

BORDEAUX

Bordeaux is an area in an almost-perfect viticultural situation on the west coast of France and benefits from the ultimate marketing tool—a chateau-based classification system that was established 150 years ago.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM appears to be just as taxing for Bordeaux's reputation as the last decade of the 20th century turned out to be. Rain-drenched harvests toward the end of the 1990s challenged Bordeaux's claim to be the ultimate viticultural paradise, while the depressingly poor quality of its generic wines attracted almost as much bad publicity as the grossly inflated prices of modest vintages from the top châteaux. The weather might have improved in the first few years of the 21st century, but the quality of generic Bordeaux has remained abysmal, prices continue to rise almost in direct relation to the drop in sales—and then the unimaginable happened: the renowned US wine critic Robert Parker failed to appear for the *primeur* tastings in March 2003.

But all is not lost—Christian Delpuch, the new head of the Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bordeaux (CIVB), has mooted the possibility of declassifying some of the weaker Bordeaux wines into a wider *vin de pays*, which could then be bolstered by stronger wines from outside the region, but traditional to the southwest, such as the deep, dark Tannat. Delpuch is the managing director of Ginestet, the region's biggest trader, and seems to have a good understanding of the more commercial end of Bordeaux's business. He has suggested the creation of a Vins des Cépages d'Aquitaine category for the Bordeaux region, under which varietal wines could be marketed. Far from detracting from the classic wines of Bordeaux, this would in fact improve their quality through stricter selection. And at the very top end of the market, the *bordelais* can once again sleep easy in their beds, as Robert Parker returned for the *primeur* tastings in 2004.

OVERVIEW

The Bordeaux appellation and the Gironde *département* are geographically one and the same. Moreover, the Gironde is the largest *département* in France, and Bordeaux is the largest source of quality wines in the world. There are more than 22,000 vineyard proprietors working in excess of 280,000 acres (120,000 hectares), producing over 71 million cases (6.4 million hectoliters) of Bordeaux wine (85 percent red, 3 percent rosé, and 12 percent white) under 57 different appellations every year. Of these 22,000 properties, no fewer than 10,000 are châteaux and domaines producing wine. Of these 10,000 wine-producing properties, some 6,000 make and market wine under their own name (75 percent of total production), while the remaining 4,000 wine-producing properties are members of 53 cooperative wineries in Bordeaux (representing 25 percent of production, a little of which is sold under the producing property name).

THE CHÂTEAU SYSTEM AND MERCHANT POWER

Prior to the concept of chateau wine estates, the land was worked on a crop-sharing basis. This feudal system slowly changed from the late 17th century onward. As the *Bordelais* brokers developed the habit of recording and classifying wines according to their *cru*, or growth (that is to say their geographical origin), and the prices they fetched, the reputations of individual properties became established.

The 19th century saw the rise of the *négociant*, or merchant, in Bordeaux. Many *négociants* were of English origin, and some

firms were established by Scottish, Irish, Dutch, or German businessmen. The best chateau wines were not consumed by the French themselves; they were the preserve of other northern European countries. Thus foreign merchants had an obvious advantage over their French counterparts. Yearly, in spring, these *négociants* took delivery of young wines in cask from the various châteaux and matured them in their cellars prior to shipping. They were, therefore, responsible for their *élevage*, or upbringing, and came to be known as *négociants-éleveurs*, eventually becoming the middlemen found in every aspect of wine trading. Many foreign buyers found it more convenient to deal through a *négociant* than directly with the wine producer, and often they had no alternative, since a number of châteaux were owned by, or were exclusive to, certain *négociants*.



CHÂTEAU PALMER
This majestic turreted chateau is one of the finest in the Médoc.

THE MODERN BORDEAUX WINE TRADE

It was perhaps inevitable that the historically powerful and family-owned *négociant-éleveur* firms would eventually become a spent force. They lacked the resources required to finance adequately the huge increase in demand for Bordeaux in the 1960s, and those that did not founder during the oil crisis of the early to mid-1970s fell prey to the economic depressions of the following two decades.

As proud old firms were either taken over or went bankrupt, so the power shifted from the *négociants* to the châteaux, and in order to cope with a boom in world markets, many Bordeaux properties expanded their vineyards or added large, shiny new fermentation facilities. Many of these projects were financed with bank loans when interest rates were low. When sales slumped

