

*Decanting  
Syrah*

*The world's best wine magazine*

January 2014 £4.40

# Decanter

## TOP 50 WINES OF THE YEAR

**The pick of our tastings  
in 2013, all in one issue**

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### **Vintage Champagne**

**Our experts rate the top wines  
and top years from 79 cuvées**

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### **Central Otago Pinot Noir**

**Is this still the New World's best  
Burgundy alternative?**

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*Also  
this  
month*

**Decanting Rhône & Barossa**

**Panel tasting: Sauternes 2009 & 2010**

**Bordeaux before 1855**

**Expert's Choice: Rheingau Riesling**

**Interview: the man at Margaux**





# A month in wine

## Around the wine world

Troubled 2013 vintage commands high prices in Beaune

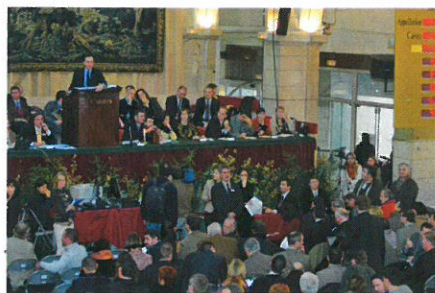
**FRANCE** This year's Hospices de Beaune auction (*pictured*) achieved the highest sales total ever, reflecting strong global demand for top Burgundy wines.

Record sales topped €6.3m (£5.3m) at the 153rd annual auction, up €400,000 on last year despite only 333 barrels going under the hammer, the smallest number since 1981.

For the first time, a Chinese buyer bought the President's Lot. The 456-litre barrel of Meursault - Cuvée Philippe Le Bon, Genevrières Premier Cru - sold for €131,000, with proceeds destined for charity.

Many lots surpassed their estimates; other top-performing cuvées included Cuvée Georges Ritter, Clos de la Roche which fetched €70,620; and Dames des Flandres, Bâtard-Montrachet, at €65,270.

Experts who tasted the wines before the auction were 'often surprised' by the quality,



said Roland Masse, manager of Domaine des Hospices de Beaune. He said staff had never worked so hard to select high-quality grapes, given the cocktail of late flowering, hailstorms and rot that have hampered the 2013 growing and harvest season in Burgundy.

'These are very clean wines - they must have sorted grapes with tweezers,' said Michael Apstein, of *Wine Review Online*.

## Sauternes grapes stolen 'by fellow producer'

**FRANCE** A Sauternes wine producer has lost a tenth of its normal haul of grapes after they were harvested overnight by someone else.

About €20,000-worth (£16,800) of grapes were stripped from 13 rows of vines at night at the seven-hectare Château Suau in Barsac.

'There was no vandalism, the grapes were carefully harvested,' Corinne

Biarnès, owner of the second growth, told *Decanter.com*. 'The person must have been a bit short [from their own harvest] and the plot is far from the road. To be stolen from by a fellow producer - there are no words to describe it.'

Biarnès believes the grapes from Château Suau, which produces 20,000 bottles annually (*pictured*), were stolen to boost volumes at another estate.



## Chinese fine wine market feels the pinch

**CHINA** An atmosphere of austerity is clogging China's fine wine sector in 2013, *Decanter.com* discovered during a visit to Shanghai in November.

The government clampdown on officials' entertainment budgets and a slower-growing economy are continuing to take their toll on sales of fine wine, especially top Bordeaux.

'There are a lot of stocks,' said Alberto Fernández, managing partner at Torres and head of the Spanish firm's China business. 'The market is in a period of correction.'

'We're planning for another tough year in 2014,' said John Watkins, chief executive of industry heavyweight ASC Fine Wines.

But he and others believe the situation will improve. 'China hasn't gone off wine,' said Richard Sutton, of Armit Wines Hong Kong.

## Christmas must be coming: Champagne prices plummet

**UK** Champagne price wars are being waged on both sides of the English Channel as retailers in the UK and France seek to tempt Christmas drinkers.

As early as October, UK supermarkets Sainsbury's and Morrisons began offering 25% off six-bottle purchases of own-label wine and Champagne. Sainsbury's Antoine de Clevecy Champagne fell to just €9.75 per bottle.

In November, French supermarkets Carrefour and Leclerc offered deals via their store loyalty cards that respectively saw Paul-François Vranken's Premier Cru fall to €7.78 and GH Martel to €8.45. 'The price is nearly cheaper than Prosecco,' Michel Letter, head of Pernod Ricard-owned GH Mumm and Perrier-Jouët, said of the offers. 'In the long term, Champagne's image will be damaged.'

## In brief

■ eBay has defended its anti-fraud measures after a man was sentenced to four months in prison for supplying fake Mouton Rothschild labels via the online trading site. Andrea Lindner-Jamin, lawyer for Mouton Rothschild, said fake labels are a problem online. An eBay spokesperson said its system 'allows rights owners to quickly and easily report copyright infringements' and it 'promptly investigates' all complaints.

■ A New York judge has allowed alleged wine fraudster Rudy Kurniawan to be assessed by psychiatrists. Kurniawan's lawyer, Vincent S Verdiramo, denied an attempt to delay the trial, scheduled to start on 9 December. 'He has already been held without bail for 18 months.'

■ St-Julien second growth Château Léoville LasCases lost 6ha of vines to toxic smoke just before harvest. Owner Jean-Hubert Delon said affected grapes were unusable. Didier Cuvelier, owner of Ch Léoville-Poyferré, the source of the smoke, blamed the incident on people dumping rubbish in plant waste.

■ The sole director of collapsed wine investment firm Bordeaux UK Ltd has been banned as a company director for nine years. Ian Vanderhook's firm is estimated to have owed more than £10 million when it went into liquidation in late 2011. Liquidator Nedim Ailyan called the firm's accounts 'mismanagement on a colossal scale'.

