

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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**THE 2011 GERMAN VINTAGE:
A VERY, VERY FINE AND MUCH MORE LAID BACK VINTAGE
FOLLOWS ON THE HEELS OF THE HIGH WIRE ACT OF THE 2010ERS**



Part of the Karthäuserhof estate with their great monopole vineyard rising up in the background.

The 2011 vintage in Germany is very, very good and a quite dramatic step back from the extraordinary style of the 2010ers. 2011 will be a vintage that is marked by harmony, complexity and impeccable balance, rather than the electricity-generating acids and soaring sugars found in the very short crop of 2010. In some ways, the 2011 vintage in Germany reflects a bit back towards the 2010 vintage in Burgundy, as the young wines show very refined and impeccably balanced profiles that promise to age long and gracefully, but which are not forbidding structurally (as are many of the 2010ers in Germany) and many will provide truly lovely drinking right from the outset. The 2011 German vintage is defined by its very early flowering and its perfect end of season Indian summer. The precocious spring got the flowering started ahead of schedule, occurring fully two weeks earlier than normal, and which provided an ideally long and uneventful growing season in which the Rieslings and other grapes could climb gently each day in sugar accumulation, without any great dashes upwards in ripeness that could trouble the potential equilibriums in the finished wines. The flowering was underway in earnest in the vintage of 2011 by the last week of May and was finished up at most estates by the end of the

first week of June, which gave the vintage a fine head start on the typical summer growing season in the region. However, the summer was really marked by very cool nights to go along with the sunny days, so that ripeness marched along at a very relaxed pace and acidities generally stayed nice and zesty throughout the vast majority of the summer. There was a very fine *fin de saison* at harvest time in 2011, which allowed winegrowers to generally pick at their leisure and really suit the style of their various wines to the strengths of each individual parcels and the needs in their cellars for their clients.

As many winegrowers commented, the summer of 2011 was really pretty remarkable for its measured and uneventful pace throughout the summer, with the exception of the middle Mosel, which was crossed by a violent hailstorm on August 26th which dropped hail stones the size of tennis balls from just up river from Piesport through all the best vineyard villages in the middle Mosel. But, as Christophe Schaefer commented, “the hail damage was far more severe in the villages themselves, with many people’s slate roofs badly damaged and so many of the cars that were caught outside utterly destroyed by the heavy hail.” Schools were evacuated, shopping locations found people stranded when they came out from the stores after the storm to find that their cars were un-drivable from the damage. He continued, “but, in the vineyards we were really very lucky, for the very large size of the hailstones made them much less hazardous to the vines, with bunches that were struck by a large hail stone obviously destroyed, but the size of the hail meant that it only hit isolated bunches and really acted as an unanticipated green harvest.” Weingut Schaefer’s production was down by fifteen percent because of the hail, and this number was I am sure pretty similar for everyone in the middle Mosel, but with the remaining berries on the vines unaffected by the storm and, at least at the estates I visited on this trip, producing very, very good wines.

The late summer was marked by one very heavy rainstorm on September 11th, which acted to get botrytis started in many vineyards, but which was followed by cooler, very sunny conditions up through the first week in November, so that botrytis in most cases was very clean and really did not budge a whole lot after its initial phase right after the rain. The results of this were that some estates were able to pick a lot of sweet, botrytized grapes in lovely condition right at the start of the harvest, while other estates decided to forego the sweet wines and focus more on the beautifully ripe, clean berries for drier styled wines and lower level Prädikats for the traditional, noble sweet wines. So, for instance, one sees very wide ranges in stylistic choices made from one estate to another, with Egon Müller having started in the vineyard by picking shriveled grapes for Trockenbeerenauslese (of which the estate has 1300 liters bubbling away slowly and happily in the cellars), whereas his close neighbors, Hanno Zilliken and his daughter Dorothee decided to go in an opposite direction and did not use any botrytized grapes for the estate’s top wines and have made a brilliant range of dry and noble sweet wines that rely on clean grapes, as they cut away the early botrytis and allowed everything else to continue to ripen slowly in the beautiful Indian Summer of 2011. So, in this vintage there is a very full and generally very well-balanced range of wines from superb Trocken bottlings all the way up to Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese as one goes from estate to estate, but each collection is quite unique to itself in terms of what Prädikat levels are offered.

As Klaus-Peter Keller observed, “2011 was a vintage where it made much more sense to select for acidity, rather than ripeness, as the grapes were in such beautiful shape, but one had to

make sure that one brought in the grapes before the acids started to fall at the end of the season.” Given how perfect the weather was all the way through to November, the temptation was of course to keep the grapes out on the vines and go for a bit more ripeness, but perhaps a few of the producers who left the bunches hanging just a bit too long and may have let acidities get a bit lower than would have been ideal. I only tasted at twelve domaines on my visit to German wine country this year, as I had to plan for a month-long trip that took me through Burgundy, Germany, Champagne and Bordeaux, and I did not want to be on the road so long that my family would not recognize me when I returned, and consequently had to make some sacrifices in terms of appointments over the course of the month to ensure that I could make it home in time for Easter. So there may well be more softly-structured wines to be found in 2011 than is indicated from the dozen estates who I visited on this trip, but this may not in and of itself necessarily be a bad thing. Given the blazing acidity of the 2010ers, which is a vintage that simply demands extended cellaring before it will be even remotely ready to deliver on its very considerable promise, the vintage of 2011 will provide wines that should delight from very early on in their evolutions, and yet also deliver very good long-term cellaring at the top estates. For those of us with cellars full of wines too young for primetime drinking, the style of the 2011ers is quite welcome.

As Johannes Haart observed, and which was echoed by many other producers, “the 2011 vintage is also characterized by quite low pHs, which seem to provide a more dramatic impact for the acids in the finished wines and which, in fact, often taste as if they had higher acids than their analyses would have suggested.” But with the very long and measured growing season of 2011, the acids in many of the finished wines are beautifully ripe and suave, which gives the young wines a very elegant patina of refinement and impeccable balance that is dramatically different from the high wire acts of the previous vintage, and which promises to be very, very enjoyable right out of the blocks. One often finds with the 2011ers that the wines that do have some botrytis influence show a slightly more overtly bright and vibrant impact from their acids, as the concentrating effect of the noble rot has given a greater impression of acidity in the finished wines. For some German wine lovers who really prefer snappy young wines, there are certainly some 2011s which will seem a bit gently-structured on the backend and which may not delight as much as some of the more zesty examples of the vintage. But, many of the wines that seem just a touch softer right now also possess truly exceptional balance and focus and I would not be surprised to see some of these slightly “softer” wines also age very well indeed.

The growing conditions of 2011 seem to have really produced a lovely style and balance for the dry wines that I tasted, which promise to allow really fine early drinking and still deliver plenty of snap and bounce on the backend. The previous year of 2010 produced a lot of dry wines that showed outstanding promise, but also pretty forbidding structural elements that demand extended cellaring (due to the vintage’s very high acidity- at least where winegrowers did not overly de-acidify), and the 2011ers are a very welcome follow-up vintage that will allow early accessibility and drinking at a high level while the 2010ers hibernate in the cellar. For the dry wines, alcohol levels seem to be down pretty much across the board in comparison to 2010, and most of the wines that I tasted from the basic Estate Riesling Trocken bottlings all the way up to the Grosses Gewächs bottlings showing just beautiful balance and filigree. Of course, with each passing year, the number of basic Estate Riesling bottlings now sealed up under screwcap is growing, but for the most part, producers here in Germany seem to be very cognizant of the

potential hazards of permanent reduction in the wines sealed up under this closure and take plenty of steps to ensure that the wines go into bottle with the widest possible window of proper drinking before these issues come along. As Johannes Haart observed, “in a perfect world, we would probably keep the wines destined to be bottled under this closure in *fuder* for an additional year or two to ensure that they do not become reductive under screwcap, but as most of these wines are the lesser bottlings, no one would be interested in drinking older vintages in any case one or two years after the vintage, so doing so would be completely unrealistic.” Amongst the estates that I visited, the only winegrower who is completely opposed to screwcaps for any of his bottlings is Klaus-Peter Keller, who commented that “my clients already know me well enough to not even ask for any wines under screwcap, as there is no doubt in my mind that wines under natural cork age better and I will not put any of my wines under this other closure.”

Rheinhessen

Weingut Keller (Flörsheim-Dalsheim)

Klaus-Peter Keller has made absolutely stunning wines across the board in 2011, harvesting a bit earlier than some of his colleagues to try and keep his acidities bright and zesty. It seems to me that for exquisite Pinot Noirs, dry Rieslings and noble sweet versions, there is no one estate in Germany today who can match the consistent fireworks generated by Klaus-Peter Keller. He also showed off three compelling bottlings of Scheurebe from the 2011 vintage during our visit, observing that he learned from Hanz-Günther Schwartz, former cellar master at Weingut Müller-Catoir and considered the dean of Scheurebe during his long and illustrious career, that “one has to have old vines with Scheurebe to really start to get an elegant and interesting expression of the grape, as young vines often just show too much of that ‘cat pee’ side of the grape and the wines lack distinction.” Klaus-Peter has forty-seven year-old Scheurebe vines in the superb vineyard of Morstein, so he has some lovely, old vine fruit to work with and in 2011 he has fashioned three truly lovely examples from these vines- a very elegant and transparent Trocken version and scintillating examples of both Spätlese and Auslese as well. I was also very much struck by the excellent quality of the three different 2010 Spätburgunders that I tasted from the estate this year, as there is now a more “basic” bottling from younger vines that was really showing well at the time of my visit and will be an excellent value. As Klaus-Peter joked about his Pinots this year, “2010 is not as good of a vintage for Pinot Noir as it is in Burgundy, but it is still a pretty good year for our red wines.” My notes on the Keller 2010 reds may be found down the road to be just a touch on the conservative side, as Weingut Keller was my last stop on the German leg of my trip, and by this time, the amount of Riesling I had tasted had certainly shifted my palate a bit. For those who do not have experience tasting a large number of German Rieslings over an extended period of time, what one finds is that the perception of tannins in red wines seems to be elevated by long tasting sojourns exclusively into the realm of Riesling, so that the wines can seem just a touch more harsh after so many Rieslings than they in reality will prove to be. I tried to take this into account when tasting Klaus-Peter’s 2010 reds this year, but it seems likely that the wines will eventually prove to be even a bit better than my notes below will suggest out of the blocks.

But, of course, despite the consistent excellence of the non-Riesling bottlings, most Keller fans want to know how the Keller Rieslings are in 2011. In short, they were probably the most consistently brilliant range of Rieslings I tasted on the trip through Germany this year, as Klaus-Peter seems to have really timed his harvesting perfectly to keep his acidities bright and zesty

and give the wines cut and purity. In the season of 2011, Klaus-Peter observed that he tried a new technique of doing a bit of leaf pulling from the top of the vines, so that he could slow down the ripening process just a touch in a few of his warmer sites, such as the Pettenthal and Hipping, and allow the sugars to mount at a slightly slower pace and keep the acid levels up. This technique seems to have worked quite well, as across the board, the 2011ers from Weingut Keller are amongst the raciest and snappiest wines of the vintage. The dry wines up and down the hierarchy from basic Trocken bottlings all the way up to the six illustrious bottlings of Grosses Gewächs and the G-Max are as magical as is now customary at this estate, and the noble sweet wines are also outstanding successes. In short, there is very little in the Keller cellars from the 2011 vintage that wine lovers are not going to want to add to their cellars, and this is a year where I would be inclined to happily buy anything from the estate that I crossed paths with in the course of my shopping for the vintage, as there is an impressive consistency of excellence across the board in this vintage. If one finds the litany of superlatives for the Keller 2011ers a bit too much, I will say that the two bottlings of Sylvaner that I tasted this year did not seem quite up to the standards of the last couple of vintages, and though they were still good, they are not quite as successful in their range than the rest of the Keller lineup in 2011. Beyond the wines listed below, there are a few higher Prädikat dessert wines also in the Keller cellars, but as they were still bubbling away in the very early stages of fermentation, there was no reason to taste them on this visit.

Pinot Noir

2010 Estate Spätburgunder Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2010 “regular” Spätburgunder Trocken is really a lovely wine and will be the Keller pinot noir this vintage that drinks the best right out of the blocks. The nose is deep, complex and really quite expressive, offering up a classy blend of red cherries, a touch of orange peel, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, a nice base of soil and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and modestly tannic, with fine focus and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is a lovely middleweight that will drink well from the outset, but has the balance and structure to also age quite well. Impressive. 2012-2025+. **90.**

2010 Bürgel Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2010 Bürgel Spätburgunder was showing just a touch of new wood still at the time of my visit, but as the wine is raised in only twenty percent new barrels (all the wood for the two Pinot Noir Grosses Gewächs are sourced from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti- so the provenance of the wood is impeccable) and I am sure that the wood will disappear seamlessly into the wine with a bit more age. The wine offers up an outstanding bouquet of cherries, a touch of strawberries, roses, cocoa, beautifully complex soil tones and a dollop of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, transparent and intensely flavored, with lovely mid-palate depth, tangy acids and a bit of chewy tannin to resolve on the well-balanced, long and focused finish. Lovely wine. 2017-2035+. **93+.**

2010 Frauenberg Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs (Selection Massale)- Keller

The 2010 Frauenberg Spätburgunder was also showing beautifully at the time of my visit, jumping from the glass in a classy mélange of red and black cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, rose petals, chalky soil tones, a touch of orange zest and a stylish base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and wonderfully complex, with a sappy core of fruit, great transparency, moderate tannins and a very long, focused and tangy finish. The wood here again

needs a couple of years to fully disappear into the wine, but the depth, nascent complexity and impeccable balance here suggest that this wine will indeed be special. 2019-2040+. **94+**.

Scheurebe Bottlings

Klaus-Peter suggested that we taste the entire range of Scheurebe on their own before wading into the other dry wines, as he felt it was more logical to taste all three Prädikat levels of this grape in succession, rather than inserting the Spätlese and Auslese bottlings in amongst the Rieslings. I have followed his order and listed all three Scheurebe bottlings here on their own, before we wade into the Sylvaner and Riesling bottlings.

2011 Scheurebe Trocken- Weingut Keller

I have never tasted a more elegant and almost ethereal version of dry Scheurebe than this 2011er from Klaus-Peter Keller. His parcel of old vines is in the Morstein vineyard, but because of the new regulations about labeling wines from these grand cru vineyards, only wines produced from Riesling in the Morstein can carry the name of the vineyard on the label. (There does seem to be an awful lot of regulations in the world of German wine!) In any event, the great *terroir* of the Morstein does not only announce itself when Riesling is the grape in question, as this dry Scheurebe is outstanding, offering up a very refined nose of pink grapefruit, tart orange, wet stone minerality, dried flowers and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and impressively transparent, with crisp acids, lovely focus and grip and impressive length on the soil-driven and impressively complex finish. At twelve percent alcohol, this is not a blockbuster dry Scheurebe, but rather a wine of discreet power and superb minerality. Just a lovely bottle of Scheurebe. 2012-2025. **91**.

2011 Scheurebe Spätlese- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Scheurebe Spätlese from Klaus-Peter is a beautiful wine that really shows just how noble this varietal can be when carried off to perfection. The deep, pure and scintillating nose offers up a tropical mélange of pineapple, tangerine, honeycomb, lavender and complex, crystalline minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and dancing, with a superb core of fruit, stunning transparency and great length and grip on the very long finish that closes with a distinct note of orange zest. This wine is incredibly light on its feet for 100 Oechsle, as it was made from ninety-eight percent clean grapes and has virtually no influence from botrytis. A great wine. 2012-2030+. **94**.

2011 Scheurebe Auslese- Weingut Keller

With the 2011 Keller Scheurebe Auslese we are moving into the realm of serious botrytis, as this beautiful sweet wine weighs in at 130 Oechsle and was made from seventy percent shriveled grapes. The brilliantly clean botrytis nose soars from the glass in a blaze of mandarin orange, pineapple, honey, chalky minerality (this is still Morstein), a nice touch of spice and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep. Full-bodied and very pure, with a lovely creaminess on the attack from the glazing of noble rot, a superb core, laser-like focus and truly stunning minerality on the very long, snappy and complex finish. Like the Spätlese, this is an amazingly light on its feet example of sweet Scheurebe. Pure magic here! 2012-2040. **96**.

Dry White Wines

2011 Grüner Sylvaner Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Grüner Sylvaner Trocken from Weingut Keller is a very good wine which may well have suffered a bit from having to follow the fireworks in the glass generated by the Scheurebe Auslese. The nose is fairly complex and stony, offering up scents of grapefruit, lemongrass, stony minerality, a bit of wheat chaff and orange peel. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite dry, with a respectable core, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the wet stone finish. Good solid juice that would really be better with a year or two in the cellar, but as Klaus-Peter commented, “most of the bottles of this wine will be drunk up by our local clients in the next few weeks during white asparagus season.” 2013-2020. **87.**

2011 Sylvaner Trocken “Feuervogel” Alte Reben- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Feuervogel old vine version of Sylvaner is a notable step up from the regular bottling this year, as the wine offers up a really lovely nose of tart orange, green apple, citrus peel, complex minerality, a touch of straw and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and transparent, with a fine core, excellent focus and balance and a very long, bright and ripely acidic finish. This is about as good as Sylvaner can get. 2012-2025. **91.**

2011 Riesling Trocken- Weingut Keller

There is nothing “basic” about the basic bottling of Riesling Trocken from Klaus-Peter Keller this year, as this twelve percent alcohol wine is the epitome of breed and zesty purity. The really lovely nose wafts from the glass in a mix of tart orange, a touch of wild yeasts, pink grapefruit, complex minerality, petrol and lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and truly dancing, with a superb core of fruit, ripe acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. Fine juice. 2012-2030+. **89.**

2011 Riesling “von der Fels” Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2011 von der Fels is a great bottle of dry Riesling. The superb bouquet delivers a complex mélange of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, crystalline minerality, a touch of smoke and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very marked by its limestone base of soil, with laser-like focus, racy acids and great cut, length and grip on the absolutely elegant and impressively reserved finish. If one cannot latch onto a few bottles of the various Grosses Gewächs bottlings in 2011, one could do a lot worse than popping a case of this outstanding dry Riesling in the cellar. 2015-2035+. **92.**

2011 Niersteiner Hipping Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The impossibly steep Hipping vineyard in Nierstein, with its eighty percent grade, has to be one of the great viticultural challenges in Rheinhessen, but also one of the most rewarding vineyards for those who are intrepid enough to cultivate their vines in these superb, red slate soils. The 2011 Keller Hipping Grosses Gewächs is a great wine in the making, offering up a very complex and refined nose of grapefruit, lemongrass, wild yeasts, tart pear, slate, gentle petrol tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly suave on the attack, with a lovely core, crisp acids, fine focus and excellent length and grip on the bright and seamless finish. The acids here are quite present, but so beautifully ripe that they will allow this fine wine to provide some impressive early drinking. That said, I would still try to give this wine at least another five years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. A supremely elegant wine which carries its 12.5 percent alcohol with cool and collected calm. 2017-2040. **94+.**

2011 Niersteiner Pettenthal Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

Nierstein's greatest vineyard, the Pettenthal, has also really delivered the goods in 2011 at Weingut Keller and one could not ask for a more refined and classy dry Riesling. The brilliant nose soars from the glass in a complex mélange of tart peach, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, orange peel, petrol, beautifully complex, slate soil tones, citrus blossoms and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and almost silky in its elegance, with an outstanding core of fruit, bright, seamless acids and magical length and grip on the dancing and utterly spectacular finish. A gorgeous wine. 2018-2045. **95.**

2011 Westhofener Kirchspiel Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

Klaus-Peter Keller's parcel in the Kirchspiel is also old vines, having been planted in 1964, and the 2011 Grosses Gewächs is a truly stunning young wine. The nose is more expressive at the present time than the more reserved Pettenthal, offering up a complex and very pure blend of tart orange, pink grapefruit, a bit of smoked meat, orange zest, complex, chalky minerality, wild yeasts and lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and vibrant, with great purity in the rock solid core, great cut and grip and a very long, laser-like and focused finish. Where this vintage of Kirchspiel will ultimately rank with some of the other great wines produced from this vineyard in the last several years is uncertain, but it seems likely to rank right up there at the summit. 2018-2050. **94+.**

2011 Dalsheimer Hubacker Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Hubacker Grosses Gewächs, with its predominantly red soils, is quite different in profile from the chalky Kirchspiel, but it too is absolutely outstanding. The wine offers up a deep, intense and complex nose of pink grapefruit, orange peel, petrol, wet stone, wild yeasts and a topnote of fresh rosemary. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, transparent and rapier-like on the attack, with a rock solid core, brisk, ripe acids, stunning focus and grip and a very, very long, precise and stony finish. This is the most masculine of the Keller Grosses Gewächs bottlings in 2011, and it will be stunning with some bottle age. 2019-2050. **94.**

2011 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

There is a little bit more Morstein in the Keller cellars this year, as Klaus-Peter has bought another small parcel in the vineyard that is planted with sixty year-old vines. Perhaps it is just the quality of the vintage in general this year at Weingut Keller, or perhaps this addition of more old vines has taken this wine's quality up just a small notch, but whatever the reason, this 2011 Morstein is a monumental wine in the making. The utterly brilliant nose offers up a very mineral blend of orange zest, pink grapefruit, kaleidoscopic minerality, a touch of lemongrass, tart orange, petrol and a very striking topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and laser-like, with a stunning core of fruit, great focus and cut, ripe, snappy acidity and simply stunning length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is a Morstein for the ages! 2020-2060. **97.**

2011 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

After the magnificent quality of the 2011 Morstein, I did not expect the Abtserde to hit the same exalted level, but it is every bit as complex and pure on both the nose and palate and even a touch longer on the finish! This is a brilliant wine in every respect, delivering a great bouquet of tangerine, petrol, blood orange, a very discreet touch of wild yeasts, lemongrass, kaleidoscopic, chalky minerality and a beautiful topnote of spring flowers with a bit of air. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and dancing, with a stunning core of fruit, gem-like precision to its focus, snappy, ripe acids and great balance and grip on the endless finish. An utterly profound young wine. 2020-2060. **98+.**

2011 G-Max Riesling- Weingut Keller

The 2011 G-Max is another absolute classic in the making from Klaus-Peter Keller. The stunningly complex nose roars from the glass in a blend of pink grapefruit, orange, wild yeasts, dried flowers, a beautiful base of limestone minerality, just a dollop of petrol and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless, with superb depth in the mid-palate, flawless focus and balance and a very, very, very long, zesty and sizzling finish. This is as good as any young white wine I have ever tasted. 2022-2075. **99+**.



Slightly Off-Dry Wines

2011 Riesling “RR”- Weingut Keller

The 2011 “RR” bottling from Weingut Keller this year will not be labeled as a Trocken, as Klaus-Peter preferred to leave the wine where it stopped on its own during fermentation, so the residual sweetness is just above the official cut off for a Trocken wine- despite the wine essentially still a dry wine and in the Feinherb range of residual sugar. The lovely nose offers up a complex mélange of peach, tart orange, lovely soil tones, lemongrass, citrus zest and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and classy, with just a bit of sweetness on the attack, lovely mid-palate depth, fine focus and excellent length and grip on the snappy and well-balanced finish. Another really lovely bottle. 2014-2030+. **91**.

2011 Hipping “R”- Weingut Keller

There are special, ever so slightly “off-dry” wines from both the Hipping and Pettenthal this year that Klaus-Peter has designated as “R” bottlings (perhaps for just a touch of residual sugar?) and which are both splendid wines. The 2011 Hipping “R” offers up a brilliant nose of pink grapefruit, orange zest, wild yeasts, a touch of bee pollen, slate, gentle notes of petrol and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and dancing, with a great core of fruit, crisp acids and just a touch of mid-palate sweetness nicely buffering the acids on the very long, pure and zesty finish. What a beautiful bottle of wine! 2014-2035+. **94.**

2011 Pettenthal “R”- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Pettenthal “R” is another absolutely stellar young bottle of Riesling, soaring from the glass in a superb mélange of peach, tangerine, bee pollen, a stunningly complex base of slatey minerality, orange blossoms and a touch of wild yeast. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and wonderfully complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely filigree, fine focus and a very, very long, bright and tangy finish that closes with just a whisper of residual sweetness tied to great minerality. This really captures the inherent elegance of the Pettenthal and should drink beautifully from the moment of release. 2012-2030. **93+.**

Noble Sweet Wines

2011 Westhofener Kirchspiel Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Keller

Kirchspiel is one of my favorite of the *terres blanches* Keller vineyards for wines at the Spätlese level and the 2011 is a truly lovely example of the vintage. The very beautiful and filigreed bouquet jumps from the glass in a very, very complex mix of white peach, apple, orange blossoms, bee pollen, a touch of petrol, wild yeasts, spring flowers and chalk. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very transparent, with dancing acidity, great mid-palate depth and a very long, zesty finish that closes with outstanding focus and grip. A truly succulent bottle of Spätlese. 2015-2040. **93.**

2011 Niersteiner Pettenthal Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Pettenthal Spätlese is a brilliant wine in the making, with a much more primary profile on both the nose and palate than the wide open Kirchspiel. The deep and youthful nose offers up a superb blend of white peach, apple, petrol, beautiful slate tones, wild yeasts a touch of violet and a lovely, esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and racy, with a superb core of fruit, beautiful filigree and brilliant length and grip on the primary and very, very promising finish. For the next six or seven years, the Kirchspiel will be the flashier and more complex wine, but about age eight this brilliant wine should really start to pull out in the passing lane and start to capitalize on its magical potential. Just a brilliant, brilliant bottle of Spätlese. 2020-2060. **95.**

2011 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Abtserde Spätlese is another stunning wine in the making. The deep and nascently complex bouquet delivers a panoply of peach, blood orange, lemongrass, chalky minerality, honeycomb and a bright and bouncy topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and snappy, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus and great brightness and transparency on the zesty and dancing finish. Another absolutely beautiful bottle of young Spätlese. 2016-2040. **95.**

2011 Niersteiner Pettenthal Riesling Auslese- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Pettenthal Auslese is an absolutely brilliant wine this year. The deep, pure and utterly beguiling nose soars from the glass in a blaze of ripe peach, a touch of mango, glorious

slate tones, honeycomb, orange zest and citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and oh, so light on its feet, with bright, zesty acidity, laser-like focus, wonderful transparency and simply magical length and grip on the hauntingly pure and filigreed finish. The red slate of the Pettenthal gives this wine such a beautiful base of mineral drive to go with its very, very clean botrytis tones and the synthesis of the two elements is simply otherworldly! One of the most beautiful wines I have ever tasted from this legendary vineyard. 2016-2050. **97.**

2011 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Auslese- Weingut Keller

The 2011 Abtserde Auslese is a touch more glazed than the hauntingly transparent Pettenthal, but every bit as lovely. The deep and glorious nose offers up a tropical mélange of Mandarin orange, a hint of pineapple, honeycomb, chalky soil tones and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and vibrant, with a great core, a lovely base of soil carrying the beautifully glazed fruit, zesty acids and simply superb length and grip on the laser-like finish. Not quite as celestial as the Pettenthal, the 2011 Abtserde Auslese is another brilliant rendition of the 2011 vintage. 2016-2040+. **95.**

2011 Niersteiner Hipping Riesling Beerenauslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Keller

The only 2011 Beerenauslese that I tasted from Klaus-Peter Keller on this visit was this superb Hipping Gold Kap BA. The beautiful nose delivers a tropical blend of pineapple, fresh apricot, tangerine, honey, a lovely touch of soil and a beautifully pungent topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very, very light on its feet, with fine framing acidity, great elegance and a very, very long, focused and honeyed finish. Just a lovely bottle of BA. 2014-2040. **93+.**

Nahe

Weingut Hermann Dönnhoff (Oberhausen)

Helmut Dönnhoff was absolutely beaming about the quality of the 2011ers at his family estate this year, for as he stated, "in my whole career, I have never seen such beautiful grapes as those in 2011." Helmut was very quick to point out that this year, his son Cornelius must receive all the credit for these beautiful grapes, as he has been solely in charge of the viticulture of the estate for the last three years (with Helmut always available for consultation). While the Dönnhoff estate has produced excellent wines in the last several vintages, I am not sure that they can match the consistent brilliance of this collection of 2011ers, which left me as ecstatic as I was a decade ago tasting through the young 2001ers at this estate. There is a tensile brilliance to each and every Dönnhoff wine in 2011 that is going to make long-time fans of this great estate very, very happy. There is a new vineyard site in the lineup of top wines this year, as Helmut Dönnhoff purchased a great old vineyard in the village of Roxheim (situated northwest of Bad Kreuznach) called Höllenpfad, which was in danger of being ripped up. The vineyard was one of the most famous in the Nahe in the late nineteenth century and first couple of decades of the twentieth, but had fallen from fashion and has been pretty obscure for several decades now. The soils here are red sandstone, and the vineyard had once been in Helmut's brother-in-law's family, but they had been forced to sell them a generation ago. The vines are a very good age-forty to forty-five years on average, but it had taken a couple of years to get the vineyard back in proper shape for a bottling on its own, and previously it had been solely blended into the Estate Riesling for the first two years that the family owned the vines. In 2011, there is a single Trocken bottling from the Höllenpfad and it is a lovely new addition to the lineup.

The following wines were all tasted during the third week of March during my visit to the estate. In addition to what was tasted on that morning, there are also Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese bottlings from the Hermannshöhle and an Eiswein from the Brücke (the first wine made exclusively by Helmut's daughter, as both Helmut and his son Cornelius were on the road when the grapes finally froze in early January), which were still bubbling away in the cellars at the time of my visit. The 2011ers from Weingut Dönnhoff are amongst the most brilliant wines to be found in this vintage and are going to make an awful lot of people really, really happy with their style and stunning quality! The Trocken wines are every bit as pure and racy as has been the case for the last several vintages, but with the inherent elegance of the vintage lending a clarity and dancing precision to the wines across the board that is very, very special this year. The noble sweet wines are simply brilliant in 2011, with

Dry Wines

2011 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Estate Riesling Trocken will be bottled primarily under screwcap, but I did have the good fortune to taste a sample sealed under natural cork for a few clients who prefer to buy this wine without a screwcap. The wine is twelve percent alcohol this year. Under cork, this is a terrific wine and a superb value, as it offers up a very pretty, complex and vibrant nose of white cherries, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, citrus peel, petrol and slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full and nicely round on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, a very minerally backend, bright acids and lovely lift on the long and classy finish. A great base bottling- a pity so much of it will be bottled under screwcap! 2012-2025+. **88+**.

2011 Tonschiefer Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Tonschiefer is a touch riper than the Estate Trocken, tipping the scales at a very civilized 112.5 percent alcohol and is really a lovely wine this year. The deep and very primary nose offers up scents of grapefruit, lemongrass, wild yeasts, crystalline minerality, petrol, citrus peel and a bit of tart orange. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite racy, with a superb core of pure fruit, great focus and a very long, youthful and minerally finish. This is a really superb bottle of Trocken Riesling! 2013-2030. **90**.

2011 Kahlenberg Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Trocken from the Kahlenberg vineyard is stunning! The outstanding nose soars from the glass in a blaze of tart orange, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, plenty of petrol, a deep base of slate, orange peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite tensile, with a rock solid core of fruit, laser-like focus and balance and a lightning bolt of acidity driving the very long and minerally finish. This is a brilliant wine this year! 2015-2040. **92+**.

2011 Höllenspfad Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

And the new wine in the portfolio? The 2011 Höllenspfad Riesling Trocken is more overtly fruity than the laser beam of minerality that is the Kahlenberg, but it is right there in terms of quality and complexity. The superb nose offers up scents of pink grapefruit, tart orange, salty soil tones, petrol, wild yeasts, orange zests, just a hint of fresh pineapple and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with excellent mid-palate depth, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the very soil-driven finish. A lovely, lovely wine. 2013-2035. **92**.

2011 Felsenberg "Türmchen" Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

The Türmchen Grosses Gewächs of course cannot have the name of this section of the vineyard on the label, so there is a drawing of the tower instead. The 2011 version is going to be

a stunning wine, as it soars from the glass in a blaze of orange zest, white cherries, wild yeasts, pink grapefruit, petrol, brilliantly complex minerality and a hint of *Chablisienne*-like straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and rock solid at the core, with snappy, ripe acids, superb focus and balance and stunning length and grip. Just a beautiful bottle. 2017-2040. **93+**.

2011 Dellchen Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Dellchen Grosses Gewächs is simply the greatest young dry wine I have ever tasted from this vineyard! The inherent elegance of the vintage has really worked its magic with this great Dellchen and this wine will be a must addition to any Dönnhoff lovers' cellar! The utterly refined and brilliant nose offers up an intense blend of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, a touch of lilacs, wild yeasts, crystalline slate tones and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and extremely elegant and racy for a young Dellchen, with a rock solid core of fruit, bright acids and stunning lift on the laser-like, endless and very snappy finish. A hauntingly beautiful wine in 2011! 2018-2045. **96**.

2011 Hermannshöhle Riesling Grosses Gewächs – Weingut Dönnhoff

Not to be outdone by the Dellchen, the 2011 Hermannshöhle Grosses Gewächs is also profound! The deep and completely kaleidoscopic nose soars from the glass in a magical blend of white cherries, pink grapefruit, crystalline minerality, citrus peel, lemongrass and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and Porsche-like in the passing lane, with stunning mid-palate depth, ripe, racy acids, brilliant focus and grip and a very, very pure and very long and elegant finish. A seamless and utterly stunning young wine! 2020-2050. **97+**.

2011 Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Weissburgunder Trocken comes in somewhere between 13 and 13.5 percent alcohol this year (the final analyses have not been completed, as the wine is still in tank) and is quite fresh and pretty. The nose offers up scents of apple, orange, dried flowers, a touch of citrus peel and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite crisp, with engaging complexity, zesty acids and quite good focus on the long and bouncy finish. This is a lovely glass of Pinot Blanc. 2012-2017. **88**.

2011 Grauburgunder Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Pinot Gris is similarly ripe and quite nicely balanced as well. The nose is a stylish blend of apple, citrus zest, a touch of wheat, lovely soil tones and spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and wide open for business, with sound framing acids, good balance and fine length and grip on the classy finish. This has brightness and bounce on the backend and is an equally successful example of the vintage. 2012-2017. **88**.

2011 Weissburgunder Trocken “S”- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Weissburgunder Trocken “S” is a single cuvée, raised in a new, 1200 liter German oak *fuder* this year. The Pinot Blanc carries the touch of new wood well, with this bottling packing a bit more mid-palate depth and backend length than the regular bottling of Weissburgunder. The nose is deep and complex, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, a touch of citrus peel, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good core, very well-integrated oak and fine grip on the long and snappy finish. High class Pinot Blanc. 2012-2020. **89+**.

2011 Grauburgunder Trocken “S”- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Grauburgunder Trocken “S” is also excellent, with more depth and complexity than the regular bottling this year. While my notes do not contain the exact oak regimen for this

bottling, I have to assume it is similar to the Weissburgunder “S”. The deep and classy nose offers up a fine mélange of orange, apple, wheat chaff, a complex base of soil, orange peel and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with lovely cut and focus, fine balance and a long, snappy finish that closes with a note of sweet grapefruit. A lovely bottle of Pinot Gris that carries its touch of new wood effortlessly. 2012-2020+. **90.**

Classic Off-Dry and Noble Sweet Wines

2011 Dönnhoff Riesling QbA

The 2011 Estate Riesling QbA had already been bottled- all under screwcap. The wine was already showing the ill effects of this closure, with an overtly metallic minerality already beginning to develop where the slate should be in the wine (Helmut Dönnhoff was quite surprised to observe this when it was pointed out to him, so perhaps this wine will escape the yoke of screwcap next year!). It is too bad, as there was a very nice wine here under the closure, with notes of apple, grapefruit, petrol and wild yeasts to go along with the minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and slightly angular from the SC, with good acids and nice focus on the backend. I would not buy this wine under this closure, as it is already showing early signs of trouble and it had only been in bottle for a couple of weeks! But, if one is intrepid enough to purchase (what was after all a very good wine before its closure) the wine, drink it up quickly. 2012-2014? **85.**

2011 Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl Riesling Kabinett – Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Krötenpfuhl Kabinett is a lovely wine. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of oranges, white cherries, spring flowers, a touch of petrol, a lovely base of soil tones and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full, fresh and lively, with lovely filigree, bright acids and a long, complex and very classy finish. Just a lovely bottle of Kabinett. 2012-2030. **90.**

2011 Oberhäuser Leistenberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Leistenberg is really a very classic example of Kabinett this year. The deep, pure and vibrant nose offers up a very floral mélange of apple, tart orange, complex slate tones, petrol, orange blossoms and lilacs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and lively, with lovely filigree, fine mid-palate intensity, snappy acids and superb length and grip on the dancing finish. A lovely, lovely Kabinett. 2012-2030. **93.**

2011 Norheimer Kirschheck Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Kirschheck Spätlese is another absolute classic in the making. The very pure and lively nose delivers a fine blend of white cherries, white peach, slate, petrol, spring flowers and bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and beautifully balanced, with zest acidity, a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and a very long, very minerally finish. This is light on its feet as the best vintages of Kirschheck often can be, but with beautiful purity and depth in the mid-palate. Again, a very classically-sized Spätlese. 2012-2030+. **92.**

2011 Schlossböckelheimer Felsenberg “Türmchen” Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Türmchen” Spätlese (of course, no mention of the name on the label- just the picture of the watchtower) is truly stunning this year and shows just how brilliant this section of old vines can be in a top vintage. The deep and magical nose soars from the glass in a blaze of pear, white cherries, a hint of Mirabelle, petrol, slate, bee pollen and apple blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine deep, medium-full and very intensely flavored, with a great core, racy acids, a fair bit of mid-palate sweetness for its Prädikat and great mineral drive on the very long, zesty and dancing finish. Just a brilliant Spätlese. 2015-2040+. **94+.**

2011 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Dönnhoff Brücke Spätlese shows the faintest touch of botrytis on both the nose and palate that serve to give the wine a slight touch of exotica that is very exciting indeed. The utterly suave bouquet offers up scents of clementine, lemon chiffon, pear, slate, citrus blossoms and an esthery topnote redolent of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and racy, with a fine core, dancing filigree, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the slatey and very precise finish. The nose is quite exotic by Brücke standards, but on the palate this wine is utterly classic. A magical combination! 2016-2040+. **95+**.



2011 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2011 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Spätlese is utterly profound and the greatest young example of this wine I have tasted since the 2001 was released! The utterly pure and refined nose soars from the glass in a stunning mélange of pink grapefruit, apple, petrol, kaleidoscopic slate, citrus peel, bee pollen and a nice dollop of white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure, with a superb core of fruit, a very ethereal palate impression, bright, snappy acidity, laser-like focus and magical complexity and grip on the very long, filigreed and dancing finish. This is a brilliant vintage of 2011 Hermannshöhle Spätlese! 2016-2040+. **96+**.

2011 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Goldkapsel Auslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

While the 2011 Brücke Spätlese is a bit exotic aromatically from its very gentle glaze of botrytis, the Auslese is completely classic. The very clean and pure botrytis here has produced a

brilliant Auslese, which soars from the glass in a blaze of apple, white cherries, gentle notes of honeycomb, a touch of tangerine, spring flowers and a glorious base of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and quite reserved today, with a great core of fruit, racy acids, again, outstanding filigree and magical length and grip on the laser-like finish. This is a brilliant young bottle of Auslese that perfectly showcases the great purity and utterly pristine botrytis of the best sweet wines of the vintage. 2020-2060+. **95.**

2011 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Goldkapsel Auslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

After the brilliance of the 2011 Brücke Spätlese and Auslese, I was beginning to wonder how the sweet wines from the Hermannshöhle were going to stack up this year. Never mind! The 2011 Hermannshöhle Auslese is a legend in the making, offering up a deeper and racier rendition of the vintage. The brilliant bouquet delivers scents of glazed grapefruit, tangerine, a touch of petrol, gentle notes of fresh pineapple, honeycomb and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and even snappier than the Brücke Auslese, with brilliant purity, a great core, flawless focus and balance and a rapier-like and endless finish. This is one of the greatest examples of Hermannshöhle Auslese I have tasted since the legendary 1998 versions. Pure magic. 2020-2075. **98.**

Weingut Emrich-Schönleber (Monzingen)

I love the wines of Weingut Emrich-Schönleber, which often seem to show quite understated out of the blocks, but age into such stunning beauties. The 2011ers here perfectly capture the long growing season and the relaxed harvesting possible in the fine Indian Summer of this year, with the early flowering having finished by the 8th of June and the harvest taken in a very leisurely fashion between September 20th and October 18th. The resulting wines are very pure, crisp and very true to their genre, with the dry wines crisp, concentrated and beautifully transparent and the noble sweet wines showing very good delineation and soil signature, with the higher Prädikat wines also resplendent in the very clean botrytis of the vintage. Several of the 2011ers here had already been bottled at the time of my visit on March 21st, with the remainder set to be bottled over the next week or two after my departure. The lower level Trocken wines this year really look to be terrific values and will drink very, very well right out of the blocks, with their crisp acids beautifully buried in extract and minerality.

Dry 2011ers

2011 Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Riesling Trocken had already been bottled (the week before my visit) and was still showing very well indeed. The very lovely nose wafts from the glass in a blend of tart orange, stony minerality, lemongrass and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and light on its feet, with lovely, ripe acids, fine focus and very good length and grip on the classy finish. For a basic Riesling Trocken bottling this is outstanding and will be a great value in 2011. 2012-20225+. **88.**

2011 Riesling “Lenz”- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Lenz bottling from Weingut Emrich-Schönleber really strikes a nice balance at 13 grams per liter of residual sugar and 12.5 percent alcohol, so that it is not officially a Trocken wine- though still essentially a dry wine. The bouquet is deep and quite stylish in its mélange of pink grapefruit, tangerine, petrol, a touch of straw, incipient notes of lavender and a really complex base of minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and bouncy, with a fine

core of fruit, bright acids and a focused and classy finish that is just brimming with complex minerality. Really fine juice here and another terrific value. 2013-2025+. **90+**.

2011 Riesling “Mineral” Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Mineral Trocken had been bottled a week before my visit as well, but was also showing quite well. This is a full thirteen percent alcohol, as it is a touch drier than the Lenz. The nose is deep and classy, offering up scents of wild yeasts, tart apple, grapefruit, stony, slate tones, citrus peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and beautifully balanced, with fine core of fruit, lovely focus and a long, complex and zesty finish. Good juice. 2013-2025+. **90+**.

2011 Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The very good Weissburgunder Trocken is around thirteen percent alcohol as well this year (the final analysis had not yet been completed on this and the Grauburgunder) and the wine had about twenty percent of the cuvée go through malolactic this year. The wine offers up a very pretty and ripe nose of white peach, pink grapefruit, spring flowers, lovely soil tones, a bit of orange peel and a nice touch of wheat in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and crisp, with a generous attack, good mid-palate depth and a long, bright and bouncy finish. This will not be a long-distance runner, but for drinking over the rest of the decade, this is a lovely bottle of Pinot Blanc. 2102-2020. **88**.

