

## THE FARR VINTNERS BLOG – January 2016

### 2012 Bordeaux Blind Tasting at Southwold

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Wednesday, 27 January 2016 by Stephen Browett

If it's January, then it's Southwold time. Every year, for a quarter of a century now, I've headed off to this charming little seaside town (home of the famous Adnams Brewery) to taste through the latest Bordeaux vintage to be physically released onto the market. When I started attending this great annual event I was the youngest person there, but certainly that is no longer the case! Sadly, we have lost Richard Peat, Bill Baker and John Avery from our ranks whilst Clive Coates, Jasper Morris and Roy Richards have de-camped to Burgundy. However, our group of twenty tasters still comprises the great and the good of the British wine world with young Masters of Wine Alex Hunt and Matthew Hemming joining senior MW's David Roberts, Sebastian Payne and Mark Savage. There are representatives of the leading UK fine wine merchants as well as critics Jancis Robinson, Neal Martin and Steven Spurrier.

This year it was the turn of 2012, and it was quite a marathon, with probably more wines to judge than ever before. We blind-tasted our way through 23 peer-group flights of 12 wines per flight over the course of three days. As always, the bottles were served in random order within their flight with no discussion until after the scores were taken.

After last year's rather underwhelming 2011 tasting we were very pleasantly surprised by 2012. This was a vintage that showed reasonably well from barrel but, in my opinion, the wines in bottle are showing better than expected. If I had to generalise, I would say that the communes of Pessac-Leognan and Pomerol have produced the best wines across the board. Saint Emilion (and environs) are very good but mixed and in the Medoc the wines have turned out to be really quite good. I asked everyone present to rank 2012 against other recent vintages (red wines only) and here are the results (13 votes for the best vintage, 12 for second best and so-on down to 1 vote for the least good vintage).

- 1 – 2005 (221 votes)
- 2 – 2009 (215 votes)
- 3 – 2010 (210 votes)
- 4 – 2000 (179 votes)
- 5 – 2001 (165 votes)
- 6 – 2008 (120 votes)
- 7 – 2006 (118 votes)
- **8 – 2012 (108 votes)**
- 9 – 2003 (89 votes)
- 10 – 2004 (85 votes)
- 11 – 2007 (60 votes)
- 12 – 2002 (43 votes)
- 13 – 2011 (25 votes)

Not only has this turned out to be a good middle-ranking vintage, but it also has the advantage of being a vintage where the wines are relatively forward with well-rounded tannins that will give early drinking pleasure. Some of the less famous names are already approaching drinkability. It's also a very decent year for the dry white wines of Bordeaux but a bit of a disaster for the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac.

### Saint Estephe

Normally this flight is always won by **Montrose** or **Cos d'Estournel** so it was a nice change to see them narrowly beaten, by **Calon Ségur**. For value for money there were good efforts from **Phelan Segur**, **Meyney** and **Capbern Gasqueton**.