■ Virgin Wines' management team has bought the firm from Laithwaite's owner Direct Wines in a deal worth £16m. Direct Wines is keen to expand overseas, but MD Simon McMurtrie added, 'we are increasing our investment in Laithwaite's in the UK following the sale'.

■ Loïc Avril, of Heston Blumenthal's flagship The Fat Duck restaurant, beat 10 rivals to be crowned the world's best young sommelier at a ceremony at the French Embassy in Washington. 'It's one of the best days of my life,' he said.

*For the latest and most comprehensive wine news, visit [Decanter.com](http://Decanter.com) and [DecanterChina.com](http://DecanterChina.com), or follow us @ [Decanter](https://twitter.com/Decanter) on Twitter*



# Sauternes 2009 & 2010

Equally excellent, but very different vintages, says Stephen Brook, so depending on your preference for opulence or elegance, there's something for all tastes

A GREAT RED-WINE vintage in Bordeaux is not necessarily outstanding for Sauternes, but in 2009 that was definitely the case. The summer heat brought the grapes to full maturity, and by mid-September all that was required was an outbreak of noble rot. Rain promptly fell and the spread of botrytis was swift. The harvest could be completed rapidly, and the sole problem was an excess of sugar. Very high must weights could have resulted either in wines with very high alcohol, or in wines with normal alcohols but worryingly high residual sugar (giving cloying, heavy wines). In the event, the producers were able to blend different lots, thus retaining considerable freshness and acidity in wines that were nonetheless very sweet.

In 2010 the rain fell a bit later, towards the end of September, and there were outbreaks of botrytis throughout October. The spread of noble rot was less rapid as temperatures were quite cool. So were night-time temperatures, and this in particular preserved acidity in the grapes. Ripeness levels were almost as high as in 2009, but acidity levels were higher, giving the wines a greater raciness and intensity. As in 2009, yields were quite generous – a godsend in a region where yields can be punishingly minute.

Barsac differs from the other communes of the region, since it is flatter and has more limestone and considerably less clay in the soil. This generally gives wines of greater finesse and less power than those of Sauternes, but that's a difference in style and structure, not in quality.

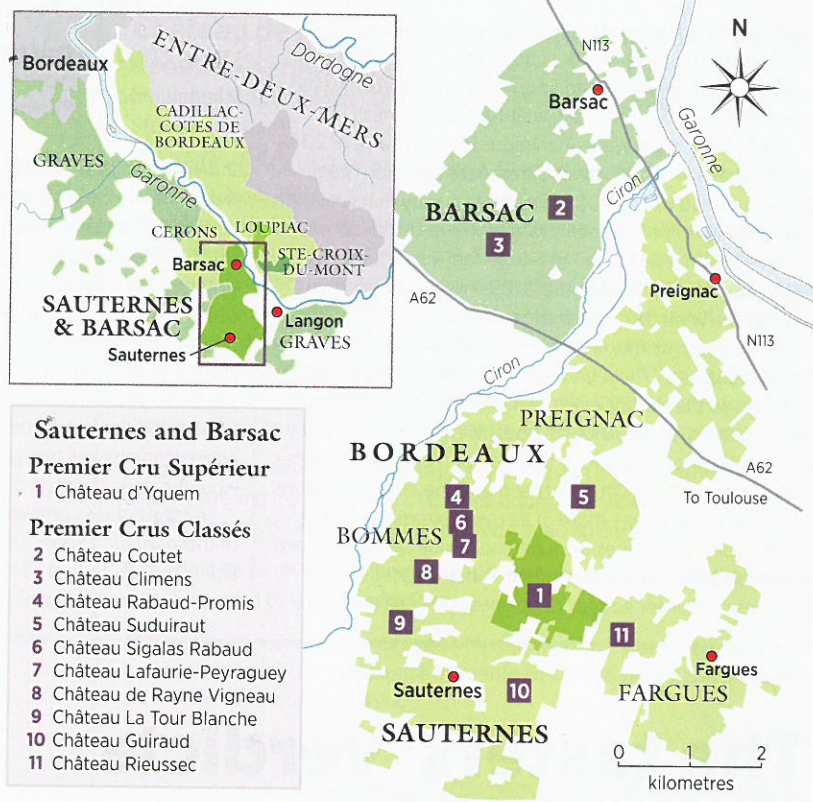
Which vintage you prefer is a matter of taste. If opulence and richness are paramount, then the 2009s may give more pleasure. If intensity and elegance matter more, then the 2010s will fit the bill. 2009 is certainly more of a crowd pleaser. One might surmise that the 2009s will be faster-maturing than the steelier 2010s, but that's by no means certain. Both vintages should age extremely well, and there will be some wines that will still be going strong in the middle of this century.

## Consistently high quality

Those with long memories of Sauternes will testify to the immense improvement in quality in recent decades. In the 1960s and 1970s there were just a handful of wines of outstanding quality, and more than a handful that were simply dire. The dire wines have just about vanished: among the classified growths in Sauternes the underperformers can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

There is always a temptation in Sauternes to cut corners: the low yields (half to a quarter of those for red wines) and the need for repeated pickings to select only nobly rotten grapes mean that the costs of production are enormous, yet rarely rewarded by the market. Yet today there is hardly any evidence of lazy harvesting and winemaking. The great majority of the classified growths, and a few non-classified estates too, are consistently making very high quality wines.

It's a pity that so few people are buying them. Quality is not the issue, but consumers are still puzzled about how and when to consume them. Sauternes producers are gamely trying to promote the wines as ideal with Asian food, but frankly it's a stretch, especially with residual sugar levels of 150 grams/litre or more. Yes, the wines are perfect



## Sauternes: know your vintages

**2012** A wash-out, with some top châteaux deciding not to bottle the wine

**2011** Magnificent, with highly concentrated fruit balanced by fine acidity

**2010** Pure and racy, with intensity rather than opulence.

**2009** Big and bold wines after a hot summer, voluptuous but not out of balance

**2008** A difficult autumn with low yields, so probably underrated. Not quite at the level of 2007

**2007** A prolonged harvest, but the wines are of high quality, though their longevity has been questioned

**2006** A light year, with low yields and high acidity

with foie gras or Roquefort, but how many of us routinely munch on those? Sauternes remains very much a niche market, while many consumers simply dismiss them as unfashionable sweet wines.