2011 Grauburgunder Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Grauburgunder also saw about twenty percent of the cuvée go through malo this year. The wine is a bit more reserved on the nose than the wide open Weissburgunder, delivering scents of apple, tangerine, wheat chaff, a stylish base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully-balanced, with a more soil-driven personality than the Weissburgunder, bright, zesty acids and very good length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice as well. 2012-2020+. **89**.

2011 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Frühlingsplätzchen Trocken was scheduled to be bottled the week after my visit and was showing very well indeed. The nose is a lovely mélange of lime peel, gentle petrol, pink grapefruit, smoky notes and a lovely base of very crystalline minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and vibrant, with a very good core, fine focus and a very long, bright and zesty finish. This is very, very elegant this year and will drink well with just a year or two of bottle age to allow its secondary elements to emerge. High class. 2013-2030. **91**.

2011 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

In 2011 the Halenberg Trocken was raised seventy percent in *fuder* and thirty percent in stainless steel tank. The resulting wine is excellent, delivering a classy bouquet of apple, pink grapefruit, smoky notes, a touch of fresh herb, a very refined base of slate and incipient notes of the petrol to come. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very suave on the attack, with ripe acids, lovely focus and a long, seamless and complex finish. Just the epitome of elegance this year. 2014-2030+. **91+**.

2011 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs is going to be a superb and very subtle example of the vintage, as the wine wafts from the glass in a complex mélange of tart pear, lime, smoky notes, fresh herbs, a very lovely base of soil, orange peel and gentle notes of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very seamless, with lovely mid-palate depth, fine focus and grip, ripe acids and a very, very long, pure and classy finish. This will drink beautifully from a fairly early age, but I would be strongly inclined to give it at least

five or six years of bottle age to fully allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Very sophisticated juice. 2017-2040. **93+**.

2011 Monzinger Halenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs is also a very refined and elegant young Riesling. The deep, nascently complex and youthful nose delivers a mix of tart orange, pear, fresh herb tones, refined nuances of petrol, a complex base of slate, lime zest and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and classy, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and balance and a very long, seamless and elegant finish. A fine, fine bottle in the making. 2018-2040. **94**.

2011 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen “Auf de Lay”- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

As is the Schönleber family’s custom, the Auf de Lay will only be bottled in magnums this year, but I did not take note of how many would be produced in vintage 2011. This is a very beautiful wine in the making, as it offers up a very bright and zesty nose of tart orange, lime, crystalline minerality, a hint of laurel, smoky overtones, petrol and a very floral topnote redolent of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and intensely flavored, with great nascent complexity, bright acids, laser-like focus and a very, very long and snappy finish that closes with a lingering note of lime zest. A beautiful bottle of dry Riesling. 2019-2040+. **95**.

2011 Monzinger Halenberg “R”- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Halenberg “R” bottling from Emrich-Schönleber is utterly superb and the pick of the litter of these superb dry Rieslings this year. The deep, pure and wonderfully complex nose soars from the glass in a blaze of tangerine, pink grapefruit, smoke, a beautifully complex base of slate nuances, orange peel and a gentle base of petrol. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and suavely complex, with ripe acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the dancing finish. This is a brilliant wine! 2019-2045+. **95+**.

Prädikat 2011ers

2011 Monzinger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Monzinger Riesling Kabinett is clearly of Spätlese must weight, but does a very nice job of maintaining Kabinett sensibilities. The very stylish nose offers up scents of apple, fresh herb tones, slate, petrol, tangerine and a touch of bee pollen in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, bright and bouncy, with good acids and fine length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice. 2012-2025. **90**.

2011 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Halenberg Spätlese from Weingut Emrich-Schönleber is just lovely, with pure and exotic nose tied to pure and filigreed palate. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a smoky mélange of wild yeasts, lime peel, complex slate tones, spring flowers and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and very pure, with a good core, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the bouncy and mineral-driven finish. This will not make old bones by Spätlese standards, but it will provide tons of pleasure over the medium term. Just a delicious wine. 2012-2022. **93**.

2011 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Frühlingsplätzchen Spätlese shows a bit more cut than the wide open and succulent Halenberg and will probably last a bit longer, but this wine is also wearing its heart on its sleeve right out of the blocks. The beautiful nose offers up scents of tangerine, green apple, lime peel, slate, wild yeasts and crystalline minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full,

pure and shows a touch more mid-palate depth and glaze of sweetness, with crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and tangy finish. Delicious. 2012-2025. **93+**.

2011 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Auslese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Frühlingsplätzchen Auslese had already been bottled and was showing very well indeed at the time of my visit. The nose is a beautiful and very cleanly botrytized blend of pineapple, mango, lime, honeycomb, slate tones and a very floral topnote redolent of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very bright, with a nice touch of petrol on the long, zesty finish. There is a lovely creaminess here from the botrytis, and the acids are very good for keeping the wine light on its feet and very bouncy, but this wine is already wide open for business and is not going to demand any long-term cellaring before it delights the senses. 2012-2030. **92+**.

2011 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Halenberg Auslese is utterly refined on both the nose and palate. The beautiful bouquet jumps from the glass in a mélange of orange, lime blossom, smoky overtones, bee pollen, slate and hints of both honey and petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long, pure and very suave, with a fine core, impeccable balance, ripe acids and lovely filigree on the long and focused finish. Another simply delightful Auslese that will drink beautifully from the start. 2012-2030. **92+**.

2011 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2011 Halenberg Auslese is also already bottled (as was the case with both Auslesen) and was showing quite well. This is a very heavily botrytized wine, which delivers a tropical bouquet of peach, papaya, pineapple, honey, lemon custard and a discreet base of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and creamy, with fairly gentle acidity, but lovely focus and balance. The finish is long, very elegant and complex. This does not have the cut to make old bones, but for drinking over the next dozen years or so, there is an awful lot of pleasure to be found here. 2012-2025. **90**.

Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich (Bockenau)

Tim Fröhlich has made another group of brilliant dry Rieslings in 2011, and it will be a great pleasure to compare this stellar set of Rieslings with the magical brilliance he produced with his derring-do in 2010. The two vintages are quite different stylistically here, but the unrepentant elegance and stunning depth and intensity of flavor of these very precise and dancing 2011ers may well be in the same league as the superb 2010 versions of each wine. At this early stage, it is far too soon to choose one vintage as superior over the other, but it is quite clear that Tim Fröhlich is currently at the height of his powers and any fan of the estate would be absolutely foolish to not chase down and put in the cellar as many of these great 2011ers as the budget will allow. While much of the wine world's focus these days are on the brilliant dry Rieslings from Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich, do not miss the superb noble sweet wines produced here in 2011, for they are all stunning and perhaps every bit as good as the dry wines in the portfolio this year. A great, great success for Tim Fröhlich this year!

2011 Fröhlich Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2011 Fröhlich Trocken is made entirely from forty year-old Müller-Thurgau vines and has turned out quite impressive for this varietal. The nose is a lovely blend of green apple, stony minerality, a touch of smokiness and a nice topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is

medium-full, crisp and nicely delineated, with good mid-palate depth and a long, impressively classy finish for its genre. Good everyday juice. 2012-2025. **87.**

2011 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Tim Fröhlich has utilized indigenous yeasts for fifty percent of the blend of the 2011 Estate Riesling, which have contributed a nice touch of wild yeast complexity to both the nose and palate in this wine this year. The nose is deep, vibrant and expressive in its mélange of grapefruit, orange peel, wild yeasts, a touch of wheat and a lovely base of stony, almost crystalline minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent, with a fine core and lovely length and grip on the complex finish. A classy wine and a superb value. 2012-2025+. **88+.**

2011 Vulkangestein Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Vulkangestein Trocken bottling hails from selected volcanic soils in the estate's grand cru vineyards, with the vines all old vines, but harvested on the earlier side for this cuvée. I am not sure if Tim Fröhlich has produced this bottling in previous vintages, but the 2011 was the first that I had tasted and it is outstanding. The deep, complex and utterly refined nose soars from the glass in a blaze of grapefruit, tart orange, wild yeasts, beautifully complex soil tones and a lovely touch of petrol. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nascently complex, with a superb core of fruit, ripe acids and great backend mineral drive on the long and focused finish. This is a beautiful wine in the making, but give it at least a couple of years to allow some secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2014-2035+. **92.**

2011 Schiefergestein Bockenaur Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Schiefergestein bottling is another stellar dry Riesling in the making in 2011, delivering a beautifully slate-infused nose of apple, tart orange, petrol, grapefruit, a touch of straw, a brilliantly complex base of slate soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and still quite primary, but with plenty of complexity to come with a bit of bottle age quite evident. The finish is long, laser-like in its focus and snappy, with lovely balance and depth. Superb wine. 2015-2035+. **92+. +**

2011 Bockenaur Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The regular bottling of Weissburgunder Trocken from Schäfer-Fröhlich all hails from red slate vineyards in the village of Bockenau, with eighty percent of the wine fermented in stainless steel tanks and twenty percent in barrel. The 2011 weighs in at a ripe and juicy 13.5 percent alcohol. For the last three vintages, Tim Fröhlich has not allowed the wine to go through malolactic, as he prefers the brightness of the wine with no malo. The 2011 offers up a very pretty bouquet of apple, white peach, spring flowers, a nice base of minerality and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and racy, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and balance and a long, snappy finish. Good juice and a fine value. 2012-2020+. **89.**

2011 Bockenaur Weissburgunder "S" Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Weissburgunder "S" Trocken bottling from Tim Fröhlich is made from a selection of Pinot Blanc vines that are forty-five years of age and planted in the steepest section of the vineyard. The 2011 version is more reserved and serious than the regular bottling, offering up a deep and very elegant nose of tart pear, grapefruit, dried flowers, complex, slatey minerality, citrus peel and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite primary, with a superb core of fruit, a tight, utterly seamless structure and great length and grip on the racy finish. This will take a couple of years to unwind and should age beautifully. A really lovely bottle of Pinot Blanc. 2014-2025+. **91+.**

2011 Kupfergrube Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich has only a small, half a hectare parcel in the great Kupfergrube vineyard in Schlossböckelheim, so this is the smallest production Grosses Gewächs in their fine lineup of grand crus. The 2011 is a brilliant wine, offering up scents of pink grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, wild yeasts, a beautiful base of soil and a very smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and almost silky in structure, with a superb core of fruit, bright, zesty acids and simply stunning length and grip on the laser-like and very soil-driven finish. A brilliant example of a great *terroir*. 2018-2040. **94+**.

2011 Felsenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Schäfer-Fröhlich

In contrast to the tiny slice in the Kupfergrube vineyard, the estate has fully 4.5 hectares of vines in the Felsenberg, which allows Tim Fröhlich to make a strict selection for the Grosses Gewächs bottling. He only takes grapes from the very steepest section of the vineyard for the grand cru bottling, where the vines consistently produce very small berries. The stunning bouquet offers up a blend of grapefruit, lime zest, smoky tones, great, crystalline minerality, wild yeasts, orange peel and lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a racier personality than the 2011 Kupfergrube, a great core of fruit and a very long, intense and impeccably focused finish. A great, great wine in the making. 2019-2040+. **95**.

2011 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

I love the Halenberg vineyard's combination of ninety percent blue slate and ten percent quartzite, which tends to give a wine of such unique and compelling aromatic and flavor profiles. The 2011 Grosses Gewächs from Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich is a brilliant wine in the making, soaring from the glass in a blaze of lime zest, green apple, a complex base of slate, smoky overtones, tart orange, wild yeasts, petrol and just a touch of the Halenberg's cress-like herbaceousness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and complex, with stunning mid-palate depth, and utterly seamless palate impression and brilliant length and grip on the snappy, suave and endless finish. This is a totally magical young wine. 2019-2040+. **96**.

2011 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2011 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs is pure beauty on both the nose and palate. The stunningly refined nose delivers a complex mélange of tart orange, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, crystalline slate minerality, citrus peel, a touch of lemongrass and again, a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and dancing, with a superb core of fruit, bright, zesty acidity, flawless balance and profound length and grip on the laser-like and boundless finish. This is just a humbling bottle of dry Riesling from a magical *terroir*! 2020-265. **98+**.

2011 Schiefergestein Bockenaur Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The fruit for the Schiefergestein Kabinett all hails from the Felseneck vineyard in 2011. The nose is very pretty, elegant and bright, offering up scents of grapefruit, pear, spring flowers, petrol and slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and dancing, with a lovely core of fruit, with fine focus and very impressive length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This has 55 grams per liter of residual sugar and 9 grams per liter of acidity, so it is obviously not a delicate, old school Kabinett, but it retains very nicely that ethereal lightness of step of Kabinett. 2012-2025+. **93**.

2011 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2011 Felseneck Riesling Spätlese from Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich is really outstanding, as it jumps from the glass in a youthfully complex bouquet of pink grapefruit, bee

pollen, white cherries, tangerine, crystalline slate and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very racy, with wonderful, crystalline minerality, outstanding focus and superb length and grip on the bouncy and beautiful finish. A great bottle of Spätlese. 2014-2035. **94.**

2011 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2011 Felseneck Spätlese Goldkapsel is even more complex and kaleidoscopically mineral than the regular bottling! The magical nose wafts from the glass in a mix of white cherries, oranges, bee pollen, brilliantly complex slate minerality, citrus blossoms and orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and ethereal, with racy acids, great mid-palate depth, superb filigree, laser-like focus and a brilliantly long, complex and weightless finish. Glorious juice! 2017-2040. **96.**

A Couple of Reds from Tim Fröhlich

2006 Spätburgunder “R”- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

I liked quite well the 2006 Spätburgunder “R” from Tim Fröhlich, which offers up a ripe and pure nose of red and black cherries, dark chocolate syrup, lovely soil tones, a touch of meatiness and just a hint of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and moderately tannic, with fine focus and very good length and grip on the finish. Good juice that still could use a couple more years in the cellar to fully blossom. 2014-2030+. **88+.**

2007 Spätburgunder “R”- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2007 Spätburgunder “R” from Tim Fröhlich was the first vintage where only indigenous yeasts were used for the fermentation and the wine was raised in thirty percent new wood. The nose here is really lovely, but the wine is currently quite shut down and rather astringent on the backend of the palate, and I wonder if it will ever be able to fully carry its wood in the long run. The classy bouquet is a blend of cherries, red berries, vinesmoke, fresh herbs, pretty soil tones, new oak and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and quite tangy, with pretty good depth, but a grumpy, cantankerous backend that is a bit green today with tannins (some clearly derived from the barrels) and demands still plenty of time in the cellar. It seems to my palate that some of these barrels may have been imperfectly cured and have leached a bit of green wood tannins into the wine. I might be wrong about this, but at this point in time, I am really not sure how this wine will eventually turn out. **???**

Mosel

Weingut Willi Schaefer (Graach)

Following on the maxim that the estate will produce primarily what Mother Nature specializes in each year, Christophe Schaefer has followed the strengths of the vintage in the middle Mosel and produced primarily Kabinett and Spätlesen in 2011, with the range of dry wines here this year not as wide as was the case in 2010. There are three Auslesen from the Domprobst, all of which were produced in fairly small quantities, as well as a Beerenauslese from the same vineyard this year, but the lion's share of the production is in lower level Prädikat wines. For fans of Kabinett, this is very good news indeed, as there are some beautiful wines at this level awaiting release in the Schaefer cellars (one from the Himmelreich and two distinct examples from the Domprobst). This is not to say that the entire range at Weingut Willi Schaefer is not stunning in 2011, as the purity and seamless beauty of the vintage is visible in each and every wine up and down the quality hierarchy. Christophe and his family had just settled down to

life without construction at the family home and winery, as the extensive renovations undertaken a couple of years ago were finally completed- just in time for the massive hail storm on August 26th to come along and shred the slate roof on their home and get the construction teams back on the premises! I continue to hear from some subscribers their dismay with the Schaefer's American importer, Terry Theise's decision to bottle the QbA level wines under screwcap, and one hopes that eventually Terry will relent and give folks who prefer to cellar these wines the chance to do so without fears of permanent reduction in the wines. I probably receive one or two emails each month mentioning a bad experience with one of the Schaefer wines under screwcap, but apparently Terry Theise is not getting the memo. I hope one day in the not too distant future we will no longer have to see any Weingut Willi Schaefer wines saddled with such closures!



Christophe and Willi Schaefer in the new tasting room at the estate- the roof outside does not look quite as nice.

2011 Graacher Himmelreich Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Willi Schaefer

A good friend of mine who was tasting with me at Weingut Schaefer opined that the 2011 vintage may well have produced the most complete and elegant set dry wines in the history of the middle Mosel, as the style of the vintage seems to have perfectly captured all the inherent beauty of dry wines here. The 2011 Schaefer Himmelreich Grosses Gewächs is a beautiful and utterly refined young wine, offering up a very classy nose of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, slate, lemongrass and a nice touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, superb focus and balance, ripe, seamlessly-integrated acids and outstanding length and grip on the finish. 2015-2035. **92+**.

2011 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Willi Schaefer

This is not yet bottled and was showing very well indeed at the time of my visit, but at least Schaefer fans in the US are going to get stuck with this wine under screwcap. The very pretty and vibrant nose offers up scents of green apple, a lovely touch of tangerine, slate, petrol and a dollop of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and balanced, with good mid-palate depth and lovely length and grip on the ripely acidic finish. The 2011 Schaefer Estate Riesling Trocken shows every sign of evolving nicely for at least a decade- if the closure of choice does not do it in before its time! 2012-2022+? **88.**

2011 Graacher Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Willi Schaefer

I am always a big fan of the Feinherb bottling from the Schaefer family, as I love the interplay of fruit and soil that seems to be honed to a fine edge with just a bit more residual sugar in the mix. The 2011 is a really lovely wine, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of apple, petrol, crystalline minerality, a touch of wild yeasts and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and very soil-driven, with a good core, crisp acids and excellent grip on the long and focused finish. The overall perception is still of a dry wine, but the impression of mid-palate generosity from a touch more residual sweetness here is quite lovely. 2012-2025+. **89+.**

2011 Estate Riesling QbA AP #1- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The estate's 2011 QbA is really a deep and classy wine that I would be delighted to have in my cellar for the next decade or more, but I guess I will have to look for it in Germany if I want to buy any for the long haul. The bouquet is deep and very, very stylish in its aromatic mélange of apple, tangerine, slate, a touch of petrol, wild yeasts and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and juicy, with a lovely core of fruit, impeccable balance, ripe acids and lovely length and grip on the complex finish. This is just delicious out of the blocks, but could easily age twelve to fifteen years. 2012-2025+. **89+.**

2011 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #2- Weingut Willi Schaefer

Both Christophe and Willi Schaefer are of the opinion that the *terroir* of the Himmelreich is best suited of their vineyard sites for the production of dry Rieslings, but in 2011 the magic here certainly extends to the level of Kabinett, as this is a beautiful wine. The deep, pure and simply glorious nose soars from the glass in a vibrant blend of lime, tangerine, lemon blossoms, slate, petrol and a nice touch of lilacs. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, fresh and pure, with zesty acids, a lovely core, superb lightness of step and terrific backend mineral drive on the long and ethereal finish. Just a lovely and quite classic example of Kabinett from the Himmelreich. 2012-2035. **93.**

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The first of the two Kabinetten from the Domprobst this year is quite a bit more reserved in style than the wide open and scintillating Himmelreich Kabinett, but it too is a fine wine. The reticent nose reluctantly offers up scents of tart orange, white grape, pretty notes of petrol, a touch of candied violet and a boatload of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, reserved and rock solid at the core, with crisp acids, fine focus and lovely length and energy on the youthful finish. This will need a couple of years to blossom, but should prove to be a lovely bottle. 2015-2035. **91+.**

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2011 Domprobst Kabinett AP #3 is a more precise, pure and overtly mineral version of the above. The excellent nose is also quite reserved in personality, but offers up scents of lime, pink grapefruit, petrol, almost crystalline impressions of slate, orange zest and citrus blossoms.

On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, pure and primary, with lovely detail, an excellent core, zesty acids and superb length and grip on the focused and filigreed finish. A beautiful Kabinett in the making, but give it a few years to blossom. 2016-2035+. **93+**.

2011 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2011 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese from Christophe Schaefer is utterly classic and a lovely example of the vintage. I did not write down the AP number, as there is only a single wine produced each year from the Schaefer's small slice of the Sonnenuhr. The deep, pure and very complex nose offers up scents of pear, apple, orange zest, petrol, a touch of vanilla bean, bee pollen, apple blossoms and a beautiful base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, vibrant and mineral, with a fine core, zesty, bright acids and excellent filigree and a very long, focused and classy finish. This will drink brilliantly from the outset, but will have no difficulties aging many decades on its flawless balance. A beautiful wine. 2012-2040. **92+**.

2011 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Willi Schaefer

There is only one Spätlese from the Himmelreich this year and it is a beauty! The utterly pure and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blend of lime, orange, slate, petrol, bee pollen, wild yeasts, orange zest and lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and wonderfully round on the attack, with a lovely core, an ethereal palate impression, fine, ripe acids and an utterly suave, pure and dancing finish of impressive length and grip. Just a hauntingly beautiful example of the pure side of the 2011 vintage. 2015-2040+. **93+**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #10- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The AP #10 Spätlese from the Domprobst is an excellent wine that will drink extremely well from an early age- a fairly rare phenomenon for this great *terroir*. The superb bouquet offers up a blend of lime, tangerine, complex slate tones, orange zest, a bit of petrol and a pungent topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and offers up a beautiful slice of the Domprobst's more fruity side, with ripe, silky acids, excellent focus and a very long, pure finish. I would give this just a year or two of bottle age (if I had the requisite will power) to allow it to blossom fully, and then drink it with wild abandon over the ensuing couple of decades. Lovely juice. 2013-2035+. **92**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #5- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2011 AP #5 Spätlese from the Domprobst is a bit more typically defined by its profound base of slate soils, but also offers up greater complexity on both the nose and palate than the more forward and succulent AP #10 version. The nose on this fine Spätlese offers up a deep and very classy mélange of orange, a touch of pear, lime, a boatload of slate, bee pollen, gentle notes of the petrol to come and a vibrant topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and racier than AP #5, with great cut and focus, excellent mid-palate depth and a wonderful weaving of vibrant fruit tones and superb minerality on the very long and delineated finish. Great Spätlese. 2015-2040. **94+**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

I have no idea why I did not write down the AP numbers for the two auction wines, but it was a long trip! In any case, this brilliant wine and its Auslesen counterpart will be worth a special trip to Trier in September to search out, as this is a very special bottle of Spätlese in the making. The beautiful and utterly refined bouquet delivers scents of tangerine, lime blossoms, crystalline slate minerality, candied violets, just a hint of petrol and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and dancing, with great filigree, crisp acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the youthful finish. An ethereal beauty! 2016-2040+. **96**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #11- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The three different Domprobst Auslesen in 2011 from Weingut Schaefer are all outstanding, with the first two a progression upwards in the amount of glazing from the botrytis and the Auction bottling hailing from a new parcel in the Domprobst that was just purchased three years ago. The Domprobst Auslese AP #11 is very delicately glazed with clean botrytis, wafting from the glass in a beautiful blend of lemon blossoms, petrol, pear, white grape, slate and a gentle touch of honeycomb. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and zesty, with great mineral drive, superb focus and balance and a very long, classy and racy finish. Here one can really sense the concentrating effect of the botrytis, as both the sugars and acids are gently intensified by this lovely glazing. A beautiful wine. 2016-2045+. **93+**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #14- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2011 Domprobst Auslese AP #14 is a step up in botrytis from the lovely AP #11, offering up a more overtly noble rot mélange of peach, tangerine, sweet grapefruit, honeycomb, crystalline slate, a touch of petrol, wild yeasts and candied violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and racy, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus and a superb, long and very pure finish. This beautiful Auslese shows off all the elegance of the vintage in a very cleanly botrytized package of great transparency and natural beauty. 2018-2050. **95**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The Auction Auslese this year from the Domprobst will hail from the new, two-tenths of a hectare parcel that was purchased by the Schaefer family four years ago and replanted from Pinot Noir to Riesling. This is the third leaf for the vines and the first vintage where they have produced grapes of a quality sufficient for top wine, and as is often the case with these three year-old vines, this first crop has produced very special quality. The nose is very gently glazed with clean botrytis, offering up scents of pear, white grape, a touch of lemon blossom, wild yeasts, petrol, honeycomb, violets and a simply beautiful base of complex slate tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and ethereal, with wonderful filigree, crisp acids and a very, very long, suave and dancing finish. This is a supremely elegant rendition of Auslese! 2018-2050. **95**.

2011 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The Domprobst 2011 Beerenauslese was still bubbling away in the cellars (or had just finished its fermentation), and while it was still quite yeasty, the snapshot I saw of the wine displayed superb potential. The nose is a beautiful blend of white grape, tangerine, honeycomb, slate, floral tones and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full and very refined, with lovely focus and excellent length and grip. This will be exceptional, but it is really too young to be trying to handicap at this point in time.

Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch (Bernkastel)

Sofia Thanisch was quite upbeat about the quality of her estate's 2011ers at the time of my March visit, and well she should be. The range that I tasted were really superb wines, with lovely mid-palate depth, bright, zesty acids and outstanding focus and depth. The range seems likely to age very well indeed- as is always the case at this fine domaine- but, the style of the vintage will make the Doctor bottlings uncharacteristically accessible early on in their evolutions. In my experience, the Bernkasteler Doctor wines here are customarily some of the slowest to unfold in all of Germany, and in most top vintages one must wait a good decade (at least) to really start to see all the layers of complexity that these wines can offer. But, the more

accessible side of the 2011 vintage will make the Doctor Kabinett a great drink from the word “go” and the Doctor Spätlese seems likely to only need five years or so of bottle age to really start to drink brilliantly, rather than the customary decade. I continue to believe that these are some of the most underrated wines to be found in Germany today, which is somewhat ironic, considering that in the first half of the twentieth century, there was no estate or vineyard more famous than the Dr. Thanisch Bernkasteler Doctor! Sadly, the estate continues to bottle several of their wines under screwcap, which I find to be a poorly chosen path for these wines, as most of them have the ability to age long and gracefully, and to take this away from some of the cuvées by sealing them up under screwcap seems to be doing the wines’ excellent quality a disservice. But, I know that not everyone shares these sentiments about the closure in question! As has been customary during my March visits in the last few years, Frau Thanisch only showed the 2011ers whose blends were fully settled upon at the time of my visit. There remains at least another Doctor Spätlese in the cellar from this vintage, which will be auctioned off in Trier in September, as well as several different Auslesen. A fine, fine range of 2011ers, and I am sure that the wines that are waiting in the wings and were not tasted will be equally fine. This is an estate at the top of its game today!

2011 Estate Riesling QbA Trocken- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2011 Estate Riesling Trocken is a very pretty wine that will drink very well from the outset, but it is a tad on the softer side than most of the other 2011ers in the range at Wwe. Dr. Thanisch this year. The very pretty and stylish nose offers up scents of pink grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, deep soil tones and a nice touch of violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and still quite primary, with a good core of fruit, lovely balance and a long, wide open and tasty finish that shows solid framing acids, but not a whole lot of cut this year. Good juice, but I would have loved to have seen just a bit more backend snappiness here. 2012-2020. **87+**.

2011 Dr. Thanisch Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch

The new bottling of Dr. Thanisch Kabinett is essentially a Feinherb, but it will not say so on the label (at least for markets outside of Germany). This is really a very lovely example of the vintage, offering up a refined nose of apple, tart orange, a fine base of slate, petrol and a nice topnote of candied violets. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and rock solid at the core, with superb backend minerality, lovely focus and a long, tangy and perfectly balanced finish. I did not think to ask Frau Thanisch at the time, but I assume that this is a blend from several of the estate’s vineyard holdings outside of the Doctor vineyard. Lovely wine that will drink well from the outset and will also age quite nicely for the mid-term. Great value! 2012-2025+. **89+**.

2011 Estate Riesling QbA- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch (screwcap)

The Dr. Thanisch Estate Riesling QbA is one of my favorite “basic” bottlings to be found on the Mosel, but as the wine is now bottled under screwcap, it needs to be drunk up on the early side. In a vintage such as 2011 I see no major problem with this, but in more tensile years like 2010, it seems like a waste of potential to take a wine that has a fine track record for moderate aging and sealing it up under a closure that demands early drinking. I understand that there are probably not many folks who would actually age this bottling in the first place (most of it is probably drunk at picnics along this stretch of the Mosel during the summer months after the vintage!), but the wine does possess the inherent capability to age and it seems to me that clients should be allowed to make that decision, not the closure! In any case, the 2011 was showing quite well at the time of my visit, offering up a complex nose of apple, a touch of lime blossoms,

salty, slate soil tones, lime peel and a nice touch of fresh mint in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with a good core, lovely focus and just the first stirring of the piercing side of minerality that accompanies all wines sealed up under screwcap. This will probably drink just beautifully for the next few years under this closure, but under natural cork, it would have easily kept a dozen years or more! Good juice- bad closure! 2012-2015+? **89**.

2011 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch (screwcap)

While I could understand the logic of putting the Estate Riesling under screwcap (this is after all, what the market wants for such wines these days), why on earth do the same thing to the Badstube Kabinett? The nose on the 2011 Badstube Kabinett is lovely, offering up scents of wild yeasts, apples, pears, violets, a beautiful base of slate and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, ripe acids and very good length and grip on the bright and nascently complex finish. To be fair, this wine is showing no ill effects from the screwcap at this point in time and is offering up very good drinking. I just worry a lot about the future when I see wines such as this sealed up under this industrial closure. 2012-2025? **89+**.

2011 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

Happily, the Doctor's wines do not have to undergo the indignity of being bottled under screwcap! The 2011 Doctor Kabinett is an excellent wine in the making, jumping from the glass in a complex and beautifully expressive mélange of green apple, lime blossoms, a touch of petrol, great, almost crystalline, slate underpinnings, lilacs and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and rock solid at the core, with beautiful focus and balance, fine, ripe acids and outstanding length and grip on the pure and zesty finish. Most Doctor Kabinetten need bottle age to really show their true qualities, but the 2011 Kabinett seems likely to offer up outstanding drinking from the outset. This is a beautiful bottle of Kabinett that fully delivers on the reputation for greatness of the Doctor vineyard. 2012-2030+. **93**.

2011 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2011 Berncasteler Doctor Spätlese is another outstanding example of the vintage. The deep, nuanced and simply beautiful bouquet jumps from the glass in a blaze of green apple, a hint of the Mirabelle to come, incipient notes of petrol, lime zest, lilacs, laurel and a lovely base of deep soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure on the attack, with a suave core of fruit, bright acids, excellent focus and outstanding mineral drive on the bouncy backend. The finish here is long, vibrant and beautifully balanced, with a sense of finesse and intensity that is very, very impressive. A classic vintage of Berncasteler Doctor Spätlese! 2017-2040. **94+**.

Weingut Schloss Lieser (Lieser)

This was first, long overdue visit to Weingut Schloss Lieser. I have been admiring the work of Thomas Haag and his Cellar Master, Phillip Vesper, for several years now, and was really delighted to finally have the opportunity to taste at the estate and see all the changes that Herr Haag has undertaken since he first purchased the domaine in 1997. Not surprisingly, the estate lies directly next door to the castle of Schloss Lieser, from which the town of Lieser takes its name (or is it vice-versa?), which is now under renovation and will be opened by its new ownership as a luxury hotel in the not too distant future. It is a glorious setting, looking out at one of the most beautiful stretches of the Mosel River, and an absolutely magnificent old building that I am sure will be a wonderful destination for the well-heeled when it is finally completed.

Thomas Haag and his team are no strangers to renovations, as the estate of Weingut Schloss Lieser needed every kind of repair when Herr Haag first arrived here as General Manager in 1992, and once he purchased the estate in 1997, the real hard work began. Today, fifteen years later, the seeds that were sown in those early days have come to full fruition and this is now one of the most beautiful and successful estates to be found anywhere in the middle Mosel. The estate has been on quite a hot streak for the last several years, but these stunning 2011ers may well be the finest set of wines ever yet to set foot outside the very comfortable confines of this lovely property, as they are pure magic!

Thomas Haag mentioned when I made my appointment that his Japanese importer was also going to be at the estate earlier on that same afternoon, so would it be alright if we started a little bit later, so that he could give proper attention to his importer? We were happy to do so, but when we arrived at the estate, the very happy Japanese group of tasters was still deep in the throes of tasting these stunning 2011ers. As Cellar Master Phillip Vesper was on vacation that week, Thomas Haag's father, Wilhelm Haag graciously greeted us and hosted our tasting of the 2011ers. As Herr Haag senior commented, "I have the best life a retired winegrower could ask for- one day at the family domaine (Weingut Fritz Haag) with my son, Oliver, and the next here at Schloss Lieser with my son, Thomas." Wilhelm Haag is one of the legendary figures in the twentieth century world of German wine, having returned early from his studies in 1957 to assist his ailing father, Fritz Haag, with one harvest and staying on to run the family estate for nearly the next fifty years, as he passed on the reins of Weingut Fritz Haag to his son Oliver in 2005. He is a living legend on the Mosel and having the opportunity to taste with him and hear him reflect on his experiences over nearly a half century at the head of one of Germany's greatest wine estates was one of the most memorable pleasures of my life (and certainly the highlight of my month-long tasting trip). Thomas Haag joined his father for the last portion of our tasting and it was a very enjoyable late afternoon on the Mosel!

Several of the 2011ers had already been bottled at the time of my visit, while others were still in fuder and awaiting bottling. The whole lineup was set to be in bottle within a few weeks after my visit. Across the board these are scintillating examples of the vintage, with bright, racy acids, great purity and soil reflection and outstanding structures for mid-to-long-term aging. They are not anywhere near as tensile and electric as the high wattage 2010ers here (which may be the longest-lived wines produced on the Mosel in a generation or more!), but, these beautiful 2011ers lack for nothing and will hit very high peaks in a much brisker evolutionary pattern than the snappy 2010ers. Like many of the top estates that I visited on this trip, Thomas Haag has produced a superb lineup of both dry wines and beautifully glazed higher Prädikat wines that take advantage of the beautiful botrytis of the vintage. Several of the lower level wines here are bottled both under screwcap and natural cork and a few of the samples we tasted from were the screwcapped versions. Only one was showing signs of imminent reduction issues, but, of course, if it were me, none of these great wines would be subjected to such a closure.

2011 Schloss Lieser Riesling QbA Trocken- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The 2011 Estate Riesling Trocken had already been bottled at the time of my visit- under screwcap- but, was showing very well. The very stylish and wild yeasty nose offers up scents of lime zest, grapefruit, lemongrass, petrol, slate and the aforementioned wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and classy, with very good mid-palate depth, lovely focus and

balance and a long, complex and zesty finish. At this point in time the wine shows absolutely no ill effects from the closure and is a superb wine to drink. How long that will last is of course up to the screwcap, not the wine. 2012-2020+? **89+**.

2011 Lieser Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Schloss Lieser

I was very happy, of course, to see the 2011 Lieser Riesling Spätlese Trocken bottled up under natural cork. This is a stunning example of the vintage and has to be one of the best values out there for a dry Riesling from this vintage, as the nose soars from the glass in a beautiful blend of grapefruit, lime peel, wild yeasts, a beautiful base of soil, petrol and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and racy, with a superb core of fruit, laser-like focus, brisk acids and simply superb length and grip on the perfectly poised and transparent finish. A great bottle of dry Riesling. 2015-2040. **93**.

2011 Schloss Lieser Riesling QbA Feinherb- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The 2011 Schloss Lieser Estate Riesling is an unchaptalized Feinherb this year, which had already been bottled (again, under screwcap) at the time of my visit. The wine shows just a touch of residual sweetness on the attack, but is, for all intents and purposes, a dry wine. It too was showing no ill effects from its closure when I tasted it in late March. The lovely nose is a mélange of grapefruit, apple, orange peel, slate, petrol, wild yeasts and a nice touch of spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and transparent, with a very good core of fruit, fine balance and a long, bright and bouncy finish. Good juice. 2012-2020+? **89+**.

2011 Schloss Lieser Riesling Kabinett - Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The 2011 Estate Riesling Kabinett had also been bottled under screwcap, and this wine was showing the first signs of that piercing minerality on the backend of the palate that is the result of the closure. The nose is quite lovely, wafting from the glass in a blend of green apple, lime, a dollop of wild yeasts, spring flowers and slightly metallic minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and complex, with a tensile personality and the very first signs of reduction starting to stir on the backend. This one I would drink on the very early side. 2012-2015+? **89**.

2011 Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Kabinett- Schloss Lieser

The 2011 Juffer Kabinett had already been bottled- under natural cork- and was showing very well at the time of my visit. The very refined and classy nose offers up a mix of lime, a touch of fresh mint, white cherries, wild yeasts, petrol, citrus peel and an absolutely superb base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, suave and complete, with beautiful complexity, fine acids and very good length and grip on the pure and elegant finish. The wine is a light Spätlese in must weight, but remains quite light on its feet and shows of lovely focus on the long backend. It will drink beautifully from the outset and should keep at least a dozen years or more. 2012-2025+. **92**.

2011 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The 2011 Helden Spätlese was still in barrel, awaiting bottling, and was showing superb potential. The deep, pure and complex nose delivers a superb mélange of white cherries, lime zest, slate, a touch of mint, orange blossoms and wild yeast tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, bright and bouncy, with vibrant acids, outstanding mid-palate depth, great focus and a very long, pure and dancing finish. Just a superb bottle of Spätlese. 2012-2035. **93+**.

2011 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The glorious 2011 Juffer-Sonnenuhr Spätlese had already been bottled at the time of my visit and was absolutely singing. The deep and very elegant nose soars from the glass in a

mélange of mandarin orange, lime, a touch of fresh mint, crystalline, slate minerality, apple blossoms, wild yeast and just a touch of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, very pure and filigreed, with a superb core of fruit, vibrant acids, magical complexity and stunning length and grip on the dancing and absolutely ethereal finish. A brilliant wine. 2016-2040+. **95+**.



Thomas and Wilhelm Haag in the tasting room at Weingut Schloss Lieser.

2011 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Schloss Lieser

The 2011 Helden Goldkapsel Auslese is another absolutely magnificent example of the vintage. The stunning nose shows off beautifully clean botrytis in its tropical blend of lime zest, tangerine, honeycomb, lovely slate tones, wild yeasts and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very light on its feet for a glazed wine, with a superb core of fruit, bright acids, great focus and a very long, complex and vibrant finish. A very, very classy Auslese. 2016-2050+. **94**.

2011 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Auslese Goldkapsel - Schloss Lieser

The Gold Kap Auslese from the Juffer-Sonnenuhr vineyard is also absolutely stellar in the 2011 vintage. The very refined and wonderfully citric nose offers up a mélange of lime zest, lemon blossoms, a touch of fresh pineapple, crystalline minerality, wild yeasts, bee pollen and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure and transparent, with a fine core of fruit, lovely acidity, superb focus and a very long, filigreed and classy finish that is

light on its feet. This is a perfect example of just how beautiful the botrytis was in 2011. 2016-2040. **94+**.

2011 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel- Schloss Lieser

The 2011 Lange Goldkapsel is a deeper-pitched wine that shows a much more generous glazing of noble rot, but also retains the great purity and cleanliness to the botrytis. The gorgeous nose offers up scents of white cherries, candied violets, lime blossoms, apple, a touch of mint, a nice dollop of slate and honeycomb in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very impressively light on its feet for such a glazing, with a great core of fruit, superb complexity, bright acids and stunning length and grip on the dancing finish. Such purity and filigree at this level of botrytis is very rare indeed! 2015-2055. **95**.

2011 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Auslese Lange Goldkapsel - Schloss Lieser

The Long Gold Kap from the Juffer-Sonnenuhr vineyard from Schloss Lieser this year is even more glazed than the Niederberg Helden rendition, but it too shares the beautiful purity to the botrytis of 2011. The glorious nose soars from the glass in a blaze of mandarin orange, mango, lime blossoms, honeycomb, a beautiful base of minerality and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and wonderfully complex, with a great core of fruit, ripe, vibrant acids and stunning length and grip on the focused and beautifully filigreed finish. A glorious bottle! 2018-2050. **95+**.

2011 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Beerenauslese- Schloss Lieser

The 2011 Niederberg Helden Beerenauslese from Weingut Schloss Lieser is probably the greatest dessert wine I tasted from the vintage during this trip. The utterly refined and gorgeous nose soars from the glass in a glazed mélange of peach, pineapple, tangerine, a lovely base of soil tones, lime blossoms and honeycomb. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and tangy, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus, beautiful balance, and endless and dancing finish and a sense of the ethereal that is so very, very rare with Beerenauslese. This nectar is absolutely stunning! 2012-2050. **98**.

Weingut Reinhold Haart (Piesport)

Johannes Haart was very, very content with the quality of his 2011ers, which offer up a combination of early accessibility and the balance and bounce to also age quite gracefully. There was less overt signs of hail damage in the village of Piesport (at least that I could see from looking at the roofs in the neighborhood) and it may well be that most of the hail was down river from the village. The range of wines at Weingut Reinhold Haart is quite typical of the 2011 vintage on the Mosel, with very strong wines made in a drier style complemented by some really beautiful botrytized wines at the higher Prädikat levels. Johannes Haart is one winegrower on the Mosel who is pretty aware of the potential pitfalls of screwcaps and seems to be reining in the number of bottlings that he is sealing up under the closure- which is good news indeed. As he commented, "for basic wines like our Haart to Heart, clients expect the wine to be sealed under a screwcap these days, but in reality, we really should be aging our wines longer in tank before bottling them if we intend to use this closure." The flip side of course is that no one is going to be looking to buy a bottle of Haart to Heart from a vintage or two previous, so of course, it is not a possibility to do so for the more basic level wines. The entire range of 2011ers here are excellent, with several cut in a more forward style that makes a perfect complement to the more tensile 2010ers fashioned by Johannes here last year- many of which will demand some serious extended cellaring. As Johannes observed, while the acids in this vintage are not particularly high, the lower pH of most wines gives them a much stronger impression in the finished wines

than the absolute numbers would suggest. This combination should allow most of the best wines to easily keep fifteen to twenty years, but also drink very well from early on and stay vibrant and light on their feet for their entire lives. As most of the wines had not yet been bottled, there were no AP numbers settled on for most of the various cuvées at the time of my visit. There were several additional upper Prädikat wines still not ready to be shown here, so the notes that follow are just the tip of the iceberg at Weingut Haart in 2011. This is another Mosel estate that is at the absolute top of its game and their 2011 range is outstanding across the board.