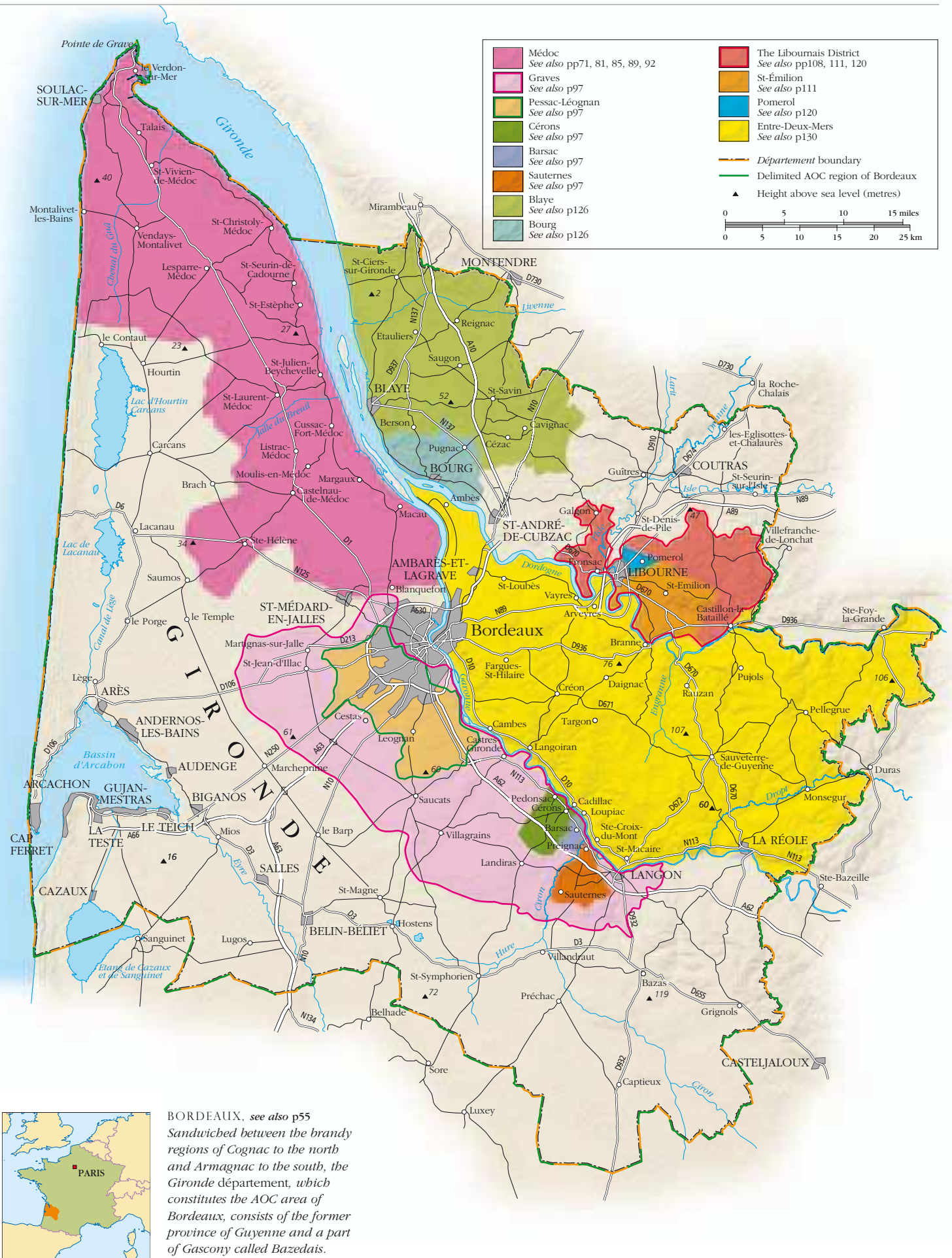
VOLUME VS. REPUTATION

Very few Bordeaux wines are produced from great vineyards. As the table below illustrates, the famous appellations represent a relatively small amount of the bordelais vignoble, and the classified growths a minuscule proportion of that. Yet it could be argued that the reputation of Bordeaux has been built upon a fraction of its *cru classé* or *grand cru classé*—the best performers. Bordeaux is a great wine region, but not all bordelais is great wine.

DISTRICTS

SURFACE AREA Expressed as a percentage of Bordeaux vineyards

Bordeaux (red)	36.8
Bordeaux Supérieur (red)	10.0
Médoc (red, non <i>cru classé</i>)	11.0
Médoc (red, <i>cru classé</i>)	2.4
Graves (red)	3.1
Saint-Émilion (red)	4.2
Saint-Émilion (red, <i>grand cru classé</i>)	0.8
Saint-Émilion satellites (red)	2.7
Pomerol (red)	0.7
Lalande de Pomerol (red)	1.0
Fronsac (red)	1.1
Various <i>côtes</i> (red)	14.4
Dry white	8.3
Sweet white	3.4



BORDEAUX, see also p55
 Sandwiched between the brandy regions of Cognac to the north and Armagnac to the south, the Gironde département, which constitutes the AOC area of Bordeaux, consists of the former province of Guyenne and a part of Gascony called Bazadais.

and interest rates shot up, the repayments became unbearable. Consequently, aside from a few entrepreneurial owners, power then shifted from châteaux to investors—not only banks but insurance groups, pension funds, and the like.

In today's market, therefore, the *négoce* has much less influence than before, with its *élevage* role primarily restricted to branded wines. The *élevage* of fine *cru classé* wine is either handled by the individual château itself or dispensed with by selling wines ridiculously young through French supermarkets or through the worldwide *en primeur* trade (see p66). Additionally, a number of château owners have carved out little empires, collecting estates or developing their own *négoçant* businesses.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF BORDEAUX WINES

Of all the Bordeaux classifications that exist, it is the 1855 Classification that is meant whenever anyone refers to “The Classification.” It was commissioned by the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce, which was required by the government of the Second Empire to present a selection of its wines at the 1855 Exposition Universelle in Paris. For their own ends, the brokers of the Bordeaux Stock Exchange traditionally categorized the most famous Bordeaux properties on the basis of the prices they fetched, so they were charged by the Chamber of Commerce to submit a “complete list of classified red Bordeaux wines, as well as our great white wines.” The classifications listed above and to the right give the 19th-century names in the original form as listed by the brokers on April 18, 1855. The frequent absence of the word *château* has been followed, as has the circumflex in *crû*, and the use of *second crû* for red wines and *deuxième crû* for whites.

THE CLASSIC GRAPE VARIETIES OF BORDEAUX

Contrary to what one might expect, it is Merlot, not Cabernet Sauvignon, that is the most important grape variety in Bordeaux. Cabernet Sauvignon represents only 27 percent of black grapes cultivated in Bordeaux, whereas Merlot accounts for more than 58 percent. It is nearer the truth, therefore, to say that Cabernet Sauvignon gives backbone to Merlot, rather than to suggest that Merlot softens Cabernet Sauvignon (which is the old adage). Although Château Mouton-Rothschild contains no less than 90 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, it is an exception, as even on the Médoc's hallowed ground, where it is blasphemy to mention the name of Merlot, 40 percent of the vines grown are of that variety. Château Pétrus (see p123), one of the most expensive wines in



THE MERLOT GRAPE VARIETY

Almost twice as much Merlot as Cabernet Sauvignon grows in Bordeaux.

