

ESTABLISHED 1883



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## BORDEAUX AND BURGUNDY VINTAGE AND MARKET REPORT

### BORDEAUX

As usual at this time of the year the market is dominated by the prospects of the vintage now in progress. This started very late, between the 2nd and 9th of October, because of the lack of maturity of grapes which had been starved of moisture during the Summer months. As might be expected the effects of this lack of water vary according to the soil and exposition of individual vineyards, the richer water retaining clay and marl, being better off than the predominantly sand and stony soils. The sugar content of the first musts of St. Emilion, Pauillac and St. Estèphe are more satisfactory than those of Margaux and the Graves regions but the variations continue in the districts themselves according to exposition and the age of vine plants. There is plenty of fruit on the vine but it is rare to see the swollen, rounded grapes of a really big vintage, most are small, even if complete looking, but some are dried up and unable to yield much juice. Experts vary widely in their opinion of the yield. Our own guess is for something above the average of about 4,000,000 hectolitres and if we are not more wrong than usual this should mean something between 4½ and 5 million hectolitres.

The quality will certainly be very variable, some moisture retaining areas having produced well matured grapes tending even towards a lack of acidity whilst the starved areas have produced unripe grapes with too much acidity and too little sugar. The emphasis in 1962 is on lack of water not on excessive heat, although there have been very warm periods as well. In general, however, the grape, if it suffers, will suffer from lack of juice, not from over thick skins, and therefore excessive tannin in the wine. Possibly a year, producing in places good coloured, well flavoured and well balanced wines and in others starved light wines that will need careful and expensive vinifications to make them palatable. Amongst the White wines, Barsac, for some reason, appears to have suffered less from the drought than Sauternes but the vintage is only getting started at the time of writing. It is too early to make a guess at the quality. The quantity should be satisfactory.

There is, as yet, not much indication of price levels for the new vintage, but they should be substantially lower than the 1961's. Bigger growers who have ample space facilities and who have, for the most part, sold their 1961's at high prices, are in no hurry to abandon their strong position, whilst smaller proprietors who need space for the 1962's and money to replenish cash boxes left half empty after the small 1961 vintage, are likely to be more reasonable in their demands. There is too the question of demand. The world produces nothing to replace the Bourgeois and classed growths of Bordeaux and, although it is possible that the limit of practical prices was reached with the 1961's,

sales from the vineyards were free and satisfactory and growers are not yet convinced of any revolt on the part of consumers. There is quite obviously room for adjustment and much will depend on the tactics of large overseas buyers, including those from Great Britain.

Exports from Bordeaux during the first seven months of 1962 showed a 2.3% increase in volume over the same period in 1961 despite the fact that the 1961 figures were substantially helped by the popular 1959 vintage shipments. The increase in value is as much as 21%. Both sets of increases are, however, entirely due to the larger bottle shipments during the period, probably consisting largely of 1959 Clarets bottled at the Château at the end of 1961 and beginning of 1962.

The separation of Algeria from France has reduced the effect of the complicated regulations which resulted in a species of export subsidy from which the U.K. benefited to a greater extent than most. This applies only to the cheaper early consumption qualities. The Common Market on the other hand has given a distinct fillip to the export of the finer qualities of the French Wines. Some of the large producing foreigners, such as Italy, have found that the mutual agreement to import each other's cheap wines has produced amongst a traditionally wine drinking public a demand for the finer unmatched qualities of France.

#### 1961 Vintage

We have no doubts at all about the quality of this vintage. The wines are dark in colour, firm and complete in composition and classic in flavour. There are very few of them and they have been sold at high prices. Because of the high quality throughout the whole range, there will still be good Clarets available to the public from about 10/- per bottle. Cheap wines from Bourg generally reserved for non-vintage blends have produced individual wines of charm and character and having been sold from £42 upwards they will be available at the above-mentioned retail price. The principle applies throughout the whole range of quality, medium Bourgeois around £60 to sell at 12/- will in this year compare favourably in quality with 12/- wines of five years ago and the £80 to £120 wines, although not bearing the well known names of the classed growths, will give as much pleasure in six or seven years as did the classed growths of 1955 at the same prices. As for the classed growths of 1961, they are great wines ranking with the 1928's, 1929's and 1945's at prices which will reserve them for well endowed classed growths enthusiasts throughout the world.