2011 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Reinhold Haart (screwcap)

The 2011 Estate Riesling Trocken was bottled before Prowein, so that it could be shown at that important trade affair in early March. The 2011 weighs in at 12.5 percent alcohol and is a lovely wine, other than the already sharpening edge of tinny minerality creeping into the finish. The nose is a pretty blend of apple, tangerine, a touch of straw, slate, petrol and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and well-balanced, with a good core and a reasonably long finish that is already starting to go metallic from the closure. Pity- waste of a good wine. 2012-2015? **87.**

2011 Piesporter Riesling Trocken- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Piesporter Riesling Trocken had not yet been bottled and was still sitting in tank at the time of my visit. This too is 12.5 percent in alcohol this year and really quite lovely, offering up a classy bouquet of peach, apple, petrol, slate and grapefruit peel. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids and very good length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice that will drink well from the outset. 2012-2020+. **89.**

2011 Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs is a touch riper than the first two Trocken wines here, reaching a full thirteen percent alcohol. This is really very refined this year, wafting from the glass in a classy and impressively complex mélange of pink grapefruit, tart pear, slate, wild yeasts, petrol, orange peel, lemongrass and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very suave on the attack, with a rock solid core, excellent focus and balance and a very long, snappy and perfectly poised finish. This is already nearly approachable, but I would strongly advise keeping it in the cellar for another five years to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. A very, very fine result in 2011. 2017-2035+. **93.**

2011 Oligsberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

There are only three hundred liters of this beautiful wine available this year, so this is going to be a difficult Grosses Gewächs to find in the market. The wine was raised entirely in stainless steel tanks, rather than a mix of stainless and old *fuder*. The bouquet on the 2011 is superb, offering up a complex and wild yeasty mélange of tart orange, grapefruit, straw, lovely soil tones and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and beautifully focused, with crisp acids, excellent mid-palate depth and very good length and grip on the ripe and pure finish. This is not quite as refined as the Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs on the backend, but it is a bit riper and more powerful. Another absolutely superb 2011 Grosses Gewächs. 2016-2035. **93.**

2011 Haart to Heart- Weingut Reinhold Haart (screwcap)

The 2011 Haart to Heart weighs in at 11.5 percent alcohol and contains twenty grams per liter of residual sugar this year. The wine had already been bottled- entirely under screwcap. This nose is quite pretty, offering up scents of white peaches, apples, spring flowers, a hint of petrol and a nice base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and juicy, with good focus,

perfectly sound depth and good length on the bright and bouncy finish. This wine is not currently showing any ill effects from its closure and is quite tasty. 2012-20216. **87.**

2011 Piesporter Gräfenberg Riesling QbA Feinherb- Weingut Reinhold Haart

This is the first vintage that Johannes Haart has produced a Gräfenberg Feinherb bottling. It was still in tank at the time of my visit and Johannes stated that it was most likely to be bottled exclusively under natural cork. The wine contains 19.5 grams per liter of residual sugar this year, which gives it really a lovely balance on the palate. The superb nose offers up a blend of tangerine, lemongrass, citrus peel, a lovely base of slate soil tones and an exotic touch of spiciness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and complex, with a lovely core, ripe acids and just a whisper of sweetness on the long and classy finish. This is a fine new addition to the Haart lineup. 2012-2022+. **91.**

2011 Piesporter Gräfenberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Gräfenberg Kabinett is also excellent, with more of the personality of a light Spätlese than a true Kabinett, but lovely delineation and filigree. The very pretty and vibrant nose offers up scents of tart orange, wild yeasts, slate, a touch of petrol and a fine, floral topnote redolent of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, deep and beautifully balanced, with a good core of fruit, bright, zesty acids and excellent focus and grip on the very pure and classy finish. A delicious wine. 2012-2025+. **90.**

2011 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Haart Goldtröpfchen Kabinett is a tad racier than the Gräfenberg version and will need a year or two of cellaring to really blossom, whereas the Gräfenberg will be irresistible from the moment it is released. The deep and very classy nose wafts from the glass in a fine potpourri of pink grapefruit, white peach, petrol, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and zesty, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and filigree and a long, vibrant and quite mineral finish. Fine Kabinett. 2014-2035. **92.**

2011 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

Johannes Haart has fashioned an absolutely superb Goldtröpfchen Spätlese in 2011, as the wine delivers an absolutely classic bouquet of apple, white peach, petrol, bee pollen, wild yeasts, a beautifully complex base of slate-derived minerality and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and beautifully transparent, with a fine core of fruit, laser-like focus and impeccable balance on the long, complex and snappy finish. A beautiful, beautiful bottle of Spätlese! 2016-2035+. **94.**

2011 Wintricher Oligsberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Oligsberg Spätlese is also outstanding, with a bit less raciness than the above wine, but equally fine detail and transparency. The superb nose offers up scents of orange, pear, a touch of spice, citrus zest, wild yeasts, and a lovely, suave base of minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very suave on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, very nice, framing acids and excellent length and grip on the zesty and complex finish. There is not a lot in reserve here and this wine will be a great drink from the moment it is released, but it does possess the requisite balance to age gracefully for at least a dozen years. 2012-2025. **92.**

2011 Wintricher Oligsberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

According to Johannes Haart, the Oligsberg Auslese is made up of about thirty percent botrytized berries in this vintage. This too is a lovely wine, but the Spätlese from this fine vineyard in Wintrich may have the slight edge in terms of personality this year. The Auslese offers up a very pretty and stylish nose of peach, candied grapefruit, wild yeasts, honeycomb, a

nice touch of minerality and a gentle touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and suave on the attack, with a creamy core of fruit, good, framing acids and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2014-2030. **91**.

2011 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Goldtröpfchen Auslese is another very pretty and creamy example of the vintage, with a very clean glaze of botrytis adding a nice tropical nose and concentrating the wine very gracefully. The seductive nose is a mélange of ripe peaches, delicious apples, orange zest, honeycomb, a lovely base of slate and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and almost velvety on the attack, with a lovely core, a rather fruit-driven personality at the present time and very good length and grip on the nicely snappy finish. If more of the slate tones emerge with further bottle age, adding drive to the gorgeous fruit tones of this wine, then my score will seem conservative. 2016-2040. **91-93?**

2011 Wintricher Oligsberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2011 Oligsberg Gold Kap is a very heavily botrytized wine that really shows just how clean and pure the noble rot was in this vintage. The superb bouquet soars from the glass in a tropical mélange of pineapple, mango, tangerine, honey, a surprisingly bright and assertive base of minerality and a beautiful topnote of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really very long on the backend, with a rock solid core, bright, framing acids and stunning length and grip on the very complex and succulent finish. While this wine will be absolutely delicious to drink right from the outset, the balance here is impeccable and this wine will cellar very well indeed. 2012-2040. **94+**.

Ruwer

Weingut Karthäuserhof (Christophe Tyrell)

Weingut Karthäuserhof has made another strong set of wines in 2011, as Christian Vogt has continued his very strong run since taking over as the head of the winemaking at the estate with the 2009 vintage. The entire range of 2011ers here had been bottled five weeks before my visit on March 23rd (no doubt so they would be ready to show at Prowein in Düsseldorf) and the wines seemed to have bounced back nicely and to be showing quite well at the time of my visit. The screwcap disease appears to be spreading here a bit as well, as this year three different cuvées, will be bottled under this closure. All three were already showing signs of early reduction, with their slate soil tones in varying stages of transforming into a sharp, metallic minerality that does not augur well for their long-term futures. But, other than the closure hiccups with three bottlings here, there is little not to be ecstatic about with the wines from Karthäuserhof these days, as the estate is really making superb wines under the cellar management of Herr Vogt. As is the custom here, I did not taste the Grosses Gewächs bottlings from 2011, as the VDP asks that estates not show them until later in the year- happily a request that is overlooked when I come to visit at several other of my favorite domaines. But, I have not been visiting here at Karthäuserhof anywhere near as long as I have at several of these other estates and perhaps with a bit more time I can take a look at the new vintage's Grosses Gewächs bottlings in the future here at the same time as I taste the other cuvées. In the meantime, here are the notes on the remainder of the range of very fine 2011ers from Karthäuserhof. Ironically, other than the wines destined to live their short lives out under screwcaps, the only wine here that did not totally impress me was the 2011 Karthäuserhofberg Beerenauslese, which delivered lovely focus and complexity, but seemed just a tad on the soft side and a bit easy-going for long-

term cellaring. But, the entirety of the remainder of the range were outstanding, with a couple of these very clean, single fuder Auslesen amongst the stars of the vintage.

2011 Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

Weingut Karthäuserhof makes one of my very favorite examples of Pinot Blanc in Germany and the 2011 version looked very promising indeed at the time of my March visit. The nose is pure and lovely, offering up scents of white peaches, tart orange, spring flowers, a fine base of slate and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and wide open, with bouncy acidity, fine balance and good length and grip on the succulent finish. This will drink very well from the outset. 2012-2020. **90.**

2011 Ruwer Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The basic estate Riesling Trocken from Karthäuserhof is really very good this year and happily is not being bottled under screwcap (or at least this was the case with the sample from which I tasted). The nose on the 2011 Ruwer Trocken is excellent, offering up a fine mélange of tart orange, grapefruit, slate, petrol and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and beautifully focused, with a fine core of fruit, racy acids and excellent length and grip on the poised and classy finish. One cannot do much better than this wine as far as Estate Riesling Trocken botlings go! Fine juice. 2012-2030. **90+.**



Christian Vogt, the Cellar Master at Weingut Karthäuserhof in Eitelsbach, has fashioned outstanding 2011ers.

2011 Schieferkristall Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof (screwcap)

I really liked this wine in 2010 and could not believe that it had all been bottled under screwcap in 2011! Ah, well, the wine is 11.5 percent alcohol in this vintage (the same as last year) and clearly had a nice wine under its closure, as it offers up a fine nose of pink grapefruit, tart orange, wild yeast tones, slate, gentle notes of petrol and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and suave on the attack, with just a touch of metallic minerality already beginning to creep in on the crisp finish. As this has only been under its closure five weeks and is already showing early signs of that piercing, metallic edge to the minerality that comes from the closure, rather than the *terroir*, I wonder how quickly one is going to have to drink this wine up. But, at least for the present time it is a pretty tasty bottle (and could have been outstanding under cork). 2012-2015+? **88.**

2011 Alte Reben Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2011 Alte Reben Riesling Trocken from Weingut Karthäuserhof is excellent and impressively harmonious on both the nose and palate. The classy bouquet delivers scents of bread fruit, tart orange, lemongrass, orange peel, slate and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, deep and quite suave on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, fine focus, ripe, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the focused finish. This is really a beautiful bottle of dry Riesling. 2012-2030+. **91+.**

2011 Tyrell's Edition Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

This is a new bottling from Karthäuserhof to fill the gap in the quality hierarchy between the Alte Reben and the Grosses Gewächs (think of it as the premier cru in the dry Riesling lineup here) and the 2011 is outstanding. The wine weighs in at 12.5 percent alcohol, as it started with good Auslesen must weight. The young and exceptional nose jumps from the glass in a poised blend of pink grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, wild yeasts, great minerality, a touch of *Chablisienne*-like straw and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with ripe, snappy acids, excellent focus and great length and grip on the racy and youthful finish. Lovely juice. 2016-2040. **93+.**

2011 Estate Riesling QbA Feinherb- Weingut Karthäuserhof (screwcap)

The 2011 Estate Riesling QbA Feinherb tips the scales at 11.2 percent alcohol and carries 16 grams per liter of residual sugar. This is already showing more ill effects from its closure than the Schieferkristall Trocken bottling, and I fear its days will be shorter and less pleasure-giving than that wine. The nose shows that there were some good things here under the closure, as pretty fruit tones of apple and white cherry mingle with wild yeasts, slate and white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and quite overtly metallic and angular in its expression of minerality from the mid-palate back. The wine retains good length and grip (for how long?), but one is going to have to drink that at a very brisk pace to avoid full-blown and permanent reduction. 2012-2014+? **86.**

2011 Schieferkristall Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Karthäuserhof (screwcap)

I am not sure what the estate has against its customers for the Schieferkristall bottlings, but the Feinherb is also sealed up under screwcap. This is a really good wine under the closure, but the minerality is already showing the first signs of that metallic and sharp edge. The nose offers up a complex mélange of pink grapefruit, white cherries, wild yeasts and apple blossoms to go along with that edgy minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and well-balanced, with a nice touch of mid-palate sweetness, good acids and a long, focused finish. It is a great pity about this closure, as it will have to be drunk up before its time, but this is the least

affected (thus far) of the three screwcapped wines in the cellar this year, so the window may be open a bit wider. 2012-2017. **88.**

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Kabinett this year is outstanding, soaring from the glass in a blaze of white cherries, tar orange, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate, citrus zest and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and utterly suave on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, fine, ripe acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. A lovely wine, which may perhaps have the must weight of a light Spätlese, but has nicely retained its Kabinett sensibilities. 2014-2035+. **93.**

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Karthäuserhof

In 2011, the Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Spätlese also has must weight a bit above its actual Prädikat level (with global warming, it has probably been nearly twenty years since any wine was really within sight of its minimum must weight), but like the Kabinett, this wine has maintained a very nice sense of proper Spätlese transparency and lightness of step. The blend included twenty percent of gently botrytized grapes this year. The very classy bouquet offers in scents of white cherry, tangerine, a touch of violet, wild yeasts, slate and a nice topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and juicy, with a fairly sweet core for Spätlese, but with lovely mineral drive and crisp acids keeping the finish properly lively on the long, dancing finish. A very tasty example. 2012-2030+. **92.**

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2011 “regular” Auslese from Weingut Karthäuserhof includes thirty-five percent botrytized berries in the blend, which gives the wine a lovely creaminess in the mid-palate and nicely concentrates the sugars and acids, without really glazing the wine dramatically. The deep, pure and very classy nose offers up a blend of pear, white cherries, slate, bee pollen, a touch of honeycomb and a potpourri of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and quite ethereal for Auslese, with a superb core of fruit, fine, framing acids and a very long, silky and dancing finish. This is really a lovely wine which will drink splendidly from the outset, but has the requisite balance to age long and gracefully as well. 2012-2040. **93+.**

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese #43- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The “numbered” Auslesen bottlings represent a lot more nobly rotten grapes in the cuvées than is the case with the above wine. The Auslese #43 is outstanding, showing a decidedly more glazed personality of oranges, pears, cherry blossoms, honeycomb, citrus zest, crystalline minerality, wild yeasts and candied violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows of a lovely coating of very clean botrytis, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and balance and a very, very long, succulent and tangy finish. This is an excellent bottle of botrytized Auslese. 2015-2045+. **94+.**

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese #49- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Auslese #49 seems a bit less marked by its botrytis on the nose than the #43 version, but is equally pure and racy on the palate. The absolutely stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of white peach, honeycomb, white cherries, wild yeasts, a touch of petrol, lilacs and a beautifully complex base of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with great mid-palate depth, superb acids, laser-like focus and outstanding length and grip on the very, very pure and transparent finish. I absolutely love this wine’s transparency and gentle coating of botrytis! 2017-2050. **95.**

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese #57- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The Auslese #57 from Weingut Karthäuserhof is the most glazed of these three stunning “numbered” Auslesen, with its beautifully tropical bouquet delivering a complex mélange of pineapple, mandarin orange, great slatey minerality, orange zest and a topnote of lilacs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very, very long, with a fine core, great focus, zesty acids and lovely grip on the long and beautifully delineated finish that is amazingly light on its feet for such a significant percentage of botrytized berries included in the blend. My heart was won by the magically ethereal aspect of the Auslese #49, but all three of these Auslesen are stunning and I would be delighted to have all three in my cellar! 2017-2045+. **94+**.

2011 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2011 Beerenauslese from the Karthäuserhofberg is a lovely wine, but it does not quite possess the same bounce of acidity as the four Auslesen from the estate this year and consequently comes across as just a touch soft by comparison. This is not to say that the wine is not very lovely on both the nose and palate, as it delivers a beautifully botrytized bouquet of tangerine, pineapple, fresh apricot, honey, a hint of soil and plenty of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and honeyed, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, framing acidity that comes across as a bit gentle, but very good balance on the long and focused finish. This is a very pretty and elegant rendition of BA, but I suspect it will be at its most pleasing on the early side of its life- though the wine probably is sufficiently well-balanced to last very nicely as well. 2015-2035+. **92**.

Weingut Maximin Grünhäuser (Mertesdorf)

I did not taste the entire range of 2010ers here last year, as there was some miscommunication about the date and time of my appointment, so Dr. von Schubert graciously offered to open several of the wines I did not see last year in addition to what was ready to be shown from the new vintage of 2011 during my visit in March of this year. As I had not reported on the wines last year, I have included notes on many of these 2010ers here in addition to the 2011ers that were served during my visit. To the credit of Dr. von Schubert, the Maximin Grünhäuser estate does not rush to make its final decisions about various bottlings until a bit later in the spring than many of its neighbors, so when I make my customary pass through Germany each March to taste the new vintage, many of the final decisions have not yet been taken at the estate. This typically means that the full range of the new vintage is not yet available for tasting, but it strikes me as a better solution than having the team at Maximin Grünhäuser put together approximations of the final blends for the year in question. As has been the case for the last few vintages here at the estate, there are some extraordinary high water marks to be found both amongst the 2010s and the 2011s that I tasted on this visit, but the quality is not quite as consistent as one might hope from bottling to bottling. None of the wines I tasted could be described as disappointing, but there are several cuvées where the estate has really capitalized on the inherent potential of each vintage, and others that are still very good, but not quite in the same league of excellence as the very finest examples of each vintage. A few of the 2011ers here had just been bottled and so my scores may be a bit on the conservative side for those particular wines.

Dr. von Schubert was very pleased with the quality of the 2011ers here at the estate, which he ranked a touch higher overall than the 2010ers. Based on what I tasted last year, I might have been inclined to agree with him wholeheartedly, but he served a few truly stunning

2010ers here as well that really increased my appreciation for the success Maximin Grünhäus experienced in that vintage as well. As has been my impression for a few years here, I really liked the Kabinetten and Auslesen the best of the range of wines that we tasted on this visit from both vintages, with the exception of the really superb 2010 Abtsberg Spätlese AP #13, which was exceptional. To be fair, there may well be a few more 2011 Spätlesen still down in the cellars whose final blends had not yet been decided upon, so maybe there are some even stronger examples still waiting in the wings from this Prädikat level yet to be unveiled. What seems pretty clear is that the great terroirs of the Bruderberg, Herrenberg and Abtsberg seem to reach their highest expressions when crafted in the traditional style of off-dry and noble sweet wines, and they are not quite as well-suited to the production of drier-styled Rieslings. The same of course can be said for many of the greatest vineyard sites in the middle Mosel and the Saar, and I continue to hope for the day where more of the domestic market in Germany starts to crave the classic styles of German Riesling with the same passion that they have embraced the superb dry Rieslings now being crafted around the country, as it would be wonderful if the terroir could have a greater role than the market in how many dry and how many noble sweet wines are produced here each year. But, I do understand that Maximin Grünhäuser is a business and they need to make wines that their clients are currently demanding.

Sadly, there seems to be an expansion of the number of bottlings that are being sealed up under screwcap at Maximin Grünhäuser, which of course is not great news in my book. Beyond the fact that this closure often mars my enjoyment of the wine from a very early age, I also have to wonder about the applicability of this closure for wines that are made so reductively in the first place at the estate and which have always been meant for long aging. It would be a pity to alter the great classic style of these wines simply to adopt a closure which, at least in my experience, clearly has some very real issues for the aging of wines. But, be that as it may, the range of wines offered under screwcap at Maximin Grünhäuser seems to have grown over the last year. In any case, there are some really excellent wines to be found from both the 2010 and 2011 vintages at this important estate, and I keep hoping that some intrepid importer will approach Dr. von Schubert about offering some of the back vintages available here, as the estate has done an admirable job of holding back some older wines and they really need to find an agent to make them more widely available on the market- as nothing beats a fully mature bottle of Maximin Grünhäuser Riesling. I have listed the wines by vintage in the notes that follow, though during the tasting we jumped around between the two vintages and climbed up the Prädikat ladder. Where there is only a single bottling of a specific wine, I have not included the AP number for the wine (as several had not yet been finalized for the 2011ers). These are two very strong, back to back vintages at Maximin Grünhäuser and for long-time fans of this estate, these have to be the most exciting recent releases from this venerable domaine in several years.

2011ers

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Estate Riesling Trocken (screwcap)

The 2011 Estate Riesling Trocken is 12.5 percent in alcohol and all is bottled under screwcap these days. The very pretty nose offers up scents of green apple, lime, a fine base of slate, citrus peel and a gentle topnote of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and well-balanced, with round acids and nice bounce on the backend. Not bad. 2012-2020. **87.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Trocken- Alte Reben

The 2011 Herrenberg Alte Reben Trocken had been bottled only two days prior to my visit, but had not yet begun to shut down post-bottling and was showing quite well. The very pretty bouquet delivers a blend of pear, Granny Smith apple, wild yeasts, incipient notes of petrol, a touch of cress-like herb tones and a lovely base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and well-balanced, with good, but not great depth and a long, ripely acidic finish. Good juice that will drink well with only a few years of cellaring. 2014-2030. **89.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Trocken- Alte Reben

The 2011 Abtsberg Alte Reben Trocken had been bottled a bit earlier than the Herrenberg (two and a half weeks prior to my visit) and was already in the process of shutting down a bit after the bottling, so my score may be a bit conservative for the wine. The nose is quite reticent in its mix of grapefruit, tart pear, petrol, wild yeasts and a complex base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and reserved, with a moderate core, but pretty good backend length and grip on the focused finish. There is a distinct possibility that there could be more here than meets the eye at this point right after the bottling. I have given a potentially higher score in parentheses for this wine in case it is just really a bit pinched post-bottling and will have more to offer once it has recovered from the *mise*. 2015-2035. **88. (90+?)**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Estate Riesling Feinherb (screwcap)

The 2011 Estate Riesling Feinherb had been bottled two days prior to my visit- all under screwcap- and was showing a distinctly coarse edge to its minerality that I associate with screwcap-related issues. Of course, it may well be that the wine has to be prepared dramatically differently for sealing under screwcap than under cork and the bottling process may be much more traumatic for the wine as a result, so that it is far more agitated right after the bottling than would be the case with a wine sealed under natural cork. In any case, the nose offers up scents of green apple, lime, piercing minerality and petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full and nicely balanced on the attack, but with the backend minerality currently coming across as quite coarse. Impossible to tell at this time how good this wine will ultimately prove to be. ???

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Superior

The 2011 Herrenberg Superior bottling from Maximin Grünhäuser had been bottled the day before my visit, but was showing very well still. The deep and superb nose offers up a fine mélange of pear, cress, petrol, a nice touch of wild yeasts, a very complex base of slate and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite zesty, with a solid mid-palate, lovely focus and grip and fine detail on the snappy and impressively long finish. The 2011 Superior from the Herrenberg is 12.5 percent alcohol, in comparison to the decidedly less ripe 2010 version at eleven percent. This is more along the lines of what I expect from the Herrenberg Superior bottling and a step up from the 2010 rendition. 2015-2035+. **91+.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Superior

The 2011 Abtsberg Superior is also a bit riper than its counterpart in 2010 and a bit better as a result. The deep, lovely and youthfully primary bouquet delivers scents of lime, tart pear, citrus zest, incipient notes of petrol, a touch of fresh mint, wild yeasts and a lovely base of slate-derived minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and racy, with a lovely core of fruit, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the poised and classy finish. This is really a lovely wine in the making! 2016-2040. **92+.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Bruderberg Riesling QbA (screwcap)

Aromatically, the 2011 Bruderberg QbA was showing quite expressively at the time of my visit, jumping from the glass in a blend of lime, white cherries, tensile minerality (from the

closure?), floral tones and a touch of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full and quite easy-going at the core for a 2011er, with a bit of backend pinching already in evidence from its closure of choice. As this was bottled fairly recently, perhaps a bit more backend amplitude will return once the wine fully recovers, but this seems very likely to be a wine of style and grace that was bottled up under the wrong closure and will never realize the potential it probably showed out of *fuder*. I note that my impression of the 2010 a year previously was exactly the same. 2012-2018. **87.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett

The 2011 Herrenberg Kabinett had all been bottled the day prior to my visit (happily, all of it under natural cork!) and was showing quite well. The wide open and expressive nose wafts from the glass in an inviting blend of lime zest, pear, a touch of bee pollen, slate, petrol and a gentle topnote of fresh-culled mint. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and generous, with a good core and nice, ripe, framing acidity carrying the long finish. This is a lower level Spätlese in terms of size and sweetness, and while it is a very tasty drink, it does not quite deliver the same filigree and classic styling as the 2010 version. I would opt for drinking the very user-friendly 2011 Herrenberg Kabinett ahead of the 2010. 2012-2025. **89+.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Kabinett (screwcap)

I was rather shocked to see an entire bottling of Abtsberg Kabinett bottled up under screwcap, but here it was in front of me at the tasting! The wine is very lovely on both the nose and palate today, but how long will that last? The superb bouquet offers up scents of white cherries, pears, petrol citrus zest, beautifully complex slate and a bit of mint in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and racy, with fine focus and mid-palate depth, crisp acids and impressive, nascent complexity. The finish is very long and sports lovely grip. If this had been bottled under cork, I would not touch a bottle for at least five years and allow its secondary layers to fully emerge. However, with this closure, perhaps it would be prudent to drink the wine on the younger side, rather than run the risk of reduction down the road? 2012-2035? **91+?**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Bruderberg Riesling Spätlese

The young vines in the Bruderberg that produced the lovely Auslese in 2009 have produced a Spätlese in both 2011 and 2010. The 2011 Bruderberg Spätlese is really very pretty and offers up a bit more dimension on both the nose and palate than the laid back 2010 version. The fine bouquet is a mix of lime zest, white cherries, oranges, a lovely base of slate, a touch of cress-like herbal tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and tensile, with nice succulence on the attack, good mid-palate depth, fine balance and lovely cut and grip on the complex finish. Fine juice here. 2012-2030. **91+.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese

The 2011 Herrenberg Spätlese is not quite as structurally racy as its 2010 counterpart, but it too is a very tasty wine that will drink well from a very young age. The lovely and already quite complex nose offers up scents of white cherries, green apple, fresh-culled mint, bee pollen, slate, a touch of petrol and a floral topnote redolent of lilacs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and juicy, with a good core of fruit, bright framing acids, lovely complexity and pretty good length on the wide open an easy-going finish. Good juice, but with just a bit more grip on the backend, this could have been stunning. 2012-2030+. **90.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese AP #6

I have to assume that the AP #6 Spätlese from the Abtsberg was bottled for Prowein again this year and there may well be another 2011 Abtsberg Spätlese waiting in the wings. The

nose is quite lovely on this wine, wafting from the glass in mix of white cherries, pears, mint, bee pollen, irises and a beautiful base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and pure, with solid depth, juicy acids and good length and grip on the focused finish. A very nice wine. 2012-2030+. **91.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Auslese AP #16

I am not sure how many Herrenberg Auslesen there will be this year, but the AP #16 is excellent. The bright, pure and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blend of pears, white cherries, honeycomb, violets, beautiful slate undertones, wild yeasts and a classic topnote of cress. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, bright, snappy acids and very good length and grip on the filigreed finish. This is a very fine result in 2011. 2016-2040. **93+.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Auslese AP #7

The 2011 Abtsberg Auslese AP #7 is another absolutely excellent example of the vintage. The beautifully pure and suave nose offers up a very pure mélange of pear, white cherries, lilacs, bee pollen, a touch of wild yeast, a superb base of slate and plenty of spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with lovely mid-palate depth, excellent focus and balance and a very long, succulent, nascently complex and very classy finish. This too will be accessible right out of the blocks, but I would strongly encourage a bit of patience to really let this beautiful bottle of Auslese blossom with a bit of further cellaring. 2016-2050. **94.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Auslese Fuder 84

The 2011 Abtsberg Fuder 84 Auslese is a bit more glazed with botrytis than the beautifully pure AP #7 version, but every bit as fine and complex. The bright and classy nose offers up a nobly rotten blend of candied violets, white cherries, orange zest, honeycomb, lime blossoms, plenty of slate and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nicely concentrated by the botrytis, with excellent focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and dancing finish. Another absolutely lovely wine. 2015-2050+. **94.**

2011 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Auslese Fuder 87

The 2011 Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 87 is a bit more precise on the nose than the Fuder 84, but it may not quite possess the same cut and grip on the backend as the former wine. The very pure and classy nose jumps from the glass in blend of orange zest, lime, white cherries, honey, white flowers, bee pollen and a lovely base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, balanced and beautifully-delineated, with a fine core, crisp, framing acids and a long, laid back and creamy finish. There is just a touch more drive on the backend of the Fuder 84 version, but believe me, this is splitting hairs and both of these Auslesen are beautiful examples of the Abtsberg! The Fuder 84 will probably last a bit longer and the Fuder 87 will provide great pleasure right from the outset- beset to have both of them in the cellar! 2012-2035+. **93+.**

2010ers

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Estate Riesling Trocken (screwcap)

The 2010 Estate Riesling Trocken is a touch more austere than its 2011 counterpart, as it is a full degree lower in alcohol and does not come from such thoroughly ripe fruit. I was very happy to see that despite it also being bottled completely under screwcap, there were no signs of reduction yet on either the nose or palate. The bouquet is a nice, green fruity blend of lime, green apple, slate, petrol, a touch of mint and lime peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is

medium-full, crisp and well-balanced, with still a very “round” impression of minerality, bright acids and good length and grip on the finish. 2014-2025. **87.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Estate Riesling Feinherb (screwcap)

The 2010 Estate Riesling Feinherb was also all bottled under screwcap, and unfortunately, this wine was already showing the early signs of permanent reduction in its cabbage-infused bouquet and metallic minerality. The palate was short on the backend and the wine seems stripped of flavor- clearly a bottle in the death throes of permanent reduction. ???

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Superior

The 2010 Herrenberg Superior is a bit less ripe than its 2011 counterpart, weighing in at eleven percent alcohol. The nose is deep and very stylish in its mélange of lime peel, green apple, wild yeasts and a lovely base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full and shows just a touch of *fluidité* at the core, with good focus and balance on the long and fairly easy-going finish. This is not bad by any stretch of the imagination, but I have had earlier vintages of this bottling that seemed much more impressive in terms of depth and intensity of flavor. Could this have lost a little punch from de-acidification? 2014-2035. **88+.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Superior

The 2010 Abtsberg Superior shows off much better mid-palate depth and backend dimension than the Herrenberg in this vintage. The fine, reserved nose offers up a mélange of pink grapefruit, lime, slate, plenty of petrol, citrus blossoms and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and rock solid at the core, with bright acids, a very modest touch of residual sweetness (which nicely buffers the acidity) and fine length and grip on the focused and classy finish. A lovely bottle. 2014-2035+. **91+.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett AP #2

I tasted this wine the year previously during my visit and really liked it, so I was very happy to see it showing every bit as well today as it did twelve months previously. The superb and classy nose wafts from the glass in a deep and focused nose of apple, lime, a touch of pineapple, lovely slate tones, wild yeasts and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and filigreed, with a superb core of fruit, fine balance and a long, tangy and very expressive finish. A superb bottle of Kabinett. 2012-2035+. **92+.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Kabinett AP #4

Last year I tasted the Abtsberg Kabinett AP #5, which was the earlier bottling of this wine that was prepared in time to show at Prowein. The later-bottled AP #5 looks to be the slightly superior version in 2010, as it offers up a lovely nose of white cherries, green apple, petrol, a fine base of slate, fresh mint, lime zest and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full and more reserved at the present time than the 2010 Herrenberg Kabinett, with a very good core of fruit, lovely balance and cut and very good grip on the long and focused finish. Another very good bottle of 2010 Kabinett. 2014-2035. **92.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Bruderberg Riesling Spätlese

The young vine Spätlese from the Bruderberg in 2010 offers up a very pretty nose and palate, but seems a touch easy-going at this point in time. The stylish nose offers up an engaging blend of green apple, pear, scents of petrol, bee pollen, slate and a bit of cress in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and juicy, with moderate depth and pretty good length and grip on the bouncy and focused finish. This is a pretty tasty and wide open bottle of 2010 Spätlese, but it lacks a bit of seriousness, if viewed in the context of the illustrious history of this great estate. 2012-2025. **88.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Spätlese AP #6

I did not have the chance to taste the Herrenberg Spätlese from 2010 last year and was very happy to see it showing quite well during my recent visit. The lovely and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a mélange of white cherries, apple, cress, gentle notes of petrol, slate, lime peel and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and zesty, with a good core, fine filigree and focus and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2014-2035+. **91.**

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Spätlese AP #13

Last year I had the opportunity to taste the 2010 Abtsberg Spätlese AP #7, which had been bottled up on the early side to present at Prowein. The AP #13 Spätlese is a decided step up from that bottling and a very fine example of the vintage. The bouquet is a deep and classy mix of lime, white cherries, a touch of fresh mint, a beautiful base of slate, white flowers and bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and very pure on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, bright, zesty acids and superb cut and grip on the very long and focused finish. I love the combination in this wine of the succulent generosity on the attack and the racy and mineral-driven backend. A lovely bottle of 2010 Spätlese! 2016-2040+. **93+.**



The great Abtsberg vineyard rising up behind the entrance to the estate- note the large section being replanted.

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Auslese Fuder 21 (AP #8)

This is another of the 2010ers I was able to taste at the estate last year and I was very happy (and surprised) to see my very favorable impressions exactly the same as twelve months ago (this usually does not happen, as both wine and my palate are moving objects). The nose on the Fuder 21 Herrenberg Auslese offers up an excellent blend of lime, pear, bee pollen, a touch of honeycomb, slate, petrol and violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and crisp, with a very stylish, gentle glazing of botrytis, a superb base of minerality, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and classy finish. A lovely Auslese. 2016-2040. **93+**.

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Abtsberg Riesling Auslese Fuder 37

The 2010 Abtsberg Auslese Fuder 37 is also an outstanding example of the vintage. The deep and classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a mélange of white cherries, lime blossoms, crystalline minerality, fresh mint, bee pollen, a touch of wild yeasts, lime zest and floral tones redolent of lilacs. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very fresh and bouncy, with a lovely core of fruit, bright, snappy acids and very good focus and grip on the long and fairly forward finish. This is quite accessible already, and while it is a far cry from a crime to be drinking it already, I would be strongly inclined to try to give it at least three or four years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Fine juice. 2015-2040. **93**.

2010 Maximin Grünhäuser Herrenberg Riesling Eiswein

The 2010 Herrenberg Eiswein was picked on December 3rd and is an absolutely stunning example of the vintage. The brilliant nose soars from the glass in a blend of pineapple, lime, honey, a beautiful base of slate, orange zest, cherry blossoms and candied violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and dancing, with a superb core of fruit, ripe, snappy acids and absolutely laser-like focus on the racy and boundless finish. This is Riesling bottled as a pure energy source! 2012-2050. **97**.

Saar

Weingut Egon Müller (Scharzhof)

The collection of 2011ers on display at Weingut Egon Müller perfectly captures how wide afield one could wander stylistically in this vintage and still make stunning wines. While nearby at Weingut Geltz-Zilliken, the Zillikens were selecting for wines without botrytis at the lower end of the Prädikat spectrum, Egon Müller and his team were out in the vineyards early selecting for botrytis and have produced fully four different Trockenbeerenauslesen in the 2011 vintage! While the vintage is skewed towards dessert wines at the Müller estate this year, this is not to say that there are not some absolutely stunning wines at the lower levels of ripeness as well, and the 2011 range here is truly exceptional up and down the quality hierarchy. There will be a total of three different Spätlesen this year from Egon Müller- one from the Braune Kupp vineyard and a regular and an auction bottling from the Scharzhofberg. There are only single bottlings of Kabinett and Auslese from the Scharzhofberg this year, and there will be no Goldkapsel or higher level Auslesen, as everything botrytized was already at TBA levels in 2011 when the picking teams got started in earnest! One of Egon Müller's key roles at the estate is deciding when to harvest and what will be the stylistic direction that the estate takes in its selection of grapes during the picking, and in 2011 it is quite clear that he was smitten with the beautiful quality of the very clean botrytis this year and decided to emphasize the potential TBAs in this vintage. Sadly, all of the 2011 TBAs were still in the very early stages of their fermentations and I was not able to taste any on this visit, but given how brilliant the botrytis

wines are at other top estates in 2011, I do hope to one day have the good fortune to be able to comment about the relative quality of the 2011 Müller TBAs. The 2011 Auction Spätlese had also just been assembled in the cellar and was not available for tasting. AP numbers had not yet been decided upon at the estate, so they do not appear below, but as the range (other than the TBAs!) is pretty straightforward, I suspect that there will not be any confusion down the road.

2011 Scharzhof Riesling QbA- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2011 Scharzhof QbA from Egon Müller had only been bottled the day before my visit, so my score may well be a tad on the conservative side- though the wine seemed to be showing very well. The very pretty and vibrant nose offers up scents of green apple, lilac, a great base of slate, lime peel and petrol. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a rock solid core of fruit, zesty acids and superb length and grip on the youthful and very classy finish. This is a stellar QbA that should age well for twenty years. 2015-2035. **89+**.

2011 Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2011 Kabinett from the Scharzhofberg is stunning and reminds me quite a bit of the 2001 version. The beautifully complex nose offers up a very pure mélange of green apple, pear, petrol, a mineral bath of slate, lime peel and scents of both violets and lilacs in the very floral upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full, pure and tensile, with stunning mid-palate depth, racy acids and magical length and grip on the very, very mineral finish. This is going to be a long-distance runner and is a glorious bottle of Müller Kabinett. 2018-2050. **94**.

2011 Wiltinger Braune Kupp Riesling Spätlese- Le Gallais

The 2011 Braune Kupp Spätlese was not yet bottled and was showing beautifully at the time of my visit. The bouquet is very complex, pure and mineral out of the blocks this year, offering up scents of mint leaf, apple, lime, wild yeasts, a potpourri of slate, violets, bee pollen and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and penetrating, with crystalline minerality, lovely focus and balance and exceptional length and grip on the snappy finish. Just a beautiful bottle in the making. 2020-2060+. **94**.

2011 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2011 Scharzhofberger Spätlese is a stunning young wine. The utterly brilliant nose jumps from the glass in a blend of lime peel, tart orange, green apple, petrol, a touch of honeycomb, orange zest and very crystalline minerality. There is a precision and a vibrancy to the nose of this wine that is almost gem-like. On the palate the wine deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly suave on the attack, with a fine core, great elegance and intensity of flavor and a very, very long, complex, zesty and seamless finish. This is one of the most complete young vintages of Scharzhofberger Spätlese that I have ever had the pleasure to taste! I can only imagine what the Auction bottling must be like! 2020-2070. **97**.

2011 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut Egon Müller

There is only one Auslese from this vineyard in 2011, but, oh what an Auslese! I love the very clean and pure effect of the botrytis to be found on the Scharzhofberger Auslese in 2011, as it serves to concentrate all the lovely elements in this wine without blurring or obscuring any of them. The gloriously complex bouquet delivers a magical mélange of lime zest, tangerine, hints of white cherries, honeycomb, kaleidoscopic minerality, white grape, candied lilacs, a touch of petrol and a floral topnote redolent of orange and lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and electric, with a great core, stunning focus and mineral drive and a very, very long, snappy and very pure finish. The botrytis here provides a lovely glazing that seems to

crystalize each element in the wine, adding vibrancy and precision. Great, great juice. 2022-2075+. 97.

Weingut Forstmeister Geltz-Zilliken (Saarburg)

Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken have made absolutely stunning 2011ers, but the collection here could not be more different than it was in 2010. As Hanno Zilliken explained, “last year the vintage gave such utterly profound raw materials for noble sweet wines that we would have been crazy not to make mostly wines in the upper Prädikat levels, but in 2011, we were presented with another opportunity and we decided to focus on the beautifully ripe and pure grapes and make more wines that were dry or at lower Prädikat levels this year.” Consequently Hanno and Dorothee decided to make an early pass through the vineyards and cut off all the botrytized grapes in the vineyards and let them fall to the ground, so that the noble rot would not spread and the vines could concentrate all their energy on ripening the remaining grapes to perfection. So, the 2011 Zilliken portfolio does not include any wines over the level of Auslese and there is almost no botrytis coloration to that wine, which is cut stylistically along the lines of a vintage such as 1988, in which the Auslesen were generally the result of golden berries, rather than botrytis (though of course it is hard to imagine even the greatest 1988 Auslesen reaching the same exalted level of quality as this stunning 2011er in the Zilliken cellars).

Hanno and Dorothee have added a new bottling to their lineup in 2011: a Saarburger Riesling Trocken “Alte Reben” (or old vines) that was created to bridge the gap between the Saarburger Trocken (the village wine) and the Rausch Grosses Gewächs (grand cru) bottling. The Alte Reben is an utterly superb wine and really a welcome new addition to the portfolio- not to mention an amazing value! The entire cellar had been bottled at the time of my visit- one month earlier than usual, as the Zillikens did not want to lose any of the extraordinary precision in the wines by extending their elevage. The 2011ers here are truly stunning wines across the board, with the dry wines amongst the most brilliant I have ever tasted from the estate, and the off-dry and noble sweet wines magical distillates of slate and utterly pure fruit. Given all the high octane fireworks at the upper Prädikat levels here in both 2009 and 2010, it is fascinating to taste through the great lineup of 2011ers from Weingut Geltz-Zilliken and see the same precision and surreal complexity at completely different registers of ripeness. 2011 will go down in the future as one of the great, great recent vintages at the estate, and it is very likely that a generation down the road, Zilliken wine lovers will be looking back at the 2011ers as the vintage where this estate really came of age with its dry wine program! I cannot recommend this entire range strongly enough.

Dry Wines

2011 Zilliken Riesling Trocken AP #14- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The Estate Riesling Trocken in 2011 is bottled primarily under screwcap, but happily, the family has also sealed 800 bottles under natural cork as well for old-fashioned folks like me who might be inclined to keep this wine in the cellar for a few years before drinking it. This sample was taken from one of the screw-capped bottles. The wine weighs in at 11.5 percent alcohol and offers up a fine nose of lemon, pink grapefruit, plenty of slate, lemongrass, petrol and a nice touch of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and minerally, with lovely focus, length and grip. The screwcap was already “firming up” the impression of minerality on

the backend, but I bet this will really age well under natural cork. I would of course drink the screwcap-sealed bottles right away, but this wine will age quite well under cork. 2012-2022. **88.**

2011 Saarburger Riesling Trocken AP #13- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Saarburger Riesling Trocken has all been bottled under natural cork this year, so this beautiful wine will make an ideal addition to the cellar for long-term keeping. The wine was not chapitalized, and at eleven percent, it is a touch lower in alcohol than the above and is a notable step up in complexity and purity. The superb bouquet offers up scents of lemon, a gentle touch of wild yeasts, spring flowers, pink grapefruit, beautiful slate tones, a gentle dollop of petrol and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and shows great *nervosité*, with a lovely core of fruit, superb filigree and a very long, focused and snappy finish. Superb juice and a great, great value! 2014-2035+. **91+**.

