

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

More important than meets the blend:

It's hard being taken for granted, whether you're a letter carrier, a sanitation employee, or in this case a noble red grape. Like its two human counterparts, we just expect them to do their job and be done with it. It's when they're missing that we notice their absence. And such, in a nutshell, is the current lot of Cabernet Franc, a grape



that is expected to do its job in the Bordeaux blend with little in the way of collectors' acknowledgment. Take it away, however, and most premium claret would not be nearly as good,

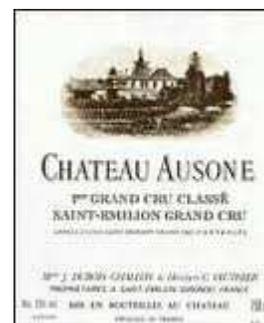
and then we'd get just as upset as when our birthday cards don't arrive and/or two weeks' worth of refuse remains uncollected.



And make no mistake: the presence of Cabernet Franc is seldom nothing short of critical when crafting Bordeaux.

Ripening earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc has historically been utilized as a type of 'insurance grape' against cooler growing seasons—nowadays much less of an issue as a result of climate change. On both the Left and Right Banks, its key contribution is fragrance, adding perfume to the blend in such a manner that cannot be accomplished by Cabernet Sauvignon and/or Merlot on their own.

On the Right Bank, in particular, where Cabernet Sauvignon has great difficulty fully ripening, Cabernet Franc is considered invaluable in this respect, with even a few estates using up to or more than 50% of it on occasion. Notable examples include Ausone (possessing 55% in 2009), Cheval Blanc (containing 56% in 2010), Lafleur (boasting 57% in 2009), and Angelus (carrying 40% in 2009). Other high(er) users of



The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

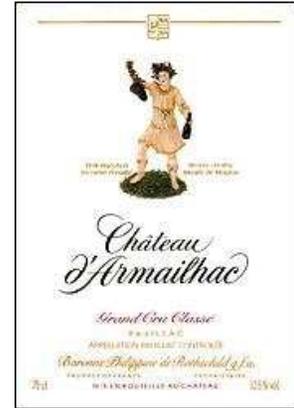
2

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Cabernet Franc are Figeac and Canon-la-Gaffelière, both of which used 35% in 2010, Beaugard (25% in 2010), Canon (25% in 2009), Le Gay and Pavie (both used 20% in 2010), and La Conseillante (19% in 2009).

On the Left Bank, Cabernet Franc nowadays ranks third in importance, with Merlot assuming a much greater role than ever before. Still, there are a few estates that continue to use slightly more Cabernet Franc than others, including: d'Armailhac and du Tertre (both used 15% in 2010), Kirwan (13% in 2009), Montrose and Léoville-Las Cases (both 9% in 2009), Malescot-St-Exupéry (8% in 2009), and Brane-Cantenac (8% in 2010). For each of these châteaux, by the way, there is a slightly greater percentage of Cabernet Franc in their vineyards.



So much for Bordeaux, but what about the rest of France, or the rest of the world for that matter? For most enthusiasts, Cabernet Franc reaches its greatest individualistic expression in certain parts of the Loire, in particular Chinon and Bourgueil, plus St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil. Here, when full ripeness occurs, the grape seems to thrive, taking on wonderful silky overtones and aromas of fragrant black currants and raspberry traces. Such wines are typically lighter-bodied, the best medium, and will keep for up to ten years when conditions permit.

In other places, Cabernet Franc often has trouble standing up on its own. While a few examples in California and Australia sometimes have the potential of making heads turn, the grape simply doesn't seem to inspire on its own. Places where Cabernet Franc might hold greater potential? New Zealand will always be a contender, but with Kiwis' becoming better and better at mastering Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, it's increasingly likely that Cabernet Franc will become less significant over time. Surprisingly, the grape just may have a bright



~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

future in Canada, where early ripeners are precisely the ticket in so cold a climate. For now, however, it seems the most desirable Cabernet Franc in Ontario is made into late harvest and icewine; though there are a few excellent dry table wine versions available. The reason? My guess: the wine would probably not be all that drinkable in any other state. Not that the sweet versions taste bad. On the contrary, the best examples are often quite superb, though they shall always remain something of an novelesque oddity.

Thus, we arrive back at Cabernet Franc's most purposeful *raison d'être*, its primary reason for being: to serve as an invaluable component in the Bordeaux blend. May it continue to serve in this noble capacity for centuries to come, never deviating, never disappointing, and always there when we need it.

[Click here for a few gems from the 18 February 2012 Vintages Release along with several others](#)

A few gems for collectors:

White Wines:

Château Pape Clément Blanc 2009, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: After Haut-Brion and La Mission, this could very well be the top white Bordeaux of 2009—a creation of magnificent posture, intensity, elegance, and breed. Pale lime in colour, the whimsical Pape Clément Blanc starts off with dazzling, slightly exotic scents of star fruit and lemon citrus, giving way to pears, orange zest, the most delicate of caramel, white chalk, almonds, quince, passion fruit, minerals, and an extraordinary hint of vanilla and spice. Insatiably complex, delivering stupendous, elegant fruit, perfect acidity, and an absolutely darling, endearing hint of lemon citrus, kiwi, almonds, and minerals on the finish. So multilayered and intense, it almost seems as if the wine is telling a story. 48% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Sémillon, 6% Muscadelle, and 6% Sauvignon Gris. Now-2028. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, January 2012)

96 \$245.00 (#275495) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Domaine de Chevalier Blanc 2009, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: Consistently one of the greats of Pessac-Léognan, the 2009 Domaine de Chevalier Blanc tops the charts as an unbelievable, incontestably fabulous wine of remarkable refinement, intensity, and breed. Pale-light lime in colour, it exhibits astounding scents of lemon citrus, pears, star fruit, kiwi, minerals, almond paste, and the slightest touch of lanolin, vanilla, orange peel, acacia, and spice. Truly complex, with extraordinary intensity of fruit and balanced acidity, ending with an unfathomably elegant hint of lemon citrus, minerals, and subtle almonds on the finish. Resolutely seductive, collectors should have no hesitation acquiring a few cases of this heavenly wine. Typically 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Sémillon. Now-2025++. (Julian Hitner, *The Successful Collector*, January 2012)

95+ \$149.00 (#581041) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

4

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2009, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France:

A liquid lesson in delicacy at its near-finest, the 2009 Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc is probably the most engrossing, ethereal wine co-proprietors Daniel and Florence Cathiard have ever produced (the '07 is more verbose). Pale lime in colour, the wine is finely toasted, offering utterly brilliant scents of lemon citrus and pears, switching to almonds, orange zest, kiwi, gooseberries, minerals, and the slightest hint of vanillin and white flowers. Truly complex, carrying excellent, intensely delicate fruit, balanced acidity, and a magnificent, ponderous hint of lemony pears, minerals and citrus oils on the finish. Fabulously subtle, tempting, and refined. 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sémillon, and 5% Sauvignon Gris. Now-2024+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93++ \$135.00 (#201418) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château de Vaudieu 2009 Clos du Belvédère, Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc AOC, Rhône, France:

Made in only small quantities, white Châteauneuf can be just as exquisite (and just as unremarkable at times) as its red counterparts, of which the 2009 Clos du Belvédère suits the former. Light straw-lime in colour, the wine displays exemplary, individualistic scents of 'white' lavender, lemon, almonds, buttercups, bergamot, loamy chalk, and cream. Very complex and quite rich, delivering beautifully inlaid fruit, balanced acidity, and an elegant, polished hint of lemon, bergamot, and chalk traces on the finish. Truly delicious, powerful (15% alcohol), and approachable. 100% Grenache Blanc. Now-2022. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

92 \$84.95 (#234740) Vintages Online Exclusives

Signorello 2008 Vieilles Vignes Chardonnay, Napa Valley, California:

Robust, lifted, and brilliantly crafted, the 2008 Vieilles Vignes is an excellent Napa Chardonnay with collectors' inclinations written all over it. Light lime in colour, the wine is finely toasted, offering in-depth, elegant scents of caramel, pears, subtle quince, nectarines, apricots, orange zest, nuts, vanilla, and lemon/lime-citrus. Very complex, possessing delicious, excellent fruit, slightly milder acidity, and a lasting, polished hint of caramel and pears on the finish. Carrying clear Burgundian tendencies, one almost feels such wines are constricted by the Americanized approach (or battle) of 'more versus less.' At least the '08 resigns itself to a superlative stalemate. Now-2019+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

91+ \$51.95 (#742692) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Michel Picard 2007, Meursault Les Corbins AOC, Burgundy, France:

Located north of the actual village of Meursault, the Les Corbins vineyard is bordered by the Premier Cru Les Plures to the northwest. This is the only note, a rather impressive one, I have from this site. Light straw-lime in colour, the '07 is moderately toasted, delivering truly delightful, focused scents of hazelnutted pears, apricots, quince, green apples, minerals, and a hint of dried caramel. Complex, displaying very fine fruit, balanced acidity, and an elegant, bashful hint of delicate pears and hazelnuts on the finish. Showing beautiful restraint and polish, even dimension; a class act. Now-2015+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

90+ \$43.95 (#183335) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release

Paul Hobbs 2008 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (Sonoma County), California:

More and more, I'm becoming convinced that the best Chardonnays from California are

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

from the Russian River Valley; they just seem to contain that extra level of dimension so often missing from other places. Starbright, light green in colour with a touch of straw, the 2008 Paul Hobbs is finely toasted, offering beautiful aromas of pears, quince, butterscotch, apricots, light orange blossom, and nuts. Complex, displaying fine, expressive fruit, balanced acidity, and a lingering hint of pears and toasted oak, which, though present, doesn't seem out of balance. Impactful, flavourful wine—delicious. Now-2016++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

90 \$44.95 (#119073) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release

Rodney Strong 2009 Reserve Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (Sonoma County), California: A significant step up from most of the other whites I have ever tasted from here, the 2009 Reserve Chardonnay is a fulsome, fresh, and delectable wine. Pale-light lime in colour, it offers beautiful, engaging scents of pears, nectarines, orange zest, delicate quince, nuts, and a hint of citrus oils and vanilla. Complex, with great fruit, slightly milder acidity, and a vibrant, lingering hint of pears and subtle orange zest traces (quite polished and poignant) on the finish. Superb effort. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, February 2012)

90 \$34.95 (#210039) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

La Crema 2009 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, California: I believe the expression 'old school' best describes the '09 Chardonnay: definitively on the oaky side, yet saved by the superb quality of its ingredients. Light greenish-lime in colour, the wine is finely toasted, with oak-driven scents of apricots, butterscotch, pears, custard, quince, orange blossom, vanillin, and nuts. Complex and rich, featuring round, full-bodied fruit, milder acidity, and a lasting, polished hint of pears, nuts, and toasted oak on the finish. Immensely appealing for what it is ... for what it is. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

89+ \$28.95 (#962886) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Mount Riley 2011 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand: Always a reliable source for impressive everyday wines, the 2011 Sauvignon Blanc is a balanced, fresh, and zesty bottling. Extremely pale lime in colour, it reveals pleasing scents of grassy gooseberries, mild tomato leaf, minerals, white peach skins, and lemon. Palate: lovely zesty fruit on display, with balanced acidity, and a nervy, refined hint of grassy gooseberries on the finish. Refreshing and extremely easy to appreciate. Screwcap closure. Now-2013. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

88 \$16.95 (#981670) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Domaine Wachau 2010 Terrassen Federspiel Grüner Veltliner, Wachau, Austria: Flagship grape from Austria's flagship region (though I prefer Riesling), the 2010 Grüner Veltliner is a correct, balanced, and refreshing wine. Pale straw-lime in colour, it displays pleasant, delicate notes of extremely subtle white pepper, green apples, white lentils, lemon/lime, leafy herbs, and minerals. Palate: good, invigorating fruit showing, with balanced acidity, and a lovely hint of lemon, minerals, and white lentils (very faint) on the finish. Plenty to enjoy here. Screwcap closure. Now-2014. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

88 \$17.95 (#31534) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Dowie Doole 2009 Chenin Blanc, McLaren Vale, South Australia, Australia: Decent offering from a reliable operation. Pale straw-lime in colour, the 2009 Chenin Blanc displays pleasant, delicate notes of dewy lime, green apple-laced lemon, wool, and a hint of orange peel. Palate: good fruit showing, with balanced acidity, and a hint of lemony green apples (slightly dewy) on the finish. Solid 'little' Chenin. Screwcap closure. Now-2012+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

87+ \$16.95 (#709246) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release

Tabalí 2011 Reserva Sauvignon Blanc, Limarí Valley, Chile: Very active and fresh, the 2011 Reserva Sauvignon Blanc is an easygoing everyday white. Extremely pale lime in colour, it has an intense 'Marlborough' influence about it, displaying lots of gooseberries, cat's pee, minerals, asparagus, and a hint of fragrant lemon. Palate: zesty fruit and acidity showing, ending with a refreshing hint of gooseberries and lemon on the finish. Nicely priced. Screwcap closure. Now-2012. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, February 2012)

87+ \$14.95 (#662999) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Domaine François Schwach 2008 Muscat, Alsace AOC, France: Round, balanced, and boasting good staying power on the mouth, the 2008 François Schwach is a solid Muscat for casual enjoyment. Pale straw-lime in colour, it is intensely grapey, with decent notes of tropical peaches, ginger, Asian spices, lemon, and lychees. Palate: nice fruit showing, with balanced acidity, and a hint of perfumed grapes and peaches on the finish. For people like me who enjoy Muscat, this goes down easy. Now-2013+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, February 2012)

87 \$15.95 (#261644) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Red Wines:

Château Figeac 2009, St-Emilion AOC Premier Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: With clear aspirations of promotion to the same status as Ausone and Cheval Blanc, the 2009 Château Figeac is a testament to what can be achieved at this terrific estate; a wine so wonderful, so close to perfection, that proprietor Eric d'Aramon might be forgiven for thinking, price-wise, that his château has already been given the nod. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this legend in the making, beautifully toasted, presents astoundingly multilayered aromas of slightly fragrant mocha and currants, plums, blackberries, black cherries, espresso, graham crackers, violets, licorice, vanilla, and spice. Blatantly complex, possessing profound, wondrously elegant yet generous fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an almost holistic, stupendous hint of perfumed mocha, currants, plums, and pencil lead on the finish. An out-of-body experience, this is a claret of tremendous allure, structure, style, depth, and finesse. Equal parts Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2045++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

98+ \$375.00 (#202689) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Haut-Bailly 2009, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: As if by subterfuge, the wines of Haut-Bailly have rapidly, though almost subtly, emerged as some of the most mesmerizing, most alluring wines of the appellation. The question, however, is whether or not the '09 is Veronique Sanders' best ever wine? Could be: dark-opaque ruby in colour, this blossoming beauty is amazingly toasted, featuring awe-

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

inspiring aromas of currants, mocha, spring flowers, black cherries, plums, coffee, licorice, intense graphite, asphalt, espresso, vanilla, and spice. Resolutely complex, possessing dazzling, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, profound hint of deep graphite-laden currants and espresso on the finish. A claret of astounding layering, refinement, pedigree, and the like. What a wine! 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, and 3% Cabernet Franc. Now-2036++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

97++ \$179.00 (#201343) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château La Conseillante 2009, Pomerol AOC, Bordeaux, France: While I have many other recent notes from La Conseillante, none come even close to matching the awesome allure, finesse, intensity, and concentration of the illustrious, poet laureate-like 2009 bottling. Dark-opaque ruby in colour and retaining brilliantly toasted oak, it offers ecstatically multilayered aromas of mocha-espresso, blackberries, black cherries, crème de cassis, Oreo Cookies®, crushed rocks, licorice, leather, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Outrageously complex, displaying decadent, 'classical' fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lasting, distinctly refined hint of espresso, plummy currants, graphite, and licorice on the finish. Incredible in almost every respect, could this be the best vintage ever? Hard to say, as La Conseillante has produced so many great wines. For my part, however, the '09 will probably become my favourite wine from here when matching it against others in the decades to come. 81% Merlot and 19% Cabernet Franc. Now-2042++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

97 \$325.00 (#201913) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Pape Clément 2009, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: The attitudinally rock star-like wine of Pessac-Léognan, the 2009 Pape Clément seduces its audience with all the skill of a performer who knows just how to please his/her fans. Amazingly toasted, this legend in the making includes incredible multilayered aromas of espresso, currants, crème de cassis, blackberries, graphite, Oreo Cookies®, black cherries, blueberries, forest floor (very mild), vanilla, and spice. Extremely complex, showcasing amazingly elegant, multidimensional fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a wholly luxurious, emphatic hint of espresso, currants, and pencil lead on the finish. Truly the best wine proprietor Bernard Magrez has ever been associated with. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot, and 2% Cabernet Franc. Now-2040+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

97 \$225.00 (#202309) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Clinet 2009, Pomerol AOC, Bordeaux, France: Hands down the greatest Château Clinet ever, proprietors Jean-Louis Laborde and son Ronan have effectively blessed collectors everywhere with their immortal '09. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is heavenly in virtually every detail, revealing stupendous, hedonistic aromas of finely toasted and mocha, seamlessly switching to currants, black cherries, espresso cream, crushed rocks, licorice, loamy earth (of the highest quality), woodsmoke, vanilla, and spice. Incredibly complex, delivering unbelievably seductive, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a long, heavenly hint of currants, black cherries, graphite, and nougats on the finish. Fantastically done: a wine of miraculous intensity, depth, multilayering, and allure. 87% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2040++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

96++ \$265.00 (#165449) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

8

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Clos Fournet 2009, St-Emilion AOC Premier Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: Easily the greatest Clos Fournet ever produced, quality at this estate has soared beyond measure under current owner Philippe Cuvelier and his son Matthieu. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the phenomenal '09 is brilliantly toasted, revealing magnificent aromas of creamy black cherried mocha, plummy currants, crème de cassis, coffee, 'dusty' red licorice, flowers, woodsmoke, vanilla, and spice. Supremely complex, possessing elegant, almost voluptuous fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an extraordinary, lingering hint of velvety cherried currants, mocha, and plums on the finish. Of unbelievable intensity, profoundness, and desire, collectors' affection for this gem shall certainly be considerable. 88% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 4% Cabernet Franc. Now-2034++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

96+ \$175.00 (#580399) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Dominus 2008, Napa Valley, California: With the dazzling '08, one could easily proclaim this is as the beginning of a new level of excellence here, at the winery that has never really managed to live up to its connections with Petrus. Opaque ruby in colour, this enthralling Dominus starts off finely toasted (very subtle), delivering uncanny, amazingly alluring aromas of spring flowers aligned with freshly baked mocha, blackberries, blueberries, charcoal, crème de cassis, licorice, graham crackers, and a hint of forest floor, graphite, vanilla, and spice. Emphatically complex and multilayered, possessing extremely elegant, brilliantly textured fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an engrossing, decadent hint of crème de cassis, licorice, mocha, and graphite on the finish. Easily the greatest Dominus I have ever tasted: abundant, poised, generous, and unflinchingly masterful. Its Bordelaise components mingle flawlessly with its Californian origins. 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petit Verdot. Now-2038++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

96 \$145.95 (#212381) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Château Léoville Barton 2009, St-Julien AOC, Bordeaux, France: Strikingly similar to the '05, only that much more concentrated and agile (typical of the vintage), the 2009 Léoville Barton effectively catapults this exquisite estate into the category of the 'Super Seconds,' even if the price remains lower—and so much more reasonable. Dense ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted, presenting exciting, decadent aromas of 'crunchy' currants and blackberries, mocha, black cherries, crème de cassis, spring flowers, licorice, crushed rocks, charcoal, vanilla, and spice. Outstandingly complex and multilayered, revealing fantastically elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an amazingly pure, lingering, and slightly hedonistic hint of currants, graphite, and delicate cherried spring flowers on the finish. Fantastically integrated, refined, bountiful, and alluring. 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22.5% Merlot, and 0.5% Cabernet Franc. Now-2042++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

96 \$149.00 (#201376) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Lynch Bages 2009, Pauillac AOC, Bordeaux, France: The best Lynch Bages ever? Hard to say, as there have been so many great vintages from this much-beloved estate. Perhaps a thorough review of the stunning '09, the wine in question, would help: dark-opaque ruby in colour, it is brilliantly toasted, showcasing magnificent, unusually decadent aromas of espresso-laden currants and mocha (seamlessly integrated), blackberries, black cherries, licorice, charcoal, graphite, suede leather,

