Pounce on those cheaper '09s

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The 2011 bordeaux primeurs campaign has been not so much a damp squib as an IED so sodden as to be completely ineffectual. The quality of the wine is in general B+ to the As scored by both 2009 and 2010, and the prices announced so far have not been low enough, lower than any other current vintage, to attract a serious level of buying. The many dampeners have included the fact that potential buyers bought 2009s and 2010s so heavily, that these two vintages were released at such high prices that they have hardly gained in value since, and general mismanagement of the campaign. What with public holidays and Vinexpo Asia Pacific in Hong Kong, there were so relatively few suitable trading days in the principal primeurs month of May that one Tuesday saw no fewer than 48 different 2011s released on a single day. Inevitably, some of them slipped through the commercial cracks into complete obscurity.

Even at their dramatically reduced release prices, few of the 2011s you might have heard of are priced at much less than £400 a dozen (and the first growths are more than 10 times this). Then you will have to pay storage, taxes and delivery – and that for a B+ vintage that will not be ready to drink for many years.

To my mind it would be crazy to invest in smart 2011s when there are so many keenly priced 2009s lower down the pecking order that are already delicious but will continue to improve over the next five to 10 years. The great appeal of the super-ripe 2009 vintage is that it is so consistent, and there are great finds even in such unglamorous appellations as Bordeaux, Médoc and Premières Côtes de Bordeaux (an appellation that has recently been renamed Cadillac Côtes de Bordeaux).

Now is the time to pounce on these. In the UK anyway, relatively inexpensive red bordeaux from the 2008, 2009 and 2010 vintages can easily be found in commercial circulation now – both on supermarket shelves and from many of the more specialist retailers such as those listed below. I strongly suggest that you take advantage of this before they all move on to the leaner 2011s that, lower down the Bordeaux ranks, are not nearly as toothsome.

It’s a little early to broach the magnificently classic 2010 vintage in Bordeaux, whose wines have so much of everything, especially tannin, but I see that Britain’s biggest supermarket has already moved to this vintage for its