2011 Saarburger Riesling Trocken “Alte Reben” AP #12- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The new bottling of the Alte Reben Trocken is a brilliant wine and again will represent stunning value. The wine weighs in at 11.5 percent and offers up superb complexity on both the nose and palate. The gorgeous nose soars from the glass in a blaze of tart orange, sweet grapefruit, classy wild yeast tones, lemongrass, crystalline minerality and a topnote of ocean breeze. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and utterly seamless, with very refined, but brisk acidity, laser-like focus, superb mid-palate depth and outstanding grip on the very, very long, snappy finish. This is the second finest young dry Riesling I have ever tasted from the estate- only outpaced by this year’s version of the Grosses Gewächs from the Rausch! Do not miss this wine! 2015-2040. **94.**

2011 Rausch Grosses Gewächs AP #11- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Rausch Grosses Gewächs is an utter masterpiece in the making and a watershed wine at Weingut Geltz-Zilliken. The brilliant bouquet is a youthful mélange of pink grapefruit, lemon, kaleidoscopic slate tones, a gentle touch of wild yeasts, lime zest and a smoky topnote. This wine is hardly shy of fruit elements, but it is a study in the multi-faceted complexity of Rausch slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly pure on the attack, with a great core of fruit, ripe, zesty acids, stunning complexity and laser-like focus on the very, very long and utterly seamless, refined finish. A *tour de force* of dry Saar Riesling! 2018-2045. **96.**

Off-Dry Wines

2011 Zilliken Riesling Butterfly AP #10- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The Butterfly bottling is the estate’s most commercially successful wine and it is easy to appreciate why this is the case, as each year this wine offers up lovely drinking at a perfect level of off-dry sweetness that matches perfectly with a wide variety of cuisine. The 2011 carries 17 grams per liter of residual sugar, but with the high acids and striking minerality of the Saar, this comes off as nearly dry on the palate. The wine has been bottled under screwcap for several years now, but this is of course the day and age that we live in. The nose on the 2011 Butterfly is very pretty, offering up scents of green apple, tart orange, slate, white flowers and a touch of laurel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and minerally, with just a touch of residual sweetness on the long, bouncy finish, Good juice at a great price. 2012-2015. **88.**



Hanno Zilliken with his ancient fuders in his deep, damp cellars- a good environment for producing stellar 2011ers!

2011 Saarburger Riesling Feinherb AP #8- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Saarburger Feinherb is truly exceptional for its level and will be one of the great steals in the Zilliken portfolio this year. The wine weighs in at 10.5 percent alcohol, so a full point lower than its comparable Trocken bottling in this vintage. The very bright and minerally nose offers up a fine mélange of pink grapefruit, orange zest, lovely, slate-derived minerality, wild yeasts and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with beautiful interplay between minerality, fruit and the faint stirrings of residual sweetness. The wine displays excellent mid-palate depth, ripe acids and very fine length and grip on the focused and vibrant finish. Fine juice. 2012-2025+. **90+**.

2011 Rausch Diabas AP #7- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Rausch Diabas is another absolutely monumental wine in the making this year. This is the Feinherb version of Grosses Gewächs, if you like, and this style has really excelled in the 2011 vintage. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of tart orange, fresh pineapple, crystalline minerality, wild yeasts, lemon grass, a touch of incipient saltiness and an overtly smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and magically complex, with a superb core of fruit, laser-like focus and simply stunning length and grip on the brilliant finish. I did not write down what the residual sugar was on this wine, but it comes across as just slightly off-dry in style. The inner sense of elegance and grace in this very intensely flavored wine is almost humbling! A simply stunning young wine. 2017-2040. **95**.

Traditional, Noble Sweet Wines

2011 Saarburger Riesling Kabinett AP #6- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Saarburger Kabinett all hails from fruit from the Rausch vineyard, though, of course, there is no mention of this on the label. This is a lovely Kabinett, offering up a very stylish nose of lemon, spring flowers, slate, a touch of sea salt and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and transparent, with lovely focus and filigree and a long, zesty, slate-driven finish. High class juice and a fine, fine value, the 2011 Saarburger Kabinett will drink beautifully right from the outset. 2012-2025. **90.**

2011 Bockstein Riesling Kabinett AP #5- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Bockstein Kabinett is simply superb. The beautiful nose offers up a complex and youthful mélange of lemon blossoms, mandarin orange, slate, a touch of petrol, gentle smokiness and a vibrant topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-bodied and dancing, with the lovely, ethereal sense of true Kabinett, fine mid-palate depth, ripe acids and a very long, complex and classy finish. Just a lovely bottle. 2014-2035. **93.**

2011 Rausch Riesling Kabinett AP #4- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Rausch Kabinett is every bit as beautiful as the version from the Bockstein vineyard. The deep and utterly refined nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of mandarin orange, lemon, complex slate tones, sea salts, lilacs, smoke and plenty of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and wonderfully filigreed, with stunning intensity of flavor, a fine core, laser-like focus and outstanding length and grip on the ethereal and seamless finish. This is as good a bottle of Kabinett as I tasted on the entire trip! 2014-2035. **94+.**

2011 Rausch Riesling Spätlese AP #3- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The “regular” bottling of 2011 Rausch Spätlese is superb as well, with no signs of a dip in precision or quality from the two lovely Kabinetten that preceded it in this tasting. The superb bouquet offers up scents of tangerine, lemon, crystalline minerality, bee pollen, lime zest and citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and tensile, with a brilliant base of minerality, snappy acids and great purity and beauty on the very long and racy finish. An utter classic in the making. 2014-2040. **93+.**

2011 Rausch Riesling Spätlese AP #2 (Auction Bottling)- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2011 Auction Spätlese from the Rausch vineyard is even a step up in elegance and refinement from the outstanding regular bottling. The brilliantly etched nose soars from the glass in a mélange of lemon, mandarin orange, crystalline minerality, slate, a touch of sea salt, gentle smokiness, spring flowers and a touch of wild yeasts in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, deep and very intensely flavored, with laser-like precision, a superb core, racy acids and superb grip on the very, very long, youthful and magical finish. Aromatically and flavor-wise, there are not significant differences between these two Spätlesen, but the Auction bottling is simply a more intense, longer and more elegant version of the inherent beauty of the Rausch. Typically this wine has shut down pretty dramatically by the time the September auctions roll around in Trier, but I hope this year that the wine is still showing as beautifully then as it is today, as it will clearly be one of the great Versteigerung wines available this year. 2018-2045+. **97.**

2011 Rausch Riesling Auslese AP #1- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

Last, but certainly not least, we arrive at the sole Auslese in the Zilliken cellars this year. This is a beautiful, beautiful wine, with almost no influence of botrytis to be found on either the nose or palate. The brilliantly refined nose offers up a magical mélange of pineapple, tangerine,

wild yeasts, kaleidoscopic minerality, bee pollen and lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is very pure, fullish and blazing on the attack, with brilliant depth, superb intensity of flavor, snappy acids, laser-like focus and utterly stunning length and grip on the gem-like and endless finish. The energy that is wrapped up inside this wine is enormous, but it never strays from its very pure and precise beam on the palate. This may well be the greatest young, non-botrytized Auslese I have ever tasted! 2020-2075+. **97.**



The castle from which the village of Bernkastel takes its name overlooking a beautiful bend of the Mosel.

**THE 2011 BORDEAUX VINTAGE
UNPRECEDENTED CONDITIONS LEAD TO VERY MIXED QUALITY,
BUT WITH SOME TRULY OUTSTANDING GEMS TO BE FOUND**



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UNPRECEDENTED CONDITIONS LEAD TO VERY MIXED QUALITY,
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Château Figeac basking in the summer-like sunshine at the end of March this year.

The 2011 vintage in Bordeaux is the third straight drought vintage in a row on the Gironde, but with weather conditions during the growing season in 2011 perhaps even more difficult for the vines than was the case in the dry summer of 2010 that preceded it. However, while both years were very dry and the drought conditions defined the styles of the two years, the two vintages could not be further apart stylistically. Whereas the 2010s are amongst the most powerful and fruit-driven of recent vintages (often with mind-numbing levels of alcohol), the 2011s are decidedly less ripe and alcoholic in style, with their sense of balance and expressions of *terroir* far more “classic” in style than the power-mongers of 2010, and only their very real backbone of substantial tannins a common link between these two vintages. Incredibly, the 2011s in general have even a higher level of tannins than their 2010 counterparts! For claret lovers who found the high alcohol and often overripe wines of 2010 not particularly to their liking, the much more classic profiles of the best wines of 2011 will be much more to their tastes and will merit serious attention if they are priced correctly. But, as was the case with 2009 and 2010, 2011 is far from a homogenous vintage in terms of quality, and one will have to tread

cautiously to ensure that only wines of balance find their way into their cellars in this quite inconsistent vintage. For, while the best wines of 2011 offer up really lovely aromatic and flavor complexity, lovely expressions of *terroir*, classic alcohol levels (in most cases ranging from the high twelves to mid-thirteens), and suave, firm structures that will demand some extended cellaring, there are also an awful lot of 2011s out there that are rather brutally tannic and seem likely to never offer up any true enjoyment during their lives- at least if they remain as they are today, without a bit of surreptitious blending back of some 2010 juice to pump up the fruit volume in the mid-palate. Adding up to fifteen percent of another vintage is still allowed in Bordeaux, so the possibility of adding 2010 juice to 2011 is of course perfectly acceptable, and I would be very surprised if some estates do not indeed feel forced to try this option to add a bit more balance to some rather thin mid-palates that currently do not stand up to the tannic clout of the wines of the 2011 vintage. The flip side, of course, is that the extremely high prices of the 2010s will demand *vis à vis* the corresponding 2011 may make this option very unpalatable from a financial standpoint.

Over and over again during my twelve days in Bordeaux at the end of March and the beginning of April this year, I heard the same refrain from *vignerons* that it was very necessary to treat the 2011 vintage “gently” both in the vineyard and in the cellars, and it was important to understand the very serious hydric stress that the vines were under on both sides of the Gironde during the growing season of 2011 and adapt one’s methodology to these realities. As Annabelle Cruse Bardinet, of the fine estate of Château Corbin in St. Émilion commented, “the 2011 vintage is simply unprecedented in our recent history in the region, and the resulting wines really bear no resemblance to any vintage of the last twenty or thirty years.” As was the case throughout much of Europe’s wine regions in 2011, the growing season got off to a very early start, with the flowering a good two to three weeks ahead of schedule and warm weather really more like summer than spring in many wine regions, including Bordeaux. The unusually warm and sunny weather of late March and early April really made it enjoyable to be visiting estates and tasting their 2010s last year, but it was not particularly good for the vines. The winter had been pretty dry and there was really no meaningful rainfall on either the Right Bank or the Left Bank in Bordeaux after the end of March, when there was thirty millimeters of rain. After that, with the exception of a few storms in August, there was simply no water for the vines for the entire summer and hydric stress was a reality for every *vigneron* in the region. In fact, the team at Château Haut Brion even went so far as to petition *Les Officials* for the right to drip irrigate younger vines (it is only allowed for vines recently planted, but Haut Brion took the lead in asking for permission to relieve the drought-stricken younger vines up to ten years of age), but not surprisingly, *Les Officials* did not act on the request in a timeframe that would have made it possible to use this technique in 2011, and the matter was dropped. But, according to Jean-Philippe Delmas, Director at Haut Brion, the petition has already been made for 2012, just in case the drought in Bordeaux continues for another year, as there is serious concern that the vines will not be able to withstand another summer like 2011, as this past winter was also considerably drier than normal and the drought in Bordeaux continues as of the writing of this article.

In any case, the drought conditions of 2011 were quite serious from the end of March forwards in this growing season, with the temperatures warm and plenty of sunshine from March all the way to the end of June. The end of June saw two consecutive days of blazing temperatures

on the 28th and 29th, as heat spikes sent the thermometer above forty degrees Celsius and a great many bunches of grapes were burned during these two days. A similar phenomenon swept through Burgundy at the same time, as a hot wind blew up from Africa, and burnt berries would be a hazard come harvest time. For estates who operated in 2011 by their standard “recipes” in their vineyards, with leaf pulling and the like, this heat spike was a disaster, as their grapes were scorched without additional leaf canopies to provide shade during these two blazing days. After these two days of heat spikes, the weather turned cool and grey- more like March (without the rain) than July, and August was not a whole lot sunnier, though more typical than was the case with the grey and frosty July. So the early start that had been provided by the summer-like conditions of the early spring was squandered by the unseasonably cool and overcast weather of July and the first half of August, with the ripening starting to fall back in line with less precocious years, and the drought conditions still persisting. Several *vignerons* commented that in the severe hydric stress of 2011, it was critical to get out in your vines and understand their suffering by treating them as gently as possible. Olivier Berrouet, Director of Château Pétrus, commented that for their team in the vineyards, “it was essential to not do anything to shock the vines during this long period of hydric stress, as practices such as green harvesting would have caused more harm than good in 2011 with the vines in such a fragile condition.” Needless to say, not everyone followed this gentle, non-interventionist approach in the vineyards. It was also the case in this vintage that the deeper soils of the Right Bank, with their underlying foundations of clay, were often much more successful in guarding a bit more water for the vines to continue to function during this extended period of drought, whereas the better-drained, gravelly soils of the Left Bank often saw their vines shut down completely for a period of several weeks in the most difficult stretch of the summer. Merlot in particular on the Left Bank was affected by the drought and maturation was often blocked during the mid-summer, so that modestly ripe and very tannic merlot either had to be consigned to the second or third wine cuvées or risk fundamentally compromising the final blend of the *grand vin* in 2011.

There were a few thunderstorms at the tail end of August, but with soils so parched, much of this badly-needed water ran off rather than was absorbed by the baked soils, and while it provided some relief for the stressed vines as September was dawning, it was not ideal. The bit of August rainfall (only 15 mm.) got vines that had shut down back going again, though as Annabelle Cruse Bardinot noted, “the first thing the vines did after this bit of rain was to start their vegetative cycles again and concentrate their energy in producing more foliage, rather than ripening the bunches, so one had to wait a bit for the plants to once again turn their attentions to ripening the grapes, rather than growing additional leaves.” The storms in August also had the less than desirable effect of getting botrytis started in the vineyards, so the pressure of rot was now part of the equation of 2011 as well and allowing grapes further hang time was now going to be decided as much by the hygienic conditions in the vineyards as it was going to be by the phenolic ripeness of the grapes. As September dawned, the drought of the summer had produced extremely small berries on the bunches (often the size of the end of one’s “pinkie” finger), and the bunches were not evenly ripe as well, so selection at picking and sorting at the cellar doors was going to be another key if one were to produce good wines in 2011. Needless to say, up to this point, this summer had been by far one of the most difficult in recent memory on the Gironde and was starting to make the drought summer of 2010 look like a cakewalk in comparison. For Ste. Estèphe and parts of Pauillac, things were about to get even worse!

September first saw a bad hailstorm sweep through Ste. Estèphe and northern Pauillac, causing significant damage to the vineyards and forcing the hands of estates that would have preferred to have waited a bit longer to get a bit more ripeness to the unevenly ripe bunches. In the wake of the hail, the vineyards saw rot fast encroaching and estates had to move as quickly as possible to get their harvesting teams in the vineyards and gather the grapes before the depredation caused by the hail was amplified by the spread of rot. For many estates affected by the hail, the entire crop was now on the line and thoughts of better physiological ripeness or better sugar levels were now left in the dust of trying not to lose their entire crops. Several *vignerons* in the area commented that the picking teams at Cos d'Estournel were particularly vigorous in selecting healthy bunches only at this time of crisis picking and they were often cited as having done an incredible job of only taking undamaged fruit under the extreme pressures caused by the storm and the consequent spread of rot in their vineyards. But that said, there is little doubt that any of the estates affected by the hail that struck the northern end of the Médoc would have much preferred to have left their bunches out on the vines at least another week or two to attain better ripeness, if Mother Nature had dealt them a kinder hand in 2011.

Even in the communes that were unaffected by the hail of the northern Médoc, the pressure from botrytis caused by the thunderstorms of August was now a considerable hazard, and many estates were making plans for earlier harvesting than would have been ideal. So picking times in 2011 can vary by quite a bit, depending on how steely were the nerves of the managers at each property and what each estate's own philosophy of managing risk happened to be in this vintage. As Bordeaux is a big money business at the classed growths- particularly on the vastly larger estates of the Left Bank- it is not surprising that many châteaux have zero tolerance for risk, and where estates emphatically seek to avoid risks, the likelihood in 2011 was for harvesting to get started during the first week of September, even if the grapes were less than ideally ripe. For the more intrepid, it paid to wait just a bit longer and get a bit more ripeness (particularly for the substantial tannins in the grapes), rather than bringing in less ripe fruit. As Jean-Michel Comme of Château Pontet-Canet commented. "we opted to pick our grapes ripe, rather than panic, and then we simply sorted very carefully to sort out the rot from the perfect grapes, as no machine can turn a bad grape into a good wine." But, of course, other estates approached these potential difficulties differently, adding to the heterogeneous nature of the 2011 vintage and there are plenty of examples this year of wines that clearly would have benefited from the picking teams not being sent out into the vineyards until just a bit later in the season.

Even without taking into account the hail in the northern Médoc, it seemed quite clear to me that the deeper soils on the Right Bank, with their base of clay, were advantaged in the 2011 vintage, as one feels less keenly in many of these wines the problems of the hydric stress and the consequent dry edges to the tannins that are more prevalent in many more wines on the Left Bank, where the finished wines have had to include production from fruit that may not have quite ripened due to drought-induced "shut downs" in mid-summer for an extended period of time. In this respect, it is often the merlot, rather than the cabernet sauvignon on the Left Bank that had the biggest problems, as well as the youngest vines, which do not have the same deep root systems as the older vines to probe the earth in search of trace amounts of water. So many of the more successful wines on the Left Bank in this vintage contain a much higher percentage of cabernet sauvignon in the blend than is customary. For example, at Mouton-Rothschild, the

ninety percent cabernet sauvignon found in the 2011 is the highest in the history of the estate. But, 2011 is far from a “Right Bank vintage”, as both Pomerol and St. Émilion are home to some of the more heavy-handed consultants whose methodologies seem to have been patently unsuitable to the challenges presented by the 2011 vintage, so there are an awful lot of disastrous failures to be found on the Right Bank this year as well. However, at least amongst the more “classically” styled producers on both sides of the Gironde, it is easy to appreciate that the deeper soils on the Right Bank have provided a bit of an advantage to the more gravelly, better-drained soils on the Left Bank, and many of the very best wines of 2011 are to be found hailing from Pomerol and St. Émilion. That said, it was interesting to hear Jean-Michel Laporte of Château La Conseillante quip that “the overall perception of the vintage for the market is always made on the Left Bank, not on the Right Bank”, inferring that even the best Right Bank wines of 2011 will still be tarnished a bit by the overall vintage’s reputation, due to the more difficult growing conditions on the Left Bank.

Given the myriad of challenges presented to *vignerons* during the 2011 growing season, it is rather a miracle that so many really good, classic wines were produced in this vintage, but there really were a significant number of very good 2011s on display during the *En Primeur* season of late March and early April. I would not go so far to say that there is a majority of success stories in 2011, as the less good wines still clearly outnumber the successful wines of this vintage, but there are still going to be a lot of very good wines produced in this vintage for mid-to-long-term cellaring. But, even the most successful wines of 2011 are going to demand significant bottle age, as this is indeed a very tannic vintage. I am sure that prices are destined to come down significantly for the 2011s from the absurd highs of the 2009 and 2010 vintages—both years have a lot of fatally flawed wines trading at unconscionably high tariffs that no amount of wishful thinking or three digit scores are ever going to bring back into balance. But, as Christian Moueix commented about the 2011s, “anyone who tells you they have made a better wine in 2011 than in 2008 is not being honest, as this is simply a reflection of their wishes to not have to roll prices all the way back to their 2008 levels, after the highs realized with the prices of their 2009s and 2010s.” He then laughed and said, “but, of course, at Bélair-Monange we did actually produce a better wine in 2011 than we did in 2008!” (There is an explanation for his comment about Bélair-Monange that appears in the note on the wine, and which does indeed bear out the likelihood that the 2011 from this estate will be quite special, so please see below.) But, in general, Monsieur Moueix’s comments about the relative quality of the 2008 and 2011 vintages certainly rings true, and one must keep this in mind in deciding whether or not to purchase 2011s or continue to try and backfill with the best examples of the lovely and still very reasonably-priced 2008 vintage.

So, what are the styles of the successful and unsuccessful red wines of 2011? Let’s start with the successful wines. The best wines of the vintage are old school, tannic and fairly low alcohol wines that beautifully reflect their underlying *terroir* and offer up plenty of structure for long-term cellaring. As noted above, there are plenty of wines with alcohol levels in the thirteen percent range, which is a welcome return to classic claret octane levels after the extremely heady vintages of 2009 and 2010. But, these are very tannic wines that will demand at least a decade of time in the cellar, and more likely, will really need a minimum of fifteen to twenty years to really shed their tannic clout and start to blossom. In this regard, it is very different from most of the less highly regarded vintages from Bordeaux, where the best wines will often offer up fairly

early drinkability as a compensation for not possessing the concentration and structure of a great year, but the best 2011s are going to need plenty of time in the cellar. Where the wines are successful, the winemaking teams have managed to provide enough mid-palate stuffing to stand up to the substantial tannins of this drought vintage, and while the wines are not necessarily going to be particularly charming over their first decade of life, these top 2011s seem balanced enough out of the blocks and are quite likely to eventually turn into very, very good examples of their respective *terroirs*. Some estates, particularly on the Right Bank, have had a much easier time finding the mid-palate concentration to stand up to the firm tannins of 2011, as the drought generally effected their vineyards less severely than on the Left Bank. On the Left Bank, with its better-drained soils that really put the vines to the hydric stress test, strict, draconian selection was key to making a successful wine in 2011. The underlying clay in Ste. Estèphe was also a benefit in this vintage for the commune in general in warding off the worst depredations of hydric stress, and if not for the hail damage on September 1st- though this did not affect everyone equally in the commune- these estates would have also been stronger than many of their neighbors in sidestepping some of the uneven ripeness issues brought on by the drought.

One of the techniques used at many of the wealthiest estates in 2011 to try and assist with their selection of only the best and most thoroughly ripe grapes of the vintage for inclusion in the top wines was the use of optical sorting machines, with many estates who used these reporting that they made a significant and very positive contribution to the ultimate quality of their wines this year. Almost all of the machines were rented by the estates in 2011, but it seems quite likely that the wealthiest châteaux are likely to purchase optical sorters as a further safeguard against vintages in the future that share the same degree of uneven ripening that plagued so many of the best-drained vineyards in 2011. As many producers who used the machines commented, the optical sorters really assisted in sorting out both the pink berries from the interior of bunches that had not ripened sufficiently, as well as the sun-burned berries from the heat spikes at the end of June. I also saw another very interesting sorting machine used by Château La Louvière in Léognan, which uses the different densities of ripe and underripe grapes to remove the underripe grapes from the cuvée prior to crushing and fermentation. The grapes float in a calculated density solution of must that allows the ripe grapes to sink to the bottom and move on to the crusher, while the underripe grapes float on this must solution (as well as leaves, bits of stem and the like) and are removed. It is a fascinating sorting technique that appeals to my sensibilities for its logical and scientific grounding.

However, no matter how draconian or technologically savvy estates were in their approach to sorting in 2011, it is clear that some estates were just not capable of making a success in this difficult and challenging vintage. Most of the less successful wines of 2011 generally have a couple of glaring weaknesses. One, of course, is that the tannins in the wines are more substantial than their underlying fruit components can comfortably carry, and one really wonders if wines that are as out of balance such as so many 2011s are early on will ever blossom with bottle age. Needless to say, folks who customarily use a lot of new oak or do malolactic fermentation in new oak barrels (and have not made significant adjustments to their cellar routines) have added a fair bit of wood tannin to wines that emphatically needed no additional tannins, making for some pretty unpleasant and astringent young claret on display during the *En Primeur* season. Sadly, a lot of these wines came from the Right Bank, which had been dealt an advantage by Mother Nature in 2011, but which was squandered by “recipe” winemaking at

many estates. But, even where tannin management was handled pretty well, there is the second Achilles' Heel of the 2011 vintage often in evidence in the finished wines, and this is a lack of mid-palate stuffing, so that the wines often dramatically dip at the core, and one of the identifying factors in many 2011s down the road will be this hole in the mid-palate of the wines. There are several reasonably successful 2011s that demonstrate this hole at the core, and this is clearly one of the calling cards of the vintage in general. It is not in evidence in the most successful examples, but this hollowness in the mid-palate is quite easy to see in a large number of wines from this vintage. There is also a decided lack of brightness, bounce and vibrancy to many of the less successful wines of 2011, and even where all the constituent components are in relative harmony and balance, there is also a sullen aspect to the wines of 2011 that may or may not fade with extended bottle age. There is certainly a lot more charm and bounce to be found in the wines of 2008 than even in the most successful wines of 2011 in this regard.

As noted above, a gentle approach to the crop of 2011 was of paramount importance in both the vineyards and cellars to maximize the potential quality of the vintage. Of course, this being Bordeaux in the modern age, there are plenty of *vignerons* and high-paid consultants who have little interest or requisite skill sets to gently handle the vinification process of their wines. There was also plenty of green harvesting done in this vintage- in the hopes of getting unevenly and lagging bunches to start to ripen more fully. There were also clearly plenty of efforts in the cellars to compensate for the lack of mid-palate depth in the wines by extracting a bit more aggressively. Neither strategy paid off in the vintage of 2011, so there are some pretty impressive failures out there that will need to be studiously avoided. In a vintage such as 2011, with such extremely high levels of firm tannins to be managed (generally ten to fifteen percent above the very, very tannic vintage of 2010!), anyone who did not approach the question of extraction with the intentions of being, quite delicate, was destined to create brutally astringent and fatally flawed wines. However, on the flip side of the coin, there are also plenty of examples in 2011 that were clearly too gently extracted- for fear of these substantial tannins in the grapes- and these wines really are a bit stripped of intensity and authority on the palate. So it is a very, very uneven vintage and it is really impressive (given the extreme difficulties faced by the *Bordelais* this year) that there are so many well-made and promising wines emerging from the 2011 vintage.

While most of the discussion thus far has focused on the red wines of the 2011 Bordeaux vintage, one must not forget that there are a lot of very good dry whites also produced in the region and one of the world's greatest dessert wines originates in Sauternes and Barsac. James Suckling took the opportunity while saying hello at lunch on the first day of my visit to the region to opine that 2011 is a terrific year for both the dry whites of the Graves region and for Sauternes and Barsac (he had already been tasting for ten days in Bordeaux prior to my arrival), and I wish my tastings later in my trip could have born this out, as I am an unabashed fan of both styles of wine from the region. But, I found both the dry whites and the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac falling more into the "good, but not great" camp in 2011, as the vintage really seems to have not delivered a lot of personality or nascent complexity in all but a few of the very top examples of each category. Starting with the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac, 2011 was a vintage where really beautiful, clean and fast-arriving botrytis swept through the vineyards in the first half of September. One can taste the really beautiful aspect of the botrytis in 2011 in a great many of the wines, as this is a vintage with a very clean glazing of noble rot and most estates

opted to only do two, three or four passes through the vineyards. However, at least to my palate, it seemed to me that this beautiful botrytis hit grape bunches that were rather unevenly ripe from the drought, so some of the beauty of the great botrytis was lost due to rather mixed quality to the bunches out on the vines when the noble rot struck. This uneven ripening prior to the arrival of the botrytis is manifested in the finished wines by a slight lack of ripeness to the acids, and sometimes a bit of greenness as well to the fruit flavors in the wines. A few estates seemed to have left the grapes out there longer in the hopes of getting the grapes to more fully ripen, but this seems to only have made the wines heavy-handed in style and not added anything of benefit.



Château Raymond-Lafon, with its exotic menagerie of free-ranging peacocks adding color to a visit of the grounds.

The other aspect of the 2011 Sauternes and Barsac crop is that the even and brisk arrival of such lovely botrytis seems to have robbed the wines a bit of their aromatic and flavor complexity- at least out of the blocks. Even the very best examples of 2011 from these two regions show nowhere near the same youthful complexity as the top wines from 2005, 2007 or 2009 showed at a similar stage of development, leading to a bit less early fireworks than one is accustomed to in (purportedly) top vintages of these wines. Perhaps this complexity will start to emerge as the wines round into form with barrel aging, but at least at this early juncture, there was a notable lack of complexity in a great many of the wines. The only major wine in the two regions that I did not manage to taste on this trip was Climens, as I was running so late on the day I was down in Sauternes that I just could not take the time and stop by to visit and taste the

constituent components that will go into the 2011 Climens (the estate never shows their wine during *En Primeur*, preferring to wait quite a bit longer before making decisions about what lots will make it into the final blend of what will become the new vintage of Climens.) The undisputed stars that I tasted from 2011 in Sauternes and Barsac included Raymond-Lafon (a stunning young wine and a true steal!), Rieussec, Coutet, De Fargues, Rayne-Vigneau, d'Yquem and a supremely elegant, almost delicately styled Suduiraut. Beyond this small group there are a lot of okay wines, but often with some inherent limitations, and this hardly seems like a large enough crop of estates to declare the vintage in the two regions an unqualified success.

The dry white wines of the Graves were also a bit lacking in personality and nascent complexity this year, and many of the wines also show the distinctive hole in the mid-palate and signs of uneven ripening that plague the reds of 2011. The vast majority of the white wine grapes were harvested in the second half of August of 2011- making it one of the earliest harvests in memory for the white varieties- but a lot of the wines seem to really lack a bit of character and mid-palate stuffing. Again, there are a handful of solidly respectable wines, but this is hardly a vintage of great quality for the dry white wines of the Graves. There are plenty of dry white wines that show off the mid-palate "dip" of 2011 and several of my usually consistent favorites are rather gently structured and *fluide* as well in this vintage. A few producers seem to have bucked the trend of early harvesting of the white grapes in 2011 and gone for a bit more ripeness for their unevenly ripe bunches, but while this approach managed to bring up the ripeness of the underripe grapes in the bunches, it also created some overripe grapes as well and a few of the wines show some elements of *sur maturité* on both the nose and palate. It seems pretty clear when tasting the dry whites of 2011 that very few domaines can afford to be draconian in their selections for their white wines, and the vagaries of the growing season have been successfully translated into the whites of this year and produced rather an uninspiring set of white wines in general. Even the biggest names in dry white Bordeaux- Haut Brion Blanc, La Mission Haut Brion Blanc, Domaine de Chevalier Blanc and Pape-Clément Blanc- are a mixed bag in 2011, with Haut Brion Blanc and DDC Blanc unqualified successes, and the other two wines relatively disappointing by their high standards. In short, there is just not a whole lot to get excited about with the dry white wines of the 2011 vintage.

So, where does the vintage of 2011 in Bordeaux rank in the hierarchy of the last couple of decades of vintages in the region? This is really a difficult question to answer, given that it is a vintage of such uneven quality. The very best wines of 2011 are truly beautiful wines that will be a great addition to any well-stocked cellar, and if the wines are priced well, they will really generate a lot of enthusiasm a decade or two down the road from those who purchased and cellared them. The two most recent vintages that I have heard the 2011s compared to are 2001 and 2008, but to my mind, neither vintage makes a meaningful comparison to the best examples from 2011 (the less successful 2011s fall far short of both vintages). The 2001s- which is a vintage that I like more and more with the passing of time, as I am beginning to find the best examples of this vintage more elegant and complex than their 2000 counterparts- were nowhere near as tannic out of the blocks as the best of 2011, and stylistically, the two vintages are rather dramatically removed from each other. The 2008s I rank considerably higher than 2011- though this should come as no surprise, as I vastly prefer the stylistic characteristics of the best of 2008 to even the best examples of the more burly wines of 2009 and 2010- and in terms of breed, brightness, elegance and purity, 2008 is a rather dramatic step up from even the finest wines of

2011. The firm character of the 2011s, without the same bounce and early purity of the 2008s, will always make them a bit sturdier than their beautifully transparent 2008 counterparts, and I will be very surprised if twenty years down the road, the best 2011s will be able to match the complexity of the best 2008s.

Even on the Right Bank, where the vast majority of the great wines of 2011 are to be found, I would take an estate's 2008 over its 2011. For example, the 2011 Trotanoy is a truly beautiful wine that will be a cellar treasure twenty years down the road, but it is still not going to ever quite reach the same celestial levels of quality as the 2008 Trotanoy. But, that said, I am sure that in many cases I would happily snap up the best 2011s from the Right Bank over their more massive, heady and sometimes top-heavy 2010 counterpart. One of the most compelling aspects of the best 2011s on the Right Bank is their dramatically lower octane levels- often one and a half to two percent lower in alcohol- which translates into dramatically more elegant and soil-driven wines, despite their substantial tannic clout. Take, for instance, an estate that really succeeded in both the 2010 and 2011 vintages, Château Corbin in St. Émilion (one of the absolute steals in the Bordeaux market of today). The 2010 Corbin tips the scales at a full fifteen percent alcohol, and while it is still nicely balanced for its very substantial level of ripeness, it simply cannot compete to my palate with the very suave, soil-driven aspect of the 2011 Corbin, which tips the scales at a much more classic 13.4 percent in alcohol. And this is a characteristic of the 2011 vintage on the Right Bank that is repeated over and over again in comparison to 2010, with the estates who realized success in 2011 producing much more classically-balanced, structured wines that should easily eclipse their power-monger counterparts from 2010. Priced the same, the 2011s would still be preferable, but when one considers that the younger vintage is also likely to be decidedly less expensive than its 2010 version, there is truly no competition between the two vintages for those who are likely to drink the wines, rather than just view them as financial assets on a spread sheet.

While I found that there were a decidedly higher percentage of stunning successes on the Right Bank than the Left Bank in 2011, this is not to discount the significant number of outstanding, classically structured wines that were produced on the Left Bank as well in this vintage. Bruno Rolland, Cellar Master at Château Leoville Las Cases commented that "for our wines, the 2011 vintage is very reminiscent of the 1986 vintage," so you can see that there are some very good and very, very sturdy wines to be found on the Left Bank as well. But, the inconsistency of the vintage is even more apparent on the Left Bank than on the Right, so some of the usual suspects are not quite up to their customary level of quality in the Bordeaux hierarchy. Interestingly, it is not a particularly strong year for the First Growths on the Left Bank, as only Latour has produced a world class wine in 2011. The other "Firsts" all have various and different issues in this vintage, and while the wines are still pretty well-made, given their celestial prices, only the 2011 Latour makes sense to purchase for those interested in the rarefied air of investment grade claret in this vintage. As I write this report, I see that Lafite-Rothschild has taken the unprecedented step of releasing their futures price very early and dropping prices by thirty percent- from 600 euros a bottle ex-cellar to 420 euros a bottle. It is a laudable gesture from the château, but the very nice wine produced at Lafite in 2011 is still a more than questionable value at 420 euros per bottle out the cellar door! As several key players in Bordeaux commented about the First Growths in general and their contemporary pricing, these are no longer really wines for drinking in any case, but rather investment tools these days, so

there is really not a whole lot of meaning in trying to link the quality of the wine with the bottle price. But, that said, I have a hard time imagining a wine of the quality of 2011 Lafite (well-made, but with the 2011 signature lack of mid-palate depth) ever really returning much on investment at that price.

The 2011 Bordeaux vintage has a lot of successful wines to be found from amongst its ranks, which may come as a bit of a surprise, given all the gloom and doom outlined in the description of the vintage earlier in this report. But, it is far from a consistent vintage and one has to proceed with extreme caution when considering purchasing wines from this vintage. I will be very surprised if it will ever be the darling of the investment crowd- with the exception of the 2011 Latour and the most successful and priciest wines to be found on the Right Bank- but, it is emphatically not a vintage to be dismissed out of hand from the outset, for there are some truly impressive wines in the making sitting in cellars on both sides of the Gironde. As was the constant topic of conversation during the *En Primeur* period, pricing will be the key to this vintage finding a happy home. I often heard journalists and people in the business bandy about flat percentage numbers like forty or fifty percent as the necessary, across the board reductions in price that would make the vintage palatable for the Bordeaux wine trade. But, I think such an approach is simplistic and does not do justice to the realities of pricing from château to château. This is particularly true of the most successful estates on the Right Bank, who have made absolutely exceptional wines in 2011- in many cases, far superior and more satisfying wines (at least to classical claret palates such as my own) than their 2010 versions. Due to the incorrect analysis and irrational hubris surrounding the 2010 vintage, prices for many Right Bank wines were absurdly high for the quality of the wines, and it would be unrealistic not to expect serious corrections in the per bottle price of the estates 2011s. But, not every Right Bank estate went through the roof in price in 2009 and 2010, and to expect a producer such as Château Corbin, whose price remained very reasonable in both of these overly-hyped years, to lower their price thirty or forty percent for their superior 2011 is just not logical. So one will have to evaluate prices on a wine by wine basis, and with some luck, there is a very strong possibility that the best 2011s are going to end up offering more value than we have seen in the most recent past in Bordeaux- at least since the release of the under-priced and under-appreciated 2008 vintage.

The following wines were all tasted during my eleven day stay in Bordeaux from March 28th to April 7th. I did my best to taste as many wines as possible *sur place* during my time in Bordeaux, but as is always the case, the vast majority of the wines reported on below were tasted at the very well-organized Union des Grands Crus tastings staged during the first week of April. As a significant number of the most famous estates on both the Right and Left Banks are not members of the Union des Grands Crus, most tastings at the estates themselves were limited to those who do not participate in the UGC. As I have discussed before, even though the members of the UGC take great pains to ensure that their samples are in pristine condition for the tastings, these are barrel samples, and it is not infrequent to encounter samples that are not in tip top condition, as these are unfinished wines that are still very young and in a constant state of flux. For example, during our UGC tasting of the wines from the Graves at Château Olivier, all of the sample bottles of the 2011 Domaine de Chevalier *rouge* were oxidized. Fortunately, the estate was close enough and had sufficient staffing available to draw new samples and send them over to the tasting once the director at Château Olivier telephoned over to DDC, so that we could taste the wine in proper condition. But, not all estates have that happy luxury. If all the samples were

obviously flawed at one of the UGC tastings, I did not write up the wine, but there is always the possibility that some wines were not one hundred percent on form and I had not basis of comparison to ascertain this. I should note that every time I tasted a sample *sur place* from a UGC member estate, the sample at the property itself seemed slightly superior.

That said, it is quite clear that the *Bordelais* are clearly doing everything in their power to make the wines from the new vintage show as well as possible during the *En Primeur* campaign. In fact, many estates in Bordeaux have gone so far as to taking to inoculating their musts for malolactic fermentation to take place at the same time as alcoholic fermentation these days, in the hopes that this will make the wines more stable and appealing during the annual *En Primeur* tastings. One of the things that was constantly heard from the producers themselves when showing the 2010s a year ago was that the very late malolactic fermentations made an adverse impact on how the wines showed during last year's *En Primeur* tastings. (I might have suggested that the real culprits were alcohol levels often well above fifteen percent!) I really question whether the simultaneous alcoholic and malolactic fermentations is good thing for the ultimate quality of the wines, as in most other regions, slow and late malos are generally considered a sign of potential quality of the young vintage, and it seems to me that perhaps it is time to reconsider when the *En Primeur* tastings should be staged, as moving them back a couple of months on the calendar would really make sense for the wines themselves. Of course, in hyped years, that would push back the cash flow from futures sales by a few months, but perhaps everyone in the trade is now wealthy enough from the very high prices charged for the 2009s and 2010s to be able to weather the storm of a couple more months financing of the new vintage to allow Bordeaux winemakers to once again focus solely on the quality of the wines- rather than how they are going to show during *En Primeur*? Presumably, a later *En Primeur* season might have helped more professionals to accurately handicap a vintage such as 2008, and what the *Bordelais* would have lost in terms of financing the vintage for a couple more months would have been made up with prices that were a more proper reflection of the quality of the wines from that year.

On a broader note, perhaps it is time to do away with the preconceived notion that warmer years are better years on the Gironde. This was certainly the case in the first half of the twentieth century, but is it really an accurate reflection of a Bordeaux that is now several decades into an era of Global Warming? 2011 is a vintage that was exceptionally dry, but not exceptionally hot, and one could hear murmurs that it was not a particularly successful vintage because of this long before I arrived in the region to taste the wines. And yet, despite its inconsistencies, there are dozens of 2011s that simply dance rings around their much hotter vintage 2010 counterparts! Perhaps the simplistic equation of finding potential quality in degree days and torrid temperatures should be traded in for a more nuanced and sophisticated approach that recognizes that the most interesting and complex wines from Bordeaux tend to emerge from vintages with longer hang time and uninterrupted ripening throughout the season, rather than heat. As California has so eloquently shown in the last fifteen years, high sugar levels in and off themselves are hardly a sound barometer for predicting quality in finished wines, and this is equally true on the Gironde today. When longer hang time is coupled with cooler nights to preserve freshness and acidity in the grapes as the growing season winds down, as was the case for instance with the 2011 vintage in Germany, one can truly find an exceptional vintage. But in the last decade, vintages such as 2001, 2006 and 2008 have produced some of the most

interesting wines on the Gironde, and even the riper year of 2005 (which seems clearly the pick of the litter for this first decade of the twenty-first century in Bordeaux) is exceptional because of its superb and uncharacteristically high acidity. The riper and higher sugar years, such as 2009 and 2010 may garner headlines, triple digit scores and flesh out proprietors' bank accounts, but they are not really particularly good vintages of claret. If one is only buying Bordeaux for investment in any case, this really does not matter as long as everyone in the investment markets continues to think that the wines from such ripe vintages are good enough to keep swapping them back and forth and propping up the market. But, if you are still one of that old-fashioned breed of Bordeaux enthusiast that is really interested in drinking the stuff one day, it is probably time to recognize the Bordeaux mantra of "ripeness equals quality" for the dinosaur that it most emphatically is today.

The notes are arranged by commune, and then alphabetically by the name of the estate within the subsection of each commune. The only exception for this is where an estate offers up a second or a third wine, in which case I have listed all of the wines from the same estate together in the slot where the "Grand Vin" would fall alphabetically in the communal section. So for example, where Château Latour would fall alphabetically in the Pauillac section, readers will find first their third label, "Pauillac" listed, then Les Forts de Latour, and finally Latour's note. This seemed like the most logical way to handle second and third wines offered by so many estates these days, so that folks could find the notes in a relatively simple fashion in the future. The communal sections are listed roughly from south to north, starting with Sauternes and Barsac, and then moving up to the Graves, then over to the Right Bank and finally to the Médoc.

Sauternes and Barsac

The Sauternes and Barsac regions were purported by all who I spoke with prior to tasting the wines to be outstanding, but I found them as irregular as the reds in 2011, with the few high water marks from the most successful estates not outweighing the less gifted wines of the vintage. With the majority of the wines in the "good, but not great" camp this year, it seems a wee bit of a stretch to call this a great vintage for the sweet dessert wines of these two regions. There was some late spring hail on April 25th that struck Sauternes and Barsac (according to the University of Bordeaux report on the vintage, this damaged some 500 hectares of vines in the two appellations), and perhaps this storm contributed to the uneven quality of the 2011 sweet wines. Uneven ripening of the bunches in this region was a problem that many estates attempted to address with an initial pass through the vineyards at the end of August, but how successful this was is not always in evidence in the finished wines. The botrytis struck at the outset of September, and as temperatures here climbed above 30 degrees Celsius on the 8th of September, this very clean botrytis spread like wildfire in the vineyards and concentrated the berries at a brisk pace. Most estates made very few passes through the vineyards to collect the fruit in 2011—often only two—and perhaps this is one of the reasons for the rather modest complexity exhibited by several of the wines this year. The best handful of wines are very, very fine indeed, but they are certainly not a majority of the 2011s here, and there are a lot of wines with very pretty and clean glazes of noble rot, but modest complexity and often wines show clear signs of uneven ripeness in their unripe acids and/or herbaceous notes. Even the very best wines here in 2011 do not have the lightness of step of the best of the 2007s, nor the great nascent complexity of the 2005s and 2009s, but the handful of top 2011s are certainly a decided step up from their 2010 counterparts.

