

Bordeaux 2012 vintage report

After tasting hundreds of 2012 Bordeaux wines, local winemaker **Gavin Quinney** says this is a vintage for drinking rather than investing in

Overall, 2012 is a good to very good vintage, but not a great one. It's clearly a vintage for drinking, not investment. Many wines will be good to drink in the short to medium term.

That's my conclusion on the 500 wines I tasted from the 2012 vintage over 10 days in April, and my scores and estimated drinking windows, and prices, for 140 reds are listed here. These are wines which should feature in the en primeur campaign in May and June, and they all come from the "big seven" appellations of Bordeaux: Pomerol and St Emilion on the Right Bank, Pessac-Léognan to the south of the city, and four main

spots of the Médoc – Margaux, St Julien, Pauillac and St Estèphe.

In 2012 Bordeaux saw a late harvest, mainly due to a cold, wet April, drawn-out flowering in June and a protracted véraison (changing of the colour) throughout August. The summer, however, was warm, very dry and sunny, with 10 weeks of fine weather between mid-July and 23 September.

We had sunshine again at the start of October and if the weather had held we'd have been set for something pretty special. But two more weeks of good weather eluded us, so picking was a bit rushed at the end.

The timing of the harvest tended to favour the earlier-ripening Merlot over the Cabernets, partly because drizzle, humidity and finally heavy rain set in from the second week of October onwards.

It's an uneven vintage but hundreds of reds have lovely colour, supple fruit, crowd-



It's a good to very good vintage, but it's clearly for drinking not investment



Pomerol

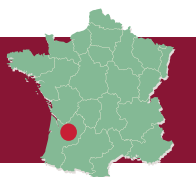
pleasing texture and no hard edges. Happily, very few wines show any green, unripe character. The fruit is ripe (thanks to the summer sunshine) even if many wines lack real depth, complexity and length.

The 2012 vintage is notably strong in the precocious terroirs of the Right Bank and, on the Left, south of Bordeaux in Pessac-Léognan and the Graves.

The plateau of Pomerol is successful, but it's tiny and

BORDEAUX 2012 ASSESSED

* Estimated UK consumer price (£) per case, in bond



CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
POMEROL			
L'Eglise Clinet	95-97	2020-2035	£1,300
Lafleur	95-97	2020-2035	£4,200
Pétrus	95-97	2018-2035	£14,000
La Fleur-Pétrus	94-97	2018-2032	£950
Le Pin	94-96	2020-2032	£9,000
La Conseillante	93-96	2017-2030	£700
Hosanna	93-95	2018-2033	£850
Trotanoy	93-95	2018-2032	£1,300
La Providence	92-94	2017-2030	£600
L'Evangile	92-94	2017-2032	£1,150
Clinet	91-93	2016-2028	£500
Gazin	91-93	2017-2030	£440
Pensées de Lafleur	91-93	2017-2028	£500
Vieux Château Certan	90-93	2019-2033	£800
Petite Eglise	90-92	2015-2027	£240
Nénin	90-92	2017-2030	£320
Feytit-Clinet	90-92	2016-2030	£360
Petit Village	90-92	2016-2030	£400
Vray Croix de Gay	90-91	2016-2030	£330
Latour à Pomerol	90-91	2017-2028	£540
Clos l'Eglise	89-92	2020-2034	£600
Clos du Clocher	89-91	2016-2028	£300
Beaurégard	89-91	2016-2030	£240

CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
ST-EMILION			
Cheval Blanc	94-96	2020-2035	£4,000
Ausone	94-96	2024-2040	£4,600
Pavie-Macquin	93-95	2018-2033	£450
Belair-Monange	92-95	2018-2032	£740
Larcis Ducasse	92-94	2017-2032	£400
Clos Fourtet	92-94	2018-2033	£500
Mondotte	92-94	2019-2033	£1,020
Pavie	92-94	2020-2035	£1,980
Angelus	92-94	2022-2036	£1,980
Chapelle d'Ausone	92-93	2018-2032	£900
Beau-Séjour Bécot	91-93	2017-2030	£340
Troplong Mondot	91-93	2022-2038	£550
Pavie Decesse	91-93	2018-2030	£950
Petit Cheval	91-92	2018-2028	£1,000
Quintus	90-93	2017-2030	£600
La Tour Figeac	90-92	2017-2032	£190
La Dominique	90-92	2016-2033	£250
La Gaffelière	90-92	2016-2032	£360
Canon la Gaffelière	90-92	2019-2033	£450
Canon	90-92	2017-2032	£410
Figeac	90-92	2019-2035	£700
Barde Haut	90-91	2018-2030	£200
Quinault l'Enclos	90-91	2016-2028	£200
Le Prieuré	90-91	2018-2032	£250
Corbin	90-91	2017-2030	£200
Pressac	89-91	2016-2030	£160
Berliquet	89-91	2017-2030	£200
Soutard	89-91	2017-2028	£230
Villemaurine	89-91	2018-2030	£240
Bellevue	89-91	2018-2030	£330

