

The Successful Collector – By Julian Hitner

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~ Bordeaux 2008 – Great clarets ~

Saturday, September 17th, 2011

Prices are high (but not ridiculously):

Right now, the 2009 and 2010 Bordeaux 'en primeur' (futures) campaigns are in full swing. And you know what? Even for the most well heeled collectors, prices for both of these vintages, especially 2010, are ridiculous, plain and simple. Never in my wine-buying life did I ever imagine that a bottle of



Château Talbot would cost more than \$85, or its oft-quoted Gruaud Larose counterpart fetching more than \$90. But here we are, basking the dog days of summer '11 (when this column was outlined), courtesy of the surprisingly sultry St. Lawrence Lowlands, with no reasonably priced claret of 'classed growth' standing to purchase, at least not via any current futures campaign.



Or are we? What about 2008? How did this seldom-sung vintage perform? Turns out rather well, in fact, judging by the many wines from I've been privy to taste. In large part, the reason for this lies in the pricing of the vintage preceding it: the rain-soaked '07 vintage, priced at such ludicrous levels that estates were forced to bring prices back down to some sort-of echelon of sanity with the '08 vintage, otherwise consumers would have been highly unlikely to part with their money.

Even more important, in terms of overall quality, 2008 was actually a very good vintage throughout both the Left and Right Banks. Granted, the year started out fairly damp and unquestionably rainy, with uneven flowering and variable fruit set; yet vines were once again saved by an extremely sunny September and excellent harvesting conditions. In the end, the best producers were largely able to craft wines of serious



structure and quality. Make no mistake, however: 2008 will hardly be remembered as a 'legendary' vintage, yet one that was (more or less) a vintage of truly great quality.

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For collectors, by the way, 2008 has already been bottled; so don't bother trying to seek out futures prices. That time has already passed. Even so, prices will probably only slightly increase when they reach LCBO shelves. Another thing to remember: while quality was fairly uniform among the best of estates, a few of the finer names really didn't perform to their usual status. And while such châteaux shall remain nameless, your best bet is to stick with established commentators for the most accurate reviews. Shall I pay voluntary heed to the task?

[Click here for a few gems for collectors from the 17 September 2011 Vintages Release](#)

A few gems for collectors:

White Wines:

Château Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc 2008, Pessac-Léognan AOC, Bordeaux, France:

The most improved estate in the entire Pessac-Léognan appellation? Absolutely, judging by Smith Haut Lafitte's sensational '08 Blanc! Starbright, pale lime in colour, the wine reveals exquisitely refined scents of classic lemon citrus and pears, giving way to starfruit, kiwi, green apples, and spice (perhaps a trace of nuts). Seriously complex, with wonderful nervy fruit, vibrant acidity, and a brilliantly refined, crisp hint of citrus lemon and pears on the finish. A real gem of a white Bordeaux, boasting brilliant finesse, harmony, and class. In the end: a true collector's wine. 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sémillon, and 5% Sauvignon Gris. Now-2020. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, January 2011)

94 \$115.00 (#136721) Vintages 2008 Bordeaux Futures

Kistler 2009 Les Noisetiers Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, California: Remarkably similar to the '07, only a shade lighter in style, the 2009 Les Noisetiers represents an outstanding effort from Steve Kistler and his team. Starbright, light-medium green in colour, the wine is only starting to open up, offering beautiful aromas of lemon blossom and quince, switching to ripe smoky pears and apricots, caramel, white loamy earth, orange peel, and a trace of vanilla and nuts. Very complex, boasting Burgundian-inspired fruit, balanced acidity, and a vibrant hint, elegant hint of nutted pears and quince on the finish. Another terrific outing from (arguably) the greatest producer of Chardonnay in California. Now-2018. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

91++ \$64.95 (#251223) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Reinhold Haart 2004 Riesling Spätlese, QmP Piesporter Goldtröpfchen, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Germany:

One of the greatest wineries in this part of the Moselle, Reinhold Haart rarely puts a foot wrong when it comes to Piesporter vineyard-based Riesling. Starbright, light greenish-lime in colour, the 2004 Goldtröpfchen Spätlese offers truly enticing scents of tropical lemon citrus, green grapes, delicate petrol, a little jasmine, and a gorgeous hint of orange blossom and spice. Very complex, with wonderful, almost ethereal fruit, balanced acidity, and an extremely sophisticated, polished hint of sweet citrus pears and petrol on the finish. A Riesling of outstanding