2011 Château d'Arche (Sauternes)

The 2011 d'Arche is a poster child for the vintage this year in Sauternes, as the wine offers up a pretty and cleanly botrytized nose, but a rather four-square and simple palate impression. The first class bouquet offers up scents of tangerine, pineapple, honey, spring flowers and a bit of slightly raw new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and simple, with a slightly spirity backend, crisp acids and a slightly forced personality on the chunky finish. The nose promises a lot more complexity than the palate delivers. 2015-2035. **85.**

2011 Château Bastor-Lamontagne (Sauternes)

The 2011 Bastor-Lamontagne shows some of the grassy notes of the vintage that I associate with unevenly ripe grape bunches before the botrytis struck. The straightforward nose is a rather odd blend of grapefruit, cut grass, honey, soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows some green notes, with a thorough glazing of botrytis offset by notes of grapefruit pith on the fairly long finish. Not a great vintage for Bastor-Lamontagne. 2016-2025? **82.**

2011 Château Broustet (Barsac)

The 2011 Broustet shows a lot of sauvignon blanc, grassy character on both the nose and palate and which I associate with perhaps uneven ripening of the bunches prior to the onset of botrytis in the vineyards. The nose offers up scents of cut grass, pink grapefruit, pineapple, honeycomb and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, but without a lot of elegance in evidence. The finish is long, betrays a bit of backend heat and finishes with a distinctly grassy note. Not great. 2015-2035. **84.**

2011 Château Caillou (Barsac)

The 2011 Caillou is a touch heavy-handed stylistically, but shows off a nice glazing of clean botrytis on both the nose and palate. The stylish bouquet delivers scents of pineapple, orange, chalky soil tones, honey, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and solid to the core, with modest flavor complexity, but good focus and length on the finish, which closes with a just bit of uncovered alcohol. Not bad, but not great and nowhere near as light on its feet as some of the top examples of the vintage. 2016-2035. **87.**

2011 Château Coutet (Barsac)

The 2011 Coutet is another one of the undisputed stars of the vintage. The nose soars from the glass in a heavily glazed mélange of pineapple, Mandarin orange, honey, chalky soil tones, plenty of vanillin oak and a lovely topnote of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with lovely focus and grip, a fine core of fruit, very good balance and just a whisper of backend heat showing up on the very long finish. I might be inclined to drink this sooner rather than later, as wines that show a tiny bit of early alcohol can sometimes seem even headier with extended bottle age. But, this is a very lovely bottle of Sauternes in the making. 2015-2040? **93.**

2011 Château Doisy-Daëne (Barsac)

The 2011 Château Doisy-Daëne is a very heavily botrytized example of the vintage, and though it shows good complexity, it is just a touch heavy-handed stylistically this year (particularly for an estate that usually produces a wine that just dances across the palate). The heavily glazed nose offers up a fine blend of pineapple coulis, honey, tangerine, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, solid framing acids and good length and grip on the finish. Not a bad effort in this vintage,

but the 2011 will never go down as one of the great vintages of this era at Château Doisy-Daëne. 2015-2035. **88.**

2011 Château Doisy-Védrines (Barsac)

The 2011 Doisy-Védrines is a pretty good example of the vintage, as it shows off a very clean and elegant glazing of botrytis on the nose, with scents of pineapple, honeyed pear, a touch of orange peel, chalky soil tones and a judicious framing of vanillin oak wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a touch forceful in style, but with a good core of fruit, nice balance and good length and grip on the focused and tangy finish. It is not quite in the same league as the lovely wines produced here in 2005 and 2009, but it is a very good example of the 2011 vintage. 2015-2035. **88.**

2011 Château de Fargues (Sauternes)

The 2011 Château de Fargues is one of the undisputed stars of the vintage and a beautiful bottle of Sauternes in the making. The complex and seductive nose wafts from the glass in a beautiful mélange of tangerine, fresh pineapple, honeycomb, orange blossoms, chalky soil tones and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly refined, with a great core of fruit, lovely, nascent complexity, tangy acids and outstanding focus and grip on the well-balanced, ripe and classy finish. This is a beautiful example of the vintage that shows off the clean and refined nature of 2011's botrytis, coupled to perfectly ripe grapes. 2016-2050. **94+.**

2011 Château Filhot (Sauternes)

I tasted a couple of samples of the 2011 Filhot at the UGC event, but neither one seemed correct, as there was an odd, chicken broth component on the nose that seemed out of place in the wine (or at least I hope so). Underneath were notes of pineapple, honey, orange and vanillin oak, and the wine was full-bodied and fairly lively on the palate. Sadly, I did not have time to stop by the estate to taste *sur place* and see if this was really the wine, or just an unrepresentative sample. ???

2011 Château Guiraud (Sauternes)

The 2011 Guiraud is another quite successful example of the vintage, but the sample at the UGC tasting seemed just a bit soft on the backend- which strikes me as rather uncharacteristic of the wines from this fine estate. The nose is complex and classy, offering up scents of apple, pear, honeycomb, orange peel, a touch of grassiness (from the relatively high percentage of sauvignon blanc in the *cépage*, rather than uneven ripening) and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a good core of fruit, quite clean botrytis and a long and complex finish. With a bit more cut and bounce, this would rank right up there with the best examples of the vintage. 2015-2035. **91.**

2011 Château Haut-Peyraguey (Sauternes)

The 2011 Château Haut-Peyraguey is a very heavily-glazed wine that is a touch on the soft side, so I would be inclined to drink this up in its relative youth, as it seems likely to become a bit cloying with extended bottle age. The tropical nose offers up a very agreeable blend of honeyed pineapple, oranges, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, botrytized and fairly simple, with a good core of fruit, quite moderate acids, but nice balance and focus on the long finish. This is not overly complex, but also not overly expensive and would make a good choice for a Sauternes by the glass in high end restaurants, as it does a very nice job of making a quite favorable impression within its limited range of complexity. 2012-2025? **87.**

2011 Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey (Sauternes)

The 2011 Lafaurie-Peyraguey is another quite typical example of the vintage, as it displays a really lovely and clean glaze of botrytis over what seems to me to be rather unevenly ripe grapes. The vibrant and complex nose offers up scents of fresh pineapple, lemon, chalky soil tones, honey, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy (but without particularly ripe acids), with a good core of fruit, fine focus and quite good grip on the long and complex finish. The issue here is not complexity, but balance, as there really seems to be some signs of uneven ripeness that may cause this wine to age in a less than ideal fashion. I would be inclined to drink it up on the early side, despite its pretty snappy acidity, as I fear that it will become less enchanting as it ages. But, there are some good constituent components on display out of the blocks here and this could be a pretty good drink for the near-term. 2014-2025+? **87+**.

2011 Château Lamothe (Sauternes)

The 2011 Lamothe is one of the heavier-handed botrytis wines of the vintage, and I wonder if this wine was harvested a bit later than some of its neighbors. In any case, the heavily botrytized and quite simple nose offers up scents of pineapple, tangerine, honey and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with good depth, but a chunky style that betrays a bit of backend alcohol and some slightly green notes that translate as grapefruit peel on the finish. A solid wine, but hardly exciting. 2015-2025+? **84**.

2011 Château Lamothe-Guignard (Sauternes)

The 2011 Lamothe-Guignard is a very elegant and dancing example of the vintage. The nose offers up a very pretty and nicely glazed mélange of fresh pineapple, pear, lemon blossoms, honeycomb, chalk and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite light on its feet, with a lovely core of fruit, sound acids and very fine length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is one of the true success stories of the 2011 vintage in Sauternes and will be an outstanding value. 2017-2040. **89+**.

2011 Château de Malle (Sauternes)

The 2011 de Malle shows a touch of the uneven ripeness of the vintage in its distinct note of pink grapefruit on the nose and palate, but the wine is also quite nicely balanced and displays pretty good complexity for the vintage. The nose is quite marked by its vanillin oak component, but also offers up scents of pink grapefruit, pineapple, honeycomb, chalky soil tones and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced, with excellent depth, moderate complexity, but very good length and grip on the crisp and focused finish. Not bad at all and should be very reasonably priced. 2016-2040. **88**.

2011 Château de Myrat (Barsac)

The 2011 de Myrat has a bit heavier glaze of botrytis than many of its neighbors in this vintage, but it carries the noble rot quite well and is really a pretty good wine. The deep and tropical nose offers up scents of pineapple, Mandarin orange, honey, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and zesty, but with a slightly four-square personality and just a touch of backend heat poking out on the long finish. This is not bad at all and if a bit more complexity will emerge with further aging, then my score will seem a touch stingy. But, I would have loved to have seen this with a bit less alcohol. 2014-2035. **87+**.

2011 Château Nairac (Barsac)

The 2011 Nairac is one of the best examples of the vintage, with a fairly heavily botrytized personality, but good lift and bounce on the palate to carry the glazing. The deep and tropical nose offers up scents of Mandarin orange, pineapple, honey, a touch of soil, lemon

blossoms and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure at the core, with lovely focus, very respectable complexity and a long, crisp and intensely flavored finish. A lovely bottle of young Sauternes and one of the steals of the vintage. I wish all the 2011s could be this good! 2015-2035+. **91.**

2011 Château de Rabaud-Promis (Sauternes)

The 2011 Rabaud-Promis is a very successful example of the vintage, with plenty of botrytis delivered on a well-balanced palate impression. The deep and nobly rotten nose offers up scents of pineapple, honey, tangerine, a touch of soil, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, clean and focused, with a good core of fruit, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the nicely glazed finish. This is not the most complex example of the vintage, but it remains quite light on its feet for such a heavily glazed wine and is really quite tasty. An impressive 2011. 2016-2035+. **90.**

2011 Château de Raymond-Lafon (Sauternes)

This was my first visit to Raymond-Lafon and I am very, very happy that I made the trek, as the estate's 2011 is one of the stars of the vintage. We were also shown a nice range of vintages back to 2005 here, with the superb 2005 and the brilliant 2007 being the picks of the litter of what was a very consistently high class set of wines. But, back to this stunning 2011, which soars from the glass in a blaze of fresh pineapple, pear, honeycomb, complex, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a judicious touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and refined, with a great core of fruit, impeccable focus and balance, ripe, zesty acids and superb length and grip on the outstanding finish. The 2011 Raymond-Lafon is every bit as good as its more famous next door neighbor this year (Château d'Yquem) and one of the absolute steals of the entire 2011 vintage in Bordeaux! I had lost track of this estate and its fine wines in the last couple of decades, after having drunk them with great regularity in the vintages of the 1980s, and I cannot recommend this 2011 highly enough. A superb wine. 2016-2045+. **94.**

2011 Château de Rayne-Vigneau (Sauternes)

Rayne-Vigneau has really been making consistently excellent wines in the last decade or two and the 2011 is another outstanding example of the vintage. The very lovely nose shows a very clean glazing of noble rot in its blend of pineapple, pear, tangerine, honeycomb, vanillin oak and orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with good, but not great complexity, lovely mid-palate depth, crisp, ripe acids and fine focus and grip on the well-balanced and classy finish. There is not quite the same complexity on the palate here as in the very top examples of the vintage, but this is a terrific bottle of Sauternes in the making and one of the great successes in 2011. Great value! 2015-2035+. **92+.**

2011 Château Rieussec (Sauternes)

The 2011 Château Rieussec is another outstanding example of the vintage, with the potential delicacy of the year very much in evidence on both the nose and palate. The esthery and complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of pear, pineapple, bee pollen, chalky soil tones, honeycomb and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant on the attack, with a fine core, impressive complexity and excellent focus and grip on the dancing finish that closes with a nice touch of orange peel. There is just a trace of backend heat to the wine, which may make it more interesting to drink in its relative youth. But, all in all, a very lovely bottle whose elegant size and shape I find most attractive. 2015-2040? **93.**



2011 Château Romer (Sauternes)

The 2011 Romer is a wine that really shows off the clean botrytis of the vintage on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a very pretty blend of fresh pineapple, lemon, bee pollen, spring flowers and a fair bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite lovely on the attack, with crisp acids, good mid-palate depth and nice delineation on the backend. The wood tannins here are already poking out just a touch on the finish, and while the wine carries its wood well today, I would hope that it will get racked into older barrels or tank in the not too distant future and keep the wood from getting more obtrusive. Today, this is a richer and quite successful example of the vintage. 2014-2030+. **88+**.

2011 Château Sigalas-Rabaud (Sauternes)

The 2011 Sigalas-Rabaud is a slightly forced wine this year, and while it shows a lovely glaze of botrytis, this does not seem to be coupled to evenly ripe grapes. The nose is quite tropical in its mélange of pineapple, orange, honeycomb, candied grapefruit peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and heavily glazed, with a slightly ham-fisted personality, tangy (but, not particularly ripe) acids and a long, heavy-handed finish. This is okay, but the estate usually produces decidedly more elegant wines in more classic years. 2015-2030+. **86.**

2011 Château Suau (Barsac)

The 2011 Suau showed quite heavily at the UGC tasting, with more of an overripe, rather than botrytized character on both the nose and palate- though the ripeness does not seem particularly even. The bouquet is a blend of pear, pink grapefruit, soil and a bit of sawdust from

its new oak component. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and four-square, with rather soft acids, relatively clean flavors, but very little complexity on the reasonably long finish. Not a particularly interesting example of the vintage. 2014-2030. **84.**

2011 Château Suduiraut (Sauternes)

The 2011 Suduiraut is one of the most delicately styled and dancing wines of the vintage in Sauternes. The deep, pure and very clean nose soars from the glass in a classically glazed mélange of bee pollen, pear, fresh pineapple, honeycomb, chalky soil tones, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and crisp, with very good mid-palate depth, fine focus and balance and a very long, light on its feet and complex finish. I really like the elegant style and shape of the 2011 Suduiraut. 2016-2040+. **93+.**

2011 Château La Tour Blanche (Sauternes)

The 2011 La Tour Blanche is another example of very clean and classy botrytis striking what seems like grapes of rather uneven ripeness. The very nicely glazed nose offers up scents of pineapple, tangerine, honey, chalk, lemon blossoms and vanillin oak. So far, so good. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex on the attack, but with acids that seem decidedly underripe and which seem likely to become a bit coarse as the wine ages. The finish is long and shows off good grip, so for drinking on the early side, there is a lot of pleasure here to be had, but I would not bury this away, as I worry how the less ripe acids will play out with bottle age. 2014-2025+? **88.**

2011 Château d'Yquem (Sauternes)

The 2011 d'Yquem is a very lovely wine in the making, but it does not tower above the other top wines of the appellation this year in the same way that it has in some other recent vintages. The deep, beautifully glazed and quite youthful nose offers up scents of pink grapefruit, tangerine, chalky soil tones, orange peel, bee pollen and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off a beautiful gloss of clean botrytis, with a nicely reserved personality, a quite unctuous core of fruit and superb length and grip on the fairly soft finish. I had expected a bit more bounce on the backend from the wine's acidity, but this is a fairly gently structured d'Yquem that seems more likely to evolve along the lines of the quite honeyed and laid back 1976 than the more racy and orange zesty 1975. The 2011 is a very lovely example of the vintage, but it does not tower over its peers this year. 2020-2100. **94.**

Graves Blanc

The white wines in the Graves were harvested very early this year, starting on August 17th and the white wine harvest was concluded by the first couple of days in September. Given that July had been almost as cool and grey as a typical March in Bordeaux, and August saw its share of fitful storms, it is hard to understand how good the grapes could have been for the dry white wines by the 17th of August, but the damp weather in August had led to botrytis pressures in the vineyards here, so perhaps the grapes had to be collected before the rot got the upper hand. In any case, the wines are purported to have good acids, though for whatever reason, the acids are more evident in the analysis charts than they taste on the palate of several examples. There are also more than a few white wines with the vintage's trademark "mid-palate dip".

2011 Château Bonnet Blanc (Entre Deux Mers)

Château Bonnet makes a consistently fine example of Entre Deux Mers and I have included my note on their 2011 white wine here, as it was the only wine I tasted from the region on this trip. The wine is already bottled and is a blend of fifty-five percent sauvignon blanc, forty

percent semillon and five percent muscadelle. The bouquet is a pretty blend of fresh fig, lime zest, fresh-cut grass, chalky and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and citrusy, with solid depth and nice bounce and balance on the moderately long finish. Good juice for its genre. 2012-2017. **86.**

2011 Château Bouscaut Blanc

The Bouscaut Blanc is one of my favorite 2011s, as it offers up good clarity and cut on the palate, as well as fine aromatic complexity. The quite classic nose offers up a mélange of grapefruit, petrol, chalky soil tones, fresh-mown grass and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and grassy, with good focus and bounce and a youthful touch of citrus peel perking up the finish. Good, solid juice and one of the more complete white wines of the vintage. 2012-2025. **88.**

2011 Château Carbonnieux Blanc

The 2011 Carbonnieux blanc is one of the classic example of the vintage where the good aromatic complexity is offset by mid-palate *fluidité*. The fine nose offers up scents of grapefruit, lemon peel, a bit of underripe Sauvignon cat pee, gentle notes of cut grass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep and fullish on the attack, with a mid-palate hole, but a long, racy finish. This is okay, but always will be a bit sinewy at the core. 2012-2025. **86+.**

2011 Château Chantegrive Blanc

The Chantegrive blanc seems to have been one of the later-harvested wines of the vintage, which resulted in a heavier-handed style that is no improvement on the hollow and short wines that might have been produced from grapes harvested a bit earlier. The less than appealing nose offers up scents of grapefruit, cat pee, dank lemongrass, petrol, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and ponderous, with solid acids, but a rather dull and four-square finish. 2012-2017. **82.**

2011 Domaine de Chevalier Blanc

The Domaine de Chevalier blanc is one of the best wines of the 2011 vintage, but even this lovely wine shows just a slight dip at the core. The deep and classy nose jumps from the glass in a mix of fresh fig, grapefruit, cut grass, petrol, orange peel, lovely soil tones and a stylish dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and focused, with lovely balance and cut, good length and grip and just that slight lack of mid-palate density keeping this from being a truly classic vintage of DDC blanc. 2015-2040. **90+.**

2011 Château Ferrande Blanc

The Ferrande blanc is a very typical 2011 white: hollow at the core, stripped on the backend, soft and possessed of a reasonably complex nose. The bouquet is a blend of lemon, grapefruit, chalky, lemongrass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is decidedly less interesting than the nose suggests, with its medium-full format quite dilute in the mid-palate, soft acids and a short and shapeless finish. Nothing special here. 2012-2018. **84.**

2011 Château de Fieuzal Blanc

Given what a train wreck the 2011 de Fieuzal *rouge* is this year, I was very happy to see that the white wine from this estate was one of the stars of the vintage. The very fine and complex nose offers up a classy mix of fresh fig, grapefruit, lemon, petrol, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, gentle grassiness and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and well-balanced, with respectable, if not great mid-palate depth, bright acids and a long, focused and crisp finish. Good juice here and one of the unqualified successes of the white wine vintage. 2012-2025. **90.**

2011 Château de France Blanc

The De France blanc of 2011 is quite herbaceous and seems dominated by its less than ideally-ripe sauvignon blanc component. The bouquet is a mélange of cut grass, a bit of cat pee, petrol, orange peel and some damp herb tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rather pedestrian in terms of flavors, and with some overt signs of underripeness showing on the backend. Not particularly stirring. 2012-2017+. **83.**

2011 Château Haut Bergey Blanc

The 2011 Haut Bergey blanc is one of the riper wines of the vintage, but while this characteristic has produced a more intense nose, it is not necessarily an attribute on the palate. The musky nose offers up scents of tangerine, pink grapefruit, citrus peel, petrol and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and a bit heavy-handed, with a four-square personality and some citrus peel bitterness and uncovered oak on the finish. A bit dull and soft. 2012-2016. **84.**

2011 La Clarté de Haut-Brion Blanc

The 2011 La Clarté de Haut-Brion blanc is one of the riper white wines of the vintage, weighing in at a full 13.8 percent alcohol. The wine offers up a very fine and complex nose of fresh fig, pink grapefruit, chalky soil tones, a touch of petrol, grassy notes, citrus peel, vanillin oak and a delicate topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a very fine core of fruit (particularly for a 2011 white), racy acids and superb length and grip on the classy and utterly complete finish. A superb success in this difficult vintage! 2014-2030+. **91+.**

2011 Château Haut-Brion Blanc

The 2011 Haut Brion Blanc is also a very ripe example of the vintage, tipping the scales at 14.4 percent alcohol. The deep, complex and classy nose soars from the glass in a fine mélange of fresh fig, orange peel, fresh-cut grass, complex, chalky soil tones, petrol and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively complex, with excellent mid-palate depth, lovely focus and a very, very long, slightly hot finish. Like the La Mission Blanc this year, I would be inclined to drink this delicious wine up on the early side, as the bit of uncovered heat on the backend does not augur well for long-term cellaring. Of course, with the threat of premox ever-present, perhaps this is the best strategy in any case. This reminds me quite a bit of the beautiful 1989 Haut Brion Blanc in its youth, except that this wine is obviously higher in alcohol and shows a bit of heat as a result. 2012-2025. **93+.**

2011 Château La Louvière Blanc

Château La Louvière makes one of my favorite white wines in the region, though for several years now they have been bottling half of their white wine production up under screwcap to try and protect it against premature oxidation (the estate's team is one of the few in Bordeaux that is willing to talk about the problems white wines in the region have faced with premox over the same time period as the Burgundians have grappled with this insoluble problem). Their 2011 Blanc is a very pretty wine, but it shows just a bit of the vintage's *fluidité* on the palate. The deep and classy nose offers up scents of grapefruit, lemon peel, a touch of fresh-cut grass, petrol, chalky soil tones and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and nicely balanced, with crisp acids, fine focus and only moderate intensity on the long finish. A very nice 2011 that fully underscores why this is not a great white Graves vintage. 2012-2020. **87.**

2011 Château Larrivet-Haut-Brion Blanc

The 2011 Château Larrivet-Haut-Brion blanc is not bad, but this is one of those 2011 whites that seems pretty soft for what is supposed to be a snappy white wine vintage. The really quite nice nose delivers a complex blend of fig, lime zest, chalk, petrol, grapefruit peel, cut grass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit flat and heavy-handed in style, with no bounce at all on the backend and a bit of bitterness from the new wood on the moderately long finish. Really just passable, despite its aromatic complexity. 2014-2020. **84.**

2011 Château Latour-Martillac Blanc

The 2011 Château Latour-Martillac blanc is one of the better examples of the vintage, but it too shows just a bit of 2011's hollowness at the core. The classy nose offers up a superb and youthful blend of tart orange, pink grapefruit, a touch of cut grass, gentle notes of petrol, chalky soil and a very refined base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a slight dip in the mid-palate, but lovely detail and good length and grip on the finish. One of the best of the 2011 whites. 2012-2025. **88+.**

2011 Château Malartic-Lagravière Blanc

The 2011 Malartic-Lagravière blanc is another example of the vintage that offers up lovely complexity and purity on the nose, but modest depth on the palate and a rather soft spine. The quite stylish nose offers up scents of lime zest, fresh fig, cut grass, incipient notes of petrol and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish and a touch flat in personality, with a modest core, good length, but not a whole lot of structural integrity on the soft finish. This is okay, but not one of the estate's more stellar vintages. 2012-2020. **85.**

2011 Château La Mission Haut Brion Blanc

A few years ago, one hectare of semillon here was grubbed up and replanted to sauvignon blanc. 2011 is the first vintage to include that young vine sauvignon blanc fruit in the La Mission Blanc. This is the ripest white wine I encountered from this vintage, at a heady 14.6 percent alcohol. The nose is deep, pretty and very suave in its mélange of grapefruit, fresh fig, citrus peel, cut grass, complex soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and impressively complex on the finish, with a very good core, but a finish that shows some of its heady octane as uncovered alcohol. The heat on the backend is pretty minor and I expect many people will not even notice it, but it suggests strongly that drinking this tasty and complex wine in its youth will be obligatory. I wonder what was the alcohol level on the brilliant 1964 Laville Haut Brion I drank a short time ago- 11.5 percent? But, those days are gone forever- I should just let them go... The 2011 La Mission Blanc is very good juice for early drinking. 2012-2020. **92.**

2011 Château Olivier Blanc

The Olivier Blanc in 2011 is quite pleasant on the nose, but again, a tad hollow and too easy-going in terms of structure on the palate. The quite stylish bouquet delivers a mélange of grapefruit, lemon, fresh-mown grass, petrol, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full and a bit *fluide* at the core, with a fairly low acid personality and a long finish that is a bit short on bounce and grip. Quite typical of the style of the vintage, but fairly well-made within that limited horizon. 2012-2018. **84.**

2011 Château Pape Clément Blanc

The 2011 Pape Clément blanc is one of the weaker vintages of this superb bottling that I have tasted in many years. The wine shows distinct signs of uneven ripeness, as there are some rather ripe tones on the nose, but a peppery aspect on the backend that is typical of some less than ideally ripe grapes in the cuvée. The nose offers up a blend of orange, pink grapefruit, a nice

dollop of cut grass, white pepper, petrol and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full and very easy-going on the attack, with modest depth and distinctly peppery acids on the backend that conveys a strong sense of uneven ripeness. This is still okay, but by the very lofty standards of Pape Clément blanc, this is a pretty disappointing vintage for this wine. 2012-2025. **87.**

2011 Château Picque-Caillou Blanc

The 2011 Picque-Caillou blanc is one of the riper wines on the nose, but it is not special. The deeper-pitched nose offers up scents of pink grapefruit, tangerine, chalk, petrol, damp grass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, flat and simple, with no shape or focus and a short, chunky finish. Pretty pedestrian fare. 2012-2015. **81.**

2011 Château Rahoul Blanc

The 2011 Rahoul blanc is not one of the better examples of this difficult vintage, despite it having a reasonably intriguing nose of lemon, grapefruit, petrol, damp grass and vanillin oak. However, on the palate the party is quickly over, as this wine is medium-full, simple and hollow, with a short, soft and uninspiring finish. Pedestrian juice. 2012-2016. **80.**

2011 Château Smith Haut-Lafitte Blanc

Normally, the Smith Haut-Lafitte blanc is one of my favorite white wines each year, but the 2011 is strangely devoid of personality and nascent complexity. The nose is clean and poised, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of grapefruit, a touch of fig, petrol, chalky, fresh-mown grass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and shows pretty good mid-palate depth, with crisp acids, but little complexity or spark on the finish. This is okay, but this is usually pretty stellar juice. 2012-2025. **87.**

Graves Rouge

The red wines of the Graves were once one of the cornerstones of my cellar, but the arrival of some of the high-powered, cookie cutter consultants here has sent me packing in search of more authentic Bordeaux for my own personal collection. The drought conditions of 2011 seem to have been particularly hard on the Graves this year, and there was not a lot of excitement to be found at the UGC tastings this year or at the toniest address in the appellation. As I discussed in the introductory section on the vintage, the extreme drought conditions and the uneven and poor ripening of the bunches from the hydric stress required a gentle hand in both the vineyard and cellar. Apparently, this was not possible at many estates in the Graves and the appellation's red wines are rather a dismal lot, with a few notable exceptions. One of the things that the über consultants have brought to this region is a higher percentage of new wood, and in a vintage of rather moderate concentration and high tannin content already, more new wood was decidedly not in the best interests of the wines in question. On a positive note, at least the alcohol levels here are decidedly down in 2011 from the 2010 wines, so scorching octane is not part of the recipe this year. For the most part though, a pretty sad set of wines here in 2011.

2011 Château Bouscaut

The 2011 Bouscaut rouge is a bit pumped up from cellar technique, but in this vintage in the Graves, it is not too bad of a wine. The nose offers up a nicely balanced blend of sappy black cherries, a touch of cassis, cigar ash, a bit of road tar and a fairly restrained base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced again, with a real paucity of soil tones, but at least well-managed, ripe tannins and good length and grip. This is a bit modern in

style, but in the land of blind wines, the one-eyed wine is king. More than passable. 2018-2035. 87+.

2011 Château Carbonnieux

The 2011 Carbonnieux *rouge* is a fairly extracted example of the vintage, but again, not badly balanced and in the context of the overall red wine caliber found in the appellation, this is not too bad. The deep and worked nose offers up scents of dark berries, cassis, tarry tones, cigar smoke and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with some early mid-palate glossiness (from micro-ox?), firm tannins and pretty good overall texture on the long and balanced finish. There is not a whole lot of personality here- and no soil tones- but at least the wine is not excessive in its rather modern style. Okay. 2018-2035. 86+.

2011 Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion

The 2011 Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion gets my vote as the most unique and original modern wine of the vintage, as it smells like a chocolate milkshake! Probably not a great thing for a red Graves, but at least it stands out at a comparative tasting. The nose is a unprecedented blend of chocolate milkshake in the starring role, with cassis, black cherries, tar, cigar ash and cedar playing supporting actors. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, dense and dulled, with chewy tannins, but aspiring to a sense of balance on the fairly long and tannic finish. This probably will eventually absorb its tannins with bottle age, which will make it a passable example of the modern school of red winemaking in the Graves today. Of course, that does not equate with quality in my book. 2018-2025+? 82.

2011 Château de Chantegrive

The 2011 Chantegrive is the Corvair of the vintage- “unsafe at any speed”- to borrow from Ralph Nadar in his youth. The wine offers up a deep and fetid nose of manufactured, sappy black cherries, coffee grounds, resinous oak, game and mud. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, dense and astringent, with a brutal blast of backend tannin on the mercifully short and precipitous finish. I would find it fascinating to hear the philosophical foundation that found this wine acceptable. ??? 65.

2011 Domaine de Chevalier

After two badly oxidized samples at the start of the UGC event, an SOS call was put into the nearby estate, who quickly dispatched over one of the technical team with freshly pulled samples that were really quite good. I have made no secret of my disappointment at the new direction at Domaine de Chevalier, as this estate has one of the largest representations of older vintages in my own personal cellar, and I cannot admire the changes wrought by Monsieur Derenoncourt since his arrival here. But, that said, this 2011 is clearly one of the best wines in the appellation this year! The nose is deep and fairly modern in its aromatic mélange of dark berries, black cherries, tobacco smoke, coffee bean and a suave base of nutty and lead pencilly new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and currently quite marked structurally by its new wood component, but with good mid-palate depth, lovely focus, a suave attack and probably enough stuffing to eventually carry its new wood with little difficulty. One could quibble about the complete lack of soil signature from an estate with one of the finest *terroirs* in all of Bordeaux, but at least the 2011 DDC is very well-balanced and quite well-made in its new, modern guise. 2022-2040+? 90.

2011 Château de Fieuzal

The 2011 Fieuzal *rouge* is a thoroughly worked wine on both the nose and palate and one of the unmitigated disasters of the vintage here. The sappy bouquet offers up scents of black cherry syrup, a touch of apricot (guess they did not sort out all the burnt berries!), chocolate, tar

and resinous new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pounded into submission with over-extraction, with unpleasant bitter and dry tannins on the backend from both the poorly-cured wood and the skins. This tastes like the merlot shut down for an extended period of time due to the drought, but a significant percentage was included anyway with deleterious effect on the wine. Pretty nasty juice that I have a hard time imagining will ever have a window of even modest pleasure. ??? **66.**

2011 Château Ferrande

The 2011 Ferrande is a thoroughly modern and dull wine on the nose, offering up scents of cassis, black cherries, coffee grounds, damp soil and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, leaden and astringent, with a completely flat finish of dry tannins that seem likely to never assimilate into the body of the wine. *Caveat emptor.* ??? **68.**

2011 Château de France

Both samples I tasted at the UGC event were oxidized.

2011 Château Haut-Bailly

Haut-Bailly is one of my favorite wines in the appellation these days- though I would like it a lot better if they would tone the new oak back down to its level from the decade of the 1980s, as the young wines these days always are on the cusp of carrying too much lumber (and for what purpose one might ask?) and struggle early on to assimilate their wood tannins. The wine is pretty dense in style in 2011, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, tobacco smoke, a nice base of soil (a pretty rare commodity in a red Graves these days!), espresso and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with a good core of fruit for the vintage, and plenty of firm, dry-edged tannins roughing up the long and focused finish. Today there is not much lift or energy on the backend, but there is probably adequate stuffing to eventually absorb the new wood, but time will be needed. Haut-Bailly is so often a wine of charm, impressive complexity and intensity of flavor without undue weight, but the 2011 shows off a bit of the sullen side of the vintage. This is not a bad wine, but hardly one of my favorite recent Haut-Baillys. 2022-2040+? **87+.**

2011 Château Haut-Bergey

The 2011 Haut-Bergey is a thoroughly modern and over-worked wine on both the nose and palate and not a success this year. The dull, modern nose offers up scents of black cherry syrup, malted milk balls, tar and poorly-cured, resinous new oak by the kiloton. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nastily astringent, with uncovered, bitter and hard tannins shutting down the backend and leaving nothing but unpleasantness at the end. One thinks of the US Army general, during the Vietnam War, who commented about a battle for the city of Hué that “in order to save the city, it was necessary to destroy it.” The same sentiments are in evidence from the winemaking team at Haut-Bergey this year. ??? **60.**

2011 Le Clarence de Haut-Brion

One wonders if there was a fire sale at Taransaud, as all the red wines from Haut Brion and La Mission are showing a lot of aggressive wood spice in 2011. The Le Clarence offers up a nose of dark berries, tobacco leaf, coffee bean, dark soil tones and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite aggressively astringent on the backend, with a good core of fruit, spiky acidity and a hard, dry-edged and tannic finish that does not inspire confidence for the future evolution of this wine. 2020-2040. **84.**

2011 Château Haut-Brion

The 2011 Haut-Brion is hardly a reassuring follow-up to the rather unconventional wines made here in 2009 and 2010. At least the alcohol this year is a very civilized 13.3 percent, which

is a very welcome departure from the 14.6 percent of 2010 and the 14.3 percent of the 2009. But, even with the lower octane level, one could hardly call this a return to classicism at Haut-Brion, given how aggressively spicy the new oak component is in this wine and how much it dominates both the nose and palate. The bouquet is very marked (marred?) by its spicy new wood, with scents of sweet cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke and soil tones striving valiantly to make themselves heard against the din of Taransaud barrels. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite markedly dried out by its wood, with a long, astringent finish that does not seem hopeful in the least. There is a decent core of fruit here, but nowhere near enough to carry this level of astringent tannin. It is hard to imagine this wine ever rallying without some (divine?) intervention in the cellar (we were tasting after all at La Mission this year). As an unabashed fan of Haut-Brion's history and a thoroughly-convinced adherent to the notion that this estate has the greatest *terroir* in all of Bordeaux, for disparate reasons, the last three vintages here have been very, very disconcerting. There may be something that can be done in the cellar to tame the tannins a bit here, and if the team does so, maybe, just maybe, this wine could climb to the upper end of the projected range. But right now, perhaps the 2011 Haut-Brion does not even deserve the lower score here. ??? 80-88?

2011 Château La Louvière

La Louvière has begun in the last few years to do twenty percent of its malolactic fermentation in barrel, which has robbed the wine a bit of some of its traditionally really lovely soil tones, but has added a bit more mid-palate generosity to the fruit component. Their 2011 *rouge* is a very nice wine in the making, offering up a pretty nose of black cherries, plums, cigar smoke, espresso, still a modicum of soil tones and a judicious framing of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with good balance, firm, ripe tannins, lovely focus and a long, tangy finish. This is good juice and a ringing success for the vintage- not to mention an excellent value! Of course, it would be even better with no malo in barrel! 2020-2050. 89+.

2011 Château Larrivet-Haut-Brion

The 2011 Larrivet-Haut-Brion is another modern failure from the vintage, delivering a heavily worked nose of black cherries, black raspberries, dark chocolate and raw, resinous oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, monolithic and utterly ponderous, with a dry, raw wood tannin finish that is nasty and sadly, reasonably long- as if to prolong the unpleasantness. One has to wonder where notes of black raspberry come from in a vintage that struggled for ripeness? A thoroughly depressing wine. ??? 67.

2011 Château Latour-Martillac

The 2011 Latour-Martillac is a deep and very structured wine that will need extended cellaring to blossom, but there is indeed some potential here. The bouquet is a properly reserved and nascently complex blend of dark berries, cassis, espresso, dark soil tones and a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tight and concentrated at the core, with firm, chewy tannins, good balance and a long, very youthful, but promising finish. Like many 2011s, there is not a lot of lift and brightness on the backend here today, but with a decade's worth of bottle age under its belt, this may prove to be a very tasty example of the vintage. 2022-2050. 87+?

2011 Château Malartic-Lagravière

The 2011 Malartic-Lagravière *rouge* is an expressive and quite worked wine on the nose, but with pretty good balance on the palate. The simply modern nose is a blend of black cherries, Cuban cigars, coffee grounds and resinous new oak. On the palate the wine deep, full-bodied and

dense, with rather coarse tannins, but at least it is not particularly excessive in its modern sensibilities. The finish is reasonably long, and though the wine is not charming by any stretch of the imagination, this is at least one modern 2011 Graves that shows no signs of imploding before it is bottled. 2017-2030+? **83.**



The beautiful inner courtyard at Château La Mission Haut Brion.

2011 La Chapelle de la Mission Haut-Brion

The second wine of La Mission this year tips the scales at 13.7 percent, which is pretty heady for the Graves region in 2011 and suggests that there was plenty of unsatisfactory merlot that had shut down during the darkest days of hydric stress relegated to the second wine. The nose is the best part of this wine at the present time, offering up scents of cassis, dark berries, espresso, smoke, dark soil tones and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused on the attack, with substantial, tough, fairly coarse tannins, pretty good mid-palate depth, and some overt heat poking out on the moderately long finish. Obviously another tough year for the “Twin Towers” in Pessac. 2020-2040. **85.**

2011 Château La Mission Haut-Brion

The 2011 La Mission was not showing well during my visit to the estate, but the team at the château seemed perfectly content with the sample and I have to assume that this really is the wine in 2011. At least the 2011 does not tip the scales at the celestial 15.1 percent of the 2010 La Mission, but the wine really seems to have been eviscerated already at this early stage by too

much spicy new wood. The bouquet is very much dominated by its new wood (Taransaud again clearly part of the oak regimen here), with the spicy wood scents covering up notes of black cherries, cassis and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite classy on the attack, with reasonable mid-palate depth, but a very dry, astringent backend from the combination of skin and wood tannins. Honestly, if this sample is really the wine, I cannot imagine this wine not drying out before it blossoms- or at least always being burdened by some dry-edged tannins. What is going on here? 2020-2050. **82-88.**

2011 Château Olivier

The 2011 Olivier *rouge* is a rather dense example of the vintage, but not too bad and shows signs that it may blossom into a more than passable drink with sufficient bottle age. The black fruity nose offers up scents of cassis, espresso, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly extracted in style, but with solid mid-palate depth and focus. There is an awful lot of backend tannin here that will need to be resolved, but there may well be enough stuffing to do so in the fullness of time. The length is pretty good, and if the fruit can outlast the tannins, this might be a pretty interesting drink a decade down the road. But how it evolves with further *elevage* will be key to its ultimate success. 2022-2045? **85+?**

2011 Château Pape Clément

The 2011 Château Pape Clément was not showing well at all at the UGC event, and I did not have a chance to visit the estate and check to see if the wine is really as over-oaked and out of balance as it appeared in all the samples at our tasting. The nose is certainly quite classy (albeit without any soil tones!) in its blend of black cherries, dark berries, Cuban tobacco and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit and fine delineation, but with a very dry, astringent backend of hard skin tannins and uncovered wood tannins from the new oak. The samples we tasted were really very, very astringent on the finish and this is one wine that I am not sanguine about it ever being able to integrate all these day tannins. If I were going to drink it, it would be early on, as this seems simply destined to dry out with bottle age. 2014-2020+? **80.**

2011 Château Picque-Caillou

The 2011 Picque-Caillou is another very modern, simple and dull wine. The formulaic bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, coffee grounds, smoke and resinous oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, thoroughly flat and four-square, with a short, ripely tannic finish. At least one can observe that the wine is almost balanced and probably has the stuffing to carry its tannins. Dullesville. 2018-2030. **81.**

2011 Château Rahoul

The 2011 Château Rahoul *rouge* is a rather rustic example of the vintage that shows some signs of eventually resolving its significant tannin content, but I am not sure how much pleasure it will ever deliver. The rustic nose is a blend of cassis, dark berries, road tar, smoke, coffee grounds and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very dense and extracted, with plenty of chewy tannins perking up the fairly long finish. The heavy extraction suggests that there was an attempt here to make a modern-styled Graves here, but this is no spit-polished modern beauty and even if it resolves, it seems likely to always be a ponderous and charmless wine. 2020-2040. **81.**

2011 Château Smith Haut-Lafitte

I had to chuckle when I heard that Robert Parker bestowed three digits on the ham-fisted 2009 Smith Haut-Lafitte, but it was certainly made just for him. The 2011 is another very

extracted bottle from this estate, which is no doubt seeking to emulate the financial success generated by the charmless 2009. The nose on the 2011 is complex and shows off a very well-managed smorgasbord of *luxe* new oak in its mélange of coffee bean oak, spicy oak (have to get some Taransaud into the recipe), and nutty oak, as well as notes of cassis, black cherries, dark chocolate and a bit of cigar smoke in the upper register. No signs of soil tones having survived the treatment in the cellar, however. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very dense, with pretty good focus and a long, very tannic finish that sports a serious dry edge that may or may not resolve with bottle age. This is leaden wine that has nowhere near as much breed or complexity as the estate's reds from vintages like 2006, but one gets what one pays for and Monsieur Derenoncourt brought home the gold medal with the 2009. I just cannot stop thinking of all those steroid-laden East German ladies from the Olympic games of the '70s and '80s when I taste the new style at Smith Haut-Lafitte. For those specious enough to buy into the hype, this heavy-handed and uninteresting wine will also probably garner big bucks points from the usual suspects. If it can eventually absorb its serious blast of backend tannin, then it should place at the high end of the range. 2018-2030+? **80-85+?**

Lalande de Pomerol, Fronsac and Côtes du Castillon

According to Baptiste Guinaudeau of Château Lafleur, whose family also owns Château Grand Village in Lalande de Pomerol, the cooler soils of Lalande de Pomerol, Fronsac and the like were at a disadvantage in 2011, as they did not benefit from the bit of retained heat in the more gravelly topsoils found on the plateau in Pomerol and consequently struggled a bit more to bring their bunches to full ripeness in this difficult growing season. Certainly, the clay soils of these communes were an advantage in terms of guarding a bit more water for the parched vines to sustain themselves with during the prolonged drought of 2011, but the wines are not quite as satisfying as one might have hoped in this vintage where the Right Bank had the less difficult hand dealt to it. There are some perfectly serviceable wines to be found in these communes, but I was hoping that there might have been a few more high water marks here in 2011, given the good base of clay of these vineyards. There are also some rather spoofulated wines to be found here as well, and as was the case in St. Émilion and the Graves as well, 2011's raw materials seemed to have been patently unsuitable for such interventionist cellar techniques.