THE 1855 CLASSIFICATION OF THE WHITE WINES OF THE GIRONDE

PREMIER CRU SUPÉRIEUR

(*Superior First Growth*)

Yquem, Sauternes

PREMIER CRUS

(*First Growths*)

Latour Blanche, Bommes

(now *Château La Tour Blanche*)

Peyraguey, Bommes (now two properties: *Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey* and *Château Clos Haut-Peyraguey*)

Vigneau, Bommes (now *Château Rayne-Vigneau*)

Suduiraut, Preignac

Coutet, Barsac

Climens, Barsac

Bayle, Sauternes (now *Château Guiraud*)

Riusec, Sauternes (now *Château Riusec*, Fargues)

Rabaud, Bomme (now two properties: *Château Rabaud-Promis* and *Château Sigalas-Rabaud*)

DEUXIÈME CRUS

(*Second Growths*)

Mirat, Barsac (now *Château Myrat*)

Doisy, Barsac (now three properties: *Château Doisy-Daëne*, *Château Doisy-Dubroca*, and *Château Doisy-Védrines*)

Pexoto, Bommes (now part of *Château Rabaud-Promis*)

D'arche, Sauternes (now *Château d'Arche*)

Filhot, Sauternes

Broustet Nérac, Barsac (now two properties: *Château Broustet* and *Château Nairac*)

Caillou, Barsac

Suau, Barsac

Malle, Preignac (now *Château de Malle*)

Romer, Preignac (now two properties: *Château Romer* and *Château Romer-du-Hayot*, Fargues)

Lamothe, Sauternes (now two properties: *Château Lamothe* and *Château Lamothe-Guignard*)

the world, contains 95 percent Merlot, without any Cabernet Sauvignon at all. Cabernet Sauvignon is a classic grape, quite possibly the greatest red-wine grape in the world, but its importance for Bordeaux is often overstated.

Sémillon is the most important white grape variety grown in Bordeaux. It is significant both in terms of its extent of cultivation and quality. This grape variety is susceptible to botrytis, the “noble rot” that results in classic Sauternes and Barsac. It is therefore considered to be the world's greatest sweet-wine grape. Sémillon also accounts for most of the fine dry white wines of Bordeaux, but these are relatively few and lack prestige. Sauvignon Blanc plays the supporting role in the production of sweet wines, and is used to a greater or lesser degree for dry wines. Many of the less expensive dry white wines are pure Sauvignon Blanc varieties.

VARIETAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO A CUVÉE

The Cabernet Sauvignon is the most complex and distinctive of all black Bordeaux grapes. It has a firm tannic structure, yet with time reveals a powerful, rich, and long-lasting flavor. Wines from this grape can have great finesse; their bouquets often possess a “blackcurrant” or “violets” character. Cabernet Franc has similar characteristics to Cabernet Sauvignon, but may also have a leafy, sappy, or earthy taste, depending on where it is cultivated. It does, however, shine through as the superior variety when grown in St.-Émilion and Pomerol, and can compete on even terms with its more famous cousin in parts of Graves. Merlot is soft, silky, and sometimes opulent. It is a grape that charms and can make wines with lots of juicy-rich and spicy fruit. Petit Verdot is a late-ripening variety with a naturally high acidity, while Malbec has a thick skin that is rich in color pigments. Small amounts of Petit Verdot and Malbec were traditionally used to correct the color and acidity of a blended wine. The cultivation and use of these two varieties for this purpose has been on the decline for the last 20 years owing to the various modern techniques of viticulture and vinification.

The white Sémillon grape provides a wine naturally rich in flavor and high in alcohol. It makes succulent, sweet white wines that are capable of great longevity. Its intrinsically low acidity

THE 1855 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RED WINES OF THE GIRONDE

PREMIERS CRUS

(First Growths)

Château Lafite, Pauillac
(now *Château Lafite-Rothschild*)
Château Margaux, Margaux
Château Latour, Pauillac
Haut-Brion, Pessac (Graves)

SECONDS CRUS

(Second Growths)

Mouton, Pauillac (now *Château Mouton-Rothschild* and a First Growth since 1973)
Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux
Rauzan-Gassies, Margaux
Léoville, St.-Julien (now three properties: *Châteaux Léoville-Las-Cases*, *Léoville-Poyferré*, and *Léoville-Barton*)
Vivens Durfort, Margaux
(now *Château Durfort-Vivens*)
Gruau-Laroze, St.-Julien
(now *Château Gruaud-Larose*)
Lascombe, Margaux
(now *Château Lascombes*)
Brane, Cantenac (now *Château Brane-Cantenac*)
Pichon Longueville, Pauillac
(now two properties: *Château Pichon-Longueville-Baron* and *Château Pichon-Longueville-Comtesse-de-Lalande*)
Ducru Beau Caillou, St.-Julien
(now *Château Ducru-Beaucaillou*)
Cos Destournel, St.-Estèphe
(now *Château Cos d'Estournel*)
Montrose, St.-Estèphe

TROISIÈMES CRUS

(Third Growths)

Kirwan, Cantenac
Château d'Issan, Cantenac
Lagrange, St.-Julien
Langoa, St.-Julien (now *Château Langoa-Barton*)
Giscours, Labarde
St-Exupéry, Margaux (now *Château Malescot-St-Exupéry*)
Boyd, Cantenac (now two properties: *Châteaux Boyd-Cantenac* and *Château Cantenac Brown*)
Palmer, Cantenac
Lalagune, Ludon (now *Château La Lagune*)
Desmirail, Margaux
Dubignon, Margaux (no longer in existence, but some of these original vineyards now belong to *Châteaux Malescot-St-Exupéry*, *Château Palmer*, and *Château Margaux*)
Calon, St.-Estèphe (now *Château*

Calon-Ségur)

Ferrière, Margaux
Becker, Margaux (now *Château Marquis d'Alesme-Becker*)

QUATRIÈMES CRUS

(Fourth Growths)

St.-Pierre, St.-Julien (now *Château St.-Pierre-Sevaistre*)
Talbot, St.-Julien
Du-Luc, St.-Julien (now *Château Branaire-Ducru*)
Duhart, Pauillac (at one time *Château Duhart-Milon Rothschild*, but now *Château Duhart-Milon*, although still Rothschild-owned)
Pouget-Lassale, Cantenac
(now *Château Pouget*)
Pouget, Cantenac (now *Château Pouget*)
Carnet, St.-Laurent (now *Château La Tour-Carnet*)
Rochet, St.-Estèphe (now *Château Lafon-Rochet*)
Château de Beychevele, St.-Julien
(now *Château Beychevelle*)
Le Prieuré, Cantenac
(now *Château Prieuré-Lichine*)
Marquis de Thermes, Margaux
(now *Château Marquis-de-Terme*)