The Sauternes estates have not helped themselves by half-hearted promotion of the wines. They probably spend so much money making them that there is little left over for glitzy promotional campaigns. But they deserve to be better known and appreciated. With few exceptions, they are not expensive, and they will keep for decades. And quality has never been higher.

*Stephen Brook has been a contributing editor to Decanter since 1996 and is the DWWA Regional co-Chair for Bordeaux*

## Sauternes: the facts

There are five communes (Sauternes, Barsac, Fargues, Preignac and Bommès), and Barsac has the right to label the wines with either the name Barsac or Sauternes.  
**Sauternes** about 2,200ha  
**Barsac** about 660ha  
**Maximum yield** 25hl/ha  
**Minimum alcohol** 13% ➤



## The results

A successful and enjoyable tasting with our judges praising both the 2009s and 2010s, highlighting excellent winemaking, value for money and impressive ageing potential. Georgina Hindle reports

'A FABULOUS TASTING,' opened Stephen Brook 'with very good results and an awful lot of Highly Recommended wines'. Sebastian Payne MW echoed the 'extremely high quality overall' while Steven Spurrier was similarly pleased with the number of 'fantastic, well-balanced wines'.

While the judges were unanimous in their praise of 2009 and 2010, they noted distinct differences between them. Brook summed up the 2009 vintage as a 'very rich year with tremendous fruit and concentration' where the 'trick' was to achieve freshness. 'And by and large they have succeeded.' Payne agreed, adding that the 2009s 'will give everything that people want, because they're rich'.

By contrast, acidity was more noticeable in the 2010s. Brook explained: 'The nights were cool, especially in October, so the acidity levels remained high, and that's the defining thing about 2010 – the best wines have this lovely mouthwatering, racy acidity that you don't find to the same extent in the 2009s. On the other hand, the 2009s are more voluptuous and sexy – more of a crowd-pleasing vintage.'

With only four wines from Barsac, Brook said it was hard to generalise but singled-out their 'fabulous acidity and freshness'. Spurrier added: 'Sauternes is always unctuous

### *'Sauternes is not a wine for investment but enjoyment'*

Stephen Brook

and voluptuous, whereas Barsac doesn't need that... it always has a kind of energy to it.'

Good balance, richness and acidity aside, our experts noted unusually high levels of residual sugar in both vintages (a minimum of 140g/l, and some more than 160g/l) which represents a 'major change in Sauternes', said Brook. 'Twenty years ago you'd have had residual sugar levels of around 100g/l, perhaps 120g/l in a really top year, and now everyone gets these really high sugars. I'm not saying it's a trend to be deplored – the wines are still lovely and they will age extremely well because they have the acidity backbone – but it means the style of the wines has changed radically.'

All the judges commented on the 'incredibly good value' of these wines. 'Except for a few wines, like Yquem, these are a bargain,' said Brook. 'Most are no more expensive than a top Médoc cru bourgeois, which is ridiculous when you

### The scores

39 wines tasted

2

Outstanding

23

Highly Recommended

13

Recommended

0

Fair

0

Poor

1

Faulty

## The tasters' verdicts

### Stephen Brook



*Brook has been a contributing editor to Decanter since 1996 and is the DWWA Regional co-Chair for Bordeaux. He has won a clutch of awards for his writing on wine, and is the author of more than 30 books, including Complete Bordeaux, now the definitive study of the region, and Sauternes and the Other Sweet Wines of Bordeaux*

#### Brook's verdict

'This was a fantastic tasting, demonstrating that most Sauternes properties are at the

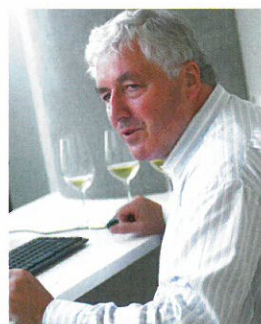
height of their powers, turning out extraordinary wines in fine vintages.

'The differences in character between the two vintages were clearly apparent: the 2009s richer, the 2010s arguably more elegant, though the best 2009s had finesse in spades. I think it unlikely that I have given higher average scores in any other *Decanter* panel tasting.

'Vintages such as these should put paid to the old notion of Sauternes as a heavy wine, lacking in acidity and freshness. True, a botrytised Riesling will probably show even greater zest and raciness, but these Sauternes – even the opulent 2009s – often had amazing freshness and lift. Their high levels of residual sugar probably rule them out as aperitif wines, but a glass at the end of a meal won't leave you slumped in your chair.

'It's dismayingly that, at a time when average quality is so high, Sauternes remains resolutely unfashionable. This tasting confirmed that it is indeed one of the world's great wines, attractively priced, and having the great virtue of being delicious young and delicious old.'

### Sebastian Payne MW



*Payne joined The Wine Society in 1973 and was appointed chief buyer in 1985. Having stepped down from this role in 2011, he remains an integral part of the buying team and currently sources its Italian, German and Eastern European wines, as well as writing for the Society List and website. He is a Chevalier dans l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole.*

#### Payne's verdict

'This tasting was a joyous reminder that proper Sauternes is one of the wonders of

the wine world. How can dehydrated grapes, which look furry and rotten, make such nectar remains a mystery to me

'Creating these wines is a labour of love. Few properties make money from doing so, because harvesting is so labour-intensive and yields, even in a good year, are half or less than half of those accrued by an equivalent classed-growth claret. In a difficult year, perhaps only a tenth.