2011 Château La Chenade (Lalande de Pomerol)

This is a selection of younger vines made from l'Église-Clinet's Denis Durantou's property of Les Cruzelles. Like all of the Durantou wines, it is very well-made in its modern style, but to my palate it really lacks a bit of personality. The nose is plush in its mix of plums, black cherries, chocolate and a touch of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and chunky, with moderate tannins and good length and grip on the utterly anonymous finish. Not flawed technically, this wine is certainly uninspired in style. 2016-2035. **84+.**

2011 Château Les Cruzelles (Lalande de Pomerol)

Sadly, I found the quality of Monsieur Durantou's Les Cruzelles every bit as compelling as his flagship Pomerol estate of l'Église-Clinet this year, which either makes the les Cruzelles a superb value or the l'Église-Clinet a bit disappointing. The nose on the 2011 Les Cruzelles is plush and fairly stylish in its modern mélange of plums, black cherries, chocolate, a touch of woodsmoke and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, focused and nicely balanced, with a long, well-balanced and moderately tannic finish. A good example of

a modern wine from Lalande de Pomerol, but do not expect any soil signature here. 2014-2035. **88.**

2011 Château Dalem (Fronsac)

There was a time when I really liked the wines from Dalem, as back in the decade of the 1980s, they could be counted on to deliver a good, honest and slightly rustic rendition of the Right Bank that aged pretty well and was perfectly acceptable for its price tag. But, those days have been left behind in an effort to make a “modern” wine, and the 2011 is a spoofed and uninteresting blend of boysenberry syrup, chocolate, tar and resinous new oak. On the palate the wine is full, dull and ham-fisted on the attack, with a moderately tannic and uninteresting finish. The one good thing that can be said about the 2011 Dalem is that the alcohol here is quite moderate for this school of winemaking, and the vintage’s tannins are really pretty well-handled. I would love to see the proprietors here return to making more traditionally styled wines, as there still seems to be serious potential in this vineyard that has yet to be realized. But, certainly it is never going to be found continuing down this path of cookie cutter, modern winemaking. 2015-2025? **83.**

2011 Château La Dauphine (Fronsac)

The 2011 La Dauphine is never going to win any awards for originality, as it is a classically modern and boring example of the vintage. The heavily-worked nose offers up scents of boysenberry syrup, chocolate, resinous new oak and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and jammy on the attack (from micro-ox?), with modest tannins and one of the most amazingly short finishes I have ever encountered. 2012-2020. **79.**

2011 Château Grand Village (Bordeaux Supérieure)

The Guinaudeau family’s estate in Lalande de Pomerol, Château Grand Village, is labeled simply as a Bordeaux Supérieure by the Guinaudeaus, as they have some very good adjacent parcels of older vines that carry outside of the communal boundary of Lalande de Pomerol, and rather than make a different wine from these, they prefer to have the flexibility to blend it into the Grand Village by using the lower level appellation on the label. The 2011 Grand Village has tuned out quite well and was one of the top Lalande de Pomerols that I tasted on this trip, as it offers up a complex nose of black cherries, a touch of raspberry, woodsmoke, a nice base of soil, fresh herbs and just a touch of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved in style, with a good core, good soil inflection and an impressively tangy, modestly tannic finish. A serious example of Lalande de Pomerol. 2018-2035. **88.**

2011 Château Grand Village “G” Acte 3 (Bordeaux Supérieure)

The old vine bottling from Grand Village, which only has a “G” and Acte 3 on its label, is also quite strong in 2011, but at least at this early stage, I do not have a preference for it from the very fine regular bottling. The nose is deep, ripe and complete, as it offers up scents of raspberries, black cherries, woodsmoke, soil and a nice dollop of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite suave on the attack, with a fair bit of fine-grained tannins and good bounce and grip on the long and primary finish. Perhaps more complexity will emerge here with further bottle age and the Acte 3 will distance itself a bit more from the regular bottling of Grand Village. 2018-2035+. **88+?**

2011 Château Montlandrie (Côtes du Castillon)

Denis Durantou’s Château Montlandrie is comprised of a blend of seventy-five percent merlot and twenty-five percent cabernet franc and was raised in a combination of thirty percent new wood and the remainder one wine barrels. Like all the wines in his portfolio, it is a well-made modern wine of little discernable individuality, as it offers up a pretty nose of black

cherries, coffee bean, smoke and nutty oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and nicely balanced, with modest tannins and a fairly long, plush and simple finish. Perfectly acceptable, but eminently forgettable at the same time. 2015-2030+. **84.**

2011 Château Moulin Haut Laroque (Fronsac)

The 2011 Château Moulin Haut Laroque is not too bad on the nose, but suffers a bit on the palate from the dry tannins of the vintage on the backend. The perfectly serviceable bouquet offers up scents of raspberry, woodsmoke, soil tones and a dollop of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite pleasant on the attack, with a bit of a dip at the core and a rather ham-fisted and dry backend, with the vintage's hard tannins taking their toll on the pleasure quotient. This is not bad in the context of the vintage and I would be interested in tasting this wine in a less arduous year. 2017-2027+? **84.**

2011 Château Tournefeuille (Lalande de Pomerol)

Château Tournefeuille is my favorite wine in Lalande de Pomerol, but I did not get a chance to visit the estate on this trip and asked to have a sample of the 2011 dropped off at nearby Château Corbin, so that I could taste it there. I am guessing that the sample was pulled from a new barrel, as it showed a bit more spicy new oak than I am accustomed to from this estate. The nose is deep and quite lovely, offering up scents of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, cigar smoke and a lot of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a good core and a long, tannic finish. Some of the backend tannins were from the oak here, but this is most likely just a reflection of the sample, rather than the shape of the overall cuvée, as the estate has never before had a penchant for too high a percentage of new wood. I have scored the wine in a range, with the lower number a possible reflection of the entire cuvée really carrying this much lumber, and the upper limit an assumption that the final blend will be oaked more along the customary lines of this fine estate. Under the wood in this sample was a really lovely wine. 2017-2035. **86-89?**

2011 Château Les Trois Croix (Fronsac)

The nose on the 2011 Les Trois Croix is pretty good, but the wine has been over-extracted and this really takes away from its interest on the palate. The nose is a blend of black cherries, raspberries, coffee bean, smoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pounded into submission with extraction, with a dry-edged, tannic finish that exudes zero charm. 2016-2025. **83.**

2011 Château La Vieille Cure (Fronsac)

It saddens me to think how good the '82 and '85 vintages of this wine were, as I bought and happily drank both vintages of La Vieille Cure back in the day. The 2011 is modern and spoofulated, and bears no relation to those lovely wines of yesteryear. The nose offers up scents of boysenberry syrup, chocolate, herbs, smoke and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and at least, well-balanced, with its tannins nicely reined-in to the body of the wine and decent length on the anonymous finish. La Vieille Cure has very interesting *terroir* and I would think that if they would revert to making a traditional style of wine here, that there would be a very willing market ready to embrace their wines. But, this 2011 is a well-made, utterly boring modern wine. 2016-2025. **82.**

Pomerol

Christian Moueix commented that the flowering for the merlot in Pomerol this year "was perfect- in fact, almost too good- as it resulted in beautifully formed and decidedly larger clusters on the vines than normal", which proved to be a bit of a mixed blessing when the

drought conditions put some damper on the ability of vines to ripen their bunches in the dry conditions. That said, there are an awful lot of truly exceptional Pomerols to be found in 2011, but not everyone was able to fully ripen their grapes even in this most favored of communes, so there are a few wines that are a bit coarse with tannins as a result of some obvious hydric stress-related shutdowns of the vines during the parched summer. Those with older vines certainly were better blessed to take advantage of whatever trace amounts of water remained in the deep clay subsoils of Pomerol, and clearly those with a bit more cabernet franc in the vineyards also seemed to have benefitted from this as well. Alexander Thienpont of Vieux Château Certan volunteered that the estate “was very pleased with the quality of the cabernet franc in 2011 and the grand vin will have the highest percentage of this grape in the final blend in several years.” Baptiste Guinaudeau of Château Lafleur also commented that their cabernet franc withstood the drought conditions better than their merlot. All things considered, the commune of Pomerol is probably the most successful in 2011 and there are a great many wines here from this vintage that tower above their 2010 counterparts- at least to my more classically-aligned palate. Most of the wines I tasted were in the 13.2 to 14 percent range of alcohol, which is a dramatic difference from the high fourteens to mid-fifteens of 2010. But, this is clearly a vintage where the finest terroirs in Pomerol produced dramatically better raw materials than their less well-situated neighbors.



2011 Château Beauregard

The 2011 Beauregard is a bit of an inky and heavy-handed example of the vintage- at least if the two samples I tasted at the UGC event were representative of the wine. The nose is a brooding blend of dark berries, cassis, a bit of road tar, tobacco leaf and resinous new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite extracted in style, with solid mid-palate depth, firm tannins and a long, well-balanced and plodding finish. This is rather charmless. 2020-2035+? **84.**

2011 Château Bourgneuf

The 2011 Bourgneuf offers up a deep and sappy nose that is quite attractive, with scents of black cherries, plums, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, soil, incipient notes of game and a nice dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a touch four-square, with good mid-palate depth, fairly grainy, substantial tannins and a long, chewy and quite primary finish. This wine will certainly take all of a decade to blossom, but should eventually become quite a tasty bottle- albeit perhaps always a little short on breed and polish. But, all in all, a pretty good success for 2011. 2022-2045. **87+.**

2011 Château La Cabanne

The 2011 La Cabanne is not a bad effort for the vintage, but it shows a bit of the mid-palate “dip” of the vintage, and I would have really liked it better if they had used better cured barrels, as the wood component gets a bit resinous with extended aeration. The pretty and ripe nose offers up scents of black cherries, chocolate, violets, cigar smoke, dark soil and a fairly restrained base of new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and a touch dull on the attack, with a bit of a hole at the core and a long, tannic and slightly grainy finish. This is okay and probably a pretty good effort for the vintage, but one can taste that strict selection was simply not a financial option for the proprietors of La Cabanne this year. 2020-2040. **85.**

2011 Château Certan de May

I have been modestly disappointed with the quality of Certan de May in the last several vintages, as the wine has seemed a bit over-oaked to my tastes and often not quite up to its former level of excellence (in the ‘70s and ‘80s this was consistently one of the top wines of the commune). Happily, the 2011 seems to be a return to that former excellence, as the wine delivers superb complexity on both the nose and palate this year. The very fine bouquet delivers scents of dark berries, black raspberries, coffee bean, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite elegant, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the soil-driven and very promising finish. This is one of the best vintages of Certan de May in recent memory! 2025-2075. **92+.**

2011 Château Clinet

The 2011 Clinet is rather flamboyantly fruity on the nose, offering up sappy scents of black cherries, blueberries, tarry tones, coffee grounds and resinous oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and surprisingly light on its feet after the heavy technique in evidence on the nose, with some firm tannins and a long, simple and backwards finish. This will never be great shakes, but at least it is balanced and will probably offer up a modicum of drinking interest when the tannins have fallen away. I find wines like this remarkably boring. 2020-2035+? **86.**

2011 Duo de Conseillante

The second wine of La Conseillante includes a lot of merlot this year, as fully ninety-five percent of the blend is from that grape. It seems pretty clear to me that the superb quality of the *grand vin* can be attributed at least partially to any of the less than perfectly ripe parcels of merlot being consigned to the second wine this year. The nose on the 2011 Duo is a touch

herbaceous as a result, offering up scents of black raspberries, fresh herbs, cigar smoke, gravelly soil and a nice touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is impressively elegant and balanced, with its medium-full and suave profile delivering good mid-palate depth, moderate tannins and a long, tangy finish. A very nice wine that will drink well with only a few years of bottle age. 2015-2025. **88.**

2011 Château La Conseillante

The big news at La Conseillante is that Jean-Paul Berrouet, formerly the Director at Château Pétrus, has begun consulting at the estate. Given that Monsieur Berrouet is not a fan of high percentages of new oak, it seems likely that future vintages of La Conseillante will see the percentage of new oak reduced from the current eighty percent to a more manageable number, which will probably allow even more of La Conseillante's beautiful *terroir* to shine through in the *grand vin*. In any case, the 2011 La Conseillante is an outstanding example of the vintage that seems likely to surpass the very, very good 2010 in the fullness of time. The wine is a blend this year of eighty-two percent merlot and eighteen percent cabernet franc. The beautiful and classically reserved nose offers up a fine mélange of dark berries, black raspberries, espresso, gravelly soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite bright, with a lovely core of pure fruit, firm tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. While I have scored the 2010 and 2011 at the same level, I have a very strong preference stylistically for the more classical 2011 here. A superb wine. 2022-2060+. **93+.**

2011 Château La Croix de Gay

One wants to cheer for the proprietors at La Croix de Gay, who are stubbornly fighting to keep the vineyard going when cousins are yelping to cash out, but, sadly, the 2011 is not going to win any awards for its quality. The nose is a sappy blend of black raspberries, black cherries, tarry tones, woodsmoke and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and over-extracted in style, but yet, with the hole in the mid-palate that plagues so many of the 2011s. The finish is long, tannic and dry-edged. 2018-2035. **82.**

2011 La Petite l'Église

The second wine of l'Église-Clinet is made on a parcel by parcel basis, rather than a selection of vats in the cellar, but focuses on vines that are twenty-five years of age or younger. The 2011 was raised in fifty percent new wood, and offers up a plush, modern and new oaky nose of ripe plums, coffee bean, woodsmoke, tobacco leaf and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit four-square, with a good core and a long, ripely tannic and anonymous finish. Again, as with all the Durantou wines in 2011, this is well-made, but boring and is impressive in its complete lack of soil tones. 2017-2035+. **86.**

2011 Château l'Église-Clinet

The 2011 l'Église-Clinet is a perfectly acceptable, modern example of the vintage, with the wine in reasonable balance for its methodology, but it was hardly a wine that generated much excitement for my more classically-inclined palate. The harvest started here pretty early (September 5th), but the wine still tips the scales at a pretty heady 13.8 percent alcohol, which was one of the highest that I noted on the Right Bank in 2011. The wine offers up a plush and sappy nose of black cherries, violets, plums, dark chocolate and plenty of nutty, new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off pretty good mid-palate stuffing, with a rather monolithic personality and a long, firmly tannic finish. Some of the backend tannins here are wood tannins, but there is probably the stuffing here to eventually absorb them. This is an okay wine in its style, but it essentially tasted exactly the same as the five wines that preceded it from

Monsieur Durantou (ranging from Côtes du Castillon to St. Émilion to Lalande de Pomerol), which I find a striking example of the triumph of method over *terroir*. 2020-2050. **88.**

2011 Château l'Évangile

I found the 2010 l'Évangile a bit overripe and heady last year, but the 2011 is a completely different animal and one of the most beautiful Pomerols of the vintage. The blend will only contain six percent cabernet franc this year, with the remainder made up of merlot, but clearly the merlot had no problem ripening at l'Évangile in 2011, as the wine is outstanding. The harvest was started here on September 6th for the young vines, with the old vines brought in between September 13th and 26th. In contrast to last year's heady 14.6 percent octane level, the 2011 is a full point lower in alcohol and shows off great *terroir* as a result. The superb and utterly classic nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of dark berries, plums, coffee bean, a touch of tobacco leaf, lovely soil tones and a suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly suave on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, firm, but beautifully-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex and very refined finish. This is better than Lafite this year! 2022-2075. **93+.**

2011 Château Gazin

I really like the proprietors at Gazin, who are one of the nicest families in all the Bordeaux trade, but their wines have been a bit less interesting in the last few years. The 2011 Gazin is a bit over-extracted, as it offers up scents of black cherries, tar, cigar ash, dark soil tones and spicy, slightly resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit dense from the extraction, with an inky core of fruit, and a long, tannic and rather lifeless finish. This has the stuffing to eventually resolve its tannins, but I would like to think that the sample was not particularly fresh at the UGC tasting and that the wine is really going to prove better than these two bottles showed! Maybe the proprietors could get Annabelle Cruse Bardinet to consult? 2022-2040+? **84+?**

2011 Château La Grave

Château La Grave, with its fine location just to the north of Latour à Pomerol, has produced a very fine example of the vintage in 2011 and is destined to be one of the fine sleepers of the vintage. The deep and classy nose offers up a ripe and pure blend of plums, black cherries, iron-like soil tones, bitter chocolate, woodsmoke, a nice touch of citrus peel and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and broad shouldered, with a rock solid core of fruit, firm, but very well-integrated tannins and a long, focused and chewy finish. This is an old school Pomerol in the best sense, and given enough bottle age, this will be a very fine glass of wine. 2025-2060. **90+.**

2011 Château Hosanna

Hosanna, which is the former Certan-Giraud estate, is always one of the more black fruity examples of Pomerol, and the superb 2011 is no exception. The lovely and quite reserved nose offers up scents of dark berries, black raspberries, espresso, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively light on its feet in 2011, with a fine core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and excellent focus and grip on the long, chewy and very well-balanced finish. This will be another excellent Pomerol in a dozen years. 2025-2075. **93.**

2011 Les Pensées de Lafleur

The 2011 Les Pensées de Lafleur is one of the ripest wines of the vintage on the Right Bank, tipping the scales at a full fourteen percent alcohol, but it still comes across as impressively "cool" in fruit tones and soil-driven in this vintage. Surprisingly, this is actually

half a percentage higher in alcohol than the 2010 Pensées! The bouquet offers up a classic blend of black cherries, black raspberries, a touch of fruitcake, dark chocolate, fresh herbs, soil and a deft touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, reserved and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and balance, firm, ripe tannins and superb length and grip on the still very primary finish. Les Pensées de Lafleur is probably, along with Les Forts de Latour, Bordeaux's greatest second wine these days. 2020-2060. **91+**.

2011 Château Lafleur

Much to my surprise, I learned that Château Lafleur has had its malolactic fermentation done in barrel for several years now- though with a bit of a twist than what is the standard recipe for this on the Right Bank. Only fifteen percent of the barrels used for the malo are new barrels, with the other eighty-five percent "broken in" for six months at the Guinaudeaus' Lalande de Pomerol estate prior to being used for the malo at Lafleur. When I asked Baptiste Guinaudeau why the estate was doing in malolactic in barrel these days, he replied "that it is the only way to keep our various small lots of wines separate during the initial élevage, and this allows us greater flexibility when making the final blend for Lafleur to only use the very best lots in the *grand vin*." It would probably be interesting in the future if the estate could purchase enough small stainless steel or cement tanks to allow the lots to be kept separate and still do the malo in tank, rather than barrel, just to see if there is any difference in the quality of the *terroir* in the finished wine. But, that said, the 2011 Lafleur is one of the undisputed stars of the vintage and a great wine in the making, as it offers up a deep and brilliantly pure nose of black raspberries, black cherries, a bit of meatiness, complex soil tones, a touch of current leaf, cigar ash and a very suave base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with superb mid-palate depth, firm, very refined tannins (particularly for 2011) and simply stunning length and grip on the still very primary finish. This is a great Lafleur in the making, but it is not quite in the same league as the great Lafleurs that preceded it in the 2010 and 2008 vintages. 2025-2065. **95**.

2011 Château Lafleur-Gazin

The 2011 Château Lafleur-Gazin is a good, chewy example of the vintage that seems to have the requisite stuffing necessary to eventually resolve its rather significant tannins and offer up pretty good drinking, but it is going to take patience. The nose is a moderately ripe and impressively complex mélange of raspberries, plums, woodsmoke, coffee, fresh herbs, soil and cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, tight and chewy, with a good core of fruit, plenty of firm tannins, good backend delineation and a long, tannic and rugged finish. The dry edge of 2011's tannins can be sensed here, but it seems quite likely that the wine will eventually absorb the tannins and blossom into a good bottle of Pomerol. 2023-2045. **88**.

2011 Château Lafleur-Pétrus

The 2011 Lafleur-Pétrus is another very fine bottle of Pomerol, but its tannins are a touch more grainy than the very finest examples of the vintage in this commune. The bouquet is deep, pure and very classy in its blend of black cherries, black raspberries, espresso, bitter chocolate, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, soil tones and a stylish dollop of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite reserved in personality, with fine mid-palate depth, firm, substantial tannins and a long, nascently complex and very promising finish. This may never have quite the same suave palate impression at maturity as wines such as Latour à Pomerol or Certan de May in 2011, but it will still be very long on complexity, breed and depth. A lovely and quite masculine example of Lafleur-Pétrus this year. 2025-2075. **93**.

2011 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 2011 Château Latour à Pomerol has turned out brilliantly and is one of the top wines of the vintage in this difficult year. The deep, complex and classy nose jumps from the glass in a pure mélange of red and black cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, a nice touch of nutskin, superb soil tones and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and reserved, with a sappy core of fruit, ripe, firm tannins and excellent length and grip on the backwards and beautifully balanced finish. This will be a superb bottle of wine in the fullness of time. 2025-2075. **92+**.

2011 Fugue de Nénin

The 2011 Fugue de Nénin is a terrific second wine and destined to be one of the great bargains of the vintage on the Right Bank. The really lovely and classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of plums, black cherries, chocolate, violets and a suave base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and velvety on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, quite modest tannins and a nice bounce from good acidity on the long and classy finish. A lovely wine and one of the very few 2011s that will not require extended cellaring before it starts to drink well. 2014-2035. **89+**.

2011 Château Nénin

The 2011 vintage of Château Nénin is outstanding and a significant step up from the more burly and borderline overripe wine produced from this fine estate in 2010. The bouquet is deeper and a bit more reserved than the second wine, but offers up the same suave purity and precision in its aromatic mélange of plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, a touch of fresh herbs, violets, lovely soil tones and a fair bit of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and structured, with a fine core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. This will need time- as do almost all top 2011s- but it should prove to be an excellent bottle of Pomerol at its apogee. 2022-2050+. **92**.

2011 Château Petit Village

The 2011 Petit Village was showing an awful lot of aggressively spicy new wood when I tasted it at Pichon Longueville, and I really have reservations about whether or not this wine will eventually be able to carry all of this lumber. The nose is deep, ripe and nascently complex, with scents of black cherries, plums, bitter chocolate, tobacco leaf and a ton of spicy new wood wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and focused on the attack, with decent mid-palate depth, but an extremely dry finish that shows both firm skin tannins and a very astringent edge from its uncovered wood tannins. It certainly seems to me that this wine is terminally over-oaked and is going to be problematic every day of its short life. I retasted this wine at the UGC Pomerol and St. Émilion tasting with consistent results. Disappointing, considering how many really good 2011 Pomerols are out there this year. ???

2011 Château Pétrus

The 2011 Pétrus is another utterly magical example of the vintage that will take plenty of cellaring before it fully blossoms, but will eventually outpace the more powerful 2010 at this estate. Olivier Berrouet commented that “with the 2011 having between ten and fifteen percent more tannins than the 2010, its *elevage* in new oak will be shorter this year as a result.” The team at Pétrus emphasized that “this was a vintage to restrain oneself in the vineyards and do nothing, so that the vines that were already suffering from the hydric stress would not be further shocked by any human intervention.” The wine has turned out brilliantly and will be a classic in fifteen or twenty years, as it offers up a deep and intense nose of black plums, black cherries, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, a beautiful base of soil, a touch of fresh herbs and a very suave and understated

base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and impressively opulent in the mid-palate, with great focus and balance, ripe, substantial tannins and very long, pure, primary and perfectly balanced finish. A great Pétrus in the making. 2030-2100. **97.**

2011 Château Le Pin

The 2011 Le Pin is a very good wine, but it is not in the top division of Pomerols this year. The deep and primary nose offers up a lovely mélange of dark plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a fine base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a sappy core and a fair bit of firm, well-integrated tannins on the long finish. This will need at least a decade to blossom, and should drink well for thirty or more years. Good juice, but without quite the personality of the best 2011 Pomerols. 2025-2050+? **91+.**

2011 Château Plince

I was rather confused about the showing of the 2011 Plince, as it offers up a very pretty aromatic mix on the nose, but a rather grainy backend on the palate that suggests less than perfect ripeness. The “cool” fruit and classy bouquet is a blend of dark berries, plums, raw cocoa, woodsmoke and soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and a bit angular, with respectable mid-palate depth, but some harsh and grainy tannins defining the finish. Perhaps the younger vine merlot here shut down and there was not the possibility of declassifying all of it into a second wine? The 2011 Plince was certainly not showing much charm or promise at this tasting. ???

2011 Château La Pointe

The 2011 is a good, old-fashioned and slightly rustic Pomerol that has all of its constituent components in pretty good balance and will prove to be a fairly good drink in the fullness of time. The bouquet delivers a complex blend of plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, a bit of cigar smoke, some tarry tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit old school, with solid mid-palate depth, firm, integrated tannins and a long, chewy finish. This will never be a paradigm of elegance or refinement, but it is a broad-shouldered and honest Pomerol that will be a pretty good drink once it has had a chance to blossom with bottle age. 2022-2045. **87.**

2011 Château Providence

The 2011 Providence is one of the finest young vintage of this wine that I can recall ever tasting. It is not as powerful as the very successful 2010 version, but stylistically, I may have a very slight preference for this beautifully balanced 2011. The very refined nose wafts from the glass in a complex mélange of black cherries, raspberries, espresso, woodsmoke, complex soil tones and a deft base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complete, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, ripe tannins and a very long, bright and properly reserved finish. This is a very impressive young Pomerol that should absolutely delight the senses after it has slept away the next dozen years or so in the cellar. I am sure that Christian Moueix does not need my aesthetic advice, but Providence might get a bit more respect in the marketplace if it were adorned with a more traditionally styled label, as the modern label on this wine seems somewhat at odds with its very classic and classy profile in the glass. 2025-2075. **93+.**

2011 Château Trotanoy

The 2011 Trotanoy is one of the wines of the vintage and an absolute classic in the making. The deep, pure and utterly brilliant nose soars from the glass in a blaze of red and black plums, black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee, chocolate, complex soil tones, fresh herbs and a

seamless base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly suave on the attack, with great intensity of flavor, a rock solid core of pure fruit, ripe, beautifully-integrated tannins and laser-like focus on the very, very long, poised and stunning finish. Perhaps this will turn out along the lines of the legendary 1975 Trotanoy? 2025-2075+. **96.**



The next generation of the famille Thienpont, Guillaume, who will head Vieux Château Certan.

2011 Vieux Château Certan

Vieux Château Certan has made one of the superstar wines of the 2011 vintage and this wine is even better than the fine 2010 and 2009 wines turned out at this consistently excellent estate. The blend in 2011 is a return to a fairly high percentage of cabernet franc, with twenty-four percent of the blend in the *grand vin* hailing from this grape, to complement seventy-five percent merlot and one percent cabernet sauvignon. The cabernet franc here at VCC is all old vines, having been planted in 1958, and their deep root systems seem to have handled the drought better than the merlot in 2011. The nose is deep, pure and beautifully complex, delivering a superb mélange of cassis, black cherries, tobacco leaf, a touch of coffee bean, woodsmoke, gravelly soil tones and a very refined base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly seamless, with very suave tannins, a lovely core and outstanding length and grip on the poised and perfectly balanced finish. This is a great wine in the making! 2022-2070. **95.**

St. Émilion

The commune of St. Émilion should have been as favored by Mother Nature as Pomerol in this vintage, with its deeper and less well-drained soils an advantage in this drought-stricken year, and indeed, some of the greatest wines of the vintage are to be found here. But, that said, the overall percentage of fine 2011s from St. Émilion is lower than one might hope, as there seems to have been a serious disconnect between the rote winemaking techniques and vineyard practices that are in vogue in so many estates in this commune and the very real and obvious need for flexibility in the face of the vintage's utterly unique and challenging characteristics. Consequently, while the commune has some truly brilliant wines to its credit, there are also an awful lot of really bad and downright boring wines to be found in St. Émilion in the 2011 vintage, making this the second vintage in a row where one must proceed with extreme caution to avoid the fatally flawed wines here. Several wines here show a flamboyantly ripe, almost overripe character to the fruit that seems to have been really difficult to come by in the climactic conditions of 2011, which suggests to me that perhaps some judicious blending of leftovers from the overripe vintage of 2010 have been used to "beef up" the blends this year. This is of course all perfectly acceptable, though I am not sure really what a bit of overripe juice brings to the blend- other than filling in a potential hole in the mid-palate.

2011 Château Angélus

I had pretty high hopes for the 2011 Château Angélus, as the last vintage where it was not really possible to go for extreme late harvesting- 2008- proved to be one of the best recent examples of this wine. Sadly, the 2011 is not even remotely close to the quality of the 2008 Angélus, as the wine offers up a dense and heavily made-up nose of sweet mocha, plums, black cherries, dark chocolate and a potpourri of nutty and coffee-like new oak tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and glossy on the attack, with a very respectable core (particularly in the context of the vintage), but a nastily astringent and harsh finish that shows off both dry skin tannins and a boatload of uncovered wood tannin from the oak cocktail the wine was raised in. The fruit is utterly eviscerated on the backend long before the wine finishes and this is really a harsh and unpleasant mouthful of wine at the present time. Patently unbalanced already, the 2011 Angélus still has many, many months to go in its new oak barrels before it is bottled. How the estate will keep this already very astringent wine from further drying out is beyond the reach of my imagination. ??? 73.

2011 La Chapelle d'Ausone

The second wine from Château Ausone is quite good in 2011, but it shows a slightly graininess to its tannins and just a hint of resin to its new wood component- both of which are slight distractions, but do keep the score down just a touch. The nose is ripe and generous, offering up scents of sappy black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee bean and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary, with a good core of fruit, firm tannins and very good length and grip on the focused finish. The wood is still sticking out a bit uncovered on the backend here, and the wine is currently a bit youthfully four-square, but I assume that time in bottle will solve both these minor issues. All in all, a pretty good wine. 2018-2035. 87-88+?

2011 Château Ausone

The 2011 Château Ausone is a step up from the very ripe and sturdy 2010, but there is a slight spark missing here this year. Of all the First Growths on either bank, this wine is more along the lines of the 2011 Mouton-Rothschild, which is technically quite sound, but somehow

all the constituent components do not add up to a completely convincing whole. The nose on the 2011 Ausone offers up a nascently complex blend of black cherries, dark berries, a touch of pine resin, coffee bean, woodsmoke and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and primary, with a very good core, fine focus and a long, balanced finish that closes with fine-grained tannins. This is nicely polished on the backend and does not show any of the coarseness of less successful 2011s, and yet, there is not the same purity and poise on display here today as is found in the very best wines on the Right Bank in this vintage. Still a very good wine, but I was hoping for a masterpiece from Ausone in such a strong Right Bank vintage. 2020-2060+. **92.**

2011 Château Balestard la Tonnelle

The 2011 Balestard la Tonnelle, made with its thoroughly modern and rigid techniques, is an unmitigated disaster in this vintage. The nasty and worked nose offers up scents of black cherries, chocolate, mud and a lumberyard of raw, resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, fat and four-square, with a huge blast of uncovered, aggressive tannins eviscerating the fruit by the mid-palate and leaving nothing by raw astringency on the finish. Total failure. ??? **63.**

2011 Château Beau-Séjour Bécot

The 2011 Beau-Séjour Bécot is another modern and fairly leaden wine whose cellar techniques seem to have been a poor match for the raw materials of the vintage. The rather heavy-handed bouquet is a blend of sappy black cherries, bitter chocolate, dark soil tones and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied on the attack, with a hollow core, firm tannins and acceptable length on the finish. The wine is certainly lighter on its feet than the 2010 here, and there are no signs of the varnish (perhaps one hundred percent of the alcoholic fermentation was returned to tank after the insane idea last year of doing some in new wood!) that plagued the previous vintage, but the 2011 Beau-Séjour Bécot is hardly a serious wine. It is an okay example of this boring modern style, but it will never offer up any complexity and only a very meager serving of pleasure. 2020-2040. **80.**

2011 Château Beauséjour-Duffau

The 2011 Château Beauséjour-Duffau is a very extracted and heavy-handed example of the vintage. The deep and very sappy nose offers up a well-worked blend of black raspberries, black cherry syrup, tar, bug spray and resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and over-extracted, with a solid core of fruit and a thoroughly pounded personality. The finish is long, astringent and leaden, with dry tannins outliving the heavily concocted fruit. Ponderous and thoroughly un-enjoyable to taste, the 2011 Beauséjour-Duffau will probably simply dry out with bottle age. ??? **69.**

2011 Château Bélair-Monange

Christian Moueix explained that 2011 was the first vintage where the harvesting was organized here to target old vines of a similar age to be picked together, as he went along with the harvesters pointing out which parcels to pick this year. As he noted, “it is pretty difficult for even a well-trained harvesting team to be able to tell the difference between a forty and a seventy-five year-old vine, but each can reach optimal ripeness at slightly different times, so it was important to help them differentiate between various ages of old vines in the vineyard at Bélair-Monange this year.” Having done so, Monsieur Moueix is confident that the 2011 Bélair-Monange is the finest wine he has yet produced from this superb estate. The brilliant nose offers up a cool and classy mélange of red and black cherries, a bit of raspberry, menthol, a touch of tobacco leaf, nutskin, utterly refined soil tones and a very suave and discreet base of new wood.

On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and tight, with a very soil-driven personality, a rock solid core, superb focus and balance and a very long, ripely tannic and laser-like finish. This is unequivocally one of the wines of the vintage this year! 2025-2075. **96.**

2011 Château Berliquet

The 2011 Château Berliquet is a modern and unsuccessful example of the vintage, offering up the standard nose of sappy black cherries, chocolate, smoke and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with a hole in the mid-palate and a fairly short, dull and tannic finish. Like many other of the modern 2011 St. Émilions this year, at least the alcohol levels are not lethal and there is a modicum of balance. But, here, zero sizzle. 2018-2035+? **83.**

2011 Clos Canon

2011 is the first vintage where the new purchase by Canon, Château Matras, was included in the blend for the Clos Canon, making the blend this year for the second wine from Château Canon eighty-five percent merlot and fifteen percent cabernet franc. The alcohol on the 2011 Clos Canon is a very classic 13.2 percent and not surprisingly, the wine is fresh and stylish, jumping from the glass in an aromatic mélange of sappy black cherries, raw cocoa, a nice touch of soil and a nice dollop of woodsmoke in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, plush and nicely balanced, with very good mid-palate depth, moderate tannins and superb balance on the long and classy finish. A very impressive second wine. 2016-2030+. **89.**

2011 Château Canon

The 2011 Château Canon is a stellar example of the vintage. The deep, pure and utterly refined nose offers up a pure and sappy mélange of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, coffee bean and a judicious base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a sappy core of fruit, a lovely signature of soil, fine focus and a very long, ripely tannic and palate-staining finish. This is nowhere near as powerful as the 2010 Canon, but in terms of ultimate quality it is at least as good as the previous vintage and in terms of style and grace, I have a strong preference for this utterly classic wine. The 2011 vintage provided considerable potential for those on the Right Bank who did everything correctly, and this was obviously the case with the team at Canon, who have made a beautiful wine in this vintage. 2025-2075. **94.**

2011 Château Canon-la-Gaffelière

The 2011 Château Canon-la-Gaffelière is more obviously ripe and sappy on the nose than many of its modern cohorts, as it delivers scents of sappy black cherries, coffee bean, dark soil tones and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively well-balanced, with a four-square personality, respectable mid-palate stuffing and a long, simple and chewy finish. This is an impressively linear wine of no lift or bounce, but at least it is balanced. 2018-2040. **84.**

2011 Château Cap de Mourlin

In 2011 the Cap de Mourlin is another fairly flamboyantly ripe example of the vintage (it seems to me like there might be some 2010 juice in the blend), as the bouquet jumps from the glass in a sappy blend of black cherries, boysenberry, chocolate, a bit of tar and resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and better on the attack than the nose suggests, with pretty good mid-palate depth and a wave of grainy, dry-edged tannins roughing up the finish. There is probably enough stuffing to outlast the tannins here, but hard to imagine this rather ponderous wine ever providing much pleasure. 2018-2035. **84.**

2011 Le Petit Cheval

The second wine of Cheval Blanc is very good in 2011, with no rough edges and a very good sense of balance and style. Like the entire portfolio in this vintage, the Le Petit Cheval is quite a polished wine, offering up a bouquet of dark berries, woodsmoke, coffee bean, menthol, dark soil tones and a nice base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and quite refined, with a good core of fruit, soft tannins and very good length on the elegant and suave finish. As the *grand vin* has more cabernet franc in it this year than has been the case for several vintages, the Petit Cheval has a higher percentage of merlot this year. However, one can clearly see here that the soil at Cheval Blanc continued to ripen the merlot fully, as there is no signs of coarseness on the palate. Good juice that will drink pretty early by the standards of the vintage. 2018-2035. **88+**.

2011 Château Cheval Blanc

The 2011 Cheval Blanc is a very lovely wine this year, with depth, purity and lovely refinement. The classic and very beautiful nose offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, coffee bean, cigar smoke, a touch of tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and nutty, *luxe* new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and texturally alluring, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and balance and a long, firmly tannic finish. The tannins here are quite substantial and will take some extended cellaring to soften, but this is a very, very successful example of the vintage. 2025-2060+. **94**.

2011 Château Clos Fourtet

Clos Fourtet has produced a quintessential modern rendition of the 2011 vintage, as the wine offers up exotic, pumped-up aromatics and a hole in the mid-palate. The simple and well-worked nose is a blend of black raspberry syrup, chocolate and resinous, spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, hollow in the mid-palate and shows a fair bit of tannin on the finish. The tannins here are pretty well-managed, but there is little shape or lift on the backend of this simple wine. 2017-2035. **82**.

2011 Château Corbin

If there is a better value in Bordeaux today than Château Corbin, I am unaware of it! The 2011 Corbin is a beautiful wine in the making that I vastly prefer to their well-made, but very powerful 2010. Not surprisingly, the 2011 weighs in at a very classic 13.4 percent alcohol, in contrast to the 2010's full fifteen percent, which to my palate gives this vintage a lot more soil signature and sense of refined elegance. The blend on the wine is eighty percent merlot and twenty percent cabernet franc, with the harvest having stretched out from September 16th (for the younger parcels of merlot) to October 4th for the oldest vines. The nose on the 2011 offers up a fine and beautifully ripe mélange of sappy black cherries, dark berries, coffee bean, lovely soil tones, a touch of licorice and a deft framing of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and primary, with a sappy core of pure fruit, ripe, substantial and beautifully-integrated tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and properly reserved finish. Picture a wine of the superb stylistic sensibilities of Château Canon on Pomerol soils and you will get a good idea of the style of the 2011 Corbin. This is one of the best wines to be found on the Right Bank in 2011 and will sell at a price way, way below its quality level, so do not miss it! Annabelle Cruse Bardinet is really at the top of her winemaking game right now and one day in the very near future, these wines are going to sell for a lot more money, so get going and track some of the recent vintages down for your cellar while the wine remains a steal. 2022-2050. **92+**.



Château Corbin on a verdant early April afternoon- another early budbreak in Bordeaux in 2012!

