

2011 Bordeaux Vintage—Drink to your “Heart’s Delight”



The best way to buy Bordeaux wines is to buy them early. Now this may be a bit counterintuitive, because many Bordeaux wines are really at their best when they have five, ten even twenty years of age on them, but buying the usually-expensive wines before they hit the traditional retail market (called “futures”) is a smart – and lower-cost – bet.

But if you are going to invest in Bordeaux futures, how do you know which wines to buy? After all, some Bordeaux wines, particularly ones from popular vintages, are incredibly expensive. But there are many wines from this famed region – located about 300 miles southwest of Paris – that are very good but are often overlooked by high-end collectors. These wines are capable of delivering solid quality at a *relatively* good price.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a way to taste through a variety of Bordeaux wines from at a single session so that one could try samples and compare wines from each region appellation within the region? And what if you could meet and talk to the winemakers themselves to get their perspective?

Well, if you were lucky enough to attend the 15th annual “Heart’s Delight” fundraiser for the American Heart Association, then you have the luxury of enjoying a four-day affair that culminates with a seated tasting of over 20 Bordeaux wines. This year, owners and winemakers representing 15 different chateaux were on hand to discuss their wines from the 2011 vintage. Whether you are a veteran wine collector or budding wine enthusiast, it truly doesn't get much better than this. Best of all, the price of admission goes to a very worthy cause; fighting heart disease and stroke.

The 2011 vintage is a very good vintage that is suffering from poor timing since it is following on the heels of the acclaimed 2010 vintage. With a little research, many of these wines will yield a lot of enjoyment down the road.

The following is a list of my favorites from the tasting, in order of price:

2011 Château Haut-Bages-Libéral, Margaux Lush flavors of black fruits, earthy spices and graphite coat the palate upfront with notes of smoked meat on the smooth finish. **\$50**

2011 Château Canon La Gaffelière, Saint Emilion The full-bodied, well-structured frame holds the ample flavors of cherry, cassis and dark plum in check while providing a lush, full finish. **\$60**

2011 Château Coutet, Barsac-Sauternes This **sweet white wine** is elegant and beautiful, featuring integrated flavors of pineapple, super-ripe nectarine, candied orange and white flowers. The long, luscious finish is kept in check by the abundant acidity. **\$75**

2011 Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte, Pessac-Léognan A pretty wine featuring great balance, nice cherry/berry fruit with nice balance and structure. The generous mouthfeel provides considerable depth to the wonderful, lush finish. **\$80**

2011 Château Lynch-Bages, Pauillac Prominent scents of red fruit and cedar mingle on the nose while earthy notes of black cherry, dark plum and smoke mingle on the long, pleasant finish. **\$95**

2011 Château Beychevelle, Saint Julien Excellent structure supports wonderful flavors of blackberry, cassis, pencil lead, black plum and coffee. Trademark notes of curry whisper on the big finish. **\$100**