St-Emilion

Margaux

Pauillac



St-Julien

St-Estèphe

Pessac-Léognan

CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
PESSAC-LÉOGNAN			
Haut-Brion	93-96	2020-2035	£3,100
La Mission Haut-Brion	93-95	2019-2033	£4,500
Haut-Bailly	92-94	2018-2033	£500
Smith Haut Lafitte	91-94	2017-2032	£450
Domaine de Chevalier	90-93	2017-2032	£340
Malartic-Lagravière	90-92	2018-2028	£270
Branon	90-92	2019-2033	£500
Latour-Martillac	90-92	2017-2030	£180
Pape Clément	89-94	2019-2033	£530
Carmes Haut-Brion	89-91	2018-2030	£300
La Chapelle de la Mission	88-90	2016-2030	£450
Clarence de Haut-Brion	88-90	2016-2030	£740
Haut-Bergey	88-90	2017-2030	£160
Carbonnieux	88-89	2016-2028	£200
Olivier	87-89	2015-2028	£180
Larrivet Haut-Brion	87-89	2016-2030	£200
De Fieuzal	87-89	2016-2030	£220

CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
MARGAUX			
Palmer	94-96	2019-2033	£1,500
Margaux	92-94	2020-2035	£2,800
Brane-Cantenac	90-92	2017-2030	£300
Boyd-Cantenac	90-92	2021-2035	£300
Malescot St-Exupéry	90-92	2020-2034	£350
Alter Ego de Palmer	90-92	2016-2030	£420
Cantenac-Brown	90-91	2017-2028	£270
Pouget	90-91	2018-2030	£300
Pavillon Rouge	90-91	2019-2035	£800
Kirwan	89-91	2018-2033	£265
Giscours	89-91	2017-2030	£290
D'Issan	89-91	2017-2030	£300
Labégorce	89-90	2017-2030	£160
Rauzan-Ségla	89-90	2019-2033	£420
Ferrière	88-90	2018-2033	£200
Lascombes	88-90	2017-2032	£400
Marquis d'Alesme Becker	88-90	2019-2033	£220
Prieuré-Lichine	87-90	2018-2032	£230
Angludet	87-89	2016-2032	£180
Du Tertre	87-89	2016-2030	£220
Dauzac	87-89	2016-2030	£260

CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
ST-JULIEN			
Léoville Poyferré	91-93	2017-2032	£500
Ducru Beaucaillou	91-93	2017-2032	£700
Léoville Las Cases	91-93	2022-2036	£970
Talbot	90-92	2017-2032	£270
St-Pierre	90-92	2017-2032	£350
Langoa-Barton	89-91	2017-2032	£290
Clos du Marquis	89-91	2019-2033	£300
Léoville Barton	89-91	2019-2033	£440
Gruaud-Larose	89-90	2017-2032	£350
Lagrange	88-90	2017-2032	£270
Petit Lion	88-90	2016-2028	£300
Croix de Beaucaillou	88-89	2015-2028	£230
Branaire-Ducru	88-89	2019-2033	£310
Gloria	87-89	2017-2030	£220
Beychevelle	87-89	2017-2032	£400

CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
PAUILLAC			
Pontet-Canet	93-95	2020-2035	£800
Mouton Rothschild	93-95	2020-2038	£2,800
Grand-Puy-Lacoste	91-93	2018-2032	£350
Pichon-Longueville Baron	91-93	2019-2035	£650
Lafite Rothschild	91-93	2018-2035	£3,800
Clerc Milon	90-92	2016-2030	£340
Lynch-Bages	90-92	2019-2033	£670
Petit Mouton	90-92	2016-2028	£760
Grand Puy Ducasse	89-92	2018-2032	£270
Armailhac	89-91	2017-2030	£290
Duhart-Milon	89-91	2018-2033	£575
Pichon Lalande	89-91	2018-2032	£650
Batailley	89-90	2018-2033	£248
Haut-Batailley	88-90	2017-2032	£220
Pibran	88-89	2017-2030	£190
Pedesciaux	87-89	2018-2033	£200
Haut Bages Libéral	87-89	2018-2033	£240
Carruades de Lafite	87-89	2017-2030	£1,150

