

Vintage report

Sauternes & Barsac 2011

Stephen Brook reports on a vintage that has yielded delicious wines in both Sauternes and Barsac – perfectly balanced between opulence and acidity. A must buy for sweet wine lovers

AS HAPPENS QUITE frequently, a year that was far from outstanding for red Bordeaux turned out to be a winner for the region's top sweet wines. The spring was mild, although hail in April affected yields badly in the village of Sauternes itself and Bommès. Flowering was exceptionally early, around 20 May, but then the weather cooled off, and July and much of August were mostly cloudy, cool and damp. In such conditions, unwelcome rot made an appearance and had to be removed. Rain during the last week of August provoked botrytis, and very warm weather continued into September, so that the sunshine was able to concentrate the increasingly botrytised fruit. ➤

'Barsac seems to have succeeded particularly well in 2011'



Photographs: Mike Prior; Ben Appetit/Alamy

Above: pickers at Château Nairac enjoyed a very warm September spell



Brook's top Sauternes & Barsac classified growths



Château d'Yquem, Sauternes 1GCC
19/20 (96/100)
£284-£298 Fine & Rare, Lay & Wheeler, Millésima, Nicholls & Perks, R&B
Tasted from cask. Lush apricot nose. Fine attack

thanks to high acidity. Very sweet and pungent, with intense apricot fruit. Not a fat style, with great elegance, and shows lots of energy and spice. Long.
Drink 2018-2060 Alcohol N/A



Château Climens, Barsac 1CC 18.5 (95)
£62.50(ib)-£84 Armit Wines, Fine & Rare, James Nicholson, Millésima

Complex, poised nose of apricot and quince. Fine attack, intense and very concentrated, with considerable force and drive. Taut and full of tension, this is for the long haul. Disappointing last year, magnificent now. Very long.
Drink 2016-2050 Alc 13.5%



Château Coutet, Barsac 1CC 18.5 (95)
£51.66-£53.30 Armit Wines, Fine & Rare, Millésima

Elegant peachy nose, with ample botrytis and integrated oak. Creamy and sumptuous, highly concentrated, this is a majestic wine with both power and freshness. Has energy and persistence and fine balancing acidity. **Drink 2015-2050 Alc 14%**



Château Clos Haut-Peyraguey, Sauternes 1CC 18 (93)
£35.86-£40 Fine & Rare, Millésima

Heady ripe mandarin and apricot nose. Very sweet and intense on the palate but with high acidity to give it finesse and drive. Tight, youthful, citric, imposing and long. **Drink 2016-2045 Alc 13.5%**



Château Guiraud, Sauternes 1CC 18 (93)
£38.34-£49.20 Berry Bros & Rudd, Millésima

Discreet apricot and mandarin nose. Fine attack of freshness and purity. Silky and intense, with fine acidity to lift the fruit. Needs time to develop complexity. Fine potential and good length.
Drink 2016-2045 Alc 14% ➤



Château Rieussec, Sauternes 1CC 18 (93)
 £30(ib)-£58.34 Armit Wines, Bordeaux Index, Lay & Wheeler, Millésima
 Tasted from cask. With a muted nose, this is distinctly oaky now. Good attack, sleek and creamy, it may not be nuanced now but it has precision and drive, and complex flavours of ripe citrus and apricots. Very long, one with a lengthy future ahead of it. **Drink 2016-2050 Alc N/A**



Château Suduiraut, Sauternes 1CC 18 (93)
 £40.41(ib)-£56.46 Armit Wines, Fine & Rare, Millésima
 Heady apricot and mango nose. Concentrated and creamy, with density and weight of fruit. The oak is integrated and the wine is harmonious in a rich rather than racy style. Long. **Drink 2016-2050 Alc 13.5%**