2011 Château La Couspade

La Couspade is one of the better modern wines to be found in St. Émilion this year, as it has decent mid-palate depth and just a bit of backend lift on the finish to keep the wine from being ponderous. The straightforward bouquet is a modern blend of black cherry syrup, malted milk balls, dark chocolate and plenty of toasty oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and simple, but at least well-balanced, with a very respectable core and a long, tannic finish. This is not great shakes, but at least it is better than some of the more egregious examples of its genre. 2016-2035. **86.**

2011 Château Dassault

Monsieur Dassault is one of the wealthiest individual proprietors in all of Bordeaux, so I am a bit surprised he does not seem interested in making a better wine at Dassault. At least one can say that the 2011 Dassault is decidedly lower in octane than the heady 2010, but this wine is a bit over-extracted and rather leaden on the palate. The modern nose is a predictable blend of black cherry syrup, black raspberries, mocha and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, extracted and grainy, with a decent core of fruit and a long, raspy and tannic finish. There is absolutely no style or charm to be found here. If I were as flush as Monsieur Dassault and really cared about my wine, I might put a call into Annabelle Cruse Bardinet of Château Corbin and see if she might consider fixing things up around here. This clearly cannot be as good a wine as this *terroir* can produce. 2018-2035. **84.**

2011 Château La Dominique

Having just drunk my last bottle of the lovely 1986 La Dominique, it pains me to see what has become of this wine in the modern age. The 2011 is a deep-pitched and syrupy concoction of black cherries and boysenberries, espresso, smoke and resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with a respectable core and a chewy backend that is already showing some uncovered wood tannins- just what a tannic 2011 needs! At least this is pretty light on its feet this year, but there is no hope for anything above studied mediocrity as time goes by for this wine. 2017-2035. **82.**

2011 Château Figeac

Figeac has made a very nice example of the 2011 vintage. The nose is deep, pure and quite lovely, as it jumps from the glass in a blaze of black cherries, fresh herb tones, cigar smoke, gravelly soil and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with pretty good mid-palate depth, firm, well-integrated tannins and fine length and grip on the nascently complex and quite poised finish. This will never be one of the legendary vintages of Figeac, but this is a unequivocal success in 2011. 2022-2050+. **92.**

2011 Château de Fonbel

The 2011 Château de Fonbel is a fairly ripe wine for the vintage, tipping the scales at 13.5 percent, but this gives the wine a nice fruit amplitude without ever becoming heavy or clunky. The bouquet is a stylish blend of black cherries, a touch of dark berry, coffee bean, woodsmoke and a touch of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a good core, very good balance and good length and grip on the suavely tannic and focused finish. Good, solid juice that will drink well from a fairly early age. 2016-2030+. **88+.**

2011 Château Fournet

The 2011 Fournet is a simple, modern and sappy wine that is flat, dry-edged and rather meagerly endowed in the mid-palate. The predictable nose is a blend of black cherries, black raspberries, chocolate, tar and raw new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and flat, with a very modest core, and a dry, tannic and astringent finish. No hope here. ??? **78.**

2011 Château Franc Mayne

The 2011 Château Franc Mayne is modern and thoroughly charmless. The concocted nose offers up a mix of black raspberries, black cherries, chocolate, resinous oak and just a touch of bug spray in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reasonably restrained stylistically, with modest depth and a seriously dry edge to the grainy, tannic finish. No pleasure to be had here now or down the road. 2016-2030? **79.**

2011 Château La Gaffelière

The 2011 Château La Gaffelière is another thoroughly ho-hum, modern example of the vintage. The well-worked nose delivers a mélange of sappy black cherries, dark chocolate, smoke and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and displays just a bit of mid-palate amplitude, with a fair bit of chewy, dry-edged tannins perking up the decidedly flat and simple finish. At least all the dark chocolate on display here will make the wine high in antioxidants! 2018-2035. **82.**

2011 Château Grand-Mayne

The 2011 Grand-Mayne is again a very modern and dull wine, but at least it is more restrained from the vagaries of the vintage than the more overripe 2010. The nose is deep and syrupy, offering up a blend of black cherries, Hershey's syrup, smoke slightly resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack (from the micro-

oxygenation?), with a fairly meager core and some firm, chewy tannins poking out on the backend. There is probably sufficient stuffing here to eventually absorb its tannins- provided more do not leach out of the new barrels during the remainder of the *elevage*. This is simple, but not as bad as some of the modern camp in 2011. 2016-2035. **85.**

2011 Château Haut Simard

The 2011 Haut Simard was raised in a combination of fifty percent new oak and fifty percent one wine barrels and is a good solid example of the vintage. The wine offers up a very good nose of black cherries, dark berries, bitter chocolate, a touch of fresh herbs and a stylish base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, suave and velvety, with fine-grained tannins and pretty good length and grip on the finish. For a wine whose malolactic fermentation was done in tank, rather than barrel, this wine really does not show much soil personality. Not a bad wine, but I was hoping for just a bit more from the Ausone team with this wine this year. 2015-2035. **87+.**

2011 Château Larcis Ducasse

The 2011 Larcis Ducasse belongs to the camp of less successful wines in the commune in this vintage. The nose is deep, extracted and quite marked by its resinous oak in the blend of black cherry syrup, chocolate milkshakes, a touch of bug spray and lots of poorly-cured new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fat on the attack, with a four-square personality, zero complexity and a long, chewy finish that seems a bit too dry to ever fully resolve. 2020-2035? **80.**

2011 Château Larmande

The 2011 Larmande is not too bad as far as these modern wines go, but it does show a bit of the 2011 “dip” in the mid-palate. The nose is a sappy mélange of black cherries, chocolate milkshakes, woodsmoke and toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pretty well-balanced in terms of tannin management, with a long, flat and simple finish that closes with substantial, but well-integrated tannins. Not bad for the genre- not great for the appellation. 2017-2035. **83.**

2011 Château Magdelaine

If anyone is still under the illusion that the 2010 vintage provided superior opportunity to 2011 in the commune of St. Émilion, I submit Exhibit A, Château Magdelaine. The 2010 Magdelaine is a very worthy effort in that top-heavy vintage, but the 2011 is an utterly pure and magical wine of world class breed and nascent complexity. It simply towers over the 2010 version. The brilliant nose on the 2011 Magdelaine offers up a very refined blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, nutskins, espresso, a beautifully complex base of soil tone and a very elegant framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very primary, with a tightly-wrapped and potentially sappy core of fruit in reserve, superb acidity, firm, well-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the beautifully focused finish. An utterly complete 2011. 2025-2075+. **94+.**

2011 Château Moulin St. Georges

The 2011 Château Moulin St. Georges is another very well-made and polite example of the vintage from the winemaking team at Ausone. The stylish nose offers up a charming mélange of black cherries, smoke, fresh herbs, a nice touch of soil tones and a suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and intensely flavored, with a good, solid core, suave tannins and bright, tangy acids that add a bit of lift on the backend and which are a pretty rare commodity in this vintage. Good juice. 2014-2035. **89.**

2011 Château Pavie

I tasted the 2011 Château Pavie on a couple of occasions during the course of my visit and I was far from impressed. How Monsieur Perse could buy a property with the *terroir* of Pavie (one of the finest-situated estates on the *Côtes* in St. Émilion) and embrace a wine style that does not champion this fine soil is a mystery to me. I know he has made boatloads of money with his chosen style, but he does not need money in the first place, so where is the motivation there? In any event, given how much pseudo-psychological babble went around the wine bulletin boards (mostly from people who had not even bothered to taste the wine in question before offering their sage opinions!) about my score for the sad 2010 Pavie, I will not bother to score this wine this year- but, I was rather dismayed by the shape and lack of balance of the 2011. The nose is simple and sappy, offering up scents of black cherry syrup, dark chocolate and more than its fair share of spicy, cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very aggressively astringent, with a wall of scorching tannin eviscerating the fruit from the mid-palate back. I see no hope for this wine without divine intervention in the cellar before bottling. I do want to thank Monsieur Perse and his team for graciously inviting me to the Pavie vertical tasting and dinner on the Sunday before *En Primeur* officially got underway, as I would have been delighted to attend and see how many of the vintages from earlier in the decade were evolving- as I have never tasted them. Sadly, the invitation reached me while I was already in Burgundy on this trip and I had previously made alternate plans for the evening in question, so I did not get a chance to attend. But, it was a very gracious gesture on the part of the team at Pavie.

2011 Château Pavie-Macquin

The 2011 Pavie-Macquin is quite notable for its overripe tones on the nose this year. The sappy nose is a rather pumped-up blend of black cherries, black raspberries, a touch of bug spray, dark chocolate, damp earth and raw new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite flat, with a good core (particularly for the vintage- some 2010 in here for mid-palate amplitude?), absolutely no complexity and a long, dry, over-extracted finish that closes with some dry-edged tannins. The tannins here will probably be eventually absorbed into the wine (if more do not leach out of the barrels during *elevage*), but this is a far cry from a special wine. Tasted twice with consistent results. 2018-2035. **81.**

2011 Château Puy-Blanquet

In terms of absolute consistency, the 2011 crop of St. Émilions represented by the Moueix firm are even better than their portfolio of Pomerols, and a few of their less-exalted bottlings from the commune, such as the Puy-Blanquet are going to be stunning values. This wine is excellent, wafting from the glass in a deep and classy nose of black cherries, a touch of plum, woodsmoke, dark chocolate and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, cool and classy, with moderate tannins, a fine core of fruit and an impressively long and well-balanced finish. Just a lovely wine in 2011. 2020-2045+. **89+.**

2011 Château Quinault l'Enclos

One of the lesser Cheval Blanc properties, the 2011 Quinault l'Enclos is really a lovely bottle in this vintage. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of dark berries, coffee, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a suave base of nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a perfectly respectable core of fruit, moderate tannins and good length and grip on the focused finish. The vintage's firm, tannic texture here show as just a touch of "dustiness", but they are far more polished than some of the more coarse examples to be found from the appellation this year. This is not overly complex, but tasty and well-made. 2018-2035. **87+.**

2011 Le Dragon de Quintus

This is the second wine of the new property owned by Haut-Brion, the former Château Tertre-Daugay, which has been re-christened as Château Quintus. 2011, being the first vintage, is obviously a work in progress and it will only be in the next few years that we really see how this project is going to take shape. The 2011 Le Dragon de Quintus weighs in at a hefty 13.8 percent alcohol and offers up a sappy nose of black cherries, dark berries, coffee bean, smoke and plenty of Taransaud oak spice. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe and slightly coarse on the backend, with a good core, firm, dry-edged tannins and a bit of heat poking through on the long finish. Rather a halting first step. 2020-2040. **86.**

2011 Château Quintus

The inaugural vintage of Château Quintus is also quite ripe by the standards of 2011, tipping the scales at 13.9 percent alcohol. It was raised in fifty percent new wood. The bouquet is deep and quite marked by its spicy oak (only ten percent Taransaud barrels used here according to Jean-Philippe Delmas, but they certainly make their presence felt on the nose), offering up a dense blend of black cherries, dark berries, coffee, chocolate and spicy wood. There is a monolithic element to the nose and a complete lack of soil here that suggests malo in barrel was heavily relied on for the 2011 Quintus. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, fat and four-square, with plenty of firm, slightly dry-edged tannins, and a long, coarse and backwards finish. Perhaps this will blossom with extended bottle age, but at this early moment, it seems likely that this is not going to be a very interesting project for Haut-Brion. One gets the sense that the winemaking team here is interested in trying out every modern cellar trick available on the Quintus, as (perhaps) they feel a bit restrained in doing so with an estate of such historical importance as Haut-Brion. I frankly expected a much more enlightened approach to this wine, given all the fanfare that surrounded the purchase of the estate by the Haut-Brion public relations team. Perhaps Cheval Blanc, Ausone and Bélair-Monange would be more worthy stylistic competitors for a First Growth team to set in one's sights, rather than Valandraud and Pavie? 2022-2050. **85+?**

2011 Château Saintayme

Château Saintayme is a grand cru owned by Denis Durantou of Pomerol's Château l'Église-Clinet, and it is made by the standard modern methods that he employs for all of his wines. The 2011 was raised entirely in one wine barrels. The nose on the 2011 is ripe and pleasant, offering up scents of black cherries, plums, chocolate, smoke and a touch of nutty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, plush and generous, with a ripe finish and rather little signs of focus or structure on its softly tannic finish. Pretty anonymous juice- but by no means flawed. 2015-2035. **85.**

2011 Château La Serre

The 2011 Château La Serre is another terrific value for a classically made wine. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a classy mélange of black cherries, dark berries, coffee bean, a touch of menthol, dark soil tones and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and naturally plush on the attack, with lovely focus and balance, fine mid-palate depth and a nice measure of fine-grained tannins on the long and classy finish. This is one of the best vintages of Château La Serre I can ever recall tasting. 2018-2045. **91.**

2011 Château Simard

The 2011 Simard is a very nice example of the vintage, with a ripe, but not overripe nose of black cherries, dark chocolate, woodsmoke, coffee bean and just a touch of resin scattered in amongst its new wood component. On the palate the wine is fullish, plush and quite fruit-driven

this year, with a very respectable mid-palate, moderate tannins and sneaky length and grip on the finish. A very pleasant 2011. 2017-2035. **88.**

2011 Château Soutard

The 2011 Soutard is a simple and modern example of the vintage. The bouquet is a worked over blend of chocolate syrup, black cherries, a bit of tariness, cigar ash and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with respectable depth in the mid-palate and pretty well-integrated, substantial and chewy tannins. The finish shows pretty good length, but this wine is very heavy on the backend. Dullesville. 2020-2030+? **79.**

2011 Château La Tour Figeac

The 2011 La Tour Figeac possesses one of the brighter aromatic *mélanges* of the modern school in St. Émilion this year, but this is counter-balanced by a decidedly thin core on the palate. The nose is modern, but at least happy, as it offers up scents of sappy black cherries, coffee bean, chocolate and plenty of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite suave on the attack, with a hole in the mid-palate and some firm tannins on the flat and modest finish. This is okay, but hardly world class. 2017-2035. **83.**

2011 La Tour du Pin

The 2011 La Tour de Pin (another wine from the Cheval Blanc stable) is a bit more reserved than the Quinault l'Enclos served before it, but it too is quite successful for the vintage. The nose offers up a classic blend of dark berries, cigar smoke, coffee, dark soil tones, a touch of menthol and a fine framing of nutty, *luxe* oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, quite suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and good length and grip on the moderately tannic finish. This is just a bit too “polished” to rank better than quite good, and while it is a tasty drink, I would love to see this wine with a bit less makeup and a bit more soil. 2018-2040. **88.**

2011 Château Troplong-Mondot

Whereas the 2011 Pavie-Macquin managed heavy extraction techniques and still maintained the possibility of eventually absorbing its tannins and at least being modestly drinkable, I do not see this same potential for the nasty and seriously astringent 2011 Troplong-Mondot. This was tasted at two separate tastings and both times the wine showed extremely poorly. The deep, inky and over-extracted nose offers up a sordid blend of black cherry cordial, Hershey's Syrup, resin, tar and raw, poorly-cured new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly dense, with good mid-palate depth and a brutally raw, astringent and tannic finish that is patently out of balance and unpleasant. Sadly, there is good length here on the backend, so the scorching of the palate from skin and wood tannins really is abrasive. I cannot imagine this grotesque caricature of a wine will ever deliver any pleasure. One of the worst wines I tasted during the trip. ??? **68.**

2011 Château Trottevieille

The 2011 Château Trottevieille samples showed very poorly at the UGC tasting at Château Dassault, but the one at the Premier Grand Cru Classé tasting was modestly better. This note comes from the best sample. The nose is deep, sappy and modern, with scents of black cherries, dark berries, espresso and spicy new oak wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite primary, with a borderline over-extracted personality, a dip at the core and a long, dry-edged and tannic finish. There is probably sufficient material here to eventually absorb the tannins, but it will always be a rather heavy-handed and four-square example of the vintage. 2020-2035. **84.**

2011 Château Villemaurine

The 2011 Villemaurine is another borderline overripe, modern version of St. Émilion that is not successful in this vintage. The very simple and jammy nose offers up a mix of black cherry syrup, bug spray and resinous new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy on the attack, with a fair bit of *fluidité* at the core, and a dry, raw and astringent finish. The finish is at least mercifully short- perhaps eviscerated by the wood and skin tannins? Not a pleasant wine, the 2011 Villemaurine seems likely to simply dry out with bottle age. ??? **72.**

Margaux

The commune of Margaux looks to have really struggled in the drought of 2011, and this is one of the regions where the top successes of the vintage can be counted on one hand and a couple of toes. It just seemed at many estates that the serious challenges of hydric stress, sunburned berries, a bit of hail at the start of June and unevenly ripe bunches presented more hurdles than could be successfully negotiated, and there are a lot of rather middling quality wines to be found in Margaux in the vintage of 2011. Some estates tried to compensate for the "hole at the core" found in 2011 by extracting a bit more- a strategy that did not work. Others seem to have been afraid to extract too much and have ended up with very feeble wines of no aromatic or flavor personality. It is a tough year in Margaux in general, with a few very impressive standouts that buck the trend and tower above the wines of their neighbors.

2011 Château Angludet

The 2011 Angludet was not showing great at the UGC tasting of Margaux member estates, and though I tasted two different samples, I am not sure if they were in good form or not. The nose seemed quite dull and lifeless in its blend of black cherries, dark chocolate, tobacco leaf, dark soil and a touch of lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite flat, with a good core of fruit, very nicely managed extraction and a long, ripely tannic and focused finish. The palate shows a bit more life than the nose- is this just a case of tired samples? 2020-2040+? ???

2011 Château Brane-Cantenac

The 2011 Brane-Cantenac is a modern wine that shows off the mid-palate hole of the vintage. The worked nose suggests a significant percentage of the malolactic here was done in small barrels, as it offers up simple blend of cassis, cigar wrapper, dark soil and plenty of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish on the attack and hollow at the core, with firm tannins and a long, dull and eviscerated finish. There does not seem to be the stuffing here to ever really resolve the tannins and one will probably have to drink the wine within a pretty small window, once the initial blast starts to soften. 2020-2035? **84.**

2011 Château Cantenac-Brown

Château Cantenac-Brown has also struggled in the 2011 vintage, and while it has a touch better mid-palate depth than Brane-Cantenac this year, it is also has more tannin and may well never quite be able to carry them all over the finish line. The modern nose offers up scents of sappy cassis, black cherries, lead pencil, dark soil and espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite dry on the backend, with a pretty good core, but a worrying edge of austerity on the fairly long, but quite charmless and tannic finish. Not too sure this wine will ever really resolve. 2020-2040? **84.**

2011 Château Dauzac

I had several vintages of Dauzac on this trip that I found quite good, but the 2011 was one that did not make the grade, falling culprit to the hollow mid-palate of the vintage. The nose shows some signs of over-extraction in its mélange of sappy cassis and black cherries, dark soil, lead pencil and a bit of coffee-like toasted oak as well. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and over-extracted, with a hollow core and a dry, tannic and unbalanced finish. This is a poster child for just how difficult it was in 2011 if one had to use a fair bit of merlot in the blend. I would be shocked if this wine did not simply dry out and one would be best-served chewing through the tannins now, rather than tucking it away in the cellar and hoping against hope. 2015-2020+? **83.**

2011 Château Desmirail

The 2011 Château Desmirail is a pretty good example of the vintage in Margaux, as it offers up pretty good mid-palate depth which seems likely to eventually carry its fairly serious tannic clout on the finish. The bouquet offers up a fairly complex blend of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, a touch of barnyard, gravel and cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit low acid, but with quite good mid-palate depth for the vintage and a slightly grainy aspect to its firm tannins on the long finish. I suspect that this will always seem just a bit leaden stylistically, but it also seems quite likely to eventually resolve its tannins and drink with a fair degree of complexity in the fullness of time. Not bad. 2022-2045+. **86.**

2011 Château Ferrière

The 2011 Ferrière seems to have been one of those estates that extracted very gently in 2011 in the hopes of avoiding too much tannin getting into the finished wine, and while this may have stripped a bit of aromatic intensity from the wine, it seems to also have resulted in a very well-balanced wine on the palate- albeit, still with plenty of tannin. The fairly timid nose offers up scents of cassis, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tight and tannic, with a pretty good core and quite good balance for the vintage. The finish is long and ripely tannic- with the tannins substantial enough to demand a full decade in the cellar before broaching, but with the overall balance sufficiently impressive to suggest that this wine may well blossom into a very good middleweight with enough bottle age. Depending on how much personality eventually develops on the nose with bottle age will decide where this wine lands on my range of scores. But, not a bad result for the vintage. 2022-2045+. **87-89.**

2011 Château Giscours

I tasted three different examples of Giscours at the UGC event- one was clearly reduced to the point of not being testable, and the other two seemed quite dull on the nose. The note is from the best of the three, but none may have been representative of the actual wine. The bouquet is a blend of cassis, dark berries, a touch of horsiness, espresso, tobacco leaf and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, flat and a bit too gently extracted, with modest mid-palate depth and a long, ripely tannic finish that shows off good balance, but zero personality. If this is the wine, it is not one of the most successful in the commune this year. 2020-2040? **85?**

2011 Blason d'Issan

The 2011 Blason d'Issan is another very good second wine this year, as it offers up a deep and very pure nose of dark berries, espresso, tobacco smoke, dark soil tones and cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and complex, with a good core of fruit, lovely balance and a long, firmly tannic finish that closes with fine focus and grip. Good juice. 2018-2030+. **88.**

2011 Château d'Issan

At Château d'Issan this year, Emmanuel Cruse did not panic and start picking too early, as the merlot harvest started on the 12th of September and was completed on the 16th, while the cabernet sauvignon was collected between September 20th and 26th. The 2011 Château d'Issan is a lovely wine, offering up a deep, reserved and classy nose of cassis, dark berries, coffee bean, cigar ash, dark soil tones and a suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and primary, with a fine core of fruit, firm, ripe tannins and very good length and grip on the chewy, but well-balanced finish. This will need a full decade to blossom, but is one of the top wines in the commune again this year- a frequent occurrence in the last several vintages! 2022-2055. **91.**

2011 Château Kirwan

The 2011 Château Kirwan is quite a modern wine and hence is short on soil signature, but at least is pretty well-balanced for this difficult vintage. The worked nose is a blend of sweet cassis, a touch of boysenberry (bit of 2010 juice in the blend this year?), mocha and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and four-square, but at least with solid balance. The core is quite respectable, and the finish is long and firmly tannic, but with the requisite stuffing to eventually handle the tannins with bottle age. However, the wine seems likely to always remain simple and fruit-driven, with no real breed or complexity. 2020-2040. **85.**

2011 Château Labegorce

Château Labegorce has had new owners for a few years now and who have been steadily investing in both the vineyards and cellars in the hopes of really bringing this property back to the forefront of the appellation. I have plenty of hope for the future, and the quite good 2011 seems to only be the tip of the iceberg for this estate. The nose is deep and reserved, offering up scents of cassis, black cherries, tobacco smoke, coffee bean, dark soil tones and cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite tannic, with an old school, classic profile (that I quite like), a quite good core of fruit, and a long, chewy finish that closes with just a touch of graininess to the consistency of the tannins. There is good length and grip here, but I have a hard time imagining that this wine is going to ever really develop a lot of charm- which one must lay at the doorstep of the vintage, rather than the winemaking. A very, very, good effort from a tough vintage, the 2011 Labegorce is going to take a full decade to blossom and may always remain a bit on the chewy side, but it will offer up very good aromatic and flavor complexity at its peak. 2022-2050. **89+.**

2011 Château Lascombes

The 2011 Lascombes is a modern, worked wine that has managed to micro-ox a bit of mid-palate depth, but at the expense of complexity and personality. The simple nose is a blend of boysenberries, sappy black cherries, chocolate, dark soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, simple and sappy in terms of texture on the attack, with a bit of mid-palate stuffing and a long, tannic finish of no charm or promise. Some of the backend tannins here are certainly wood tannins from the malo in barrel. This is a wine devoid of charm and a citizen of the town of Dullesville (a well-populated hamlet in the 2011 vintage). 2018-2035+? **83.**

2011 Château Malescot St. Exupéry

The 2011 Château Malescot St. Exupéry is a tough customer on the palate, but with enough balance and aromatic complexity to suggest that it may well blossom into a pretty serviceable example of the vintage. The moderately complex nose delivers a mélange of cassis, dark berries, dark chocolate, gravelly soil tones and cigar box. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plenty tight, with a pretty good core of fruit, firm, chewy tannins and good

balance on the long, reticent and tannic finish. This seems likely to come around after ten to twelve years of bottle age and should be a pretty good drink from that point forward. 2022-2050. **87.**

2011 Pavillon Rouge de Margaux

I have no real sense of what is going on behind the scenes at Château Margaux, but there seems to be some drift here- perhaps a bit of disagreement between technical team and ownership? In any case, the 2011 group of wines were far from reassuring. The 2011 Pavillon Rouge is very tannic, but not particularly concentrated, as it offers up a new oaky bouquet of cassis, dark berries, smoke, a bit of cigar ash and plenty of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and fairly tannic, with respectable mid-palate depth, tangy acids and an ever so slightly dry edge to the rather gentle finish. I get a very strong sense of under-extraction here in both the red wines at Château Margaux. Just passable- if it can resolve its dry backend in a favorable manner. 2018-2035. **84-86+?**

2011 Château Margaux

The 2011 Château Margaux has the highest level of measured tannins ever in the history of the estate. The nose is quite bright for the vintage, offering up scents of black raspberries, cassis, dark chocolate, violets, soil and a suave base of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is not quite as good as the nose suggests, with its full-bodied, backward and reserved profile decidedly short on personality and a touch sinewy. The wine has a long, very firmly tannic finish, with tangy acids and rather blunt balance. I really am not wild about the equilibrium here and could very easily imagine this wine drying out, rather than blossoming with bottle age. But, beyond the wine's overall balance, I get a strong sense that this was a wine made by decision-making that was completely risk averse, and the wine's resultant lack of personality will shadow it all the way through its long (or short- depending on how the tannins are eventually resolved) life. One expects and should receive more from a First Growth! If the tannins do manage to resolve, then this will be a pretty good wine and a disastrous value. If they do not, well, even at thirty euros a bottle it would be too expensive, and we can rest assured it is not going to be priced out the cellar door at thirty euros! 2025-2065? **87-90+?**

2011 Pavillon Blanc de Margaux

All the talk this year during *En Primeur* was about Château Margaux planning to bottle their Pavillon Blanc under a screwcap. Well, all I can say is that the 2011 certainly deserves such a closure, as this is far from a great wine. The nose offers up a blend of grapefruit, lemon peel, cut grass, petrol and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and a bit ham-fisted in style, with brisk acids and a long, simple and decidedly second division finish. This could use with a couple of years bottle age to soften, but of course, under screwcap, it might be a better idea to drink the wine right out of the blocks, rather than let the reduction sink its teeth into what is already a pretty uninteresting wine. 2014-2020? **87.**

2011 Château Marquis d'Alesme

The 2011 Château Marquis d'Alesme is a very young and powerful example of the vintage that looks clearly to be well-balanced enough to eventually blossom into a very good wine. The deep and youthful nose offers up a fine mélange of cassis, dark berries, espresso, dark soil tones, smoke and nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and primary, with good purity on the attack, a rock solid core of fruit and a long, ripely tannic and well-balanced finish. This is a chewy wine that will need some extended cellaring to come around, but all of the constituent components are in place for the future. Good juice. 2025-2065. **91.**

2011 Château Marquis de Terme

The 2011 Château Marquis de Terme is quite extracted in style, but actually manages this difficult task with a fairly high degree of success. The deep and nascently complex nose offers up scents of cassis, black cherries, cigar ash, soil tones and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plenty chewy, with a good core, pretty good overall balance and a long, ripely tannic finish. Again, this will never be a wine of great charm, but it looks to have the requisite stuffing to outlast its tannins and deliver a reasonable level of enjoyment in the fullness of time. 2022-2045. **87.**

2011 Château Monbrison

The 2011 Monbrison is a rather dull and flat wine, but not overtly flawed. The nose is a blend of dark berries, cassis, espresso and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pretty impressive for its lack of personality, with firm tannins, solid depth and a reasonably long and balanced finish. The wine is four-square and pretty simple, but it at least shows every likelihood of at least resolving structurally with bottle age. 2020-2040. **84.**

2011 Alter Ego de Palmer

The 2011 Alter Ego is a beautiful example of the vintage and one of the best second wines to be found on the Left Bank in this vintage. The wine is a blend of thirty-seven percent cabernet sauvignon, forty-eight percent and fifteen percent petit verdot and weighs in at a very civilized 13.1 percent alcohol. The nose is deep and very classy, offering up scents of cassis, dark berries, tobacco leaf, fresh herb tones, a lovely base of soil and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure on the attack and impressively transparent, with a very fine core of fruit, lovely focus and a long, ripely tannic and beautifully balanced finish. A superb Alter Ego. 2020-2045. **90.**

2011 Château Palmer

The 2011 Château Palmer is unquestionably the finest wine in the commune this year, as it is a step up from the 2011 Château Margaux in quality. It was produced from yields of only twenty hectoliters per hectares and is a very tannic and backward vintage of Palmer, but it will be stunning in the fullness of time. The great nose offers up scents of mulberries, black cherries, cigar smoke, a lovely and complex base of soil tones, dried violets and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with an almost silky sensation on the attack, a superb core of fruit, and a very, very long, firmly tannic and perfectly balanced finish. These are serious tannins and they will take plenty of time to resolve, but they are very fine-grained for the vintage and beautifully integrated into the body of the wine. A long distance runner, the 2011 Palmer is one of the best wines to be found on the Left Bank this year. 2025-2075. **93+.**

2011 Château Prieuré-Lichine

The samples at the UGC event of the 2011 Prieuré-Lichine were not special, but happily, we had scheduled an appointment to drop by and taste the wine at the estate, where the wine was singing. The deep and very lovely nose offers up scents of dark berries, cassis, a touch of coffee bean, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and a nice touch of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pure on the attack, with really lovely balance for the vintage. The finish is long, focused and chewy, but there is a lovely core here and there will be no issues with this wine blossoming in the fullness of time. Since the 2008 vintage (a really beautiful, middleweight Prieuré-Lichine), this estate has really been at the top of its game. A fine 2011. 2018-2035+. **90.**

2011 Château Rauzan-Gassies

The 2011 Château Rauzan-Gassies is one of my favorite wines of the appellation this year, and while it has a touch of graininess to its tannins, it also shows a very fine core of fruit

and a very strong possibility to blossoming into a very complex and interesting wine in the fullness of time. The complex nose offers up a mélange of dark berries, cassis, cigar smoke, fresh herb tones, a good base of dark soil nuances and a deft touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very primary, with a very fine core of fruit (particularly for a 2011), firm, chewy tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Except for the slightly grainy edge to the tannins, there are no signs of concern about the ultimate shape and style of this very successful 2011. 2022-2050. **89.**

2011 Château Rauzan-Ségla

Aromatically and on the attack, the 2011 Rauzan-Ségla is one of the classiest wines of the commune, but there is a distinct dry edge to the tannins here that will have to be waited out if the wine is going to deliver pleasure at the high end of its projected range of score. The bouquet is first rate without a doubt, jumping from the glass in a blaze of black cherries, black raspberries, espresso, dark soil tones, fresh herbs and a nice base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with lovely nascent complexity, good mid-palate depth and a very long, firmly tannic finish that has a bit of graininess on the backend that does not seem currently to be particularly well-covered by fruit. I should note that I had similar reservations about the amount of backend tannin on the 2009 at a similar stage of evolution and retasted the wine on this trip- only to find it very well-balanced and far better than I had envisioned. So perhaps I am also being overly cautious about the 2011 at a similar point? 2022-2055+? **87-91+?**

2011 Château Siran

The 2011 Château Siran seems a bit more modern on the nose than the last few vintages of this wine have been, but perhaps that is just the style of the vintage here this year. The nose offers up a sappy blend of black raspberries, cassis, dark chocolate, smoke, dark soil tones and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and primary, with a good core of fruit, quite low acidity and a long, chewy and well-balanced finish. I like the size and shape here quite well, but the modern touches may rob the wine of complexity at maturity. 2022-2045. **87+?**

2011 Château du Tertre

The 2011 Château du Tertre seems quite a modern wine- with little or no signs of soil to be found on either the nose or palate- but at least it is pretty well-balanced in the context of the vintage. The deep and extracted nose offers up scents of cassis, dark berries, resinous oak, coffee bean and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and balanced, with a respectable core, but a micro-ox textural element and a complete lack of soil. The finish is long and tannic, but with the stuffing to eventually outlast the tannins, but there is really not much personality here. 2018-2030. **82.**

Listrac and Moulis

The communes of Listrac and Moulis seem to have been poster children for the vintage, with the drought characteristics of slightly coarse tannins and inadequate mid-palate depth certainly evident in several of the wines I tasted from these two communes. But, there are also some really nice and successful 2011s to be found here, and with prices always quite reasonable, the best wines of these two communes will certainly merit attention for those seeking good value.

2011 Château Clarke (Listrac)

The 2011 Château Clarke is a pretty good example of the vintage, as it offers up pretty good balance and mid-palate depth. The nose is a “cool” fruit mélange of dark berries, cassis, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full,

deep and well-balanced, with a good core, moderate, slightly grainy tannins and good length and grip on the finish. The wine is just a touch “flat” on the palate, but otherwise, this is quite a good effort for the vintage. 2020-2045. **87.**

2011 Château Chasse-Spleen (Moulis)

The 2011 Chasse-Spleen is a very tannic example of the vintage and it is going to take plenty of time to come around. The nose is deep and quite refined in its mélange of black cherries, cassis, espresso, cigar smoke, gravel and cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and a touch sinewy today, with good, but, by no means, great depth, fine focus and plenty of firm and chewy tannins to resolve on the long and nicely tangy finish. This is a pretty structured young vintage of Chasse-Spleen, and though it seems to have the stuffing to outlive the considerable tannin here, it will require extended bottle age before it provides any pleasure and may well prove to always be a bit sulky on the palate. Not bad, but patience will be required. 2022-2050. **87+.**



Château Fonréaud in Lustrac- home to a pair of very successful and truly excellent values in 2011.

2011 Château Fonréaud (Lustrac)

I had not really been familiar with the wines of Château Fonréaud previously, but having stayed here two nights during my eleven days in Bordeaux, I had the opportunity to taste several older vintages and discover how beautifully this wine evolves with bottle age. Needless to say, I paid plenty of attention to their 2011 after drinking a few older vintages and was very happy to

find that the estate has produced a very good wine this year. The nose is deep, pure and complex, offering up scents of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and a nice, discreet touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and very good length and grip on the ripely tannic finish. This wine has lovely mid-palate depth and manages its tannins seamlessly. 2018-2035+. **88+**.

2011 Château Fonréaud “le Cygne” (Listrac)

The le Cygne is the white wine bottling from Château Fonréaud. At one time, many of the estates in Listrac produced a white wine as well as a red wine and the whites were probably even valued a bit higher than the reds from this lovely commune at the time. After the second world war, most estates in Listrac did away with their white wines, but Château Fonréaud has continued the tradition and makes a really excellent white from a classic blend of sauvignon blanc, semillon and a touch of muscadelle. The 2011 le Cygne is a lovely wine that tips the scales at a very civilized 13.1 percent alcohol. The deep and refined nose is a classic blend of fresh fig, grapefruit, petrol, lovely soil tones and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and impeccably balanced, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids and a long, focused and complex finish. Fine juice that is actually better than a number of better-known whites in the Graves this year! 2012-2020. **89**.

2011 Château Fourcas-Borie (Listrac)

I was quite impressed with the Fourcas-Borie in 2011, as it shares the same fine sense of balance and good mid-palate depth as the more famous names in the Borie lineup this year. The wine is a blend of sixty percent merlot, thirty percent cabernet sauvignon and ten percent petit verdot, making it one of the most successful of the Left Bank wines that rely heavily on merlot for their *cépages*. The very classy nose offers up scents of cassis, black raspberries, espresso, dark soil tones, smoke and a deft touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave and well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, ripe and very well-integrated tannins and good grip on the long finish. This is a lovely bottle of Listrac. 2018-2035+. **88+**.

2011 Château Fourcas-Dupré (Listrac)

The 2011 Château Fourcas-Dupré is another quite successful example from the commune of Listrac. The wine offers up a complex bouquet of cassis, black cherries, coffee, a touch of fresh herbs, dark soil tones and a nice base of cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and shows off good depth at the core, with fine focus and a good, long, chewy finish of well-integrated tannins and fine grip. This is old-fashioned in the best sense of the term and a very good value. 2020-2045+. **88**.

2011 Château Fourcas-Hosten (Listrac)

The 2011 Fourcas-Hosten is not as successful as the Fourcas-Dupré, as this wine is decidedly more extracted in style and seems as likely to dry out as blossom with bottle age. The nose is a blend of cassis, dark chocolate, herb tones and a fair bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and over-extracted, with a modest core and plenty of distinctly dry-edged tannins on the chewy finish. I am not hopeful for the overall balance of this wine. ???

2011 Château Maucaillou (Moulis)

The 2011 Maucaillou is a thoroughly modern wine that offers up a simple, sappy nose of black cherries, cassis, Nutella and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and confectionary on the attack, with a bit of depth in the mid-palate, but an over-extracted, dull finish of dry, uncovered tannins. This will dry out before it ever offers up a modicum of mature enjoyment, and the only hope I see is chewing through this wine in the next few years, before it completely withers. Not too exciting. 2012-2016+? **78**.

2011 Château Poujeaux (Moulis)

I have not been a fan of what Monsieur Derenoncourt has done with this estate since coming on board here in 2009, but the 2011 is certainly the best effort yet for his team at Poujeaux. The polished and modern nose offers up a sappy blend of cassis, black cherries, Cuban tobacco, a touch of gravelly soil tones and plenty of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and borderline over-extracted, with a slight dip at the core, but probably enough fruit density to eventually carry its rather dry-edged tannins. The finish is long and I would imagine a decade or so down the road, the 2011 Poujeaux will have dropped a fair bit of its tannic clout and be approachable. It is a far cry from charming in style, but it is better than the last two Poujeaux vintages. 2022-2040+? **87.**

St. Julien

St. Julien is probably the most consistently successful commune on the Left Bank in 2011, as there were several truly beautiful wines on display during En Primeur. All the wines here are very structured and are going to demand extended cellaring before they blossom, but the stars here in 2011 are every bit as fine as the top wines of the commune have been in the previous three vintages. The usual suspects of Ducru-Beaucaillou, Leoville Las Cases, Beychevelle and Lagrange have made stunning 2011s, and the Gruaud-Larose this year is also superb. I even found that some of the more modern properties such as Leoville-Barton have produced wines that are more interesting to my palate than anything they have turned out since the 2008 vintage's climactic characteristics also reined in their penchant for excess. None of the top St. Juliens are going to offer up much pleasure until (at the very minimum) a good decade of bottle age has come and gone, and most of the top wines are going to be infinitely more satisfying at age twenty-five than they are going to be at age ten, so this may well be a commune to look closely at for those who have children born in 2011.

2011 Château Beychevelle

According to the estate's Director, Philippe Blanc, the harvest at Beychevelle took place from September 14th to the 29th this year, and the 2011 is a blend of forty-seven percent each of cabernet sauvignon and merlot, with four percent cabernet franc and two percent petit verdot rounding out the mix. The wine was raised in fifty percent new oak this year, and has been the case for the last several years, one third of the wine went through malolactic fermentation in barrel. The wine has turned out beautifully and is one of the stars on the Left Bank this year, offering up a superb nose of black cherries, dark berries, espresso, cigar smoke, lovely soil tones and a very discreet base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine, sappy core of fruit, a suave attack and a very long, ripely tannic finish. The acids here come across as slightly on the low side, but this is a lovely and very complete wine that should blossom with a decade or so worth of bottle age and should age long and gracefully. Beychevelle is making truly superb wines at the present time. At 13.2 percent alcohol, the 2011 is a full point lower than the ripe 2010 vintage here. 2023-2075. **93.**

2011 Château Branaire-Ducru

The 2011 Branaire-Ducru is a pretty good example of the vintage, but it has a couple of the less than desirable characteristics of 2011 on display in its dip in the mid-palate and the slightly gritty aspect to its tannins. The nose is ripe and reasonably attractive, offering up scents of dark plums, black cherries, coffee bean, soil tones and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is medium-full and slightly *fluide* at the core, with good focus and plenty of firm, slightly coarse

tannins poking out on the backend. The finish here is impressively long and the wine shows fine grip as well, but it will never be one of the top recent vintages from Branaire-Ducru. 2020-2040. **85+.**

2011 La Croix de Beaucaillou

The 2011 La Croix de Beaucaillou is really a very successful example of the vintage. The blend this year is seventy-three percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot and seven percent petit verdot, with the petit verdot hailing from a new twenty hectare parcel that Ducru purchased from Terry Gros Cailloux in 2005. With the classy new label designed by Jade Jagger, the 2011 La Croix de Beaucaillou is likely to turn heads both in the glass and on the shelf. The team at Ducru used optic sorters for both the La Croix and the *grand vin* this year. The bouquet on the '11 is a very refined and pure blend of cassis, dark berries, gravel, cigar smoke, a lovely base of soil and a discreet framing of cedary new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very suave on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins and a long, focused and tangy finish. High class juice in 2011. 2022-2050+. **90.**

2011 Château Ducru-Beaucaillou

The 2011 Ducru-Beaucaillou is one of the best wines on the Left Bank in this vintage, with a sense of completeness and refined balance that is fairly rare in this difficult vintage. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a complex mélange of cassis, sweet dark berries, cigar smoke, an outstanding base of soil and a nicely-integrated base of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe, fine-grained tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long, primary and impeccably balanced finish. This will take a long time in the cellar to really blossom, but all of the constituent components are in place here to make this one of the great wines of the vintage on the Left Bank. 2025-2075+. **94.**

2011 Château Gloria

The 2011 Château Gloria is a tad on the sullen side stylistically, but does possess reasonable depth in the mid-palate and sufficient balance to eventually come around with bottle age. The nose is a blend of cassis, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, weedy young cabernet tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tight and pretty well balanced, with a moderate core and a long, ripely tannic finish. There is neither great depth or charm here, but the wine should age gracefully. 2020-2035+. **86+.**

2011 Château Gruaud Larose

The 2011 Gruaud Larose is a very fine example of the vintage. The excellent nose is deep and pure, wafting from the glass in a blend of sweet cassis, dark berries, coffee bean, gravel, tobacco smoke, a touch of violet and a suave base of new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, tightly-knit and very well-balanced, with a very solid core of fruit, ripe, well-integrated tannins and very impressive length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. This will take plenty of time to blossom, but this is one 2011 claret that one does not have to worry about the overall balance of the wine. 2025-2075. **90+.**

2011 Les Fiefs de Lagrange

With each passing vintage, Director Bruno Eynard continues to incrementally move Lagrange's two red wines to a higher and higher level, and the 2011s are both outstanding. The continued fine-tuning at this outstanding St. Julien include increasing the percentage of cabernet sauvignon that will be planted in the estate's vineyards, as the petit verdot experiment started by Monsieur Eynard's successor, Marcel Ducasse, when much of the property's parcels were replanted in the mid-1980s, has not turned out quite as hoped. In any event, those changes will be

felt in the future, but the 2011s till have a fair bit of petit verdot in the blends. The 2011 Les Fiefs de Lagrange is one of the best second wines to be found on the Left Bank this vintage, offering up a deep and complex nose of cassis, dark berries, coffee bean, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with lovely nascent complexity, a good core, moderate tannins and lovely focus and balance on the long and quite sophisticated finish. This is a lovely wine. 2017-2035. **89.**

2011 Château Lagrange

The 2011 Château Lagrange is a very classy example of the vintage, soaring from the glass in a refined aromatic mélange of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, cigar smoke, a nice youthful touch of tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and a stylish framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and tightly-knit, with superb mid-palate depth, excellent focus and grip, firm, seamlessly-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the well-balanced and very stylish finish. I love Lagrange these days, which I rank right up there with the very best of the commune. This lovely wine will take a good dozen years to fully blossom and should prove to be quite long-lived. 2025-2075. **93.**

2011 Château Lalande-Borie

The 2011 Lalande-Borie has turned out quite well for the vintage, but it does not possess quite the same mid-palate stuffing as the more illustrious labels in the Borie lineup (La Croix de Beaucaillou and Ducru-Beaucaillou) and hence, its firm tannins show just a tad more angular as a result. The nose is deep and complex in its blend of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, a touch of fresh herbs and a discreet base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite reserved in profile, with a very serious spine of structure, but enough depth to carry the formidable tannins on the long and primary finish. This will need at least eight to ten years of bottle age to blossom, but should prove to be a pretty good wine at its apogee. 2020-2040+. **87+.**

2011 Château Langoa Barton

The 2011 Langoa Barton is a fairly modern wine, but probably possesses enough stuffing to eventually carry its very generous coating of new wood. The sappy and worked nose offers up scents of black cherries, cassis, cigar box, tobacco leaf and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly extracted, with a modest core of fruit, very firm tannins and reasonable length and grip on the chewy finish. There is not much lift here on the backend, but the wine is not technically flawed and probably will resolve in the fullness of time. Okay- but, not a style that moves me in the least. 2020-2040. **86.**

2011 Château Leoville Barton

The 2011 Leoville Barton is another very modern wine that is most impressive in its complete lack of soil tones on both the nose and palate! The sappy nose is a pretty blend of cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, lead pencil and coffee bean. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and quite suave on the spit-polished attack, with reasonably good mid-palate depth and a fair bit of dry-edged, oak-derived tannins poking out on the long and flat finish. The complete lack of grip here is rather startling on the backend. Again, there is probably enough stuffing here to eventually gobble up the wood tannins, but this is not a wine that shouts out “Bordeaux” in the glass- let alone St. Julien! Simple juice for simple minds. 2020-2040. **87.**

2011 Le Petit Lion

The 2011 Le Petit Lion- third wine of Leoville Las Cases- is quite tasty, but it is also seriously tannic and will demand a fair bit of cellaring before it is ready to drink. The nose is a stylish blend of cassis, black cherries, a touch of Cuban cigar, gravel, a hint of new wood and a

smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very primary, with a very firm base of tannin, fine focus and very good length and grip on the chewy finish. These are tough, old school tannins here and this wine will take every bit of a decade to really start to soften, but it does seem to have the stuffing to carry its tannins. 2022-2040+. **87+**.



