

**CRU BOURGEOIS 2011**

**DECANTER – MARCH 2014**

**CIRCULATION: 40,000**



# Cru bourgeois 2011



These wines may not hit the heights of previous years due to variable weather, but lovers of a more classic style of Bordeaux will find lots to enjoy. James Lawther MW selects 61 of the best, most between £10 and £20

THE 2009 AND 2010 vintages were always going to be a hard act to follow and clearly 2011 is not in the same register; the opulence and density of fruit are missing. Instead, 2011 has delivered wines of a more classic nature, with freshness, modest alcohol and a degree of tannic bite. The 'wow' factor is less evident and quality does vary, but credit to the cru bourgeois growers for producing wines of a decent standard, given the climatic vagaries of the year.

The first of these was the summer-like spring. April was exceptionally hot and dry, the second hottest since 1900, with an average maximum temperature close to 23°C and a mere 11mm of rain falling. May followed suit and June was warmer than average, with two consecutive days at 40°C. The upshot of this was a short and early flowering, but it also prompted concern over undue water stress, burnt bunches and the vines shutting down, the advanced cycle reviving memories of 2003.

Weather conditions then turned upside-down.

July was cool and less sunny than usual, with rainfall above average and August warmer than average but with 50% more rain. This was contrary to the great years of 2005, 2009 and 2010, the closest in terms of August rainfall being 2008 – a vintage some believe 2011 resembles.

*Veraison* (when the grapes turn from green to red) started early, but it was spun out and not always completed. This meant lots of work in the vineyards to remove lagging or heat-affected bunches and, later, lots of sorting in the cellars – something not always financially possible for the crus bourgeois.

Apart from a deluge on 1 September and a hailstorm that damaged grapes in part of St-Estèphe, September was hot and dry. This helped to prevent the spread of rot, assisted phenolic maturity where the vineyards were well set, and allowed the harvest to proceed under favourable conditions.

**Below: Château Maucamps is one of 25 estates in the Haut-Médoc that James Lawther MW has selected in his top 61 crus bourgeois for the tricky 2011 vintage**





Analytically, the grapes had a high tannin count (nearly as high as 2010), good acidity and modest alcohols – certainly compared with 2009 and 2010 – of about 13%.

Tasting the 2011 crus bourgeois in bottle, the main impression is one of freshness and the strict nature of the wines. The tannins appear less rounded – sometimes even green. This, reinforced by the acidity and less fruit 'stuffing', make for a more austere style. Many are recommendable, as the following pages attest, but few excite enough to give a higher endorsement. Those that stand out have an added depth of fruit and as a commune I'd single out St-Estèphe (excluding the hailstruck vineyards) as the most successful. Listrac-Médoc also performed reasonably well and there are selectively some decent wines in the Haut-Médoc, with the Médoc being the most heterogeneous.

Clearly, it is a vintage for lovers of a more classic style of Bordeaux. Most wines will be better with another year in bottle (so drinking from 2015) and will be at their best over a five- to six-year period. This is still the value end of the region, with most wines retailing for between £10 to £20 a bottle. Competition at this end of the market is also fierce, so the discrepancy in price between vintages is slight. Certainly prices for the 2011s seem fair, but if you have to pay a premium for the 2009s and 2010s (possibly £2 to £3 a bottle) it will likely be worth it.

#### Gaining selection

The cru bourgeois label – a one-tier system – is now awarded on a yearly basis, the wines assessed by a quality procedure (eligibility, inspection and blind

tasting) administered by an independent body, Bureau Véritas. The selection process is open to all producers in the eight Médoc appellations (Médoc, Haut-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc, Moulis, Margaux, St-Julien, Pauillac and St-Estèphe).

The yearly assessment was introduced in 2010 for the 2008 vintage after the annulment of the official 2003 classification in 2007, when a French Court of Appeal ruled on procedural grounds. The 2003 classification, originally valid for 10 years, included 247 châteaux ranked in ascending order as crus bourgeois (151), crus bourgeois supérieurs (87) and crus bourgeois exceptionnels (nine). The ranking was 'tolerated' on labels up to and including the 2005 vintage, but deemed legally invalid for the 2006 and 2007 vintages. The nine crus bourgeois exceptionnels have since withdrawn from the yearly evaluation process.