CINQUIÈMES CRUS

(Fifth Growths)

Canet, Pauillac (now *Château Pontet-Canet*)
Batailley, Pauillac (now two properties: *Château Batailley* and *Château Haut-Batailley*)
Grand Puy, Pauillac (now *Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste*)
Artigues Arnaud, Pauillac
(now *Château Grand-Puy-Ducasse*)
Lynch, Pauillac (now *Château Lynch-Bages*)
Lynch Moussas, Pauillac
Dauzac, Labarde
Darmaillac, Pauillac (now *Château d'Armailbac*)
Le Tertre, Arsac (now *Château du Tertre*)
Haut Bages, Pauillac (now *Château Haut-Bages-Libéral*)
Pédesclaux, Pauillac (now *Château Pédesclaux*)
Coutenceau, St.-Laurent
(now *Château Belgrave*)
Camensac, St.-Laurent
Cos Labory, St.-Estèphe
Clerc Milon, Pauillac
Croizet-Bages, Pauillac
Cantemerle, Macau

few years ago. Early harvesting, preferment maceration on the grape skins to draw out the aromatics, and longer, cooler fermentation in stainless steel, have all combined to produce a far more interesting, medium-quality, dry white wine.

FERMENTATION AND MATURATION

Although some properties producing *crus classés* retain their wooden vats for the fermentation process (more because they lack the funds to reequip than for any idealistic reasons), hardly any of them actually invest in new oak vats, preferring those made of stainless steel. The one startling exception is Château Margaux. This great property has spent more money, following the advice of the legendary oenologist Professor Peynaud, than any other château in Bordeaux. This is puzzling because it was principally at his recommendation that virtually everyone else in Bordeaux invested in stainless steel.

ADDING VIN DE PRESSE

One technique that is more characteristic of red winemaking in Bordeaux than in any other region is the addition of a certain amount of *vin de presse*. This is produced after the wine has completed its alcoholic fermentation and has undergone malolactic conversion. The wine is drawn off its lees into casks and the residue of skin and pips at the bottom of the vat is pressed. Normally this requires two pressings: the first *vin de presse* is the best and represents about 10 percent of the total wine produced, the second provides a further 5 percent. *Vin de presse* is relatively low in alcohol, very dark, and extremely tannic. In a wine made for early drinking, *vin de presse* would be harsh and unpleasant, but with the structure of a classic oak-matured Bordeaux, it gives extra body and increases longevity.



THE VINIFICATION PROCESS

The proportion of grape varieties grown and the intrinsic potential of a château's terroir determine the basic quality and character of Bordeaux's finest wines. Manipulating the vinification process has, however, always been the method of honing the style of this region's best châteaux. Processes include adding up to 15 percent vin de presse; grape-skin contact (which can be for up to a month); maturation, which used to take 3 to 5 years, but now takes 15 to 18 months; and a percentage of new oak, always the hallmark of Bordeaux's premiers crus.

makes it less suitable for producing dry wines, but in exceptional circumstances the highest quality Sémillon does make a fine dry white wine—if matured in new oak. This enhances the aromatic character of the wine and gives it a firm structure without which it would be too “fat” and “flabby.”

The Sauvignon Blanc in Bordeaux is soft, delicate, and easy to drink. It does not have the same bite as it does in the Loire vineyards of Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé, but the varietal character is more pronounced today, with a crisper, fresher style, than it was a

BUYING EN PRIMEUR

WHAT IS BUYING EN PRIMEUR?

This is a method of investing in Bordeaux wines by buying the wine before it is bottled. It is no longer something I subscribe to. Every château in Bordeaux attempts to presell a certain amount of its wine production in the first year of the wine's life, although it will not be bottled and shipped until it is three or, perhaps, four years old.

APPROXIMATED BLENDS

The wines tasted by the trade and upon which *en primeur* offers are based will be approximated blends, which is to say that they will consist of several different casks in roughly the proportion of grape variety that will make up the final *grand vin*. Yet no matter how honest and accurate the winemaker tries to be, this can never be a true representation of the final wine. Winemakers do not know what the final proportions of grape varieties will be. Much depends on whether every

barrel matures as expected, and how strict the selection is when it comes to rejecting wines not fit for making *grand vin*.

WINE SALES BY MAIL ORDER

The first sales usually go on sale in the spring after the vintage, shortly after merchants from all over the world have spent a hectic week tasting hundreds of wines barely six months old. Cask samples (wine bottled from the cask) of the best wines are taken back to their home markets for tasting by the trade and key private buyers. This can be as early as March, although June is the most popular month and it is at around then that mail-order offers go out with vivid descriptions of the wines and how they are likely to mature.

WHY BUY EN PRIMEUR?

It is only worth buying a wine that you cannot touch for three or four years (and probably

should not drink for at least another three or four years after that), if you know it will be unavailable by any other means or, when it does become available, that it is likely to cost significantly more at that time.

WHICH WINES SHOULD YOU BUY?

Wine lovers are better advised to take up offers to buy *en primeur* wines such as Cornas from the Rhône, which never seem to be available when it is ready to drink. As far as investments are concerned, there is only one piece of advice I can give, and that is to stick to "blue-chip" wines in top vintages. It does not matter whether cask samples of Latour, Mouton, Pétrus, Yquem, and so on bear any resemblance to the final bottled product, they will always be a good investment, and from a wine drinker's point of view, there is no point in gambling on any other Bordeaux *en primeur*.

OAK CASK MATURATION

After fermentation and prior to bottling, all the best red Bordeaux are matured in 59-gallon (225-liter) Bordeaux oak casks called *barriques*. The duration of this operation and the percentage of new oak casks used should depend entirely on the quality and structure of the wine, and this will vary according to the vintage. The bigger the wine, the more new oak it can take and the longer maturation it will need. The greatest wines—all the *premiers crus*—require at least 18 to 24 months in 100 percent new oak to reach maturity. Other fine-quality Bordeaux wines do not need so much time, perhaps only 12 to 18 months, and do not benefit from 100 percent new oak; between 30 and 50 percent may be enough. If you get the chance, put your nose into a new oak cask before it has been used. The wonderful creamy-smoky, vanilla-and-charcoal aroma is the very essence of what should come through when a fine wine has been properly matured in oak.