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

vanilla, and spice. Immensely complex and multilayered, featuring outstanding, classic fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, extraordinary hint of currants, graphite, and black cherries (rather poignant) on the finish. Such allure, intensity, and stature, is the '09 the best Lynch Bages ever? Could be, but even if it isn't, it comes exceedingly close. 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 2% Petit Verdot. Now-2040++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

96 \$235.00 (#274902) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Pichon-Longueville Comtesse de Lalande 2009, Pauillac AOC, Bordeaux, France: The most sensual of the Pauillacs, the 2009 Pichon Comtesse is a testament to terroir—a wine so different from its same-named, across-the-road counterpart that you'd never know Lalande and Baron were neighbours. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this intoxicating, Burgundian-inspired claret, beautifully toasted, exhibits dazzling aromas of strawberried currants, plums, blackberries, dark cherries, violet perfume (intermixed with assorted potpourri), licorice, crushed rocks, mild herbs and leather, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, delivering outstandingly refined fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a sinful, sensually elegant hint of silky strawberried currants and pencil lead on the finish. This has all the marks of a legend in the making; the only thing now needed is time. 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, and 5% Petit Verdot. Now-2036++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

96 \$295.00 (#202200) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Canon-la-Gaffelière 2009, St-Emilion Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: Quite likely the most decadent, luxurious wine Stéphan von Neipperg has ever created, the 2009 Canon-la-Gaffelière is a masterpiece at appealing to the lusty, provocative side of our senses. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this seducer of cellar space presents unbelievably opulent aromas of beautiful toasted oak and mocha that eventually switches to black cherries, plums, blackberries, crème de cassis, espresso, licorice, vanillin, graphite, and spice. Really complex, possessing abundant yet magnificent fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lasting, luxurious hint of plummy blackberries, creamy mocha, and black cherries on the finish. About as profound and inviting as a wine of this type gets. 55% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Franc. Now-2035++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

95++ \$145.00 (#200196) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Smith Haut Lafitte 2009, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: Could this be the Cathiards' opus vintage? Subtle in some respects while prodigiously enticing in others, the 2009 Smith Haut Lafitte is a stupendous achievement no matter which way you look at it. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this wondrous wine is finely toasted, possessing classic, elegant aromas of exotic coffee-laden mocha and currants, blackberries and cherries, plums, graphite, licorice, sushi wrapper (top notch), forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Almost dramatically complex, delivering outstandingly elegant, multilayered fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a fantastically refined hint of currants, plums, and graphite on the finish. With such personality, subtleties, and depth, collectors needn't shy away from this beauty. 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot. Now-2035+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

95++ \$145.00 (#580241) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Elderton 2006 Command Single Vineyard Shiraz, Barossa, South Australia, Australia: Flagship wine of the Elderton stable, when the Command is on form, it constitutes one of the most seductive, most abundantly layered wines in Australia. Opaque ruby in colour, the stupendous '06 displays superbly refined, youthful aromas of milk chocolate, finely toasted oak, eucalyptus, currants, leathery blackberries, cherries, freshly brewed coffee, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, delivering unbelievably smooth, decadent fruit, velvety tannins, mild acidity, and a fantastic, long-lasting hint of silky milk chocolate and plums on the finish. Opulent, hedonistic, sumptuous, and multilayered, this is unquestionably one of the greatest vintages I have ever tasted. Bravo! Now-2032++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2010)

95 \$89.95 (#716142) Vintages 2 October 2010 Release

Château Pichon-Longueville Baron 2009, Pauillac AOC, Bordeaux, France: Quintessential 'Baron,' the 2009 Pichon-Longueville encapsulates the spirit of (arguably) the greatest appellation on the Left Bank. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is beautifully toasted, presenting pure 'Pauillac' aromas of mocha, currants, blackberries, plums, black cherries, pencil lead, violets, licorice, saddle leather, premium coffee brew elements, minerals, and a seamless hint of vanilla and spice. Intrinsically complex, delivering magnificently focused, intense, and elegant fruit, firm yet slightly supple tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, amazingly polished hint of currants, black cherries, and graphite on the finish. Immensely elegant, generous, stylish, and robust, this closely resembles the '05, only with more concentration—such is the only really substantial difference, in my opinion. 67% Cabernet Sauvignon and 33% Merlot (according to one source). Now-2036++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

95 \$209.00 (#201764) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Canon 2009, St-Emilion AOC Premier Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: A startling improvement in comparison to most of its other vintages, one can only hope that Château Canon has turned over a new leaf (for good) with its astounding '09—a wine of such style, intensity, and structural brilliance that it's almost unrecognizable from many of the estate's other bottlings. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this astonishing wine exhibits ultra-unique, alluring aromas of beautifully toasted oak, mocha, black cherries, currants, plums, coffee ice cream, licorice, red currants, graphite (almost fragrant), minerals, spring flowers, vanilla, and spice. Amazingly complex, featuring fantastic, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a decisively refined, superlative hint of mocha, plummy currants, and coffee ice cream on the finish. The best Canon ever? It sure as hell looks like it. 75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Franc. Now-2036++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

94++ \$209.00 (#209270) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Tenuta dell' Ornellaia 2007 Ornellaia, Bolgheri Superiore DOC, Tuscany, Italy: Rightly considered one of the greatest Super Tuscans of them all, the astounding 2007 Ornellaia serves as a continuation of what has been a remarkable string of vintages. Opaque ruby in colour, it offers incredibly luxurious aromas of milk chocolate intermixed with black cherried currants, blackberries, kirsch, leather, pencil lead, spicebox, vanilla, and a trace of roasted meats. Extremely complex, with marvellously layered, poised, delicious fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a gorgeous hint of black cherries, currants, and pencil lead on the finish. Sensational offering: classic,

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

expressive, and decadent. Wow! 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Petit Verdot. Now-2025++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2010)

94++ \$184.95 (#722470) Vintages 2 October 2010 Release

Château Rauzan-Ségla 2009, Margaux AOC, Bordeaux, France: Restored to its original lustre under the prudent administration of John Kolasa since 1994 when the estate was taken over by Chanel, Rauzan-Ségla has quietly yet steadfastly assumed its place as the best château of the appellation, after the eponymous Châteaux Margaux and Palmer. Hence, the fabulous 2009: dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine, finely toasted, presents absolutely exquisite aromas of subtle, fragrant mocha and currants, giving way to dried raspberries and violets, black cherries, crushed flowers, licorice, pencil lead, vanilla, and spice. Sincerely complex, boasting stupendously elegant, wonderfully integrated fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a wholly refined, tantalizingly silky, yet texturally expressive, hint of pure fragrant currants and violets on the finish. Probably the best Rauzan-Ségla I have ever tasted. Bravo! 68% Cabernet Sauvignon and 32% Merlot. Now-2035+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