The most recent selection, for the 2011 vintage, was unveiled in September 2013, the designation awarded to 256 châteaux of which the Médoc and Haut-Médoc ACs provided the lion's share with 191 châteaux. All told, this represents a volume of some 28 million bottles or 30% of the Médoc's production, the figures roughly in keeping with what has been seen in 2008, 2009 and 2010. The bottles are all labelled with a distinctive cru bourgeois sticker, which contains a unique security code for each, as well as a QR code to access information. ➤

*'Those that stand out have an added depth of fruit and as a commune I'd single out St-Estèphe'*

*Based in Bordeaux, James Lawther MW is a Decanter commissioning editor, DWWA Regional co-Chair for Bordeaux and Decanter's Right Bank en primeur expert*

Photograph: Nigel Blythe/Cephus





## Médoc

**1 Château Rollan de By** 17/20pts (90/100pts)  
£15–£19 **Cambridge Wine Merchants, Corkr Fine Wines, Eminent Wines, Millésima, Nebuchadnezzar Wines**

Dark and red berry aromas with a hint of vanilla oak. Fleshy with a good depth of fruit. Fresh and satisfying on the finish. More ripeness here. Has to be good value.  
**Drink** 2014–2020 **Alcohol** 13.5%

**2 Château Les Ormes Sorbet** 16.5 (88)  
£19 (2010) **Fine & Rare**

Bright crimson hue. Lively fruit with well-integrated vanilla oak. Fresh, long and linear. Well-worked tannins. The complete package.  
**Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13.5%

**3 Château Le Boscq** 16 (86)

N/A UK [www.domaines-lapalu.com](http://www.domaines-lapalu.com)  
Light and lithe with well-integrated oak. Tannic grip on the finish. Shows a certain presence.  
**Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13%

**Château Poitevin** 16 (86)

£9.90–£14 **Fine & Rare, Lea & Sandeman**  
Toasted, mocha nose. Lively fruit on the palate with just a hint of oak. Clean, dry finish.  
**Drink** 2015–2020 **Alc** 13.5%

**Château Fontis** 16 (86)

£11.20 (2010) **Fine & Rare**  
Pleasant fruit. Well-integrated vanilla oak. Good depth. Tannins present but well worked.  
**Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13%

**Château du Périer** 15.5 (88)

£15 (2008) **Alexander Hadleigh, The Wine Centre**  
Deeper hue. Toasted nose and palate but oak is well integrated, the fruit coming through on the finish. Tannins well worked here.  
**Drink** 2015–2020 **Alc** 13%

**Château Laulan Ducos** 15.5 (88)

N/A UK +33 (0)5 56 09 42 37  
Purple hue. Bigger, bolder wine with a touch

more weight and extraction. Pleasant fruit. Tannins well worked. **Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** N/A

**Château Tour Seran** 15.5 (88)

£19.90–£30 **Eminent Wines, Fine & Rare, Kosher Wine, Occidental & Oriental, The Wine Cellar**  
Mocha nose and palate. Oak dominates at present but the fruit is definitely there. Polished tannins. **Drink** 2016–2020 **Alc** 13.5%

**Château Noaillac** 15.5 (88)

£15.99 (2010) **British Airways Wine Club, Thorman Hunt**  
Soft and open. Appealing red fruit on the palate and nose. Satisfying wine with a bit of grip on the finish. **Drink** 2014–2018 **Alc** 13%

**Château Lousteauneuf** 15.5 (88)

£10–£11 **Cambridge Wine Merchants, Fine & Rare**  
Creamy, coconut aroma and flavour. Fairly generous fruit behind. Firm finish.  
**Drink** 2015–2020 **Alc** 14%

**4 Château Les Grands Chênes** 15.5 (88)

£12–£13 **En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Nebuchadnezzar Wines**  
Restrained nose. Bolder style with a bit more extraction. Solid fruit with a firm tannic frame. Needs time. **Drink** 2016–2022 **Alc** 13.5%

## Haut-Médoc

**5 Château Cissac** 17 (90)

£12–£20 **Avery's, Berry Bros & Rudd, Cambridge Wine Merchants**  
Reserved in style but firm, solid and backed by a good depth of fruit. Long, dry finish. Tannins present but honed. Traditional claret for cellaring. **Drink** 2016–2025 **Alcohol** 12.5%