Luckily producers have enjoyed one of their most successful decades ever, though total quantities remain small. Both 2010 and 2009 clearly produced many highly recommendable wines, and good acidity to balance the richness was key. I liked the top 2009s – both opulent and rich – best, but the 2010s are still very young and have a fresh vitality of their own, which has great appeal. Most wines would age well over 10 to 30 years.'



# Sauternes 2009 & 2010

consider the yields are perhaps a third.' Spurrier agreed, but warned potential speculators: 'With very few exceptions, Sauternes doesn't have a high resale price on the auction market, so it's not a wine to invest in.' Payne added that 'Sauternes is not a wine for investment but enjoyment.'

So when is best to enjoy them? Despite Payne's recommended ageing time of 'at least 20 years for nearly all of them' he also said 'If you drink them tomorrow, you won't be disappointed. Sauternes is a wonderful wine because you can drink it soon after its bottled and, because of its sweetness, most will last 20 years and some will last 50 years. They don't go bad, they just change, losing some sweetness but gaining finesse.'

Spurrier put his drinking window from 2014 to 2035. 'Sauternes will never let you down. The wines will keep on improving and surprising you – as long as they have acidity.'

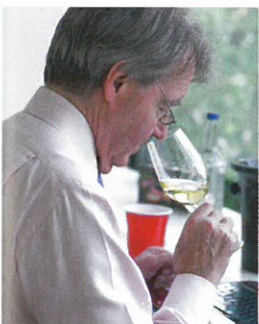
In reflecting on Bordeaux's sweet wines, Brook said that 30 years ago there were some poor Sauternes and Barsacs. 'But that's not the case anymore; the quality level has never been higher.' He said both the 2009 and 2010 vintages 'have great virtues' and he and his fellow judges 'recommend them with enthusiasm'.

And with Christmas approaching, Spurrier said it was the perfect time to 'forget the vintage Port' and seek out Sauternes instead. 'No house should be without it!'

**Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit any 2010 and 2009 sweet wines from the Barsac and Sauternes appellations**

**NB: wines that have an asterisk by their region (Sauternes\*) are officially qualified as Barsac but have chosen to use Sauternes on their label**

## Steven Spurrier



*Spurrier is Decanter's consultant editor. He joined the wine trade in London in 1964, opening L'Académie du Vin, France's first private wine school, in 1973. He has written several books and created the Christie's Wine Course with its then senior wine director Michael Broadbent*

### Spurrier's verdict

'For a small, specific wine region whose name is a byword for some of the world's greatest yet climatically most difficult to

produce wines, Sauternes-Barsac has been on a roll this past decade.

'2009 and 2010 represent two vintages of the highest, but very different quality. The former was a hot year, where the drawn-out harvest period allowed the necessary botrytis to develop in healthy conditions; the latter was cooler, providing less generous fruit but perhaps more precision. 2009 will justifiably take the honours, and the best wines will last for decades, while 2010 has a florality that I personally appreciate.

'There were very few disappointments across the 39 wines – not surprising, for there is little room for compromise in Sauternes, the painstaking result of several passages through the vines, picking berry by berry. A long fermentation is necessary to absorb just the right balance of alcohol while retaining very high levels of residual sugar and, most importantly, natural acidity for the future. These wines are certainly richer in residual sugar than in the past, but they retain a clarity and presence on the palate that will convert every wine lover new to Sauternes and do more than reassure the appellation's regular admirers.'

## Outstanding 18.5–20pts (95–100pts)



### Château de Rayne-Vigneau, Sauternes 1CC 2009

*Decanter* average score: 18.75/20pts (95+/100pts)

Individual judges' scores: Stephen Brook 18.5 Sebastian Payne MW 19 Steven Spurrier 19

£31.60–£50 Bancroft, Bordeaux Gold, Christopher Keiller, Corkr, Fine & Rare, Millésima, Nebuchadnezzar

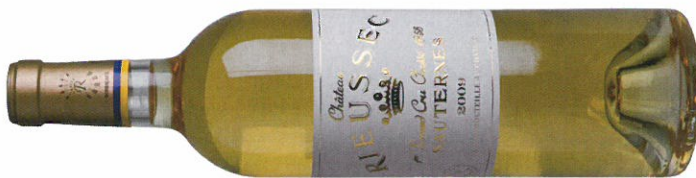
The hill on which this estate lies is unique in the region for the scattering of semi-precious gems found in the soil. The property has changed hands a few times over recent decades, and is now part of the portfolio owned by the French bank Crédit Agricole. It's large, with 80 hectares planted, of which 50ha are considered top quality. There is a higher than usual proportion of Sauvignon Blanc at 24%, with 74% Semillon. Quality has been patchy, but has risen over the past decades, thanks in part to intensive studies of the terroir, and perhaps to the arrival of a new winemaker in 2009.

**Stephen Brook** Powerful botrytis nose which is rich and explosive, with stone fruits and mango aromas. Medium-bodied, very sweet, with plenty of acidity. There's drive and persistence, and a bracing citric finish.

**Sebastian Payne MW** Ripe lemon fruit on the nose and palate that is elegant and stylish and beautifully balanced.

**Steven Spurrier** Exotically honeyed fruit, fully rich and smooth on the palate, wonderful citrus and spice elements add to the vigour and presence on the palate, exotic yet classic.

Drink 2014–2034 Alcohol 13.5%



### Château Rieussec, Sauternes 1CC 2009

18.5 (95) SB 18.5 SP 18.5 SS 18.5

£57–£95 Armit, Berry Bros & Rudd, Christopher Keiller, DBR Wines, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Frazier's, Handford, Imbros, Jake's Food & Wine, James Nicholson, Lea & Sandeman, Marc Fine Wines, Majestic, The Secret Cellar

Little surprise that the 2009 Rieussec excelled. The first growth, on one of the highest slopes in Sauternes, benefits from the investment and professionalism of its owners, the Lafite-Rothschild group. It's a large property, with 93 hectares planted, 90% of which are Semillon. Charles Chevallier, the Lafite group production director, used to be the winemaker at Rieussec and has always had a passion for the property and its wine. He is the last person who would allow quality to slip, and has masterminded the construction of new cellars that allow longer ageing of the wine, which is matured in 55% new oak. The barrels come from the cooperage at Ch Lafite.

