Dry white bordeaux vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2011 was far better for dry whites than their sweet siblings – in fact, they are one of the notable successes of the vintage. Pessac-Léognan and Graves are both good, with more 'liveliness' than the average vintage.

2011 As dour a vintage for dry whites as it was for reds, with pretty poor quality throughout.

2010 Tremendous quality, combining the best weight of the 2009s with the lively freshness of the 2008s.

2009 Warm conditions led to full and fleshy whites with high alcohol but sufficiently balanced acidity, in most cases. Yields for Sauvignon Blanc were a bit lower than for Semillon, compounded by severe hail in Entre-Deux-Mers and Graves, leading to some supply shortages.

2008 A cool growing season with late autumn sunshine gave well balanced whites to Bordeaux in 2008, with pure aromatic qualities and a steely austerity. Volume was affected by some hail and frost.

2007 The season's low temperatures benefited these dry whites, as in 2006. With white winemaking improving each year, dry whites were Bordeaux's real triumph in 2007.

2006 The cool August preserved acid levels and fruit in these wines, which deserve serious attention.

2005 Very concentrated successful wines in general. Some run slightly to fat.

2004 A long growing season and cool September nights, along with increasing white winemaking skill, produced a good tally of wines with impressive acid levels – a relief after 2003.

2003 Acid levels were dangerously low in the heatwave. For very early drinking except for the very finest.

2002 Small crop of concentrated, fragrant wines.

2001 The low temperatures of September helped maintain freshness and produced well-etched, fruity flavours with good acidity.

2000 Summer was if anything too hot to produce nervy wines and most of these were best drunk young, although there are one or two great wines at the top of the tree.

1999 Some attractive, aromatic Sauvignon Blanc was harvested but the Sémillon fruit was often dilute.

1998 Attractive wines with no shortage of ripeness.

1997 Rather lacklustre without much depth or personality.

1996 Like most French 1996 whites, vivacious, crisp wines.

1995 Lots of body and flavour and structure thanks to the warm summer wherever grapes were picked before the mid-September rains.

1994 Potentially superb as fully ripe grapes were again gathered before the rains.

1993 Avoided the rains: generally good, soft and full, sometimes outstanding.

1992 Clearly better than the reds, the best are intense and well-structured.

1991 A difficult year, rather light and most are just too dilute to be interesting.

1990 Mostly richer, fuller and more complex than 1989, but drink now.

1989 Picked too soon, generally light and not a patch on the reds except for Laville-Haut-Brion and Haut-Brion.