94 \$145.00 (#200725) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Troplong Mondot 2009, St-Emilion Premier Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: Likely the most powerful of the '09s, though it logs in at a massive, unprecedented 15.4% alcohol, the 2009 Troplong Mondot retains all the necessary constituents to both handle itself and excel like few other 'blockbuster clarets.' Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine delivers rich aromas of 'thick' mocha, currants, plums, kirsch liqueur, licorice, sesame oils, leather, port-like black fruits, vanilla, and spice. Fabulously complex, proffering amazingly velvety fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an astonishing, lingering hint of smooth plummy currants and mocha on the finish. Excellent, powerful, and wholly unique—my, my, my. But will this wine last as long as its peers? Only time will tell. 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc. Now-2030++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

94 \$209.00 (#201004) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Beau-Séjour Bécot 2009, St-Emilion Premier Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: With this wine, along with a terrific '08 and several other excellent back vintages, Beau-Séjour Bécot has now firmly secured its place as one of the most improved, most collectible Premier Crus of St-Emilion. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the fantastic '09 is finely toasted, displaying startlingly alluring, surprisingly fragrant aromas of spring flowers, currants, blackberries, plums, licorice, mild incense, graphite, leather, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, delivering excellent, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an incredible, almost heavenly hint of spring flowers, currants, and pencil lead on the finish. Even at 14.5% alcohol, a wine of superlative purity, style, structure, and breed. 70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2036++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93++ \$109.00 (#580274) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Gruaud Larose 2009, St-Julien AOC, Bordeaux, France: As elegant and graceful as ever, the 2009 Gruaud Larose performs like a Schubert string quartet: so lyrical, harmonious, and emotionally relevant that all one can do is sit back, take a sip,

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

and enjoy the music. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this gem is finely yet delicately toasted, offering amazingly refined aromas of slightly fragrant currants and black cherries, switching to mild mocha shavings, blackberries, licorice, graphite, subtle grilled herbs, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, possessing strikingly elegant, extraordinary fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an almost 'strict,' pedigree-oriented hint of currants, plums, and flowers (plus a few black cherries) on the finish. The epitome of great St-Julien, from one of my favourite wineries in Bordeaux. 68% Cabernet Sauvignon and 32% Merlot. Now-2032++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93++ \$125.00 (#580753) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Cantenac-Brown 2009, Margaux AOC, Bordeaux, France: Indisputably the best vintage ever, the 2009 Cantenac-Brown should settle all doubts as to the potential of this long-underperforming estate. Dark ruby in colour, this great wine features enticingly fragrant aromas of dried raspberried black currants and violets, switching to blackberries, blueberries, flowers, pencil lead, minerals, mild graham crackers, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, presenting exceptional, unusually decadent yet decisively delicate fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, absolutely marvellous hint of silky violet currants, black raspberries, and graphite on the finish. Uncannily focused, supremely elegant, and stylish. Fantastic claret. 65% Cabernet Sauvignon and 35% Merlot. Now-2030++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93+ \$199.00 (#580639) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste 2009, Pauillac AOC, Bordeaux, France: For Pauillac lovers, the wines of Grand-Puy-Lacoste are continual must-haves for any thoroughly assembled collection; and while the 2009 is just a shade less ambitious than the phenomenal '05, there is absolutely no reason not to adore this wine. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, it is finely toasted, with—what I assume to be—deliberately ethereal yet superb aromas of currants, blackberries, plums, roasted herbs, graphite, black cherries, licorice, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, possessing excellently structured, supreme 'Pauillac' fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an elegant, stylish hint of currants, graphite, and black cherries (all extremely pure) on the finish. Marvellously assembled: focused, upright, and sincerely harmonious. Now-2030++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93+ \$115.00 (#199406) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Saint-Pierre 2009, St-Julien AOC, Bordeaux, France: A shame this smaller-sized estate isn't better known, for its wines are often of superlative calibre, with the exquisite '09 ranking among the best ever made. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this brilliant wine is beautifully toasted, displaying magnificently engaging, assertive aromas of suggestively fragrant currants, blackberries, plums, dried black cherries, licorice, burning embers, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Innately complex, featuring excellent, harmonious fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a wonderfully elegant hint of delicate mocha, currants, and flowers on the finish. In the end: a claret of incredible purity, structure, depth, and finesse. The vineyard is planted to 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, and 10% Cabernet Franc—a shame I was unable to learn the exact percentages of the vintage. Now-2034++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93+ \$119.00 (#229526) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Château Brane-Cantenac 2009, Margaux AOC, Bordeaux, France: Remarkably similar to the '05, only a shade fuller, the 2009 Brane-Cantenac is a claret of unabashed pedigree, finesse, balance, and fragrant, sensual delight. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is wonderfully perfumed, featuring superlative aromas of raspberry-driven currants and blackberries, plums, spring flowers (mostly violets), licorice, delicate graphite, minerals, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, offering excellent, aristocratically pure fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an utterly refined, (appellation-) 'Margaux' hint of violet currants, black raspberried plums, and minerals on the finish. Likely the best wine owner Henri Lurton has ever presided over. Beyond enviable. 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 7% Cabernet Franc. Now-2032+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93 \$109.00 (#580621) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Lafon-Rochet 2009, St-Estèphe AOC, Bordeaux, France: Matching the sensational '05 pound for pound, the 2009 Lafon-Rochet is easily one of the best wines ever made at this excellent estate. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, it is marvellously toasted, featuring wonderful aromas of currants, blackberries, crushed flowers, graphite, forest floor, and a hint of blueberries, pain grille, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, possessing superb fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a truly elegant, classical hint of currants, licorice, and 'iron' asphalt on the finish. Excellent harmony, breed, and finesse. Kudos to the Tesseron family for their obvious commitment to quality, which, in the case of the '09, is nothing short of considerable. According to one source: 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot, and 3% Petit Verdot—is the rest Cabernet Franc? Now-2030+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, November 2011)

93 \$77.00 (#197228) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Langoa Barton 2009, St-Julien AOC, Bordeaux, France: The greatest Langoa Barton I have ever tasted, while other recent vintages have also been excellent, it's the extra concentration and finesse that puts the '09 in a league of its own. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine, with a shade of the 'Margaux' appellation about it, reveals sensational aromas of finely toasted oak and fragrant currants, switching to blackberries, violets (spring flowers), black fruits, black cherries, fresh herbs (extremely subtle), forest floor, asphalt, and spice. Very complex, boasting wonderfully pure, elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined, suggestively velvety hint of currants and flowers on the finish. Pure, smooth, and refined, collectors will want to hurry and secure a case or two of the stuff. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, and 3% Cabernet Franc. Now-2032+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93 \$95.00 (#201061) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Château Pavie Macquin 2009, St-Emilion Premier Grand Cru Classé AOC, Bordeaux, France: Burgeoning with unfettered uniqueness, generosity, and character, the 2009 Pavie Macquin is a testament to proprietor Nicolas Thienpont's refusal to rest on his laurels after securing his estate's well-earned promotion in 2006. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine shares extraordinary aromas of fig-laced mocha, currants, black cherries, kirsch, forest floor, licorice, subtle wild game, flowers, woodsmoke, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, possessing wonderfully vibrant, expressive fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an outstanding hint of figs, mocha, and red currants on the finish. So delicious and fulsome, its otherwise sinewy characteristics only serve to enhance its