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

During the early 1980s, the idea of "second wines"—always a factor in the production of the finest Bordeaux growths—began to catch on among the properties producing *crus bourgeois*, enabling



BARRELS IN A BORDEAUX CHAI

These new oak *barriques* at Château Langoa-Barton contain the wines of Château Léoville-Barton (Léoville-Barton has no chai of its own). Both properties belong to the Barton family (who are of British descent).

modest properties to make much better wines through stricter selection of their *grands vins*. Toward the end of the 1980s, "green harvesting," or crop-thinning, became *de rigueur* for all quality-conscious châteaux (even though the Romans considered such practices essential 2,000 years ago!).

However, the most significant advance in Bordeaux over the last 20 years came in 1994, when a decision was made to harvest grapes according to tannin ripeness, rather than sugar-acidity ripeness. Unripe tannins are not hydrolyzed; they are hard and will never soften, whereas ripe tannins are hydrolyzed, have a certain suppleness from day one, and will always soften. This phenomenon has long been known, but precisely when it occurs can vary from region to region, and year to year. In Bordeaux tannin ripeness has been under study since 1986 by Vincent Dupuch, who discovered that grapes deemed physiologically ripe in Bordeaux by their sugar-acidity ratio actually possessed a high proportion of unripe tannins.

In 1994, many *bordelais* harvested according to Dupuch's tannin ripeness parameters and were surprised to discover the optimum moment to pick was in fact much later than they had previously thought. This means not only that many Bordeaux wines will be riper, but also that by determining ripeness in this way, the winemaker is aware of the precise phenolic content, and this allows the fine-tuning of maceration and fermentation for each batch of grapes.

The 21st century will see a continuation in the rise of super-premium boutique wines, particularly from St-Émilion. However, the increase in the density of vines to raise general standards in several Bordeaux appellations has been delayed. According to decrees issued in 1994, these new standards were to be fast-tracked, but this was fudged by new decrees in 1998, which let some areas off the hook, making higher-density planting not legally enforceable until 2025.

Meanwhile, the volume of dry white Bordeaux has dropped, leaving fewer producers making superior wines. Once the poorest cousin in Bordeaux, dry whites are better today than they have ever been. This applies across the board, from the lowliest Entre-Deux-Mers to the finest classified growth, even to the point where the 1993 Château Couhins-Lurton became the first Bordeaux *cru classé* to be sealed with a screwcap.

In a move to inform the public, and increase the region's profile among consumers of wines that do not include the Bordeaux name in the appellation (from Bourg to Blaye, and Fronsac to Pauillac, *et. al.*), all wines must include "Vin de Bordeaux" or "Grand Vin de Bordeaux" on the label.

RECENT BORDEAUX VINTAGES

2003 Unlike in the rest of France, this was not a drought year. In fact, precipitation levels were slightly above average. However, as in other French wine regions, 2003 was a very hot and sunny vintage, with exceptional ripeness. Exceptionally, acidification was permitted, but although initial concerns about low acid musts were widespread, relatively few producers bothered to add acid. This is a great Bordeaux vintage, with good to superb wines produced throughout the region, but favoring the Right Bank and improving the further north the vineyards are in the classic communal appellations of the Médoc. The most concentrated wines will be quite exotic and flamboyant. Great Sauternes were also produced.

2002 Hyped-up immediately after the vintage, when the wines were tasted the following spring, this vintage turned out to be far more variable than anyone had imagined. Essentially, it is a Cabernet year, not Merlot, thus some very high-quality Médocs were produced,

particularly in, but not restricted to, Pauillac. The further up the *cru classé* scale you go, the better the wines are, with Lafite a match for the greatest wines of any Bordeaux vintage. Excellent for Sauternes too.

2001 But for the outstanding 2000 vintage, everyone would have been hyping that of 2001 as one of Bordeaux's finest vintages across the board. Homogeneity (relevant to the intrinsic quality of the *château*, of course) is almost as widespread as in 2000, but the quality, although excellent, is not as great as that special year, while the style is more elegant, less concentrated. Another superb Sauternes vintage, and some of the best dry white *cru classé* wines produced in 10 years.

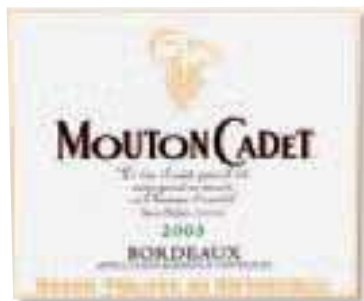
2000 God forgave the *bordeleais* their transgressions and excesses of the recent past, and smiled on the world's foremost red wine region for the last vintage of the old millennium. He held back the rains until almost everyone had brought their harvest in.

The reds on both banks are beautifully colored, high in alcohol, with the weight and plumpness of a truly great year. This is a very special vintage indeed, producing wines of extraordinary concentration, except in Sauternes and Barsac, which were hit by rain during their late harvests—the results are not that bad, with quality equaling that of 1999.

1999 This is the year when almost everything that could go wrong did go wrong in Bordeaux. It was as if the last vintage of the 1990s was a testament to the climatic difficulties that masked this decade, with disease in the vineyards, rain at harvest, and a huge crop of unripe grapes. Very patchy, but most of the best wines were made in St.-Émilion, with some excellent Margaux and St.-Julien, and some Sauternes that can vie with the 1998s, though not the 1997s. It is in vintages such as 1999 that the difference in quality between Bordeaux as a whole and that found when tasting at the top 100 or so Bordeaux estates becomes so marked.

BORDEAUX'S BEST GENERIC BRANDS

Bordeaux has the greatest reputation for red wine in the world, but as in all regions, ordinary wines do exist. In fact, the majority of wines produced in any region is very ordinary, and Bordeaux is no exception. Remember that more than money separates Mouton Cadet from Château Mouton-Rothschild. While the former might be the most famous of all generic Bordeaux brands, it is merely the blended product of relatively inferior wines grown anywhere within the vast *départementale* appellation of Bordeaux, while the latter is a selection of one of the finest wines grown on a single estate—a *premier cru classé* in the small, communal AOC of Pauillac.



