

WINTER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Winter 2012

Dear Club de Vin Member,

As the holidays draw closer, we have many reasons to celebrate here at Château Fonplégade! With the 2012 harvest concluded, and the winter warmth of family gatherings and meals savored under a glow of candlelight ahead, it is a joyful time for sharing great wine!

In the words of our technical director, Eloi, “2012 was characterized by considerable temperature differences between winter and summer. The weather was a rollercoaster, going down to 5°F (-15°C) and up to 104°F (40°C)! Even so, spring rains favored vine growth but limited blossoming, creating low yields and excellent concentration. After the heat of summer, late September showers helped the grapes to reach perfect ripeness. We started to harvest our youngest plots on October 5th and followed with older plots between October 8th and 12th—a responsive and record-setting timeline that ensured the grapes arrived in perfect condition, with no adverse impact from rain.”

Since the grapes arrived in the winery, our winemaker, Franck, has been working his magic: “As I write this, the wines have just finished their sugar (fermentation) and started their time in vat, which is key to achieving the color and tannin profile of the vintage. Our wines are on an elegant path, with pure, alluring red fruit aromas and incredibly soft tannins. Rigorous sorting was implemented in the field, as well as in the cellar, and certain vats were punched-down by hand three times a day before revealing their secrets and superb surprises. Even though there is a long way still to go, we are extremely proud of our 2012 wines, and we believe they will ultimately be a worthy successor to our distinguished 2011 vintage. I would like to thank our entire team for their passion and hard work. I would also like to thank my assistant Leandro, who came all the way from Argentina to discover the richness of Fonplégade, with a special thanks to Mr. Ponchant for his inquisitiveness, friendliness and zeal.”

“Who is Mr. Ponchant,” you may ask? He is the lucky Club de Vin Member who spent a week with us during harvest. We are pleased to share his unique and insightful take on working at Château Fonplégade: “I was very impressed by the team’s dedication and passion. I was also amazed by Franck and Eloi’s professionalism and humility: they answered all my questions, and truly trust their team. I enjoyed taking part in every step of harvest and winemaking—though punching-down the wines by hand was really exhausting! Before this experience, I couldn’t imagine the amount of work necessary to achieve rich wines like Fonplégade’s. Even though they benefit from cutting-edge equipment to sort the berries and keep only the best grapes, four to six people are still around the sorting table to withdraw pieces of stems or green berries.”

The grapes arrive in small baskets to avoid being crushed. This level of attention to detail makes Fonplégade's wines stand out. From now on, Château Fonplégade will taste different for me! I know that behind such a great wine, many people spent a lot of time and energy (night & day!). Thank you to the team, I learned a lot, and spent a great time with you. See you next year?"

This harvest, our talented winemaker introduced another innovation at Château Fonplégade, with the use of four 500-liter (132 Gal US) oak barrels. Traditionally, we fill big wooden tanks with freshly harvested berries, just after sorting. This year, we employed the new 500-liter barrels for the fermentation and maceration steps for a few select, high-quality lots. The results have been impressive! The aromatic development of these barrels has been fascinating, turning from grape juice to prune pie and icing sugar. Even though this kind of winemaking in barrel is extremely labor-intensive, the complexity of our 2012 wine will be richer thanks to this innovation and effort. "Next year, we will use even more of these barrels," says Franck.

To celebrate the end of harvest and to thank our great team, Mr. & Mrs. Adams gathered everyone together for a friendly harvest luncheon on October 18th. It was a wonderful event, reviving our region's great "Gerbaude" tradition, where people used to come together to share a great meal, sing and play games to mark the end of labor in the field. The "Gerbaude" name comes from the "bunch of flowers" (or "gerbe" in French), which was placed by a child on the last cart of wheat or grapes harvested each vintage. We raised many a glass to the success of 2012 vintage, and to express our pride at the new 2012 Saint-Emilion Classification, which once again honored Château Fonplégade with the title of "Great Classified Growth" for another ten years!

For those of you who had the opportunity to enjoy our Winter Gourmet Reception (as a preview of holiday festivities!), you were able to meet with acclaimed local food producer, Mr. Garde. Since 1955, Mr. Garde has been producing foie gras, sea lamprey and boletus, and he is as passionate as ever! As an aside, sea lamprey and leeks is one of the traditional dishes of the "Gerbaude."

Last, but never least, we leave you with a few thoughts about our December release! With its enticing spicy aromas of truffle and underbrush, Château Fonplégade 2008 will transport you to the quiet winter landscape of Bordeaux. It will also make a lovely pairing with your holiday meals! We are also excited to share our Fleur de Fonplégade 2006—a wine in its perfect prime. Before it officially sold out, we set aside a special allotment for our treasured Club de Vin Members, and are pleased to offer you an exclusive opportunity to add-on the final bottles we have on stock.

Happy holidays,

Fonplégade Club de Vin Team
Saint-Emilion, Bordeaux