Shipment of the cheaper wines will start in the Spring of 1963 whilst Château bottling of some of the biggest may well be postponed until the Spring 1964.

The White wines are very successful particularly at Barsac. They have a delicacy of form that promises a quite unusually attractive bottle development.

#### 1960 Vintage

Bottled at the right time, appear to be conserving their fruit and developing quickly as expected. They will be ready for consumption before the 1959's and very usefully fill the gap between these and 1957's and 1955's.

#### 1959 Vintage

Still settling down in bottle. In some cases showing a tendency to over-quick ageing but mostly solid, fine flavoured, traditional Claret needing a few years for their development. It will be remembered that there was some variation in quality and that care was necessary to select the best examples of this fine year.

#### 1957 Vintage

We can do no more than repeat our previous exhortations to the Trade to give serious consideration to any wines of this vintage that come their way. They are now beginning to reveal their true quality. They are warm, generous, long living Clarets.

#### 1955 Vintage

Probably the best value in wines being at present offered to the public in reasonable quantities. They are developing very well in a steady if unspectacular manner without deviating one drop from the good behaviour expected of a well brought up member of a large family. Pleasant, safe, courteous and comforting.

#### 1953 Vintage

Good for many years yet. Seems often to be taking on depth and developing a personality which is very attractive.

#### 1952 Vintage

Also good for some years yet but at the moment seems less likely to outlive the 1953's than we once thought.

### BURGUNDY

The vintage in Burgundy started about the same time as Bordeaux on the 1st or 2nd October. Weather conditions about the same as Bordeaux with, however, some rain a little earlier and mostly fine and hot during September. Quality is expected to be good and quantity about that of a normal year. Some transactions have taken place all at prices higher than last year, probably because the export market is strong and more and more growers are able to find outlets abroad for their wines in bottle. Exports for the first seven months of 1962 were 13% up on the same period in 1961 and not, as in the case of Bordeaux, due to a particularly large increase in bottle wines. Burgundy in fact exported a larger gallonage in wood during the period than Bordeaux. When it is remembered that Burgundy, including Beaujolais and Macon, produced only about one million hectolitres compared with four million in Bordeaux, it may be thought that present prices in Burgundy—high as they are—are more easily justified than the equally high prices in Bordeaux.

Beaujolais is expecting a crop a little short of normal, prices are about the same as last year but must weigh in general a degree less than in 1961. Flavour remains to be assessed.

#### 1961 Vintage

Well selected wines of this year are dark coloured, complete, full flavoured and medium light in construction. They appear to be soundly bred and to reveal the individual characteristics of their areas on the palate. They should be bottled early—all but the biggest in the Spring of 1963 and should make elegant, bouqueté, soft complete wines.

#### 1959 Vintage

Not so very different in character and quality to the 1961's. There is so much variation in each of these years that we have formed no clear impression of their relative merits. Many of the 1959's are developing quickly in bottle—others are taking their time. Both are certainly good vintages and neither years that are likely to make very old bottles.

#### 1957 Vintage

Mostly good, generous and some quite fat wines. Their accelerated rate of development seems to have lessened during the past twelve months and an acquired second wind to be enabling them to progress at a steadier pace. The big wines from individual vineyards are especially satisfactory and worth keeping.

#### 1955 Vintage

Generally ripe, mature, warm and satisfying. Still improving in bottle for the most part. A safe and satisfying vintage but now in short supply in many retail firms.

#### Resumé

Our impression is that the pace shows a tendency towards a possible slacking. There have been very few transactions "sur souche" in the 1962's and, if stocks in growers' hands are not excessive, shippers are waiting a little longer to see the effect of the present high prices at the point of sale. A new pattern of distribution is emerging which will need considerable adjustment if Bordeaux is to be free to continue to earn its reputation for quality and is not to be satisfied with resting on laurels which may wither with time.

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