CHÂTEAU	QUINNEY SCORE	MATURITY	EST £/CASE*
ST-ESTÈPHE			
Montrose	92-94	2022-2040	£640
Calon-Ségur	91-93	2021-2037	£410
Lafon-Rochet	89-91	2017-2032	£230
Cos d'Estournel	89-91	2019-2035	£750
De Pez	89-90	2018-2032	£180
Le Crock	88-90	2017-2030	£160
Meyney	88-90	2019-2033	£190
Ormes-de-Pez	88-90	2017-2030	£190
Tronquoy-Lalande	88-90	2018-2030	£190
Phélan Ségur	88-90	2018-2032	£230
Ségur de Cabanac	88-89	2018-2030	£120
Capbern Gasqueton	87-89	2018-2030	£120
Cos Labory	87-89	2016-2032	£190
La Dame de Montrose	87-89	2017-2030	£230
Lilian Ladouys	87-88	2017-2030	£110

BORDEAUX 2012 HIGHLIGHTS

- It is a good to very good vintage, but not a great one
- It's a vintage for drinking, not investing in
- Most wines (but not all) will be good to drink in the medium-term
- It is strong on better terroirs of the Right Bank, and south of Bordeaux
- The plateau of Pomerol is successful but it's tiny and expensive
- Lots of attractive Crus Classés in the Médoc, yet few big scores
- Very few of the leading estates got it wrong, with harsh extraction
- Many pretty wines from petit châteaux of the Right Bank, less so for Cru Bourgeois
- Élevage (barrel ageing) will be key – better to buy after bottling?
- Happily, few wines are “green” – the fruit is ripe but lacks real depth
- Good for dry whites, tricky for sweet – but some heroic efforts in Sauternes and Barsac.

IS IT A VINTAGE TO BUY?

- Strong château brands will always find a home at the right price
- Lowish scores are expected from Robert Parker and will drive down prices of pricey Left Bank wines
- The 2012s should be half the price of the expensive 2010s: many are only half as good
- Low-production, top Pomerols will be the most sought after
- With little demand, margins are tight for UK merchants so focus will be on blue-chip names
- Only the top 10 Bordeaux négociants can afford to carry stock without selling through, allegedly
- Below the top level, buy after bottling
- There'll be plenty of bargains in the Foires aux Vins in French supermarkets in 2014/15.

the wines expensive. Merlot on the clay and limestone terroirs around the town of St-Emilion (and beyond) also fared well.

Here there are some great wines but styles and prices vary. Are Angélus and Pavie, at £2,000 a case, that much better than Canon and Beau-Séjour Bécot at £400 and £340? (The first two are Premier Grand Cru Classé “A”, the others “B”.)

There are many attractive Crus Classés in the Médoc, yet few big-scoring wines. There are some real successes, and possible values, from all four of the major Médoc appellations (Margaux, St-Julien, Pauillac and St-Estèphe), but there are several fairly disappointing wines, including some big names.

There are many pretty wines from the petit châteaux of the Right Bank, less so for the Cru Bourgeois of the Left. It's probably a vintage to re-evaluate after bottling at this level.

It's a fine vintage for dry whites, and not just at the top level in Pessac-Léognan where almost all of the whites are barrel fermented. Most Sauvignon and Semillon across Bordeaux was picked in fine weather in mid-September, in very good condition.

The summer drought and October rains proved difficult for sweet wines after three excellent years on the trot. Although some big names declared that they wouldn't be making a wine this year (Yquem, Rieussec, Suduiraut) there are some heroic efforts from Sauternes and Barsac, in small quantities.

As for the market for the wines, much depends on the prices.

■ **Gavin Quinney owns and makes wines at Château Bauduc, Bordeaux**



In St-Emilion Merlot fared well on the clay and limestone terroirs

QUINNEY'S TOP TEN

Pétrus	Pomerol	95-97	£14,000
L'Eglise Clinet	Pomerol	95-97	£1,300
La Fleur	Pomerol	95-97	£4,200
La Fleur-Pétrus	Pomerol	94-97	£950
Cheval Blanc	St-Emilion	94-96	£4,000
Ausone	St-Emilion	94-96	£4,600
Le Pin	Pomerol	94-96	£9,000
Palmer	Margaux	94-96	£1,500
La Conseillante	Pomerol	93-96	£700
Haut-Brion	Pessac-Léognan	93-96	£3,100

QUINNEY'S 10 BEST VALUE WINES FOR £200 OR LESS

La Tour Figeac	St-Emilion	90-92	£200
Barde Haut	St-Emilion	90-91	£200
Quinault l'Enclos	St-Emilion	90-91	£200
Corbin	St-Emilion	90-91	£200
Fonbel	St-Emilion	88-89	£120
La Pointe	Pomerol	88-90	£200
Latour-Martillac	Pessac-Léognan	90-91	£180
Labégorce	Margaux	89-90	£160
Pibran	Pauillac	88-89	£190
Le Crock	St-Estèphe	88-90	£160



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