**SB** Smoky, toasty nose of apricots and passion fruit. Rich and creamy palate with fine weight of fruit. Very concentrated, voluptuous style yet refreshed by sleek, racy acidity. Still a bit primary but should evolve very well.

**SP** Very ripe lemon fruit. Another serious wine that will deliver the sweetness hit at the end of the meal, and will delight everybody who drinks it.

**SS** Fine yellow fruits and honey nose. Lovely lifted fruit and natural richness on the palate. Concentrated with a lemony touch on the finish. A fine, elegant wine, already complex and with more to come.

Drink 2014–2040 Alc 13.5% ➤



# Sauternes 2009 & 2010

## Highly Recommended 17–18.25pts (90–94pts)



### Château Coutet, Barsac 1CC 2009

18.25 (94) SB 19 SP 18 SS 18

£66–£84 Berry Bros & Rudd, Bordeaux Wine Investments, En Primeur, Farr Vintners, Frazier's, Hennings, Imbibros, Justerini & Brooks, La Place de Bordeaux, Millésima, Nebuchadnezzar  
Lush, honeyed nose that is peachy with hints of orange peel. The expression of botrytis comes through on the palate, which is succulent with balanced acidity. This is unequivocally delicious with a great future. **Drink** 2014–2040 **Alc** 14%



### Clos Haut-Peyraguey, Sauternes 1CC 2009

18.25 (94) SB 17 SP 19 SS 18.5

£26–£37 Bordeaux Gold, Corkr, Fine & Rare, Millésima  
Apricot and mandarin aroma with oaky notes and a classy citrus minerality. The palate is creamy and opulent with real structure and personality – full of natural energy for the long term. A long finish, and a real classic. **Drink** 2014–2039 **Alc** 14%



### Château Doisy Daëne, Barsac 2CC 2010

18 (93) SB 18.75 SP 17.5 SS 18

£37–£55 Appellations, Berry Bros & Rudd, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Coe Vintners, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, HS Liquid Assets, Justerini & Brooks, Lay & Wheeler, The Wine Society  
Fine, floral, honey nose that is lightly oaked – a delicate wine. Natural richness on the palate and lively concentration which is cut by racy acidity. Delicious with great purity and a finish that is long and elegant. **Drink** 2014–2040 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Sigalas Rabaud, Sauternes 1CC 2010

18 (93) SB 18 SP 18.5 SS 17.5

£27.50(ib)–£33.60 Fine & Rare, Wine Owners  
Ripe lemon, fresh peaches and some exotic fruits make up this complex nose. The palate is rich and velvety with good concentration and enough acidity for the long term. The finish is a classy flourish of a prima ballerina finishing her move. **Drink** 2014–2039 **Alc** 13.5%

*'Most are no more expensive than a top Médoc cru bourgeois, which is ridiculous when you consider the yields are perhaps a third'*

Stephen Brook



### Château Suduiraut, Sauternes 1CC 2009

18 (93) SB 18.75 SP 18 SS 17.5

£55–£95 Fine & Rare, Coe Vintners, Bancroft, Davis Bell McCraith, En Primeur, Goedhuis, Handford, Justerini & Brooks, Marc Fine Wines, Nebuchadnezzar, Rodney Fletcher  
Exotic, charming nose: quite honeyed and with ample botrytis. An extremely unctuous palate that is concentrated but has pungent acidity. This wine is opulent but has real finesse. **Drink** 2014–2040 **Alc** 14%



### Château Lamothe-Guignard, Sauternes 2CC 2009

17.75 (92) SB 18.25 SP 18 SS 17

£14.75–£22.50 Bordeaux Gold, Fine & Rare  
Passion fruit, pineapple and lovely botrytis nose, which is very open. This openness carries to the palate which is balanced, massively rich and has a long, crystalline finish. **Drink** 2014–2040 **Alc** 14%



### Château Filhot, Sauternes 2CC 2010

17.5 (91) SB 18 SP 17.5 SS 17

£18–£20 Bordeaux Gold, Daniel Lambert, Fine & Rare, Rodney Fletcher  
Spice, herbs and honey aromas with a touch of oak and some lemon. Pineapple is more overt on the palate, which is elegant and pure. The finish is fresh and long with some candied notes. **Drink** 2014–2040 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Sauternes 1CC 2010

17.5 (91) SB 16 SP 18.5 SS 18

£34–£54 Bordeaux Gold, Corkr, Fine & Rare, Millésima, Rodney Fletcher, Wine Owners  
Toasty apricot nose with orange peel and mandarin notes. Fine natural richness on the palate which will reveal more complexity as it ages. Great acidity for the long term. A classy wine. **Drink** 2014–2039 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Caillou, Sauternes\* 2CC 2010

17.25 (90+) SB 16.5 SP 17.5 SS 18

N/A UK [www.chateaucailou.com](http://www.chateaucailou.com)  
Lifted citrus and honeyed nose that is delicate and fresh with floral notes. The palate is rich with citrusy ripeness, a vibrant presence and good length. **Drink** 2014–2039 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château d'Arche, Sauternes 2CC 2010

17.25 (90+) SB 17 SP 17 SS 17.5

£21.30 Bordeaux Gold, Fine & Rare  
Rich, naturally honeyed nose and palate with very ripe lemon, summer fruits and citric freshness. Lean but persistent with charm rather than grandeur. It's balanced and will age well. **Drink** 2014–2034 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château de Malle, Sauternes 2CC 2010