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

allurement. 85% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot. Now-2032++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

93 \$145.00 (#229260) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Podere La Vigna 2004, Brunello di Montalcino Riserva DCG, Tuscany, Italy: Not having any prior (recorded) notes from this winery, the 2004 Podere La Vigna puts me in an excellent frame of mind when recording my observations. Dark-opaque garnet in colour, this wonderful Brunello Riserva is aging superbly, exhibiting a fantastic bouquet of cedarwood-infused plums, undergrowth, gun flint, dried mocha, saddle leather, loamy earth, and spice. Very complex, with exemplary elegant fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, refined yet assertive hint of dried cedary plums on the finish. A wine of wonderful style, structure, and attitude. Now-2020+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

93 \$71.95 (#244178) Vintages Online Exclusives

Caymus 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California: For collectors, the 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon is an easy choice: sumptuous, fulsome, and wholly representative of its Napa Valley origins. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine displays amazing aromas of finely toasted oak and dark mocha, giving way to delicate black currants, blackberries, plums, violets, charcoal, tar, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, offering delicious fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a long-lasting hint of dark mocha and plummy currants on the finish. Considering the much-heralded quality of the vintage, collectors should expect nothing less. Now-2022++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2010)

92+ \$69.95 (#222877) Vintages 2 October 2010 Release

San Felice 2006 Vigorello, IGT Toscana, Tuscany, Italy: While not in the same league as Sassicaia or Solaia, the Vigorello label of San Felice has always retained a first-rate reputation for excellence. Opaque ruby in colour, the '06 reveals resplendent, alluring aromas of dark fragrant chocolate, stewed blackberries, tarry leather, licorice, camphor, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with outstanding fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, sumptuous hint of baked mocha and stewed blackberries on the finish. Massively extracted, still remarkable in terms of structure, style, and (even) balance. The website lists the blend as 40% Sangiovese, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 20% Merlot. Now-2024. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

92+ \$52.95 (#726463) Vintages Online Exclusives

Château Beychevelle 2009, St-Julien AOC, Bordeaux, France: A St-Julien of extraordinary finesse, structure, and style, the excellent 2009 Château Beychevelle, to put it mildly, continues to put the estate on a firm footing of successful, successive improvement. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, this superb claret is finely toasted, displaying extremely refined, inviting aromas of slightly raspberried/black cherried currants, blackberries, plums, licorice, asphalt, charcoal, dried herbs, and a hint of perfumed flowers (extremely subtle), vanilla, and spice. Very complex, showcasing remarkably refined fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a plentiful, elegant hint of black perfumed currants on the finish. Outstanding effort from an outstanding vintage. 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Petit Verdot. Now-2028++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

92 \$105.00 (#200543) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Coniglio 2005 Diamond Mountain District Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California: Having no notes from this winery, I am instantly made aware by the 2005 Diamond Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon that concentration and power are the orders of the day. Opaque red-garnet in colour, the wine is exceedingly rich, offering sumptuous, maturing aromas of baked currants intermixed with dark chocolate, cedarwood, molasses, camphor, forest floor, tar, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with mightily delicious, port-like forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a terrifically long-lasting hint of stewed mocha and plums on the finish. Parkerized to the point of human DNA replication and transference, still utterly delectable and tempting. Now-2020+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

92 \$67.95 (#227546) Vintages Online Exclusives

Castello di Nipozzano 2008 Mormoreto, IGT Toscana, Tuscany, Italy: Fiercely modern, unapologetically rich Bordeaux blend from Frescobaldi's excellent Nipozzano outpost. Opaque ruby in colour, the 2008 Mormoreto is unabashedly decadent, starting off with finely toasted oak that shortly gives way to abundant aromas of black mocha, coffee, currants, crème de cassis, blackberry treacle, sushi wrapper, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Complex, carrying outgoing, sumptuous fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lengthy, polished hint of generous mocha and smooth plums (plus coffee) on the finish. Polished, lengthy, and hedonistic, what's not to like? Even the 14.5% alcohol doesn't seem out of whack. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petit Verdot (their website suggests the blend stays the same every year). Now-2024+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

91++ \$59.95 (#951210) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Ferraton 2006 Les Dionnières, Ermitage AOC, Rhône, France: Located in the southeast part of the appellation, this could very well be the only wine I have ever tasted from the Les Dionnières vineyard. Opaque ruby in colour with the slightest trace of red currant, the '06 starts out intrinsically leathery, featuring almost 'roasted' aromas of currants, subtle brambleberries, asphalt, walnuts, forest floor, grilled herbs, and a hint of pepper and spice. Complex, boasting remarkable fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a robust, immensely refined hint of roasted leathery currants on the finish. Delicious, individualistic, well structured, and even a little stylish. Great Hermitage. Now-2021+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

91+ \$95.00 (#578781) Vintages Online Exclusives

Duckhorn 2009 Merlot, Napa Valley, California: More in line with the '07 than the '08, the 2009 Duckhorn Merlot, fulsome and inviting as always, shall be sure to find an eager audience. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted, featuring more hedonistically-driven aromas of fresh mocha, blackberries, plums, licorice (plus a few bonbons), mild spring flowers, marshmallows, and a hint of forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Complex, featuring intrinsically forward, delicious supple fruit, firm yet approachable tannins, milder acidity, and a lingering, polished hint of plums and licorice on the finish. Also contains 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Cabernet Franc. Designed specifically to give pleasure, it seems. Now-2019+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

91 \$56.95 (#992529) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Château Labégorce-Zéde 2006, Margaux AOC, Bordeaux, France: After the Classified Growths, Labégorce-Zéde ranks highly on most collectors' lists of great Margaux estates. Dark-opaque ruby in colour, the '06 seems slightly to be shutting down, nonetheless suggesting attractive, 'commune-specific' aromas of subtle fragrant currants and coffee beans, switching to blackberries, licorice, earth, forest floor, and spice. Complex, revealing superb, elegant forward fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined, 'comfortable' hint of currants and licorice on the finish. Beautiful delicacy, balance, and harmony. 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

91 \$47.95 (#234773) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Giuseppe Quintarelli 2001, Valpolicella Classico Superiore DOC, Veneto, Italy: From the most prestigious Veneto producer, the 2001 Valpolicella Classico Superiore is aging superbly, possessing wonderful 'regional' characteristics and grace. Medium-dark garnet in colour, it delivers a lovely bouquet of savoury cedar that promptly gives way to game-laced fruitcake, leather, undergrowth, and spice. Complex and mature, offering great fruit, well-integrated tannins, balanced acidity, and a beautiful hint of savoury, cedary plums on the finish. Great wine: unmistakably traditional (the hallmark of Quintarelli bottlings), characterful, and forever changing. Now-2015++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2010)

