



Written by
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Ch Labadie 2009 Médoc



From £10.50, €14.90, 149 Danish krone

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Bordeaux is routinely bashed for the sky-high prices of its famous wines, but it is my belief that it also offers some of the best-value wines in the world. (Congratulations to the Bordelais, by the way, for getting the Chinese to recognise officially 45 of its AOCs as announced yesterday - a long negotiating process which saw Bordeaux follow Napa Valley, Champagne, Cognac, Scotch whisky and tequila in persuading the Chinese to recognise their uniqueness. See [Fighting fakes in China](#), Nick Bartman's adventures working to protect Bordeaux's reputation there.)

When you taste wines like **Ch Labadie 2009 Médoc** - fully mature, very delicious, ripe and flattering but unmistakably red bordeaux and well under £11 a bottle - you really have to

question the whole en primeur business and wonder why you would want to tie up a three- or four-figure sum for a case of wine that you will have to store for years before it's worth pulling the cork.

The two wines in the Chanel owners' stable Canon and Rauzan Ségla may have quite rightly found willing buyers, but in general the 2015 campaign seems to be rather turgid and awfully protracted.

There is every indication that 2015 will be a vintage like 2009 that was ripe and winning from the start and will not demand very long ageing. This is just the sort of vintage that can yield exceptional value among the so-called *Crus Bourgeois* and similar petits châteaux. Admittedly you will have to avoid some of the less successful, more obviously dilute wines of the northern Médoc in 2015 where rainfall was relatively high (whereas 2009 was pretty successful across the board), but I am sure there will be many a bargain to be had among the lower ranks of 2015. I have already made some specific suggestions at the bottom of *Bordeaux 2015 - the verdict* but I'm sure many more candidates will emerge, not least when the 2015 *Crus Bourgeois* are anointed and released in September 2017.

In less ripe vintages, such as 2011 and 2013 in particular, it can be much more challenging to pick out the really good buys among the lower ranks, but a look at the selling price of this 2009 shows you just how unfair is the giant financial chasm between the petits châteaux of Bordeaux and the famous names.

If you have a copy of the latest, seventh edition of *The World Atlas of Wine*, you will see in the introduction to the section on Bordeaux a comparison of the production costs per bottle of €2.35 for a typical Médoc château and €9.80 for a typical cru classé. Profits clearly increase considerably with réclame.

Underpriced wines were the theme of the tasting I presented a couple of weeks ago at this year's Kerrygold Ballymaloe Food and Wine Literary Festival in southern Ireland. Right from the start I decided that this wine should be part of the line-up, as below:

A A Badenhorst, Secateurs Chenin Blanc 2015 Swartland

£9.99 James Nicholson

Le Clos du Château L'Oiselinière 2009 Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine

£10.95 The Wine Society

Tio Pepe Fino En Rama 2016 bottling

€22 for 75 cl in Ireland

Jean-Paul Brun, Terres Dorées Beaujolais L'Ancien 2014 Beaujolais

£9.95 The Wine Society

Gaglioppo, Santa Venere Gaglioppo 2014 Cirò

£7.95 The Wine Society

Ch Labadie 2009 Médoc

£10.50 The Wine Society

Santa Duc, Vieilles Vignes 2012 Côtes du Rhône

€16.50 in Ireland

(All the wines showed very well, I thought. The group's favourite white was, just, the Chenin while the favourite red was the cheapest, interestingly enough.)

Ch Labadie is on the outskirts of the village of Bégadan just north of St-Estèphe. Like so many properties here, it used to send all its grapes to the local co-op but in 1988 the Bibey family,

who bought Labadie in 1970, decided to make wine themselves. Jérôme Bibey has been in charge of the 58 hectares of clay-limestone and sandy gravel since 1999.



As is usual this far north, the vine density is rather lower than for a typical classed growth, between 5,000 and 6,666 rather than 10,000 vines per hectare. The average age of the vines at Ch Labadie is 30 years and the blend in this 2009 was 52% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot. The result, in this ripe vintage, was a wine, aged for just over a year in barriques of which 25% were new, with 13.5% alcohol. It is absolutely ready to drink now with rich spicy fruit and tannins well in retreat. Not a wine for casual slurping as an aperitif, this would give considerable pleasure with many a main course – unless your guest is the sort who expects first-growth concentration and complexity.

Rather to my surprise, Ch Labadie turns out to have an extremely detailed and useful [website](#) where I found the picture above right with this charming caption: 'Ch Labadie works with this following slogan: to produce good but also in the best environmental respect way. Here is a collecting swarm of bee thanks to the sexual confusing (no insecticide).' Also on their website they boast of having won the Cru Bourgeois Cup with their 2011. Richard gave it a score of 16 and described it as 'successful' when he tasted the 2011 Crus Bourgeois in 2013. I see that we have tasted four vintages of Ch Labadie, some of them twice, and have never awarded less than 16. Tam tasted their wine from the ill-starred 2013 vintage and scored it 16.5 and VVG. You can order a case of six bottles of the 2013 direct from their website for €63 [here](#). The 2012 is also available at €66 for six.

The 2009 is currently on sale in Germany, Denmark and France, according to Wine-searcher, as well as being one of The Wine Society's many bargains, at £10.50 a bottle.

I hope I can persuade you to take advantage of the value that lies in the lower ranks of Bordeaux - and on the right bank, don't forget the [Côtes](#).

As I wrote about this wine when I tasted it and gave it an enthusiastic 16.5 in 2010, 'Could be quite a good buy...'

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