17.25 (90+) SB 18 SP 16 SS 17.5

£23.50–£35 Bordeaux Gold, Christopher Keiller, Corkr, Fine & Rare  
Floral, spicy and honeyed nose with a lovely expression of lemony botrytis fruit on the palate. Brighter and more pineapple on the aftertaste, which is surprisingly refreshing for such a sweet wine. **Drink** 2014–2035 **Alc** 13.5% ➤



# Sauternes 2009 & 2010

## Highly Recommended (continued) 17-18.25pts (90-94pts)



### Château Filhot, Sauternes 2CC

**2009** 17.25 (90+) SB 17 SP 17 SS 17.5

£29-£40 Daniel Lambert, Essentially Wine, Fine & Rare, Handford, Hennings, Mumbles Fine Wines, Noble Green, Richard Granger, South Downs Cellars, Tanners, The Haslemere Cellar

Deep, rich apricot jam nose with exotic summer fruits. The palate has a complex fruit profile with good concentration and energy. Good length and potential. **Drink** 2014-2034 **Alc** 14%



### Château Guiraud, Sauternes 1CC

**2009** 17.25 (90+) SB 17.5 SP 18 SS 16.5

£52-£60 Corney & Barrow, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Goedhuis, Handford, Hedonism, Hennings, Millésima, Morgan Classic Wines, R&B Wines, Swig, The Sampler, Uncorked, Wine Owners

Honeyed peach and passion fruit nose with warm spices. Sweet palate but has precision and lively acidity. Luscious, balanced and very delicious. **Drink** 2014-2034 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Rieussec, Sauternes 1CC

**2010** 17.25 (90+) SB 18 SP 17 SS 17

£46-£48 Albany Vintners, Bancroft, Berry Bros & Rudd, Bordeaux Index, Decorum Vintners, DBR Wines, Fine & Rare, Justerini & Brooks, L'Assemblage, Lay & Wheeler, LHK, Roberson Wine, Seckford, Vinsignia  
Lush stone fruit and mango nose with dried herbs and ripe lemon. The palate is full of lush and smooth botrytis richness that is precise rather than opulent. Tangy and very long finish with a good future. **Drink** 2014-2040 **Alc** 14%



### Château Sigalas Rabaud, Sauternes 1CC

**2009** 17.25 (90+) SB 16 SP 17.5 SS 18

£38-£41 Bordeaux Index, Christopher Keiller, Fine & Rare, Haynes Hanson & Clark, Nebuchadnezzar, Wine Owners, Z&B Vintners

Ripe lemon and yellow summer fruits with fine floral notes. Very sweet and sleek with delicate citrus and decent acidity. This is an excitingly elegant wine that will keep well. **Drink** 2014-2039 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Broustet, Sauternes\* 2CC

**2010** 17 (90) SB 18 SP 17 SS 16

£15-£17.50 Bordeaux Gold, Fine & Rare, Wine Owners

Delicate citrus aromas with oak notes and some honey. Very sweet and succulent with bright acidity to cut the fruit. A refreshing style with a long finish. **Drink** 2014-2034 **Alc** 13%



### Château Climens, Barsac 1CC

**2010** 17 (90) SB 17 SP 17 SS 17

£77-£92 Armit, Bibendum, Bordeaux Index, Corkr, Decorum Vintners, En Primeur, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Goedhuis, Laithwaite's, L'Assemblage, Lay & Wheeler, Millésima, Nebuchadnezzar, Uncorked, Wine Owners  
Ripe lemon, apricot, honey and pineapple with harmonious fruit and a fine texture. There's purity of fruit here and a good balance with a promising, fresh finish. **Drink** 2014-2035 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Climens, Barsac 1CC

**2009** 17 (90) SB 16.5 SP 18 SS 16.5

£80-£120 Albany Vintners, Bancroft, Berry Bros & Rudd, Bordeaux Index, Bordeaux Gold, Corney & Barrow, Frazier's, James Nicholson, Laithwaite's, Lay & Wheeler, Majestic, Millésima, Tanners, The Sampler, Uncorked  
Intriguing, rich stone fruit nose with hints of exotic flowers. The palate is utterly delicious with lots of sweet botrytis and great charm. This should develop well. **Drink** 2014-2034 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château Coutet, Barsac 1CC

**2010** 17 (90) SB 17.5 SP 17.5 SS 16

£52.20-£76 Berry Bros & Rudd, Bibendum, Christopher Keiller, Corkr, Farr Vintners, Goedhuis, La Place, Lay & Wheeler, LHK, Millésima, Nebuchadnezzar, Wine Owners

Opulent apricot nose that is fleshy, ripe and oaky. The texture is almost creamy with a bright seam of acidity. A round and sensuous style.

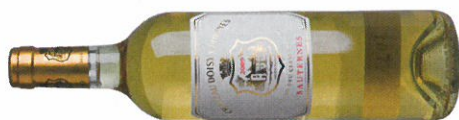
**Drink** 2014-2035 **Alc** 14%



### Château d'Arche, Sauternes 2CC

**2009** 17 (90) SB 17 SP 17.5 SS 16.5

£26.67 Fine & Rare, Goedhuis, Rodney Fletcher  
Broad, rich honeyed nose with lush peach and botrytis notes. Creamy, voluptuous and sensuous, this Sauternes delivers on all fronts except for lightness of touch. Surely this will last 50 years. **Drink** 2014-2064 **Alc** 14%



### Château Doisy-Védrières, Sauternes\*

**2CC 2009** 17 (90) SB 16 SP 18 SS 17

£30-£40 Bancroft, Berry Bros & Rudd, Christopher Keiller, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Formula Wine, Four Walls, Haynes Hanson & Clark, Imbibros, Justerini & Brooks, Magnum, Millésima, Nickolls & Perks, Uncorked  
Apricot and banana aroma with obvious Sauvignon Blanc characters. The palate is robust with a natural richness and a clean-cut finish. Very enjoyable. **Drink** 2014-2034 **Alc** 13.5%



### Château La Tour Blanche, Sauternes 1CC

**2010** 17 (90) SB 16.25 SP 17.5 SS 17.5

£47.40-£53.35 Berry Bros & Rudd, Bordeaux Gold, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Goedhuis, Justerini & Brooks, Laithwaite's, Lay & Wheeler, Millésima

Toasty nose with ripe citrus fruits that build in the glass, along with nuanced spices. Good palate of velvety ripe fruit with lifted acidity. This has presence, charm and a good future.