As a branded generic Bordeaux wine can be a disappointing introduction to the world's greatest wine region, the following brands are suggested as reliable choices:

DOURTHE NUMÉRO 1

Probably the best, largest-selling branded Bordeaux available.

LA COUR PAVILLON

One of the most reliable and underrated generic Bordeaux wines on the market at the moment. Made at Château Loudenne, this wine always displays good fruit, but possesses enough structure to keep for a while.

MAÎTRE D'ESTOURNEL

This has the same connection to Château Cos d'Estournel as "Mouton Cadet" has to Château Mouton-Rothschild, which is absolutely nonexistent as far as the wine is concerned, but both brands hope to sell on the back of their respective *château* name. There is however, a fundamental difference between the two, of course: "Maître d'Estournel" happens to be an expressive, early-drinking wine that can also take a few years in bottle, whereas "Mouton Cadet" is mutton posing as lamb.

MICHEL LYNCH

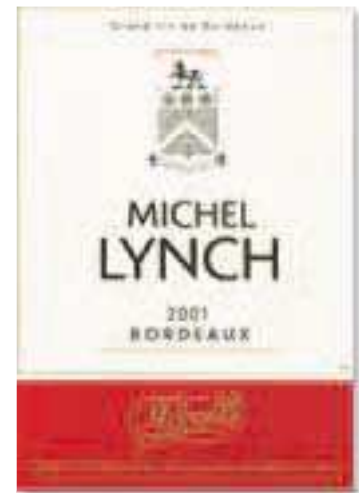
Produced by Michel Cazes of Château Lynch-Bages in an unashamedly up-front, fruity style. Red, white, and rosé are all thoroughly recommended.

PREMIUS EXIGENCE

Produced by Yvon Mau, the step up between the premium Premium and Premium Exigence is about as big as it can get for two wines sharing the same brand. The stricter selection of grapes and no-expense-spared handling shows through in the richer, oak-layered fruit.

SICHEL SIRIUS

This is as serious as it sounds. An excellent oak-aged generic Bordeaux, it will improve for a further year or two in bottle.



THE APPELLATIONS OF GENERIC BORDEAUX

There are more than 50 appellations in Bordeaux and every one has its generic wines, produced by a *négociant* or local *coopérative*.

BORDEAUX AOC

As with any large, and thus variable, appellation, the generic Bordeaux AOC is responsible for the good, bad, and ugly wines of the region. Overall, quality is of a decent standard, although the best wines are unlikely to fit the classic descriptions that have made the region famous. Wines carrying the generic appellation may come from any AOC vineyard in the entire Gironde. Some of the most interesting wines are from classic areas where the more specific appellation is confined to a precise style: such as a red Bordeaux produced by a *château* in Sauternes. If the wine is a brand, it should be ready to drink. If it is a *château* wine, the address should reveal its origin, and the price will be an indication of its quality and a guide to when it should be drunk.

RED Most are simply dry, luncheon claret styles, made for early drinking and usually softened by a high Merlot content.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 1–5 years

WHITE All medium-dry, basic white bordeaux contain at least 4 grams of residual sugar per liter, and have a certain sweetness. It is by far the most variable appellation category, with many dull wines. If the wine contains less than 4 grams of residual sugar per liter, the Bordeaux appellation must be qualified by “Sec.” These dry whites are also variable, but most of the best wines of the appellation are found among them. They may be sold from December 1 without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

🍷 Sémillon, Sauvignon, Muscadelle plus up to 30% in total of Merlot Blanc, Colombar, Mauzac, Ondenc, Ugni Blanc

🕒 1–2 years

ROSÉ When made by individual properties, this medium-dry, medium-bodied wine can be attractive. These wines may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 Immediately

BORDEAUX CLAIRET AOC

“Claret” is a term that refers to a red wine that is light in body and color. It derives from *vin claret* in Old French, a term of respect; this suggests that Bordeaux achieved a reputation for limpidity before other wines.

ROSÉ Rich, dark rosé or failed, feeble red? The best examples of this medium-dry, medium-bodied wine come from the village of Quinsac in the Premières Côtes de Bordeaux.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 1–2 years

BORDEAUX ROSÉ AOC

The theory is that this appellation is reserved for wine deliberately produced as rosé, while “Bordeaux Claret” is for a light-colored red wine. Both may simply be labeled “Bordeaux AOC.” For technical details see Bordeaux AOC.

BORDEAUX SEC AOC

White bordeaux with less than 4 grams of residual sugar per liter (see Bordeaux AOC).

BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR AOC

Technically superior to Bordeaux AOC by only half a degree of alcohol, yet most of these wines do seem to have a greater consistency of quality, and, therefore, value. All generics are variable, but this one is less so than most.

RED These dry, light-bodied or medium- to full-bodied wines vary a lot but are generally fuller and richer than most red wines using the basic Bordeaux appellation.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 2–6 years

WHITE Dry or sometimes sweet, light- to medium-bodied white wines that are little seen.

🍷 Sémillon, Sauvignon, Muscadelle plus up to 30% in total Merlot Blanc, Colombar, Mauzac, Ondenc, Ugni Blanc; the proportion of Merlot Blanc must not exceed 15%

🕒 1–2 years

BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR CLAIRET AOC

This is a little-seen appellation: the wines are sold either as “Bordeaux Supérieur” or “Bordeaux Claret.”

ROSÉ Medium-dry and medium-bodied as Bordeaux Claret, but with an extra half degree of alcohol.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 1–2 years

BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR ROSÉ AOC

This appellation has a small cast—and Château Lascombe’s Rosé de Lascombes still tops the bill.

ROSÉ As few examples of these medium-dry, medium-bodied wines exist, it is possible to generalize and describe them as fuller, richer, and having more class than any Bordeaux Rosé AOC wines.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 1–2 years

CRÉMANT DE BORDEAUX AOC

This was introduced in 1990 to replace the old Bordeaux Mousseux AOC (which was phased out on December 31, 1995). Although preferable to a lot of poorly produced Loire sparkling wines, there is nothing special about Bordeaux bubbly. Changing the appellation has done nothing to change the product because, like its predecessor, Crémant de Bordeaux is merely a modest and inoffensive fizz. It lacks the spirit and expressiveness to stand out from the sea of far cheaper, but equally boring, sparkling wines that exist almost everywhere. I have tasted much better from areas far less suited to sparkling wine than Bordeaux.