2011 Clos du Marquis

The 2011 Clos du Marquis is a superb example of the vintage in the making, with fine mid-palate depth and a good level of ripeness to its tannins, but it too is a very structured wine and is going to take a long time to blossom. The deep and very closed nose reluctantly offers up a pure mélange of black cherries, dark berries, cigar wrapper, dark soil tones, and a nice framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with a sappy core of fruit in reserve, very firm and substantial tannins, lovely focus and balance and a very long, chewy and palate-staining finish. This will take a minimum of twelve years cellaring to start to open up and should prove to be a very long-lived and classic example of Clos du Marquis. 2025-2065+. **92**.

2011 Château Leoville Las Cases

The 2011 Château Leoville Las Cases is a classic in the making, but like the 1986 that Monsieur Rolland compares this wine too, it is going to take a long time to come around from behind its substantial wall of tannin. The superb nose offers up a classy and very pure blend of cassis, black cherries, tobacco leaf, gravelly soil tones, cigar smoke, espresso, a touch of tobacco

leaf and a discreet base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a very tightly-knit personality, a rock solid core of fruit, seamless and very firm tannins and outstanding length and grip on the laser-like finish. This will be a superb vintage of Leoville Las Cases in the fullness of time, but plan on cellaring it at least fifteen years before opening a bottle and most likely, the wine will take every bit of thirty years in the cellar to really reach its apogee. 2027-2075+. **94+**.

2011 Château Leoville Poyferré

The 2011 Leoville Poyferré is quite attractive on the nose, but the cellar team here has over-extracted the wine. The bouquet on the 2011 is not bad, offering up a pure blend of cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite clearly over-extracted, with a modest core and plenty of dry-edged tannins poking out on the long finish from both wood and skins. One should note that the 2011 Leoville Poyferré was one of the brighter wines at the St. Julien tasting, with nice acidity for the vintage, but the hard tannins on the finish spoil the party. 2020-2040. **83+**.

2011 Château Saint-Pierre

I heard while making the rounds in Bordeaux this year that the new owners of Saint-Pierre and Gloria have now started taking the best parcels that used to go into Gloria and requisitioned them for the Saint-Pierre bottling. Perhaps in future vintages this might augur well for Saint-Pierre, but in 2011, this heavily modern and worked wine is not showing any meaningful benefit from its stripping the best away from Gloria. The nose is a boringly modern concoction of black cherries, cassis, cigar box and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with plenty of dry-edged tannins roughing up the short and coarse finish. Hard to imagine a lot of pleasure ever part of the future here. 2018-2035. **83**.

2011 Château Talbot

The 2011 Château Talbot is a lovely wine on both the nose and palate, but it is carrying an awful lot of firm tannin that is going to take a long time to resolve. The truly lovely nose offers up scents of sweet cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite tannic, with a respectable (but far from spectacular) core of fruit, fine delineation and a lot of slightly dry-edged tannins to tame before this wine starts to drink with style and grace. The wine is certainly quite long on the backend and the balance is quite good, so there should be no problem with eventually carrying the day against these formidable tannins. But, just how much style will still be around once the tannins begin to fade will determine whether this wine is eventually superb or just quite good. 2022-2045+? **88-91?**

Pauillac

There are some very fine wines to be found in Pauillac in 2011, but the inconsistencies of the vintage here can also be quite easily seen, as some of the usually quite reliable and excellent estates have not been able to completely sidestep the vagaries of the vintage. Keep in mind that there was some hail damage on September 1st in northern Pauillac- Lafite-Rothschild was most certainly affected to some degree by the hail, but by and large the drought was a bigger headache for proprietors in Pauillac than the storms in early September. Of the three First Growths in Pauillac, Latour is by a good margin the most successful in 2011. Another absolutely toweringly successful wine to be found in the commune in this vintage is Pontet-Canet, which has made a brilliant wine that is clearly one of the best wines of the entire vintage. Pichon-Lalande and Lynch-Bages are also both excellent this year, and at a more reasonable price point, Grand-

Puy-Lacoste has produced a wonderful wine as well. I was also quite happy with the quality of Clerc Milon this year, and in the realm of value wines in the commune, the Croizet-Bages and Batailly are also quite successful in 2011. But, this will never be remembered as a great year in Pauillac.

2011 Château d'Armailhac

The 2011 Château d'Armailhac is a pretty good wine, but like all the wines from the Mouton-Rothschild roster this year, at least at this early stage it seems a bit overly spit-polished for my tastes. The wine is pretty ripe for a 2011, tipping the scales at 13.3 percent alcohol and offers up a bouquet of cassis, dark berries, Cuban tobacco, coffee bean, a nice dollop of soil and a suave base of nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and glossy, with a good core, solid acids and a bit of coarseness poking out on the long and tannic finish. This is not bad, but not particularly exciting at this early stage and will need quite a bit of bottle age to blossom. 2024-2055. **87-89+?**

2011 Château Batailly

The 2011 Château Batailly is one of the better examples of the vintage in Pauillac this year and will offer quite good value. The quite stylish nose offers up scents of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, coffee bean and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish and quite well-balanced, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and very good length and grip on the ripely tannic finish. If one were to split hairs here, the 2011 Batailly is a touch more “spit-polished” than was the case with the wines here a decade ago, and I am not sure what this slightly more glossy style adds to the overall potential for the wine in the cellar. But, all in all, a very solid effort from a difficult vintage. 2020-2040+. **88.**

2011 Château Clerc Milon

The 2011 Clerc Milon is really quite good and of all the wines shown at Mouton this year, this is the one that I have the most confidence about its future evolution moving in a very positive direction. The deep and classy nose offers up scents of cassis, cigar ash, lead pencil, gravel and a nice touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite reserved on the attack, with a firm core of fruit, good focus and a long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. This will need at least a good dozen years in the cellar before its starts to drink well, but it will be a very good wine in the fullness of time. 2025-2065. **90.**

2011 Château Croizet-Bages

I have been quite content with the style and quality of the last few vintages from Château Croizet-Bages and the 2011 is another fine success for the year. The nose is deep and complex, offering up scents of dark berries, cassis, gravel, espresso, tobacco leaf and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a fine core and a long, ripely tannic finish. The *terroir* at Château Croizet-Bages is clearly not in the first division in Pauillac, but the winemaking certainly seems to be these days! A very example of the vintage and a superb value. 2020-2040. **88.**

2011 Château Duhart-Milon

The 2011 Château Duhart-Milon is a very fine wine on the nose, but suffers from the hole in the mid-palate syndrome of the vintage. The bright and classy bouquet is a blend of dark berries, black cherries, coffee bean, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and coffee-like new wood. On the palate the wine is fullish and hollow at the core, with firm tannins and a flat, short finish. Not particularly inspiring, but at least a very honest rendition of the vintage. 2020-2040. **85.**

2011 Château Grand-Puy-Ducasse

The 2011 Château Grand-Puy-Ducasse is a modern and “spoofed” wine. The nose is an extracted blend of sappy cassis and black cherries, muddy earth, coffee grounds and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and over-extracted, with no elegance whatsoever and a significant blast of dry-edged tannins defining the finish. Not particularly pleasant, but will probably have to be chewed through in its relative youth, before the wine dries out. 2016-2025. **80.**

2011 Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste

Grand-Puy-Lacoste made one of the finer 2010s in Pauillac, but I am not sure I do not prefer their excellent 2011 to the former vintage! This is a complete and very classy wine on both the nose and palate, with none of the difficulties of the vintage in evidence. The very classic bouquet offers up scents of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones, espresso and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a very long, complex and youthfully stylish finish. A lovely and very classic vintage of Grand-Puy-Lacoste! 2022-2060. **92+.**

2011 Château Haut-Bages Libéral

The 2011 Château Haut-Bages Libéral is a very nicely balanced example of the vintage, with just a touch of rusticity on both the nose and palate keeping its score down just a tad. The nose is complex and quite deep in its mélange of cassis, black cherries, cigar ash, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and a very discreet base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off pretty good depth at the core, with a slightly grainy aspect to its substantial tannins and very good length and grip on the finish. The balance here is quite good and all that will be needed is patience to outwait the vintage’s tannic backbone. A good, honest wine. 2020-2045. **87+.**

2011 Carruades de Lafite

I really wanted to like the Lafite stable of wines a bit more, as I find their decision quite admirable to just take what the vintage dealt them this year and make as honest an example of the 2011 as they could (or at least this was my impression of their roster). There was some hail damage in the vineyards here, as a percentage of Lafite’s vineyard parcels lie across the border in Ste. Estèphe. The 2011 Carruades is obviously a wine of rather gentle extraction, as it offers up a reserved nose of sweet cassis, dark berries, cigar wrapper, dark soil tones and a suave touch of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full and shows off a bit of a dip in the mid-palate, but with good length on the moderately tannic and suave finish. There is just not a lot of intensity in the 2011 Carruades, and at the prices this wine used to sell for back in the decade of the 1980s, it would not be a bad drink. But, at its current tariff, there is no reason to chase after this wine this year. 2020-2040. **88.**

2011 Château Lafite Rothschild

The 2011 Lafite Rothschild is a pretty good example of the vintage, but it is a bit lean by the contemporary high standards of this estate. The nose is deep, dark and quite reserved in its aromatic mélange of cassis, dark chocolate, dark berries, gravel, cigar smoke, fresh sage and a well-gauged base of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, closed and quite tannic, with a pretty good core of fruit, plenty of touch tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. If this can put on weight in the mid-palate during the course of its evolution in barrel and bottle, then it will land at the high end of my projected range. It is not a great Lafite by any stretch of the imagination, but it could end up being a very good bottle in twelve to twenty years’ time. 2025-2075+. **89-92+.**

2011 Pauillac de Latour

As Château Latour has announced that it will no longer sell its wine as futures, starting with the 2012 vintage, I was very happy to see that they have produced some of the finest wines of the Left Bank in 2011 with which to exit the futures game. The 2011 Pauillac de Latour (the estate's third wine) is very good, offering up a fine and deep nose of cassis, black cherries, espresso, gravelly soil tones, cigar smoke and a hint of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly reserved in style, with an impressive core of fruit, firm, chewy tannins and quite good length and grip on the focused finish. Quite impressive- particularly for a third wine! 2020-2040. **88.**

2011 Les Forts de Latour

The 2011 Forts de Latour is an excellent and quite structured wine that will demand time in the cellar, but clearly reward those patient enough to tuck it away and forget it for twelve to fifteen years. Thirty-five percent of the blend this year is merlot, as more was relegated to the second wine than the *grand vin* in 2011. The bouquet on this superb Forts de Latour offers up a very pure, primary and classic mélange of sweet cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and a touch of nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and perfectly balanced, with a sappy core of fruit, excellent focus and grip and a very long, ripely tannic and powerful finish. I love the cooler fruit tones of the 2011 wines here, as with just a smidgeon over thirteen percent alcohol gives this wine a precision to its soil signature that is far superior to the more heady 2010 version. A very, very impressive second wine! 2025-2055+. **91+.**

2011 Château Latour

The 2011 Château Latour is an absolute classic in the making. The wine is a blend of just under eighty-five percent cabernet sauvignon, fifteen percent merlot and a *soupeçon* of petit verdot this year and tips the scales at a very cool and "old school" 13.1 percent alcohol. The bouquet is deep, brooding and classically reserved mélange of cassis, dark berries, coffee bean, gravelly soil tones, cigar smoke, a nice touch of youthful tobacco leaf and a very discreet base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a rock solid core of fruit, very firm structure, plenty of chewy, but seamlessly-integrated tannins and a very long, powerful, soil-driven finish. A great effort in 2011, this is the finest wine to be found on the Left Bank in this vintage. It will be a timeless and utterly traditional vintage of Latour. 2030-2100. **95+.**

2011 Château Lynch-Bages

The 2011 Château Lynch-Bages is a lovely example of the vintage, though like many of the most successful wines on the Left Bank, it is plenty tannic and will need at least a good decade to soften. The deep, complex and very classy nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of cassis, black cherries, espresso, gravelly soil tones, a touch of anise and lead pencil new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite well-balanced, with a very good core of fruit, fine focus and a very long, ripely tannic and chewy finish. With this wine, the analogy between the 1986 and 2011 vintages seems quite apropos. 2025-2075. **93.**

2011 Château Lynch-Moussas

The 2011 Château Lynch-Moussas is a dull and chunky wine, offering up a simple nose of roasted cassis, coffee bean, dark soil and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, four-square and has its flavors quite dominated by mocha-like oak tones, with modest depth, but at least well-integrated tannins on the short finish. I would have to assume that a wine that is so much defined aromatically and flavor wise by its new wood will eventually dry out, but with the

tannins not particularly formidable, this wine should at least be approachable on the early side. 2014-2020+? **82.**

2011 Le Petit Mouton

The whole Mouton-Rothschild stable fell into the “good, but not great” camp in 2011. To my palate the entire lineup tasted a bit overly worked in the cellars, and while the wines are certainly not overtly flawed, they seemed to have lost something along the way. The 2011 Petit Mouton weighs in at a cool 12.9 percent alcohol and offers up a deep and ripe nose of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, soil and a bit of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave and reserved, with a good core, ripe tannins and pretty good length and grip on the finish. The wine just seems a tad too polished to really excite this year. 2020-2040+. **87.**

2011 Château Mouton-Rothschild

The 2011 Mouton-Rothschild contains the highest percentage of cabernet sauvignon ever in the history of this estate, as fully ninety percent of the blend is made up of this varietal, to go along with seven percent merlot and three percent cabernet franc. The wine is very deep and nascently complex on the nose, as it offers up scents of cassis, Cuban cigar ash, coffee bean, tobacco leaf, a bit of lead pencil and plenty of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with firm, substantial tannins and a very long, primary and quite concentrated finish. This will need a long time to come around, but seems to have the constituent components in place to eventually blossom nicely. I do not know why the wine does not move me more than it does, but, at least at this early stage, the wine just seems to lack a bit of soul. Maybe bottle age will reveal its inner beauty. 2030-2100. **89-92+?**

2011 Aile d’Argent (Mouton-Rothschild’s Blanc)

The 2011 Aile d’Argent is quite ripe by the standards of the vintage, tipping the scales at a hefty 13.7 percent alcohol, but the wine has turned out quite successfully and at least for near-term consumption, there will be a lot of pleasure to be had here. The *cépages* this year is sixty percent sauvignon blanc, thirty-eight percent semillon and two percent muscadelle. The nose is deep, ripe and complex, wafting from the glass in a blend of grapefruit, cut grass, petrol, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and bounce, sound framing acids and very good length and grip on the balanced and wide open finish. Good juice. 2012-2020. **90+.**

2011 Château Pédesclaux

The 2011 Château Pédesclaux seems likely to have also been affected by the hail damage in the northern end of Pauillac at the start of September, as the wine shows a distinctly tired aspect to the nose and palate that is not a reflection of the sample (according to Emmanuel Cruse, who was showing the wine at Château d’Issan). The nose is a fatigued blend of cassis, dark berry, a bit of cigar ash, damp soil tones and a hint of incipient oxidation in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite flat, with reasonable balance, but shape or backend energy on the chewy and dull finish. This seems most likely to just dry out from its substantial, dry-edged tannins. 2020-2040? **82.**

2011 Château Pibran

The 2011 Château Pibran has turned out pretty well in this vintage- particularly considering that it includes fifty-five percent merlot in its *cépages*. The nose is a ripe and sappy blend of cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and a touch of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tannic, with a quite good core of fruit and a long, tangy and slightly rustic finish. The tannins here show just a touch of coarseness to them, which

suggests that the merlot struggled a bit with the drought in 2011. But, all in all, not a bad effort. 2017-2030+. **86+**.

2011 Reserve de la Comtesse

Pichon-Lalande is one of several properties that seems to have taken every effort to ensure that only the very finest fruit has gone into the *grand vin* this year, and consequently, there is a bit of coarseness to the second wine as a result. But, of course, this is the whole point of having a second wine in the first place. The 2011 Reserve de la Comtesse is a blend of forty-three percent cabernet sauvignon, forty-nine percent merlot and eight percent petit verdot this year. The nose is a pretty and fairly reserved blend of cassis, dark berries, coffee bean, dark soil tones and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full and shows a bit of backend dryness, with the tannins slightly coarse and quite substantial. It seems pretty clear that all the merlot that struggled to ripen fully in the drought conditions of 2011 has found its way into the Reserve de la Comtesse. 2020-2040. **85**.

2011 Château Pichon-Lalande

The 2011 Pichon-Lalande is one of the most cabernet-dominated wines in history at this estate, as it is seventy-eight percent cabernet sauvignon this year and only eight percent merlot (to go along with twelve percent cabernet franc and two percent petit verdot). The decision to relegate most of the merlot to the second wine has clearly paid off this year, as the 2011 Pichon-Lalande is excellent, offering up a deep and complex nose of dark berries, coffee bean, cigar smoke, fresh herbs, tobacco leaf and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish pure and intensely flavored, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip and a very long, ripely tannic and very well-balanced finish. There is a real sense of elegance to the 2011 Pichon-Lalande that is a very rare commodity in this vintage! Lovely juice. 2025-2075. **93**.

2011 Les Tourelles de Longueville

The 2011 Les Tourelles de Longueville is heavily laden with merlot in this vintage, as its *cépages* includes fully sixty percent of this varietal this year. The nose is quite plush, offering up scents of dark berries, cassis, coffee bean, cigar smoke, dark soil and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and shows good depth on the attack, with a solid core, but a very short finish that carries more than a fair bit of tannin. This is a classic example of how difficult the vintage was for merlot in the Médoc. 2018-2030+. **86**.

2011 Château Pichon-Longueville

I have been quite a fan of the young vintages of Château Pichon-Longueville in the last decade or so, but I crossed paths with a handful of vintages from early in the decade during the many events held for *En Primeur* and I was rather dismayed to see the wines seemingly drying out from their high percentage of new oak. This included the 2001, which should have been starting to really drink splendidly, but was instead astringent from uncovered wood tannins. Now, I am beginning to wonder about whether or not the high percentage of very spicy new oak used here is not too heavy a load for the wine to carry over time. In any event, the 2011 Château Pichon-Longueville is a very cabernet-dominated wine this year, with fully eighty-two percent of the blend comprised of this varietal. The nose is pure and really stunning, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, cigar wrapper, gravel, coffee bean and plenty of spicy (Taransaud?) new barrels. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and deep and pure on the attack, with a very good core of fruit (particularly for 2011), fine focus and a long, very primary and very tannic finish. There is a distinct dry edge to the tannins at the present time, and a year ago I would have given this wine the benefit of the doubt. But, having seen a couple of recent vintages drying out from wood tannins, I am not entirely sure about how the 2011 Château Pichon-Longueville will

evolve with bottle age. It will certainly be at least a very good wine, but will it also be a bit marred a decade down the road by its eighty percent new oak in this vintage? 2022-2060? **88-92?**



Château Pontet-Canet- home to one of the most brilliant 2011s on the Left Bank.

2011 Château Pontet-Canet

Château Pontet-Canet is making one of the most exciting wines in all of Bordeaux these days and their 2011 is one of the top wines to be found on the Left Bank. Jean-Michel Comme decided on using fifty percent new wood this year and feels that he may even reduce the percentage in coming vintages, as he prefers the expression of *terroir* that comes through at lower percentages of new wood. As many readers may already know, Château Pontet-Canet is the only major estate in all of Bordeaux to embrace *biodynamique* principals, and as has been seen to be the case in regions such as Burgundy, now that the vineyards have been farmed *biodynamically* for a while now, they are really starting to accelerate in terms of quality fruit production. Happily, there was no hail damage at Pontet-Canet this year and the decision to let the grapes ripen fully and then sort out the rot seems to have paid excellent dividends. The complex nose is deep and excellent, offering up a very pure blend of black cherries, cassis, dark soil tones, cigar smoke, a nice touch of new leather, coffee bean and a stylish framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and classically balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and excellent focus and grip on the long and classy finish. A very thoughtfully-made and impressively-successful 2011! 2022-2065. **92+**.

Ste. Estèphe

Ste. Estèphe could well have been the most-blessed commune on the Left Bank in 2011, given their deeper base of clay under the gravel that retained better water reserves during the prolonged drought of this year, but the hail on September 1st really offset the advantage of the deeper soils here. Consequently, it does not seem likely that many proprietors in Ste. Estèphe are likely to look back fondly on the harvest of 2011, as in the immediate aftermath of the hail, harvesting teams had to be pieced together as quickly as possible and grapes had to be brought in with all deliberate speed, as rot was spreading quickly in the hail-damaged vineyards. Naturally, not all of the grapes were ready for collection in early September, with the cabernet sauvignon grapes in particular still lagging behind in terms of ripeness and in a perfect world, they would not have been picked for another week or two. However, not everyone was hit with hail in 2011 in this commune, as Château Calon-Ségur was reportedly spared from the damage, as it lies at the most northerly end of the appellation, and the estate has fashioned one of the most brilliant wines of the vintage to be found on either side of the Gironde this year.

2011 Marquis de Calon

The team at Calon-Ségur, led by *Régisseur* Vincent Millet, were very draconian in their selection process in 2011, with almost all of the estate's merlot relegated to the second wine, the Marquis de Calon. This led them to the unprecedented step of serving the second wine after the *grand vin* this year during our visit, but one can see why this was done once the two divergently-styled wines were both tasted. The 2011 Marquis de Calon is fully eighty percent merlot this year, and one does indeed find some of the coarseness to the tannins on the backend here that can be found pretty easily around the Médoc in this vintage. But, that said, this is still quite a successful second wine, offering up a lovely nose of dark berries, black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, espresso and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit chewy, with a good core of fruit and nice bounce on the backend. The tannins are plenty firm here, but there certainly seems to be enough stuffing to eventually resolve the tannins. Not a particularly suave wine, but with good substance. 2020-2035+. **88.**

2011 Château Calon-Ségur

The 2011 Château Calon-Ségur is one of the most beautiful wines to be found in all of Bordeaux in this vintage and clearly one of the superstars on the Left Bank this year. As Calon-Ségur is the most northerly of estates in Ste. Estèphe, they were spared from the brunt of the hail and were able to harvest as the grapes demanded this year. Vincent Millet and his team started bringing in their merlot on September 5th, the younger vine cabernet sauvignon on the 12th and waited until the 18th of the month to start bringing in the fruit from the old cabernet vines on the estate. Additionally, most of the merlot was relegated to the second wine in 2011, so that the blend for the *grand vin* is sixty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot, twelve percent cabernet franc and one percent malbec. The result is a stunningly refined and silky example of the vintage that delivers a degree of early elegance that is not found anywhere else in Bordeaux this year! The deep, very complex and beautifully pure nose offers up a sappy blend of red and black cherries, cigar wrapper, espresso, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, a touch of currant leaf and a deft framing of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and suave on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, soft acids and a very long, moderately tannic and beautifully focused finish. This is one of the most stunning young vintages of Calon-Ségur that I have ever tasted and one 2011 that is not to be missed! 2022-2065+. **93+.**

2011 Château Capbern-Gasqueton

Château Capbern-Gasqueton is a Cru Bourgeois estate in Ste. Estèphe owned by the same family that owns Château Calon-Ségur. The wine is comprised in 2011 of a blend of seventy-four percent cabernet sauvignon and twenty-six percent merlot and has turned out quite well indeed in this vintage. The nose is quite lovely, offering up a pure blend of red and black cherries, gravel, cigar ash, tobacco leaf and a nice touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite open on the attack, with fairly low acids and a bit of firm tannin perking up the long finish. This is quite a successful 2011 and a very good value. 2015-2035+. **87+**.

2011 Goulée by Cos d'Estournel

The third wine from Cos, the 2011 Goulée by Cos d'Estournel is quite good this year. The deep and sappy nose offers up scents of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, a nice base of soil and a framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy on the attack, with a good core, ripe and substantial tannins and fine length and grip on the long and focused finish. I like this very much, though it will need some time to resolve its tannins. 2020-245. **89**.

2011 Les Pagodes de Cos

The 2011 Les Pagodes de Cos weighs in at a pretty ripe 13.5 percent alcohol this year, which suggests that a good fifteen percent of the 2010 has found its way into the cuvée (as it is hard to imagine getting this level of ripeness under the combination of drought and hail in 2011). That said, this has also turned out pretty well in its style, offering up a quite ripe nose of black raspberries, black cherries, coffee bean, Cuban tobacco, soil and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and powerfully ripe, with a sappy core of fruit, firm, chewy tannins and a long, well-balanced finish. Not particularly typical of the 2011 vintage- which may be a blessing with the blast of hail that the vineyards absorbed here this year- but a pretty well-made wine in its way. 2022-2050. **90+?**

2011 Château Cos d'Estournel

Like the 2011 Les Pagodes, the Château Cos d'Estournel this year shows an awful lot of sappy ripeness that strongly suggests that there was some back-blending to add some mid-palate muscle to the hail-strafted fruit this year. This is, of course, all perfectly acceptable under the rules in Bordeaux, where up to fifteen percent of a different year can be blended into the current vintage. In fact, it was probably just in case of depredations like the September 1st hail storm that the regulations were left in place. The nose on the 2011 Cos d'Estournel is ripe and sappy, offering up scents of black cherries, a touch of black raspberry, coffee bean, gravelly soil tones and plenty of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off the “cool season” structure in its hard and quite substantial tannins, but with a thick and sappy core to support this wine’s tannic clout. The finish is very long, focused and backwards. At this point in time, it is hard to be sure how well this wine will integrate all of its tannin over time, so I have scored the wine within a range. But, it is a very well-made wine from what were near catastrophic conditions. 2027-2075? **90-92+?**

2011 Château Cos d'Estournel Blanc

This was the first time I had ever tasted the Cos d'Estournel Blanc, whose label and package I absolutely find one of the most sophisticated in Bordeaux. The 2011 is not bad in the context of the vintage, but seems to show a bit of *fluidité* at the core from younger vines. The wine is a blend of two-thirds sauvignon blanc and one third semillon, and offers up a fresh and lively nose of grapefruit, fresh-cut grass, lime zest, a very gentle whisper of soil and a stylish

base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and lively, with good balance and sneaky length and grip on the focused finish. As these vines get older, this is going to become a very interesting wine. The 2011 is not bad by any stretch of the imagination. 2012-2020. **88.**

2011 Château Cos Labory

The 2011 Château Cos Labory is one of the more idiosyncratic wines of the vintage, and I have to assume that there is a good fifteen percent of 2010 in the blend here to try and compensate for the hail in the commune this year. The weirdly ripe nose offers up scents of very vibrant cassis, a touch of blood orange, dark soil tones, cigar smoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, four-square and over-extracted, with plenty of dry-edged tannins on the short finish. This is chunky, rustic and dry on the backend, but probably is not all that bad in the context of the severe hail damage that so many vineyards in the commune suffered from this year. I will be very surprised if it does not dry out before it resolves its tannins, so chewing though it on the early side will most likely be the best strategy. 2016-2025+? **81.**

2011 Château Haut Beauséjour

Haut Beauséjour is another of the smaller estates in the Pichon-Lalande constellation. The 2011 seems to have gotten the double whammy of hail and a high percentage of merlot (sixty percent) in its blend, so the wine has ended up a bit on the rustic and excessively chewy side. The nose is not bad at all, offering up a blend of dark berries, cassis, cigar ash, dark soil and a touch of new oak. On the palate, however, the vagaries of the vintage come into play, as this is a full-bodied wine of decent focus, moderate depth and a bit of coarse tannins obtruding on the finish. Not a bad effort in the face of serious difficulties, but not a wine of much charm. 2016-2030. **83.**

2011 Château Haut Marbuzet

It has been several vintages since I last tasted the wines from Haut Marbuzet and perhaps it was not particularly fair to the estate to start with their 2011, given all the depredations that *vignerons* faced in Ste. Estèphe in this year. In any event, the 2011 Haut Marbuzet is a fairly heavy and ponderous example of the vintage, offering up a blend of black raspberries, cassis, dark chocolate, damp soil, coffee grounds and plenty of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rather leaden, with zero hint of soil and a heavy-handed, tannic and charmless finish. This has the density of a black hole this year, but, at least the alcohol is not excessive. 2017-2030+? **78.**

2011 Château Lilian Ladouys

I quite liked the 2010 vintage of Château Lilian Ladouys, but the 2011 seems to have suffered quite a bit from the hail on September 1st. The nose shows a bit of fatigue (from the hail) in its blend of sappy cassis, coffee grounds, cigar smoke and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tannic and quite austere, with a distinctly edginess to the substantial tannins on the slightly dry finish. Hard to imagine this wine really ever rallying. 2016-2025+? **83.**

2011 Château Meyney

The 2011 Château Meyney is a rather worked, modern wine that fails to inspire. The very simple nose offers up a blend of black raspberry syrup, coffee grounds, cigar ash and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, flat and dulled, with respectable mid-palate depth, plenty of firm tannins and a very short, leaden finish. Not good. 2016-2025? **83.**

2011 La Dame de Montrose

The selection was obviously quite draconian for what went into the *grand vin* this year at Montrose, and (as was also the case at Calon-Ségur) the second wine was served after the first wine this year- reflecting the more coarse style of this wine from the higher percentage of problematic merlot in the blend. The 2011 Dame de Montrose offers up a ripe and slightly four-square nose of sappy cassis, espresso, a bit of vinesmoke, cigar ash, dark soil and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly monolithic in personality, with firm, slightly coarse tannins, good depth at the core and a long, fairly sullen finish. This will take a fair bit of time to soften, but also looks likely to never deliver a whole lot of charm. 2020-2050. **87+?**

2011 Château Montrose

The 2011 Château Montrose has really turned out well, with a great elegance and very well-managed tannins for the vintage. The deep, pure and classy nose wafts from the glass in a blend of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, gravel, tobacco leaf and a discreet base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the reserved and very, very primary finish. This is an old school vintage of Montrose that will take close to two decades to start to stir, but should prove to be one of the absolute stars on the Left Bank in the 2011 vintage. A superb effort from such a trying vintage in Ste. Estèphe. 2030-2075+. **92+**.

2011 Château Lafon-Rochet

Château Lafon-Rochet has produced a quite modern and anonymous wine in 2011, with the telltale hole in the mid-palate of the less successful wines of the vintage. The nose is a simple, modern mix of sappy black cherries and cassis, cigar smoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a dip at the core and a well-balanced and ripely tannic finish. Impressive lack of both soil and soul. 2015-2025. **82**.

2011 Château Les Ormes de Pez

Les Ormes de Pez seems to be one of those estates that opted for a bit more extraction as a possible solution to the inadequate ripening and hail damage of the vintage, and while this approach seems to have produced a bit more mid-palate density, it has squeezed the charm out of the wine. The extracted nose is a blend of sappy cassis, dark berries, cigar ash, gravel and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and astringent, with a dull, heavily-extracted mid-palate and a dry-edged, tannic and ponderous finish. Again, Mother Nature dealt the *vignerons* in Ste. Estèphe a pretty rotten hand in 2011 and one cannot blame the winemaking team here for trying. 2017-2030. **81**.

2011 Château de Pez

The 2011 Château de Pez also shows signs of damage from the hail in its rather pinched and tough palate, but it at least offers up a pretty good bouquet. There is a lot of merlot in this wine- fully forty-six percent- and this may also contribute to the angularity on the palate in 2011. The nose is a reserved blend of cassis, espresso, dark soil tones, cigar smoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full and a bit attenuated from the hail, with a modest core of fruit and a moderately long, chewy and rather dulled finish. Again, fairly good winemaking seems to be in evidence here in the face of a pretty brutal bashing from the hail. 2018-2035. **85**.

2011 Château Phélan Segur

I was very impressed with the size and shape of the 2011 Château Phélan Segur, which was not affected by the hail in the commune and has turned out quite suave and well-balanced. The deep and very stylish nose jumps from the glass in a mélange of black cherries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, a touch of tobacco leaf and a deft framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the

wine is deep, fullish and nicely reserved, with a good core of fruit, a fair bit of ripe tannin to resolve and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is an estate that is clearly on the upswing in quality and warrants paying close attention to now and on into the future. 2018-2035. **89.**

2011 Tronquoy de Sainte Anne

The 2011 Tronquoy de Sainte-Anne is not a bad effort for the vintage, but shows a bit of a dry edge to its tannins from the combination of hail and drought. The nose is a ripe and pure blend of cassis, dark berries, smoke, espresso and a lovely base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly flat on the attack, with a good core of fruit, and plenty of chewy, slightly coarse tannins perking up the reasonably long finish. This is not bad at all, but even when it has seen a decade of bottle age and begun to blossom, it may still lack a bit of charm. 2020-2045. **86+?**

2011 Château Tronquoy-Lalande

The 2011 Château Tronquoy-Lalande has turned out quite well for the vintage, as it offers up a deep and quite reserved nose of cassis, black cherries, espresso, dark soil tones, cigar smoke and a touch of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite primary, with very good mid-palate depth, fine focus and a long, chewy and substantially tannic finish. The tannins here are quite well-integrated into the body of the wine and there should be no issues with their resolution down the road, but patience will be needed. A fine result from a tough vintage. 2020-2050. **89.**



Régisseur Vincent Millet of Château Calon-Ségur sampling his beautiful 2011- one of the wines of the vintage!

Médoc and the Haut-Médoc

2011 Château Beaumont (Haut-Médoc)

Château Beaumont is one of the most consistently fine wines in the Haut-Médoc, but the 2011 shows a bit of the mid-palate hollowness of the vintage. The nose is quite nice in its blend of roasted cassis, dark soil tones, cigar smoke and just a touch of nutty oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full and nascently complex, with a youthfully weedy young cabernet personality, refined backend tannins and very good focus on the finish. Other than the dip at the core, this is a pretty well-balanced example of the vintage. 2017-2030. **86.**

2011 Château Belgrave (Haut-Médoc)

The 2011 Château Belgrave is a bit over-extracted and suffers for this. The nose is ripe and almost sappy in its mélange of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, gravel and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and chewy, with a coarseness from the over-extraction that muddies up the attack and adds astringency on the tannic finish. The length and focus here are pretty good, but this wine is patently out of balance from the start. 2016-2025. **81.**

2011 Château Bernadotte (Haut-Médoc)

Château Bernadotte is owned by the folks at Pichon-Lalande, where the wine was shown this year. This is a quite good example of the vintage, offering up a pure nose of cassis, dark berries, coffee bean, dark soil tones and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a touch four-square, but with very good balance and nicely measured tannins on the fairly long finish. Not bad at all! 2016-2030+. **86+.**

2011 Château de Camensac (Haut-Médoc)

The 2011 Château de Camensac is quite typical of the vintage, as it has a bit of a hole in the mid-palate and shows a bit of over-extraction, which was probably an attempt to compensate for the lack of mid-palate depth. The nose is quite nice in its blend of black cherries, cassis, cigar ash, fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish and a touch over-extracted, with very modest mid-palate depth and some overtly coarse tannins on the reasonably long finish. Just a typical 2011 that could not rise above the serious challenges of the vintage. 2015-2025+. **83.**

2011 Château Cantemerle (Haut-Médoc)

Cantemerle has consistently been one of my favorite wines on the Left Bank for the last ten or fifteen years, so I was a bit disappointed not to see what I would term a “great” sample of the wine at the couple of tastings I attended where it was on display. At the UGC event held at Château Talbot, the wine showed well aromatically, but seemed a bit hollow at the core. At a tasting a few days previous, the wine had shown fine mid-palate depth, but a lot of firm, almost hard tannins on the finish (which were not in evidence in the samples at the UGC tasting!), so I am not really sure how to evaluate such disparate showings of the wine. The bouquet on the wine is quite fine, offering up scents of dark berries, cassis, coffee bean, gravel, cigar smoke and a discreet base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with either good or modest depth at the core and either hard, chewy tannins or well-managed and ripe tannins that are perfectly integrated into the base of the wine! Would have loved to have had time to stop by the estate and taste a pristine sample. Best-case scenarios would place this wine around 90-91 points, and worse-case scenarios more around 86-87. But, no way I can come up with a more definitive impression based on the samples I tasted. ???

2011 Château Citran (Haut-Médoc)

The 2011 Citran is a coarse and rustic example of the vintage. The nose is a blend of cassis, weedy tobacco tones, a bit of overt tariness and cigar smoke in the upper register. On the

palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with a chunky personality and a long, chewy and moderately tannic finish. Not much style here. 2016-2030+? **82.**

2011 Château Coufran (Haut-Médoc)

Château Coufran is one of the most merlot-dependent wines in the Haut-Médoc, so the struggles of this variety with the drought of 2011 did not augur well for the quality of the wine in this vintage. Interestingly, the wine does not show any overt signs of struggle on the nose, as it offers up a pretty nice blend of cassis, dark berries, cigar ash, soil tones and a touch of toasty new oak. However, on the palate, the imperfect ripening of the merlot is evident in the rustic nature of the backend tannins and the slightly drying aspect on the finish. The wine is full-bodied and shows a good attack, but also falls off in the mid-palate, as is typical of so many wines in this difficult vintage. The 2011 Coufran is not a bad effort, given the estate's dependency on merlot and the vagaries of the vintage, but it is not a great wine. 2016-2030+? **83.**

2011 Château Greysac (Médoc)

Château Greysac has been on quite a roll the last several years, producing a deep and classy example of each vintage that has been a very fine value, but unfortunately, the challenges posed by the drought of 2011 seem to have been a bit much to completely overcome for this steady estate. The nose seems a bit modern this year (something I have never associated with Greysac in the past and hope was just an attempt to deal with the vagaries of the vintage), offering up scents of sappy black cherries, cassis, tobacco, dark soil, coffee bean and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite flat on the attack, with a hole in the mid-palate, very little complexity, and a long, tannic finish. The palate seems a bit more classic in style than the nose, but given the high standards of this estate of late, the 2011 is a bit of a disappointment. 2018-2035. **84.**

2011 Château de Lamarque (Haut-Médoc)

I have had some vintages of Château de Lamarque with which I have been quite impressed, but the 2011 suffers from some of the vagaries of the vintage. There is not much mid-palate depth here, and the wine was clearly extracted on the very gentle side to try and avoid getting too much tannin into the wine, which makes it a bit feeble. The nose is a nice blend of sweet cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, soil and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, nascently complex and quite hollow at the core, with moderate tannins and a fairly short finish that does not display much grip or intensity. Okay, but no better. 2014-2025. **82.**

2011 Château Lannesan (Haut-Médoc)

Château Lannesan has made a quite successful 2011, and while it has a bit more structure that is typical with this consistently very good estate, the balance here is quite fine and there will be no problems with it eventually blossoming with bottle age. The deep and classy nose is a mélange of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly tannic, but with the tannins well-integrated into the body of the wine. The mid-palate depth here is quite good and the wine is focused and well-balanced, with the chewy finish plenty long and classy. This will be a very good example of the vintage and a fine value. 2019-2035+. **87+.**

2011 Château Malescasse (Haut-Médoc)

The 2011 Château Malescasse is another example of the vintage where the proprietors seem to have taken the route of over-extraction in an effort to compensate for the lack of mid-palate depth inherent in so many wines from this year. The bouquet is not particularly clean in its mix of cassis, barnyard, a touch of grapefruit peel and cigar ash. On the palate the wine is deep,

fullish and over-extracted, with a dry, coarsely-tannic and dulled finish. A pretty charmless wine of questionable balance. ??? 79.

2011 Chapelle de Potensac (Médoc)

The 2011 Potensac is really excellent this year, as the selection process seems to have been quite strict as to what went into the *grand vin* and what was relegated to the second wine, the Chapelle de Potensac. The 2011 Chapelle contains fifty-six percent merlot this year, which brings about of backend chewiness on the palate. The nose is quite pretty in its blend of black cherries, cassis, tobacco leaf, dark soil and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full and quite easy-going on the attack, with a bit of old school, chewy tannins roughing up the finish a bit. This is really made to be drunk from the outset and I would be inclined to do so, even with the bit of backend chewiness. 2012-2025. **85.**

2011 Château Potensac (Médoc)

The 2011 Château Potensac is by a good margin the finest young wine I have ever tasted from this property, as the team at Leoville Las Cases has really excelled with this estate in this vintage. The deep, pure and beautifully reserved nose soars from the glass in a mélange of black cherries, cassis, tobacco smoke, dark soil tones and a deft framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and nascently complex, with an excellent core of fruit, beautiful focus, a lovely signature of soil and outstanding length and grip on the ripely tannic and perfectly balanced finish. This is a *tour de force* vintage for Potensac! 2022-2050+. **91+.**

2011 Château Sénéjac (Haut-Médoc)

The 2011 Château Sénéjac is not one of the more successful wines of the vintage and it may well be that the estate was affected by the early September hail and attempts were made in the cellar to counter damage. In any event, the nose offers up a rather non-distinctive blend of sappy cassis, black raspberries, espresso, resinous new oak and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit syrupy on the attack, with solid mid-palate depth, low acids and a long, dry-edged, tannic finish, with some of the tannins coming from the new wood. This is quite astringent and it is hard to imagine when to drink it. ??? 79.

2011 Château Sociando-Mallet (Haut-Médoc)

The 2011 Château Sociando-Mallet is not too bad, but shows the vintage's lack of mid-palate depth and dry-edged tannins on the backend. The nose is quite marked by its new oak, offering up scents of sappy cassis, coffee bean, tar, dark soil tones and a fairly aggressive blast of coffee-flavored new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and almost glossy on the attack (from a bit of micro-oxygenation?), with a distinct dip at the core, good focus and a firm, tannic finish that has a dry edge to it. Not great, but if it can absorb all its tannins with sufficient bottle age, there is enough complexity here to perhaps offer up pretty respectable drinking. But, I am not sure if it has the requisite stuffing to be able to do so. 2019-2035. **84-87?**

2011 Château La Tour de By (Médoc)

Château La Tour de By, situated way up in the northern Médoc, could have been a victim of the hail on September 1st that hit Ste. Estèphe so hard, but the sample I tasted showed no signs of this. The nose is deep, complex and quite lovely in its mélange of sappy black cherries and cassis, cigar wrapper, a touch of coffee, dark soil tones, tobacco leaf and a deft framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite powerfully constructed this year, with a good core of fruit, fairly low acids and a long, tannic and well-balanced finish. This has very good balance for the vintage and will have no difficulties eventually blossoming and drinking very well. Château La Tour de By has aspirations of making much higher quality wines than their appellation and the 2011 is another in a line of consistently excellent wines from this

superb estate. This is one of the best values to be found in Bordeaux in this vintage, but the wine will need a minimum of eight to ten years of cellaring before it really starts to come into its own. A fine result. 2020-2040+. **88+**.

2011 Château La Tour Carnet (Haut-Médoc)

There was a time in the 1980s when Château La Tour Carnet was one of the best values to be found in the Haut-Médoc, but those days seem an awful long time ago today. The 2011 is a modern and uninteresting concoction of sappy black cherries, cassis, smoke and pricey new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full and eviscerated by its combination of new oak tannins and the hard tannins of the vintage, with no core of fruit and a short, nasty, dry and woody finish. No fruit seems to have survived the cellar treatments here. ??? **62**.