**Drink** 2014-2034 **Alc** 14%



### Château La Tour Blanche, Sauternes 1CC

**2009** 17 (90) SB 17.75 SP 16.5 SS 17

£36.90-£56 Beckers & Larners, Bordeaux Gold, Christopher Keiller, Corkr, En Primeur, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Millésima, Morgan Classic Wines, Wine Owners  
Apricot and apple compute bouquet with a touch of orange peel. The medium body, which is supple, silky and quite concentrated, is refreshed by good acidity. This is a wine for the long term. **Drink** 2014-2040 **Alc** 14% ➤



# Decanter PANEL TASTING

## Recommended 15-16.75pts (83-89pts)

Wine	Score	SB	SP	SS	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Château de Malle, Sauternes 2CC 2009	16.75 (89)	17	16	17.5	Passion fruit and orange peel with floral and honey notes. Good attack, with precision and liveliness. Long finish.	14%	2016-2024	£25-£46	Christopher Keiller, Corkr, Fine & Rare, Highbury Vintners
Château Lamothe, Sauternes 2CC 2009	16.75 (89)	17.5	15	17.5	Expressive and slightly exotic toasty nose. The palate is racy and has freshness and drive. A classic Sauternes with a good future.	13.5%	2014-2035	N/A UK	www.chateau-lamothe.com
Château Rabaud-Promis, Sauternes 1CC 2010	16.75 (89)	17.75	16	16.75	Opulent peach aromas with ripe lemon notes. Rich, yet has a light touch and admirable freshness. Very good length.	13%	2014-2034	N/A UK	www.rabaud-promis.com
Château Nairac, Barsac 2CC 2009	16.5 (88)	17.75	16	15.5	Robust, rich, honeyed fruit with passion fruit notes on both nose and palate. Creamy and voluptuous with good acidity.	13%	2017-2037	£39.60-£55	Bordeaux Gold, Bordeaux Index, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Millésima, Nebuchadnezzar
Château Suduiraut, Sauternes 1CC 2010	16.5 (88)	16	17.5	16	Dry spice and tropical fruit with well-judged oak. This is the real deal with luscious texture and length.	14%	2014-2039	£50-£69	widely available from specialist merchants
Clos Haut-Peyraguey, Sauternes 1CC 2010	16.25 (87)	18	15.5	15.5	Reticent stone fruit nose with ripe lemon and robust botrytis. Fine acidity to balance the tropical fruit palate. Persistent finish.	14%	2014-2035	£34.70-£41.60	Bordeaux Gold, Corkr, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima
Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Sauternes 1CC 2009	16.25 (87)	17	16	16	Peach, mango and apricot jam flavours on a weighty palate. This is a powerful wine that lacks a bit of finesse.	14%	2014-2035	£47.50-£59	widely available from specialist merchants
Château Nairac, Barsac 2CC 2010	16.25 (98)	16.5	15	17	Spicy and dry herb nose with underlying ripe apricot and mango tones. Creamy mid-palate with good acidity.	14%	2014-2024	£39.60-£50	Bordeaux Gold, En Primeur, Fine & Rare, Millésima
Château Doisy-Védrières, Sauternes* 2CC 2010	16 (86)	16	16	16.25	Rich, exotic fruit with oak and ripe lemon fruit. Luscious with a lemony finish that adds complexity.	13.5%	2014-2034	£27-£34.99	widely available from specialist merchants
Château Guiraud, Sauternes 1CC 2010	16 (86)	16	15.5	16.5	Apricot and custard nose with a sweet attack balanced by good acidity. An extravagant wine with a long finish	13.5%	2014-2034	£32-£41.50	widely available from specialist merchants
Château Rabaud-Promis, Sauternes 1CC 2009	15.75 (85+)	16	15	16	Spicy and exotic with a creamy palate and a caramel finish. Moderate acidity and length.	13%	2015-2030	£30-£36.50	Bordeaux Gold, Christopher Keiller, Fine & Rare, Justerini & Brooks, Millésima, Rodney Fletcher
Château de Rayne-Vigneau, Sauternes 1CC 2010	15.75 (85+)	14.5	16	16.5	Reticent apple and apricot nose with lots of concentration. Rich with quite firm acidity.	13.5%	2014-2034	£31.20-£40	Bordeaux Gold, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Millésima
Château Lamothe-Guignard, Sauternes 2CC 2010	15.5 (85)	17	14.5	15	Deep lemon and apricot nose and a sleek and silky palate with elegant acidity. Good length and finesse.	14%	2014-2035	£17.40-£18.50	Bordeaux Gold, Fine & Rare, Vinsignia

### Faulty

- Château Lamothe, Sauternes 2CC 2010 (corked)

For full UK stockist details, see p97

### Correction

- In the Gigondas panel tasting in our December 2013 issue we published that the Domaine Notre Dame des Pallières, Bois des Mourres 2010 was not available in the UK. It is in fact available to buy through Robert Anthony Wines at £17 per bottle.

