

Bordeaux En Primeur 2020

The new 2020 vintage of Bordeaux wines is currently being released for sale en primeur (out of barrel). The wines will not physically be delivered in bottle for another 18-24 months.

This is your annual opportunity to buy your favourite Bordeaux wines at their opening prices, which should theoretically be the cheapest they will ever be.

The 2020 vintage is being hailed as the third in a trilogy of “great” vintages, following on from the excellent 2018 and 2019 vintages. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 travel restrictions, for the first time in 15 years I have not had the opportunity to try any Bordeaux wines from this new vintage, so I can not personally confirm this. My comments and buying recommendations this year are therefore based on a combination of the following:-

- 1) the opinions and scores of a handful of the best respected Bordeaux wine press – The Wine Advocate, Neil Martin, Jancis Robinson MW, Jeff Leve, Decanter and Falstaff magazines.
- 2) Discussions I have had with negociants and producers in Bordeaux
- 3) The prices of the 2020 wines relative to previous vintages currently available on the market

There has to be a good reason to invest your money en primeur, and as much as I love Bordeaux and its wines, I personally need to be convinced that a wine deserves to be purchased at this early stage before I will offer it to my customers.

My assessment of the 2020 vintage

2020 is a very good to excellent vintage, but more erratic in quality than either 2019 or 2018. You therefore need to buy carefully this year, as not all chateaux have produced top wines.

2020 was another warm, dry and sunny vintage, although rain in mid August and relatively cool weather from mid September onwards has given many wines, particularly on the left bank, surprising freshness and only moderate alcohols.

The wines in general have deep colours, dark fruit and floral aromatics, good fruit concentration and fine, gentle tannins.

The vintage seems to have been particularly successful for Merlot grapes grown on clay soils, which were able to retain the maximum possible rainfall from earlier in the growing season, and which could be picked at perfect ripeness before the late September rains. Pomerol, much of St Emilion, Pessac Leognan, Margaux and St Julien appear to have produced the most consistently high quality wines this year.

The heat and water stress in the summer reduced volumes produced by around 10% vs the long term average in Bordeaux. This reduction in quantities available will be exaggerated by the current trend for many of the more famous chateaux to release smaller proportions of their wines en primeur; a trend which makes it extremely difficult to satisfy demand for the most sought after wines – please note!

Should you buy 2020 Bordeaux en primeur?

Yes, IF the prices are correct in relation to wine quality. I will only recommend wines which I believe have a fair quality:price ratio and are worthy of buying 2 years before you will actually receive them!

Yes, if there are specific chateaux you love and you want to be sure of securing a case or two of at their release price.

Yes, if you would like half bottles or large-sized bottles, which are very difficult to buy in the future.

I will send out my Bordeaux 2020 En Primeur offer at the end of June once all wines have been released for sale, and I have had the opportunity to select my best buys of the vintage.

Please let me know if you would like to receive this offer.