

Bordeaux 2008: Sauternes & Barsac

The 2008 vintage was not an easy one for the **Sauternes** communes of Barsac, Bommès, Preignac, Fargues and of course Sauternes itself. Although I suspect no vintage ever really seems 'easy' here, because good wines here demand more than the right balance of sunshine and rain. Here the managers and proprietors are looking for other factors, morning mists and showers to stimulate the desired waves of botrytis, later warming sunrays to encourage the desiccation of the fruit. 'Vintages of the Century' might be common in claret-land, but here they are less frequently encountered I think.

All the same 2008 held some early promise, the rather damp weather in September fostering a warm blanket of **noble rot**, which with the drying effects of the Indian summer generated a good crop of handsomely roasted, shrivelled grapes for the first *tries*. But sadly this first bountiful picking was not to be repeated. There was a little more rain in October bringing another very minor wave of rot, but nothing of note. What had initially promised to be great turned out to perhaps rather more ordinary.

Tasting the wines at the *primeurs* there were only a few wines that truly impressed, but happily on this tasting a number of the wines seemed much more convincing and were openly expressing botrytis characteristics. One reason for this is that there were in fact a number of wines here that I didn't have the opportunity to taste back in April 2009. Most impressive on this assessment were **Climens, de Fargues, Guiraud, Nairac, Suduiraut** and **Coutet**; of these it is only the final two that I have tasted before. Other wines, although with a pure crystalline fruit character suggesting a greater dependence on *passerillage* than botrytis, also showed well, often with a more harmonious presence than back in 2009. They remind me somewhat of the 2007 Coteaux du Layons; attractive wines, but not for the more botrytis-hungry among us.

Sauternes

Chateau Guiraud 2008: Rather more savoury and masculine than the other wines on the nose, with a tangible fruit concentration, and on the palate a broad sweep of quite creamy fruit with a fresh golden character but also a pile of grip and substance. There is the structured depth and textural quality that comes from botrytis here so I suspect that this will develop into a classically fat and brooding Guiraud. Lots of structure and a spicy grip. Good potential here especially in the context of the vintage. 17.5+/20 🔍