SPARKLING WHITE Varies from dry to sweet and light- to medium-bodied, but is almost always bland.

🍷 Sémillon, Sauvignon, Muscadelle, Ugni Blanc, Colombar, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 1–2 years

SPARKLING ROSÉ The authorities should have taken advantage of the introduction of a new appellation to allow the inclusion of white grapes for this style, as this would potentially have improved the quality.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot
🕒 2–3 years

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF

BORDEAUX AND BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR

Although many of the following properties are located within more specific appellations, at least a certain portion of their wine production is sold as either Bordeaux or Bordeaux Supérieur, and it is those particular wines that have been recommended by the author in this section.

BORDEAUX

CHÂTEAU BALLUE-MONDON

Gensac

Soft and fruity “organic” claret.

CHÂTEAU DE BERTIN

Targon

Powerful Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated wines that age gracefully.

CHÂTEAU BERTINERIE

Cavignac

A serious rosé, pleasantly romantic, with delicately rich, floral fruit on the palate and a smooth finish.

CHÂTEAU BONHOSTE

St.-Jean-de-Blaignac



Classic white bordeaux at its best.

DOMAINE DU BRU

St.-Avit-St.-Nazaire

Refreshing claret: light in color and body and easy to drink.

CHÂTEAU CARSIN

Rions

Popular in the UK, New World influenced.

CHÂTEAU COURTEY

St.-Macaire
★●

These are intensely flavored old-style wines, possessing quite a remarkable bouquet.

CHÂTEAU FAUGAS

Cadillac

Well-balanced reds with attractive berry-fruit flavors.

CHÂTEAU DU GRAND MOUEYS

Capian

Consistently elegant red wines.

CHÂTEAU GRAND VILLAGE

Mouillac

Rich and easy Merlot-dominated, oak-aged red, and a good second wine under the "Beau Village" label.

CHÂTEAU DE HAUX

Haux

Gorgeously ripe and dry white wine, with very fresh and elegant fruit.

CHÂTEAU LAGROSSE

Tabanac

★●

Elegant, ripe, and long, with lemony-rich, oaky fruit.

CHÂTEAU LAPÉYÈRE

Cadillac

Well-structured red, dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon.

CHÂTEAU DE LUGIGNAC

Pellegrue

Romantic 15th-century château making attractive, firm, and fleshy red that can show some finesse.

CHÂTEAU MARJOSSE

Branne

★●

This is Pierre Lurton's home, where he makes lush and up-front reds with creamy-silky fruit and a beautiful dry white.

CHÂTEAU MORILLON

Monségur

★●

Rich, fat, and juicy wines.

CLOS DE PELIGON

St.-Loubès

Fine, full-bodied red with a hint of oak.

CHÂTEAU PLAISANCE

Capian

This château makes excellent, lightly rich Bordeaux Blanc Sec, made from 50-year-old vines and fermented in oak.

CHÂTEAU DE PLASSAN

Tabanac

★●

The basic Bordeaux Blanc Sec has

fresh, severe Sauvignon fruit, while the more expensive Bordeaux Blanc Sec, which is fermented and aged in oak, has lovely creamy fruit and a fine, lemony-vanilla finish.

CHÂTEAU POUCHAUD-LARQUEY

La Réole

Full and rich red with lots of fruit.

CAVE DE QUINSAC

La Tresne

Delicately colored, light-bodied, rosé-style wines sold as claret.

CHÂTEAU RENON

Langoiran

★●

This is a pleasantly fresh and floral Sauvignon-style wine.

CHÂTEAU REYNON

Cadillac

★●

This is a star-performing château that produces *cru classé* dry white wine under the auspices of Denis Dubourdieu. The elite Vieilles Vignes *cuvée* is quite extraordinary, but everything produced here can be relied upon, right down to the aptly named "Le Second de Reynon." Also very good red.

CHÂTEAU ROC-DE-CAYLA

Targon

Easy-drinking, well-balanced reds with good fruit and some finesse.

LE ROSÉ DE CLARKE

Castelnau-de-Médoc

From Château Clarke, this has all the fragrance expected from a classic dry rosé.

CHÂTEAU THIEULEY

Créon

★●

These are medium-bodied, elegant reds that possess more than just a hint of cask-aging. Also fine, fresh, floral, and fruity white wines.

CHÂTEAU TIMBERLAY

St.-André-de-Cubzac

★●

Deep-colored, full of flavor, but not without a certain elegance.

BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEURCHÂTEAU DES ARRAS

St.-André-de-Cubzac

★●

Deep-colored wines with good structure and lots of chunky fruit.

CHÂTEAU LA COMBE-CADIOT

Blanquefort

★●

These well-colored wines have a

big bouquet, and are oaky with delicious fruit.

CHÂTEAU FONCHEREAU

St.-Loubès

★●

Well-structured, finely balanced *vins de garde* of extremely good quality.

CHÂTEAU FOUCHÉ

Bourg-sur-Gironde

This wine is firm yet has fat, juicy fruit and a smooth finish.

CHÂTEAU LA GRANGE-LES-TOURS

St.-André-de-Cubzac

Well-made, full, flavorsome wines.

CHÂTEAU GROSSOMBRE

Branne

★●

Nicely concentrated, very good red wine which will improve for 12 to 18 months, and represents exceptional value.

CHÂTEAU LATOUR

Sauveterre-de-Guyenne

These medium-bodied wines have consistently good fruit, smooth flavor, and make a cheap way to get the "Latour" name on the table!

CHÂTEAU LAVILLE

St.-Loubès

Rich, tannic, and powerfully structured wines with spicy fruit.

MARQUIS DE BOIRAC

Castillon-la-Batille

★●

Super value *coopérative* wine with a big, oaky aroma and fruit to match.

CHÂTEAU MÉAUME

Coutras

Alan Johnson-Hill used to be a UK wine merchant before settling north of Pomerol. Since then, he has gained a reputation for cleverly tailoring this red bordeaux to young British palates.