91 \$84.95 (#986117) Vintages 2 October 2010 Release

Clarendon Hills 2006 Hickinbotham Grenache, Clarendon, South Australia, Australia: Like all his other bottlings, owner Roman Bratasiuk's 2006 Hickinbotham Grenache is a powerhouse that some will adore, while others will despise—personally, I find his wines excellent. Dark-opaque ruby-red currant in colour, this particular beauty is richly toasted, possessing inviting aromas of baked eucalyptus and currants, leather, dates, nutmeg, delicate cedarwood, spicebox, and a hint of minty strawberries. Very complex, with powerful, almost fortified-like fruit, firm tannins, mild acidity, and a very long hint of stewed eucalyptus and currants on the finish. Weighty, ultra-powerful at 15.5% alcohol, and delicious. Now-2017++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, June 2011)

90++ \$74.00 (#928143) Vintages Online Exclusives

Clarendon Hills 2006 Onkaparinga Syrah, Clarendon, South Australia, Australia: Easily one of the most concentrated, powerful wines in this part of South Australia, some might find it strange that the wine is called 'Syrah' instead of 'Shiraz.' Not that it matters, for the 2006 Onkaparinga is downright enticing. Very dense red currant in colour, it offers invitingly unique aromas of baked dark chocolate, stewed currants and dates, eucalyptus, leather, soy, cumin, tar, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, with powerful, delicious forward fruit, firm yet supple tannins, mild acidity, high alcohol (15.5%), and a lasting, polished hint of stewed mocha and currants on the finish. Very strong, roasted style; an alluring force to be reckoned with. Now-2018++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, June 2011)

90++ \$99.00 (#64154) Vintages Online Exclusives

Santa Duc 2009 Les Garancières, Gigondas AOC, Rhône, France: Exemplary Gigondas of the near-highest calibre, the 2009 Les Garancières is a large, embracing bottling well-suited to collectors' cellars. Opaque ruby in colour with a streak of purple,

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

the wine features darkened, 'brooding' aromas of baked blackberries and plums, kirsch liqueur, black raspberries, licorice, blackberry compote, and a hint of leather, lavender, and spice. Very complex, possessing substantial, persevering fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering, expressive hint of baked blackberries and kirsch on the finish. Tempting, to say the least. 80% Grenache, 10% Syrah, and 10% Mourvèdre. Now-2022+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

90++ \$27.95 (#234989) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Ridge 2007 Santa Cruz Mountains Estate Cabernet/Merlot, Santa Cruz Mountains, California: Something of a 'second wine' to the legendary Monte Bello, the 2007 Santa Cruz Mountains Estate provides the taster with lots of in-depth character, flavour, and polish. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted, with tempting aromas of currants, blackberries, white pepper, leather, dried mocha, tobacco, forest floor, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with superb, opulent fruit, firm tannins, slightly milder acidity, moderate alcohol (13.3%), and a great hint of subtle mocha, currants, and leather on the finish. First-rate blend with a swell life ahead of it. 58% Cabernet Sauvignon and 42% Merlot. Now-2022+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

90+ \$49.95 (#89284) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Byron 2008 Nelson Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, California: Depending upon one's taste, the 2008 Nelson Vineyard is a delicious, Americanized (fruity and alcoholic) Pinot Noir that offers no end of pleasure. Dark ruby in colour, it is finely toasted (for a Pinot), with lovely aromas of dark curranted raspberries, black cherries, rhubarb, cola gummy bears, pain grille, and a hint of violets and spice. Complex, with delicious, almost Vosne-styled fruit, fine tannins, slightly milder acidity, and a refined hint of dark curranted raspberries on the finish. Impressively crafted, with great intensity and focus; though I could personally do without the 14.8% alcohol. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2011)

90 \$39.95 (#719161) Vintages Online Exclusives

Chateau Chevalier 2006 Spring Mountain Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District (Napa Valley), California: My only note from this winery, the 2006 Spring Mountain Vineyard is a big, flavourful, and characterful Cabernet. Opaque ruby in colour with a touch red currant, it's coming along attractively, displaying inviting aromas of baked mocha and curranted plums, blueberries, forest floor, leather, cedarwood, vanilla, and spice. Complex, delivering forward, delicious fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lasting, poignant hint of dried mocha, plums, and cedarwood traces on the finish. Like many Spring Mountain wines, noticeably more pristine and 'clearheaded' than many of its valley floor counterparts. Now-2020+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

90 \$34.95 (#256776) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Vignobles Diffonty 2009 Cuvée du Vatican, Châteauneuf-du-Pape AOC, Rhône, France: While retaining a less 'grippy' disposition than I would have otherwise preferred, the 2009 Cuvée du Vatican remains an undeniably delicious, desirable Châteauneuf. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine presents patently inviting aromas of slightly reddish, Provençal-infused currants, plums, dried black raspberries, leather, and a hint of kirsch and spice. Complex, with delicious, rounder-styled fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a persistent, fleshy hint of plummy currants and dried black raspberries on the finish.

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

In the end: ever-ready to give satisfaction. 70% Grenache, 25% Syrah, the rest Mourvèdre, Cinsault, and 'other varietals.' Now-2023. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

90 \$37.95 (#719120) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

O. Fournier 2002 Alfa Crux, Uco Valley (Mendoza), Argentina: With six years' aging to it, collectors are in for a fascinating opportunity to lay their hands on a sumptuous, going-the-distance, atypical blend. Opaque ruby in colour, the 2002 Alfa Crux is still remarkably youthful, with attractive aromas of wild flowers intermixed with mocha, currants, plums, blackberries, tar, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with beautiful, powerful fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lasting, almost velvety hint of mocha and currants on the finish. Seriously well crafted, superbly structured and endowed. 60% Tempranillo, 35% Malbec, and 5% Merlot. Now-2019+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

90 \$39.95 (#52704) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release

Mountadam 2007 The Red Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot/Cabernet Franc, High Eden (Eden Valley), South Australia, Australia: With shades of the 'Bordelais' about it, the 2007 Red is a delicious, elegant, balanced, and fulsome offering. Dark-opaque ruby-red in colour, the wine is beautifully toasted, boasting lots of milk chocolate (intermixed with gentle cedarwood and eucalyptus) at the outset, giving way to baked red currants, dried cherries, underbrush, licorice, scorched earth, leather, and a hint of coffee and spice. Complex, with beautiful, assertively forward yet elegant fruit, supple yet firm tannins, milder acidity, and a poised, lingering hint of plums, eucalyptus, and cedarwood on the finish. Truly impressive! 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, and 5% Cabernet Franc. Now-2020. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, February 2012)

90 \$30.95 (#931105) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Manuel Olivier 2008, Gevrey-Chambertin AOC, Burgundy, France: Better than most village Gevrey-Chambertin, the 2008 Manuel Olivier is superbly textured, balanced, and polished. Medium-dark ruby in colour, it features 'proper,' attractive aromas of dried raspberries, cherries, licorice, plums, and a hint of violets and spice. Complex, featuring refined, almost silky fruit, fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a beautiful, understated hint of cherries on the finish. Great Gevrey, this is my only recent note from this operation—indeed, it leaves me curious about their other bottlings. Now-2018. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

