliminate green / unripe berries, flavors and rot
  - the year of the optical sorting machines
- Left bank and Cabernet more impacted than Merlot
- Right bank fared better – more structure





## 2012 Vintage Characteristics

- Fruity vintage – ‘fruity’ wines for early enjoyment – more immediately aromatic than 2011 – broader with darker fruit than 2011 – more earlier charming and less austere - less complex than 2010
- “softer’ / smooth gentle tannic structure - not powerful wines
- Some mid/back palate hollowness and green notes
- Equally if not more heterogeneous than 2011
- Best wines are Merlot dominant – Right Bank and Pessac Léognan
- Lacking precision and concentration of better vintages such as 2010
- Some comparisons to 2002 and 2008



# 2014 Growing Season

- Mild, wet winter – replenished water table (after a few dry winters) and facilitated an early start to growth season
- Spring (March) started warm – above normal temperatures – but cool nights delayed budding a bit (but still March and ahead by 2 weeks of the norm)
- April remained warm but was very dry (slowing growth somewhat)
- May – variable – cool and damp with a mid-month heat spike –
- June – first half hot and sunny – so fast
- End June, July and August – growing season fell apart – cool, dull and showery – slowed ripening, disease pressure
- Summer marked by humidity – way less hours of ‘dry air’
- End of August – weather changed and through October glorious Indian summer – warm, sunny and dry – enabled red grapes to ripen and concentrate – 3<sup>rd</sup> hottest September on record (after ‘61 and ‘21)



# 2014 Impact of growing Season

- Variable
- Long Indian summer enabled grapes to fully ripen
- Cool summer kept pH low and preserved high acidity levels
- Some poor fruit set for Merlot
- Poor summer weather (i.e. HUMIDITY) = increased disease pressure early on – so vigilance in the vineyard important – especially for Merlot – also some ‘withering’ of Merlot
- Hail on right bank also impacted quantity
- Veraison ..... long and painstaking
- Mainly dry sunny Sept and Oct meant very little rot to deal with at harvest.
- Gentle extraction important to balance with medium concentration / structure and more elegant style
- A Cabernet vintage on the Left Bank



# 2014 Vintage Characteristics

## Promising beginning – Worrying Middle – Happy Ending

- Wines of elegance rather than power
- Characterized by high acidity – some initially said 'too high' – but good for aging
- Deeply color with aromatic complexity and medium+ flavor concentration – but not the power or concentration of 2010
- Tannins fine and smooth – left bank more structured than 2012
- A Cabernet vintage on the left bank
- Right bank less powerful than usual – and easier drinking



# WINES

SWE Bordeaux Seminar - Three Vintage Comparison

T-Order	Wine	appellation	vintage	Blend	Abv	Price
1	Château Brown	Pessac-Léognan	2010	60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot	14.0%	\$42
2	Château Brown	Pessac-Léognan	2012	50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 46% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot	13.5%	\$35
3	Château Brown	Pessac-Léognan	2014	55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot	13.0%	\$30
4	Château Lafon-Rochet, 4th Growth	Saint-Estèphe	2010	66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot	14.0%	\$50
5	Château Lafon-Rochet, 4th Growth	Saint-Estèphe	2012	67.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot, 1.5% Petit Verdot	13.0%	\$45
6	Château Lafon-Rochet, 4th Growth	Saint-Estèphe	2014	66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc	13.5%	\$40
7	Clos de l'Oratoire	Saint-Emilion Grand Cru Classé	2010	95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc	14.5%	\$60
8	Clos de l'Oratoire	Saint-Emilion Grand Cru Classé	2012	90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc	13.5%	\$45
9	Clos de l'Oratoire	Saint-Emilion Grand Cru Classé	2014	90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc	14.0%	\$40

**WINES**

Thank you !