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balance, character, and integration. Now-2018+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, May 2011)

91++ \$29.00 (#900373) Vintages Online Exclusives

Domaine de Congy 2009 Cuvée Les Galfins, Pouilly-Fumé AOC, Loire, France:

Delightful Pouilly-Fumé, one that successfully manages to capture the essence of the appellation. Starbright, pale straw-lime in colour, the 2009 Cuvée Les Galfins reveals lovely, smoky (very mild) scents of lemon, grassy green apples, minerals, and hints of both white grapefruit and dried pears. On the palate: good, refreshing fruit to be had, boasting balanced acidity and a pleasing hint of steely, slightly minerally lemon and green apples on the finish. Nicely integrated and refined. Now-2013. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

88+ \$24.95 (#244780) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Red Wines:

Château Léoville-Poyferré 2006, St-Julien AOC, Bordeaux, France: Over the past decade, this remarkable property has improved by leaps and bounds, almost to the point of equalling the other two 'Léovilles' in overall quality. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the 2006 Léoville-Poyferré offers superlative aromas of dark, near- black mocha-laden currants and plums, blueberries, graphite, charcoal, licorice, vanilla, and spice. Sincerely complex, featuring exemplary fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and an elegant, harmonious hint of currants, mocha, and pencil lead on the finish. Truly, a claret of amazing pedigree, refinement, and depth. Bravo! 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 8% Petit Verdot, and 2% Cabernet Franc. Now-2020+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, April 2011)

93 \$99.00 (#565044) Vintages Online Exclusives

Château Beauséjour Duffau-Lagarrosse 2006, St-Emilion AOC, Bordeaux, France: Less famous than it's 'Bécot twin,' the 2006 Beauséjour Duffau-Lagarrosse is nonetheless an undeniably appealing, fairly decadent wine that manages to capture the 'flavour' of the vintage with comparative ease. Brilliant, opaque ruby-red currant in colour, it seems to be aging beautifully, offering inviting aromas of (slightly baked) mocha, plummy currants, cedarwood-driven black cherries, leather, forest floor, and a hint of earth and spice. Very complex, delivering polished yet well-structured fruit, fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a more reserved though fairly assertive hint of plummy currants and delicate incense on the finish. Definitely not to be missed. 65% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Now-2018+-. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, April 2011)

92+ \$85.00 (#565085) Vintages Online Exclusives

Te Mata 2007 Coleraine, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand: Flagship wine of Te Mata, one of the greatest wineries in Hawkes Bay, the '07 Coleraine is a marvellous, Bordeaux-inspired specimen of exciting richness and elegance. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the wine is finely toasted, offering seriously beautiful, resplendent aromas of 'forested' mocha shavings and currants, giving way to blackberries, licorice, crushed rocks, lavender, minerals, and a hint of pain grille, vanilla, and spice. Truly complex, offering delicious, elegant fruit, fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a refined, almost silky hint of 'dusty' mocha shavings and currants on the finish. Outstanding multi-layered

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focus, flavour, and design. Bravo! 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, and 14% Cabernet Franc. Now-2020+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

92+ \$59.95 (#640656) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Clarendon Hills 2006 Brookman Cabernet Sauvignon, Clarendon, Australia: From the looks of things, '06 was a fantastic vintage for Clarendon Hills. I've tried a substantial array of Roman Bratasiuk's wines, and nearly all of them have been excellent. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the Brookman Cabernet Sauvignon is deliciously toasted, with intense, brooding aromas of blackberries, baked eucalyptus and currants, plums, leather, mocha, stewed cherries, tar, asphalt, vanilla, and spice. Complex, with absolutely sumptuous forward fruit, firm (yet approachable) tannins, mild acidity, and a very long, abundant hint of fresh 'black' cocoa and plummy currants on the finish. Wonderfully done, with real prowess, roundness, and depth. Now-2020++. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, May 2011)