90 \$47.95 (#265371) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Piramimma 2009 Shiraz, McLaren Vale, South Australia, Australia: Noticeably more characterful than recent vintages, the 2009 Piramimma Shiraz, while powerful at 15.5% alcohol, offers a remarkable assortment of 'fresh' elements worth pointing out. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted, carrying inviting aromas of eucalyptus, cocoa beans, baked black cherries (still fresh), blueberries, bacon bits, licorice, leather, vanilla, and spice. Complex, possessing flavourful, supple forward fruit and tannins, mild acidity, and a lasting, lifted hint of smooth plums, licorice, and cocoa beans on the finish. Beautifully executed. Screwcap closure. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

90 \$26.95 (#987784) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

1

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Cicchitti 2004 Gran Reserva Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina: In the past, I've never been entirely certain how well Mendozan Malbec can age; though these days it seems better examples can keep rather decently. Opaque ruby in colour, the 2004 Gran Reserva delivers enticing, exotic aromas of intense Chinese black tea, currants, blackberries, forest floor, violets, tobacco, and spice. Complex, with delicious forward fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a wholly unapologetic hint of Chinese black tea and plums on the finish. A true original, boasting great structure, balance, and style. Now-2016. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, June 2011)

89+ \$21.95 (#155713) Vintages 9 July 2011 Release

Ramos Pinto 2007 Duas Quintas Reserva, Douro DOC, Portugal: Though I've already said it a hundred times, allow me to say it again: some of the best red table wines in Europe nowadays hail from the Douro. Opaque ruby in colour, the 2007 Duas Quintas Reserva delivers beautiful aromas of (moderately) incense-infused currants, plums, blueberries, toasted oak, mocha, pain grille, leather, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with powerful, forward yet well-structured fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a great hint of plummy blueberries on the finish. Delicious, robust, well structured and flavourful. 70% Touriga Nacional, 25% Touriga Franca, and 5% Tinta Barroca. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, June 2011)

89+ \$21.95 (#951301) Vintages 9 July 2011 Release

Domaine Les Aphyllanthes 2009 Cuvée des Galets, Côtes du Rhône-Villages Plan de Dieu AOC, Rhône, France: Big, round, and extremely tasty, the 2009 Cuvée de Galets certainly exhibits some very positive attributes. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine reveals really lovely, 'regional' aromas of slightly confectioned plums, incense, lavender, white pepper, licorice, and a hint of kirsch and spice. Complex, offering fulsome, satisfying fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering hint of Provençal plums (very fleshy) and incense on the finish. Concentration Plan de Dieu, rather Parkerized at 15.2% alcohol, still well supported with all the necessary constituents. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

88++ \$22.95 (#252270) Vintages 18 February 2012 Release

Thorn-Clarke 2008 Shottfire Shiraz, Barossa, South Australia, Australia: For some reason, it is always hit-and-miss with Thorn-Clarke; but when the winery gets it right, the wine in question is typically of very good value. Very dense ruby in colour, the 2008 Shottfire Shiraz is finely toasted, with lovely, intensely fragrant scents of eucalyptus, plums, licorice, leather, incense, mocha, and spice. Fairly complex, with splendid forward fruit, supple tannins, mild acidity, and a long, velvety hint of eucalyptus and plummy blueberries on the finish. Impressively lengthy and flavourful. Screwcap closure. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, June 2011)

88++ \$21.95 (#18796) Vintages 9 July 2011 Release

Madrigal Vineyards 2006 Petite Sirah, Napa Valley, California: Not to be confused with Syrah, one of the greatest grapes in existence, Petite Sirah, when done right, can actually be rather satisfying. Opaque purple-ruby in colour, the '06 Madrigal Vineyards is finely toasted and intensely meaty, with accompanying notes of baked currants and plums, mocha, 'confectioned' violets, vanilla, spice. Mouthfeel: tasty forward fruit on display, with firm tannins, milder acidity, and a hint of violet-black currants on the finish.

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

2

~ Cabernet Franc ~

Saturday, February 18th, 2012

Mighty, satisfying wine, logging in at 14.6% alcohol. Now-2016++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

88+ \$23.95 (#71803) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release

Château Haut-Vigneau 2006, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France: From a vintage on which I've repeatedly stated as being grossly underrated, the '06 Haut-Vigneau, while hardly a blockbuster, is nonetheless a delightful claret. Opaque ruby-red currant in colour, it is moderately toasted, with fresh meaty currants and red plums, mocha, earth, smoke, and spice. On the palate: fine fruit showing, with firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a hint of earthy red currants on the finish. A tad phenolically underripe, still a very fine example of a proper Pessac. Now-2016+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

88 \$24.95 (#29678) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release

Xumek 2009 Reserva Malbec/Syrah, Zonda Valley (San Juan), Argentina: Boasting lots of character, appeal, and flesh, the 2009 Reserva Malbec/Syrah is a very satisfying blend. Opaque ruby in colour, the wine is intensely meaty, with appealing notes of red currants and blackberries, baked cherries, cracked pepper, leather, vanilla, and spice. Complex, retaining very good, concentrated fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lingering hint of 'meaty' plums on the finish. Tasty, interesting blend; what I like most about it is its individuality. 60% Malbec and 40% Syrah. Now-2017. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, February 2012)

88 \$24.95 (#265207) Vintages 18 February 2012

Dessert Wine:

Château Climens 2009, Barsac AOC, Bordeaux, France: Widely considered second only to d'Yquem, the wines of Château Climens have an uncanny ability to excite the 'sweet senses' like few other stickies. Pale-light golden-yellow in colour, the prodigious '09 reveals astounding scents that seem like they're only beginning to present themselves: exotic lemon blossom, honeycomb, Honey Nut Cheerios®, acacia flowers, orange zest/peel, marmalade, melon rinds, and spice. Extremely complex and pure, possessing amazingly intense, preposterously elegant, and alluring sweet fruit, balanced acidity, and a long-lasting, 'golden liquid' hint of honeycomb, lemon blossom, and Honey Nut Cheerios® on the finish. About as intense, elegant, and enticing as they come—a definite candidate for 'sticky of the vintage.' 100% Sémillon (as intimated by their website). Now-2055++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2012)

97 \$175.00 (#274936) Vintages 2009 Bordeaux Futures

Le Dauphin de Guiraud 2003, Sauternes AOC, Bordeaux, France (375 mL): The 'second wine' of Sauternes producer Château Guiraud, the '03 Le Dauphin shows all the signs of a lightweight yet well-integrated, tasty sticky. Light-medium orange in colour, it features lovely scents of orange peel, honey, apricots, nuts, and an intriguing hint of brown sugar. Complex, with splendid sweet fruit, balanced acidity, and a hint of apricots and honey on the finish. All things considered, a decent, well-made batch. According to the website, one is led to believe that the wine is typically a blend of around 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Sémillon Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, September 2010)

88 \$24.95 (#190496) Vintages 16 October 2010 Release