**Château Belle-Vue** 17 (90)

£13–£15 **Ellis of Richmond, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima**  
Spicy, dark fruit nose and palate. Long and minerally but with a sweetness of fruit. Tannins firm but well honed. Lovely persistence.  
**Drink** 2015–2024 **Alc** 13%

**6 Château de Gironville** 16.5 (88)

£10 **Ellis of Richmond, Fine & Rare, Nebuchadnezzar Wines**  
Deep, vibrant colour. Shows plenty of depth and extract. Lush fruit, finely honed tannins and good length. **Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13%

**Château Bernadotte** 16.25 (87)

£14–£16 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Goedhuis, Millésima**  
Brambly, dark fruit nose. Juicy, well-extracted palate. Savoury and ripe. Refined tannic frame. Will not disappoint. **Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13%

**7 Château Larose Perganson** 16.25 (87)

£19.95 **Great Western Wines, Liberty Wines**  
Dark hue. Modern allure. Palate ripe and focused. Fresh and long on the finish with finely honed tannins. **Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13%

**Château Maurac** 16 (86)

N/A UK +33 (0)5 57 88 07 64  
Purple-crimson hue. Attractive fruit with vineyard character. Plenty of energy and length. Firm, pebble-sucking finish. Muscular in style. **Drink** 2015–2024 **Alc** 13%

**Château Paloumey** 16 (86)

£10–£11 **En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Jeroboams, Lea & Sandeman**  
Attractive fruit and texture. Dark fruit notes. Supple and round, then a firmness to the finish. Comfortable wine. **Drink** 2015–2020 **Alc** 13%

**Château Pontoise Cabarrus** 16 (86)

£11 (2010) **Fine & Rare**  
Crimson hue. Attractive fruit expression and real depth on the palate. Well structured. Firm, long finish. **Drink** 2015–2022 **Alc** 13.5%

**8 Château Peyredon Lagravette** 16 (86)

£11.50–£15.95 (2010) **Fine & Rare, Great Western Wine, The Wine Society**  
Savoury nose and palate. A touch of sweetness to the fruit. Long and linear. Well crafted.  
**Drink** 2015–2020 **Alc** 13%







**Château Lestage Simon 16 (86)**

£15.99 (2009) **Handford Wines**

Attractive fruit on the nose and palate. Quite lush and full. Some blackcurrant notes. Tight, firm finish. **Drink 2015-2024 Alc N/A**

**Château de Ste-Gemme 16 (86)**

£14.99 (2008) **Majestic**

Modern allure. Toasted, mocha notes on the nose but good depth of fruit behind. Oak is present on the palate but integrated. Rounded tannins but firmness on the finish. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

**Château d'Arche 16 (86)**

£18.25 **The Knotted Vine**

Modern in style, with vanilla oak and red fruit notes. A generosity of fruit on the palate with a touch of sweetness. Firm, dry finish. Quite good length. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

**9 Château Peyrat-Fourthon 15.5 (88)**

N/A UK [www.peyrat-fourthon.com](http://www.peyrat-fourthon.com)

Creamy red fruit notes with a touch of green behind. Vanilla oak adds sweetness. A little drying on the finish but a sound wine. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

**10 Château Cambon La Pelouse 15.5 (88)**

£10.50-£13.50 **Albany Vintners, Bordeaux Cellar, Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, London Wine Co, Millésima, Waitrose**

Good colour. Chocolate notes, the oak adding sweetness to the palate. Firm, savoury finish. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13.5%**

**Château Maucamps 15.5 (88)**

£18.95-£22 (2009) **Ashdown Wines, Just Fine Wines, Lacy Fine Wines, York Wine**

Juicy, red fruit character. Has a lighter weight and frame but it is still ripe and the tannins well honed. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13.5%**

**Château Bel-Orme Tronquoy de Lalande**

15.5 (88)

£13.20 (2010) **Fine & Rare**

Savoury nose. Palate fresh and sinewy.

Attractive red berry notes and a firm finish.

**Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

**11 Château Charmail 15.5 (88)**

£12.90-£15 **Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Lay & Wheeler, Millésima**

Soft, red berry fruit with a touch of vanilla oak. Medium-bodied. Displays a certain charm.

**Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

**Château Beaumont 15.5 (88)**

£10.40-£12.40 **Bowes Wine, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Richard Dawes, Richard Kihl, Rodney Fletcher, Uncorked**

Fresh and fruit-driven in style. Gives easy pleasure. Oak is well integrated. Clean, dry finish. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13.5%**

**12 Château Reysson 15.5 (88)**

£15.99 **Cambridge Wine Merchants**

Savoury vanilla nose and palate. Supple fruit with well-rounded tannins. A little grip on the finish. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

**Château Clément-Pichon 15.5 (88)**

£14 **Fine & Rare**

Dark hue. Leathery note on the nose and palate. Tough and chewy at present but should come round. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 13%**

**13 Château St-Paul 15.5 (88)**

£14.99 (2010) **Marks & Spencer**

Pretty raspberry and red berry fruit nose and palate. Medium-bodied. Firm and a touch chewy at present but still well made.

**Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

**Château de Malleret 15.5 (88)**

£13.20-£14.40 (2010) **Corkr Fine Wines, Fine & Rare**

Creamy, red fruit aroma. Savoury palate. Firm, long and chewy on the finish. Bit of tannic bite. Clean and correct. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

**Château Bibian 15.5 (88)**

£15.99 (2010) **Avery's, Telegraph Wines**

Dark fruit notes. Generous fruit on the palate.

Firm tannic frame. A fresh, good food wine.

**Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

**Château d'Arcins 15.5 (88)**

£16.72 (2010) **Spirited Wines**

Pretty red fruit aromas and flavour. Soft and supple but with a firmness on the finish.

**Drink 2015-2020 Alc N/A**

**Château d'Agassac 15.5 (88)**

£14-£15 **Corkr Fine Wines, Fine & Rare**

Open and creamy on the nose. Fleshy mid-palate. Accessible. Just a little dry and hard on the finish. **Drink 2014-2020 Alc 13%**

## St-Estèphe

**14 Château le Crock 17 (90)**

£16-£19 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Charles Taylor, Corney & Barrow, Lay & Wheeler, Richard Dawes, Richard Kihl**

Good, deep colour. Distinct blackcurrant aroma. Lovely depth of fruit. Ripe and round with blackcurrant again on the palate. Firm tannic frame. **Drink 2015-2024 Alc 13.5%**

**15 Château Clauzet 16.5 (88)**

£14-£16 **Cambridge Wine Merchants, Corkr Fine Wines, Fine & Rare**

Firm, leathery, red fruit aroma. Sweetness on the attack. Good depth of fruit. Firm, long finish. **Drink 2016-2025 Alc 13%**

**16 Château Lillan Ladouys 16.25 (87)**

£13-£16 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Bordeaux Index, Bowes Wine, Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima**

Creamy, red fruit aroma and flavour. Well-integrated vanilla oak. Really quite unctuous on the palate. Tannins firm but rounded. Good length. **Drink 2015-2025 Alc 13%**

**Château Le Boscq 16 (86)**

£25 **Thiénot UK**

Reserved but concentrated on the nose. Good depth of fruit. Fresh and firm on the finish. Well worked tannins. **Drink 2016-2024 Alc 13%** ➤



## CRU BOURGEOIS

### 17 Château Tour de Pez 16 (86)

£14.40-£16.70 **Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima**

Attractive, toasted, berry fruit nose. Supple attack with a touch of sweetness. Firm, dry finish. Well balanced. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

### 18 Château Beau-Site 16 (86)

£19-£22.50 (2010) **Berry Bros & Rudd, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Christopher Keiller, Corkr Fine Wines, Davis Bell McCraith**  
Slightly reserved and austere on the nose but generous fruit on the palate. Rounded tannins. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

### Château Coutelin Merville 16 (86)

£17-£19 (2009) **Fine & Rare, Wine in Cornwall**  
Reserved, dark fruit nose. Supple, fruit-driven palate with a hint of cassia. Tannins fine but present. Harmonious. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

### 19 Château Serilhan 16 (86)

£19 **Fine & Rare**  
Attractive fruit. Red berry spectrum. Long and linear in style. Good length on the finish. **Drink 2016-2024 Alc 13%**