Château de Rayne Vigneau, Sauternes 1CC 17.5 (91)
 £36 Berry Bros & Rudd, Millésima
 Reticent but oaky stone fruit nose, with ample botrytis. Lean and fresh, sleek and silky, this is showing precision rather than depth of fruit. But it does have finesse and persistence. **Drink 2015-2040 Alc 13.5%**



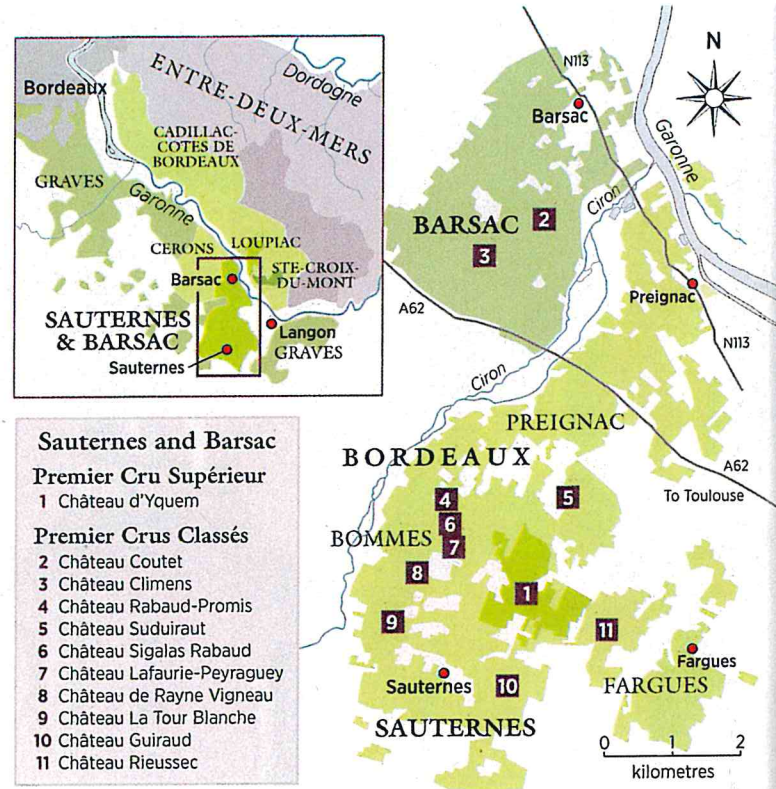
Château Doisy-Daëne, Barsac 2CC 17.5 (91)
 £24.16(ib)-£31.40 Armit Wines, En Primeur
 Clean citric nose, lightly candied and oaky. Concentrated and precise with fine acidity, this is silky, charming, impeccably balanced and long. **Drink 2015-2040 Alc 13%**



Château La Tour Blanche, Sauternes 1CC 17.5 (91)
 £43.34-£51.40 Berry Bros & Rudd, Millésima
 Juicy apricot and pineapple nose, lashings of upfront fruit. Very concentrated, velvety and imposing, with a slight lack of freshness and acidity, but it does have impressive density of fruit. **Drink 2015-2040 Alc 14%**



Château Sigalas Rabaud, Sauternes 1CC 17.5 (91)
 £38.46 Fine & Rare
 Smoky apricot and mandarin nose. Good attack, sweet and pungent, this is supple rather than racy, with purity of fruit and a long, spicy finish. **Drink 2015-2040 Alc 14%**



'Is this a vintage to buy? Absolutely. Even the richest wines are not heavy, thanks to the acidity'

The harvest got under way from 12 September, and the best grapes were picked over a period from 20 September to 5 October. Nairac, by contrast, picked its entire crop in a single *trie* from 21 to 30 September. The grapes had ripened and concentrated to such an extent that the risk was the cuvées would be too rich and heavy. Yquem coped with this problem of balance by including in the blend some mature bunches that had not developed noble rot. The final balance of the wines was assisted to a great extent by the acidity that the cool summer had preserved. >

Below: wines from Château de Rayne Vigneau show 'finesse and persistence'