92 \$54.00 (#64196) Vintages Online Exclusives

Ladera 2004 Lone Canyon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California: Ideal for collectors, the 2004 Lone Canyon Vineyard is a first-rate Napa Cabernet of remarkable depth and enticement. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the wine is intensely toasted, featuring beautiful, engaging aromas of baked black mocha and currants, switching to plums, licorice-infused compote, incense, leather, tar, graham crackers, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, delivering sumptuous fruit, firm tannins, milder acidity, and a lasting, decadent hint of chewy black mocha and currants on the finish. Quite a hefty, richly endowed wine; yet even at 14.7% alcohol, everything seems to be holding together—always a good sign. Now-2020. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

92 \$64.95 (#236000) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Two Hands 2008 Bella's Garden Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia: Crafted for maximum extraction and richness, the 2008 Bella's Garden is a über-mighty wine of abundant sumptuousness and heft—not for everyone, but unquestionably self-indulgent. Brilliant, extremely dense black/purple-ruby in colour, it offers powerful aromas of baked eucalyptus and currants, switching to plums, leathery blackberries, violets, black forest cake, coffee, mint, vanilla, and spice. Very complex, boasting deliciously powerful, forward fruit, firm tannins (quite supple in texture), mild acidity, and a courageously long hint of 'purple' eucalyptus and plums on the finish. At 15.8% alcohol, this is a massive wine, yet all components seem to be in working order; making for one satisfying wine. Now-2022+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

92 \$63.95 (#636407) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Château Beaugard 2008, Pomerol AOC, Bordeaux, France: A steadily improving estate, Château Beaugard has become one of the best bargains for collectors in search of delicious, appropriately fleshy Pomerol. Brilliant, dark-opaque ruby in colour, the '08 offers inviting aromas of finely toasted oak and plums that shortly give way to black cherries, licorice, forest floor, (root beer) gummy bears, light coffee, leather, vanilla, and spice. Suitably complex, offering beautiful velvety fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a very elegant, rounded hint of plums, mild mocha, and licorice on the finish. Superbly done, with great harmony and approachability. Now-2020. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

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91 \$57.95 (#249003) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Château La Couspaude 2005, St-Emilion AOC, Bordeaux, France: This is the first time I have ever tasted from this particular château, located on the plateau immediately east of the town and known for its more hedonistic style of claret. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the 2005 La Couspaude is richly toasted, with intense (slightly baked) aromas of currants and dates, blueberries, kirsch, leather, tar, vanilla, and spice. Very complex and truly delicious, displaying lovely fruit, fine tannins, balanced acidity, and a (slightly) baked hint of blackberries and dates (laced with some mocha) on the finish. Quite rich and extremely satisfying—it would score even higher if it was somewhat more 'temperate.' Now-2018+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, April 2011)

90++ \$108.00 (#504902) Vintages Online Exclusives

Domaine Grand Veneur 2009 Clos de Sixte, Lirac AOC, Rhône, France: Ambitious effort for a Lirac, one of the lesser-known appellations of the south-western Rhône; yet there is little mistaking the craftspersonship of this particular offering. Brilliant, opaque ruby in colour, the '09 Clos de Sixte exhibits appetizing aromas of Provencal-inspired plums, blackberries, incense, leather, mild smoke, and spice. Complex, with engaging, highly satisfying fruit, firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a polished, lasting hint of plums and 'Provencal' incense on the finish. Quite possibly the best Lirac I have ever tasted. A sign of things to come from this part of the Rhône? 55% Grenache, 35% Syrah, and 10% Mourvèdre. Now-2018. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

89 \$23.95 (#76349) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release

Arrocal 2008, Ribera del Duero DO, Spain: Performing well above its weight, the 2008 Arrocal represents exceptional value for money when considering its overall heft and aromas. Brilliant, opaque purple-ruby in colour, the wine is intensely toasted, with lovely aromas of baked plums and blueberry pie, blackberry compote, light granola, kirsch, vanilla, and spice. On the palate: satisfying, forward fruit, with firm tannins, balanced acidity, and a lingering hint of plums and (understated) blueberry crumble on the finish. Strictly appealing, well balanced, and very tasty. 100% Tempranillo. Now-2017+. (Julian Hitner, The Successful Collector, August 2011)

88+ \$16.95 (#67868) Vintages 17 September 2011 Release