### Château Petit Bocq 15.5 (88)

£15-£17 **Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare**  
Pronounced mocha, coffee bean aroma and flavour. Fruit in behind. A little astringent on the finish. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

## Pauillac

### 20 Château Haut-Bages-Monpelou 16.5 (88)

POA **Armit, Berry Bros & Rudd, Montrachet**  
Solid Pauillac nose and body. Plenty of stuffing. Firm tannic frame. Has fine ageing potential. **Drink 2016-2024 Alc 13%**

### Château La Fleur Peyrabon 16 (86)

£16.40-£19.20 **En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima**  
Lovely fruit expression with just a hint of well-integrated oak. Juicy fruit on the palate. Firm but finely honed tannins. Gentle Pauillac. **Drink 2016-2022 Alc 13%**

## Listrac-Médoc

### Château L'Ermitage 16.25 (87)

£20 **McKinley Vintners**  
Ripe, fragrant nose. Juicy fruit with a touch of well-integrated oak. Refined tannins. Good length and balance. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13.5%**

### 21 Château Reverdi 16 (86)

N/A UK **www.vignoblesthomas.fr**  
Attractive leafy, berry fragrance. Juicy fruit on the palate. Firm but finely honed tannins. Good length and grip. A serious wine. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13.5%**

### Château Fonréaud 16 (86)

£11-£12.50 **En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima**  
Fragrant vanilla-chocolate nose. Good depth of fruit. Oak is well integrated on the palate. Firm, long finish. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

### Château Lestage 15.5 (88)

£13 (2010) **Corkr Fine Wines**  
Attractive fruit on the nose. Some sweetness on the attack, a juicy middle then a firm, dry finish. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

### Château Saransot-Dupré 15.5 (88)

£15.95 **Drinks of France, York Wines**  
Traditional Listrac. Firm and slightly austere. Berry aromas with a touch of sweetness then a dry, chewy finish. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

## Moulis-en-Médoc

### 22 Château Brillette 16.25 (87)

£15-£17 **Corkr Fine Wines, Fine & Rare, Millésima**  
Touch of berry and vanilla fragrance on the nose. Well-made wine with attractive fruit and finely honed tannins. Good length. Real potential. **Drink 2016-2022 Alc 13%**

### Château Biston-Brillette 16 (86)

£17-£25 **Fortnum & Mason, Walkers Wines**  
Fruit-driven and accessible. Medium-bodied weight. Fine tannic frame. Well-made with plenty of charm. **Drink 2014-2020 Alc 13%**

### Château Gressier Grand Poujeaux 15.5 (88)

£13-£14.50 **Corkr Fine Wines, Fine & Rare**  
Fragrant red fruit aroma and flavour. Fresh and clean with finely worked tannins. A touch lean but good length. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

### Château Duplessis 15.5 (88)

£19.40 **Amazon UK**  
Crimson hue. Discreet nose. Lighter weight but shows a certain elegance. Tannins firm but fine. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13%**

### 23 Château Lalaudey 15.5 (88)

£20-£24 (2009) **Avery's, Quaff, Telegraph Wines**  
Fragrant vanilla and red berry nose. Fresh and lean but with attractive fruit. Well-honed tannins. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

## Margaux

### Château Haut Breton Larigaudière 16.5 (88)

£32 **Private Cellar**  
Spicy and exuberant on the nose. Bigger depth of fruit on the palate. Firm and long. Muscular but lots of promise. **Drink 2016-2024 Alc 12.5%**

### 24 Château La Tour de Bessan 16.25 (87)

£14-£15 **Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima, Thorman Hunt**  
Margaux fragrance. Fine boned. Soft, seductive fruit. Harmonious. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

### Château d'Arsac 16 (86)

£14.50-£19.99 **Cambridge Wine Merchants, Corkr Fine Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima, Rodney Fletcher**  
Fragrant raspberry nose - almost a touch of Pinot Noir. Palate firm and structured. Solid depth of fruit. **Drink 2015-2022 Alc 13.5%**

### Château Mongravey 15.5 (88)

£20 **3D Wines**  
Bright crimson hue. Vanilla and red berry flavour. Oak is well integrated. Fresh, clean finish. **Drink 2015-2020 Alc 13%**

For full details of UK stockists, see p88