## My top three Stephen Brook

■ **Château Doisy Daëne, Barsac 2CC 2010**  
A brilliant wine, with incredible raciness and purity of fruit. It's not unctuous or viscous, quite the opposite, but it has precisely the finesse that one hopes to find in Barsac. **18.75/20 (95+/100)** Drink 2014-2040

■ **Château Coutet, Barsac 1CC 2009**  
A great Coutet, which combines the lushness of the 2009 vintage with superb acidity. It's amazingly persistent and the ageing potential is excellent. Very typical of Barsac, but with added opulence. **19 (96)** Drink 2014-2040

■ **Château Lamothe-Guignard, Sauternes 2CC 2009** This small, family-owned property has not always excelled, but the Guignards have gone all out in 2009, and the result is voluptuous and creamy, yet far from cloying. Probably their best-ever wine. **18.25 (94)** Drink 2014-2040

## My top three Sebastian Payne MW

■ **Château Climens, Barsac 1CC 2009**  
Exotic, flowery and intriguing bouquet and utterly delicious palate - full of bounce, though rich. A great multi-faceted wine with a long future, only beginning to hit its stride. **18/20 (93/100)** Drink 2014-2034

■ **Château Lamothe-Guignard, Sauternes 2CC 2009** Ripe apricot nose and exuberant, open palate, brilliantly balanced by acidity which makes it dance on the palate. This property (not to be confused with the disappointing Lamothe) offers superb value for money. **18 (93)** Drink 2014-2040

■ **Château Sigalas Rabaud, Sauternes 1CC 2010** My favourite 2010. Though far from fully developed, this is the real thing with a properly luscious palate and final classy flourish of a prima ballerina finishing her pirouette. An excellent estate often below the radar. **18.5 (95)** Drink 2014-2039

## My top three Steven Spurrier

■ **Château Climens, Barsac 1CC 2010**  
Bérenice Lurton and her team make the final selection barrel by barrel at least 18 months after the vintage and the result is shy in its first years, only to present a rich but firmly textured purity of vineyard fruit in the decades to come. **17/20 (90/100)** Drink 2015-2035

■ **Clos Haut-Peyraguey, Sauternes 1CC 2009** At just 12 hectares, this is the smallest of the Sauternes premiers crus classés but for me one of the finest, least 'show-off' of all, under the painstakingly discreet ownership of the Pauly family, whose 2001 is a masterpiece and this comes close. **18.5 (95)** Drink 2014-2039

■ **Château Rayne-Vigneau, Sauternes 1CC**  
With 80 hectares of elevated vineyards that dominate the commune of Bommès, strict selection here has placed Rayne-Vigneau back at the peak it knew in the past. A wine both precise and exotic with a great future. **19 (96)** Drink 2014-2034

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors



## Expert summary: Stephen Brook

Such exceptional wines – from these two fine vintages and others – ought to be more widely promoted, bought and consumed, especially given their modest prices



Stephen Brook has been a contributing editor to *Decanter* since 1996 and is the DWWA Regional co-Chair for Bordeaux

IT CAME AS no surprise that there were so many exceptional wines, even though there were only two Outstandings. A few more came extremely close. What is more surprising is the number of less familiar properties that made exceptional wine in either or both of these fine vintages. Filhot, for example, showed well in both 2009 and 2010, and this is a property that has never been highly rated by wine critics. A change in generations has clearly made a difference, and since 2008 the wine has been very good indeed. De Malle, another middling property, also fared well in both years, while Caillou produced an excellent 2010.

There were a few letdowns. Climens, a perfectionist estate in Barsac, was undoubtedly good in 2010 and '09, but seemed shy here and failed to dazzle. These vintages have been more impressive in previous tastings. Guiraud, too, was a disappointment in 2010, though better in 2009. Rayne-Vigneau, which performed so gloriously in 2009, was weaker in 2010. Clos Haut-Peyraguey, a sentimental favourite for all panel members, was sensational in 2009, though reactions were more mixed to the 2010. It should be said that 'letdown' is a relative term in a tasting such as this, when average scores were exceptionally high.

The Barsac wines were, for the most part, true to type. Because of the curious labelling rules, some Barsacs were tasted in the Sauternes category, but their citric raciness

was perceptible. Nairac and Doisy-Védrières tend to be richer and more exotic, and this too was noted by us.

Unfortunately, our enthusiasm is unlikely to translate into a spurt of sales for these great wines. Although there are niches of demand in many countries, they have never walked off the shelves. Despite often risibly low prices considering the costs of production, Bordeaux merchants take little interest in the wine; British importers faithfully buy the good properties but don't always manage to sell them to their loyal customers; and the Sauternes producers themselves promote their wines poorly, if at all. The lush sweet wines of Austria and Tokaj are always sold in 375ml or 500ml bottles; in Sauternes such formats, which are so much more practical than 750ml, are still rare.

The tasting demonstrated that the old stereotype of Sauternes as a heavy, cloying wine should be jettisoned. Modern Sauternes is complex and layered, its multitude of flavours singing out and modulating with aeration and with bottle age. Their pleasure far outweighs the modest cost. **D**

*'What is surprising is the number of less familiar properties that made exceptional wine'*

*Bernard Magrez*  
The sole owner of  
4 Grands Crus Classés in Bordeaux

CHATEAU PAPE CLÉMENT      CLOS HAUT-PEYRAGUEY  
CHATEAU LA TOUR CARNET      CHATEAU FOMBRAUGE

L'ABUS D'ALCOOL EST DANGEREUX POUR LA SANTÉ. A CONSOMMER AVEC MODÉRATION.

## INTERNATIONAL SWEET WINE CHALLENGE

Hosted by the Riverina Winemakers Association in Australia since 2006, the International Sweet Wine Challenge unveils the variety and quality of sweet and semi-sweet wines. [www.sweetwinechallenge.com.au](http://www.sweetwinechallenge.com.au)

### THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

2013 INTERNATIONAL SWEET WINE OF THE YEAR  
BLUE PYRENEES 2010 CELLAR DOOR BOTRYTIS RIESLING  
ACCOMPANIED BY THE OTHER 2013 TROPHY WINNERS