

## WINTER 2011 NEWSLETTER

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Winter 2011

Dear Club de Vin Member,

A celebratory feeling is in the air here at Château Fonplégade as 2011 draws to a close. While the year may be ending, the story of the 2011 vintage is just beginning...

Our 2011 harvest started on September 14<sup>th</sup> after a challenging growing season that delivered some relatively unpredictable weather. Though we applied exacting viticultural practices throughout the growing season, in certain instances we observed different ripeness levels even within the same grape cluster! To ensure the best possible wine from these conditions, we dramatically narrowed our grape selection. Care and discernment were the rule, as our harvesting team of 30 people did a meticulous hand-sort in the vineyard. While this, and additional hand-sorting at the crush pad, would have been enough for most wineries, we took our rigorous approach to quality a step further at Château Fonplégade in 2011. Our Technical Director, Eloi, invested in a cutting-edge optical sorting machine, with 40 video cameras trained on the grapes to analyze the color and shape of each berry, and to get rid of any fruit not meeting our exacting standards.

Franck, our talented Winemaker, introduced his own innovation at Château Fonplégade this year with the installation of five egg-shaped cement vats in our cellars. Each of these cement vessels will replace the equivalent of three oak barrels during the ageing process. While these vats bring a bit of an Arne Jacobsen mid-century modern aesthetic to the cellar, they actually take their inspiration from the ancient Roman wine amphoras called dolias. The natural cement of the vats allows for slow ageing, preserves aromatics and allows the wine's pure varietal fruit notes to evolve without oak influence. Additionally, the shape of the egg induces a slow movement thanks to the vortex phenomena, which keeps the lees in suspension, resulting in richer wines. Our friends at other renowned Châteaux using these concrete eggs often speak of the suppleness they impart, and the fresh, pure, mineral-laden qualities they help to preserve. For Franck, the decision to incorporate this new tool into our winemaking repertoire made perfect sense:

“This approach is very much in harmony with our philosophy of organic wines. It is technology in the service of the grape. These concrete eggs respect and accentuate the character of the fruit, and the natural lees stirring results in fresher and fruitier aromas.”

Switching gears from harvest to the holidays ahead, there is no better time of year to enjoy the comforts of home and hearth, the warmth of friends and family, and the joys of great wine and homemade food. In our own kitchen, we are excited to welcome Chef Maria to Fonplégade.

Originally from the UK, Maria has spent two decades establishing a reputation for excellence, both as a highly regarded caterer and as the Chef de Cuisine for several acclaimed restaurants.

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Most recently, Maria has been working as a chef on private yachts in the French Riviera. As part of her role at Fonplégade, Maria prepares the lovely appetizers for our

receptions. She also makes our exquisite Fonplégade Merlot Jelly, and creates the exciting original wine-paired recipes included on the back of the tasting notes in each club consignment. We invite you to try these delicious recipes at home this holiday season alongside our wines—we think you'll love them!

Speaking of your December Club de Vin selections, we are pleased to enclose two wines that will be welcome under any Christmas tree: **Château Fonplégade 2008** and **Château l'Enclos 2008**. Many of you have been eagerly anticipating these exceptional bottlings. The 2008 growing season was a spectacular one, and the resulting **Château Fonplégade 2008** earned our highest rating ever from noted critic Robert Parker: 92-94/100! We have set aside a few extra cases for our Club de Vin Members, as this vintage will sell out quickly.

These offerings also provide you a wonderful opportunity to compare two renowned, and very different "terroirs,"—Saint-Emilion and Pomerol. Both regions had low yields in 2008 because of frost, a factor that contributed to the depth and concentration of these wines. Both also benefited from late-season sun to achieve excellent ripeness. Eloi's patience and fortitude in waiting until late October to harvest was amply rewarded! These wines are deep in color, full-bodied and display great ageing potential. These qualities and a shared streak of blackcurrant are where the similarities end. Château Fonplégade possesses deep fruit-laden aromas that segue to a supple, velvety mouthfeel sensation with a hint of fleur de sel in the long, fresh finish. In contrast, Château l'Enclos reveals spicier aromas, with layers of vanilla and licorice, red and black fruit, full tannins and woody finish. As always, if you would like to acquire additional bottles, please e-mail us at [chateaufonplegade@fonplegade.fr](mailto:chateaufonplegade@fonplegade.fr), or call + (0)5 57 74 43 11.

May your home be blessed with joy and abundance this holiday season!

The Fonplégade Club de Vin Team  
Bordeaux, France