CHÂTEAU LA MICHELIERIE

St.-André-de-Cubzac

Another property producing a big, tannic style of wine.

CHÂTEAU LES MOINES-MARTIN

Galgon

This is well-made wine for reasonably early drinking, with an attractive bouquet, round fruit, and fine balance.

CHÂTEAU DE PIERREDON

Sauveterre-de-Guyenne

★●

Serious Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated bordeaux from the Haut-Benauges.

CHÂTEAU PUYFROMAGE

Lussac

Attractive, well-balanced, medium-bodied, and easy to drink.

ROSÉ DE LASCOMBES

Margaux

Refreshing, fruity rosé of excellent character, quality, and finesse.

CHÂTEAU SARRAIL-LA-GUILLAMERIE

St.-Loubès

Rich and fleshy wine that softens nicely with age.

CHÂTEAU DE SEGUIN

La Tresne

Look out for the Cuvée Prestige, which is rich and smoother than the basic Château Seguin.

CHÂTEAU TOUR-DE-L'ESPÉANCE

Galgon

★●

This is soft and smooth wine, full of fat, ripe, and juicy fruit, yet not without finesse.

CHÂTEAU TOUR PETIT PUCH

St.-Germain-du-Puch

★●

Attractively colored, well-made, well-balanced wines, with a touch of spice.

CHÂTEAU DE LA VIEILLE TOUR

St.-Michel-Lapujade

★●

Consistently rich and smooth, even in notoriously harsh vintages.

CHÂTEAU VIEUX MOULIN

Villegouge

These are well-rounded, long, and supple wines, which are of consistently fine quality.

THE MÉDOC

The style of wine alters more radically over short distances in the Médoc than in any other French red wine district. The wines are mild and unexceptional immediately to the northwest of Bordeaux, but from Ludon onward, they become progressively more characterful, acquire finesse, and—after Margaux—gain considerable body. Beyond St.-Estèphe, the firmness of body of the wines eventually turns to coarseness, and their finesse fades.

THE MÉDOC TAKES its name from the Latin phrase *medio aquae*—“between the waters”—referring to the Gironde estuary and the Atlantic Ocean. It is a long, thin strip of prized vines, extending northwest from the city limits of Bordeaux to the Pointe de Grave. At its center is the classic area of Bordeaux, where the vast majority of the most famous châteaux are located, and yet this was the last major district of Bordeaux to be cultivated. While winemaking in the Libournais district of St.-Émilion began as early as the Roman occupation, it was another thousand years before scattered plots of vines spread along the Médoc. Across the large, brown expanse of water called the Gironde, the Romans viewed Bourg and considered its hilly area far more suitable for growing vines. At that time the marshland of the Médoc was difficult to cross and impossible to cultivate. Today, the Médoc is the envy of winemakers the world over and Bourg is merely a source of inexpensive, if good-value, basic Bordeaux.

THE MÉDOC STYLE: VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The four famous communes of Margaux, St.-Julien, Pauillac, and St.-Estèphe, plus the two lesser-known but developing communes of Lustrac and Moulis, are to be found in a region within the Médoc known as the Haut-Médoc, where the wines are fine, firm, and fleshy. The Haut-Médoc begins at the southern outskirts of the city of Blanquefort, along the northern reaches of the Graves district, where the wines are fairly neutral. The greatest wines of the Haut-Médoc are found in the area beginning at Ludon with Château la Lagune—the first *cru classé* encountered moving north from Blanquefort. Fine *crus bourgeois* are to be found in this area as well.

The wines at Margaux are soft and velvety and full of charm, although they are very much *vins de garde* and will improve well with age. The wines of St.-Julien are elegant with a very pure flavor. They have the delicate touch of Margaux, yet lean closer to Pauillac in body. The wines of Pauillac are powerful, often having a rich blackcurrant flavor with hints of cedar and tobacco. These

DISTRIBUTION OF MÉDOC CRUS CLASSÉS THROUGHOUT THE APPELLATIONS

APPELLATION	GROWTHS					TOTAL
	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH	
Haut-Médoc	0	0	1	1	3	5
St.-Estèphe	0	2	1	1	1	5
Pauillac	3	2	0	1	12	18
St.-Julien	0	5	2	4	0	11
Margaux	1	5	10	3	2	21
TOTAL	4	14	14	10	18	60

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY



LOCATION
The Médoc lies on the left bank of the Gironde estuary, stretching northwest from Bordeaux in the south to Soulac in the north.



CLIMATE
Two large masses of water on each side of the Médoc—the Atlantic and the Gironde—act as a heat-regulator and help provide a microclimate ideal for viticulture. The Gulf Stream generally gives the Médoc mild winters, warm summers, and long, sunny falls. The district is protected from westerly and northwesterly winds by the continuous coastal strip of pine forest that runs roughly parallel to the Médoc.



ASPECT
Undulating hillsides with knolls and gentle slopes are characteristic of the Médoc. The best vineyards can “see the river” and virtually all areas of the Haut-Médoc gradually slope from the watershed to the Gironde. Marshy areas, where vines cannot be grown, punctuate most communes.



SOIL
Similar topsoils lie over different subsoils in the Médoc. Its topsoils are typically outcrops of gravel, consisting of sand mixed with siliceous gravel of varying particle size. Subsoils may contain gravel and reach a depth of many feet, or may consist of sand, often rich in humus, and some limestone and clay.



VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION
Only red wines can use the Médoc appellation. Mechanical harvesting is commonplace and all grapes are destalked prior to fermentation in tanks, or in vats increasingly made of stainless steel. Skin contact lasts for one to two weeks, although some châteaux have reverted to the once standard four weeks.



GRAPE VARIETIES
Primary varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
Secondary varieties: Carmenère, Petit Verdot, Malbec

BARREL-MAKING AT LAFITE ROTHSCHILD

Wines are aged in new oak at Château Lafite-Rothschild, although for a shorter length of time than in the past. The barrels are made with great care in a time-honored, traditional manner.



are wines of great finesse, and Pauillac can be considered the greatest appellation of the Médoc. St-Estèphe includes many minor growths of rustic charm and a few classic wines, and technology is changing the robustness of its spicy wines to richness.

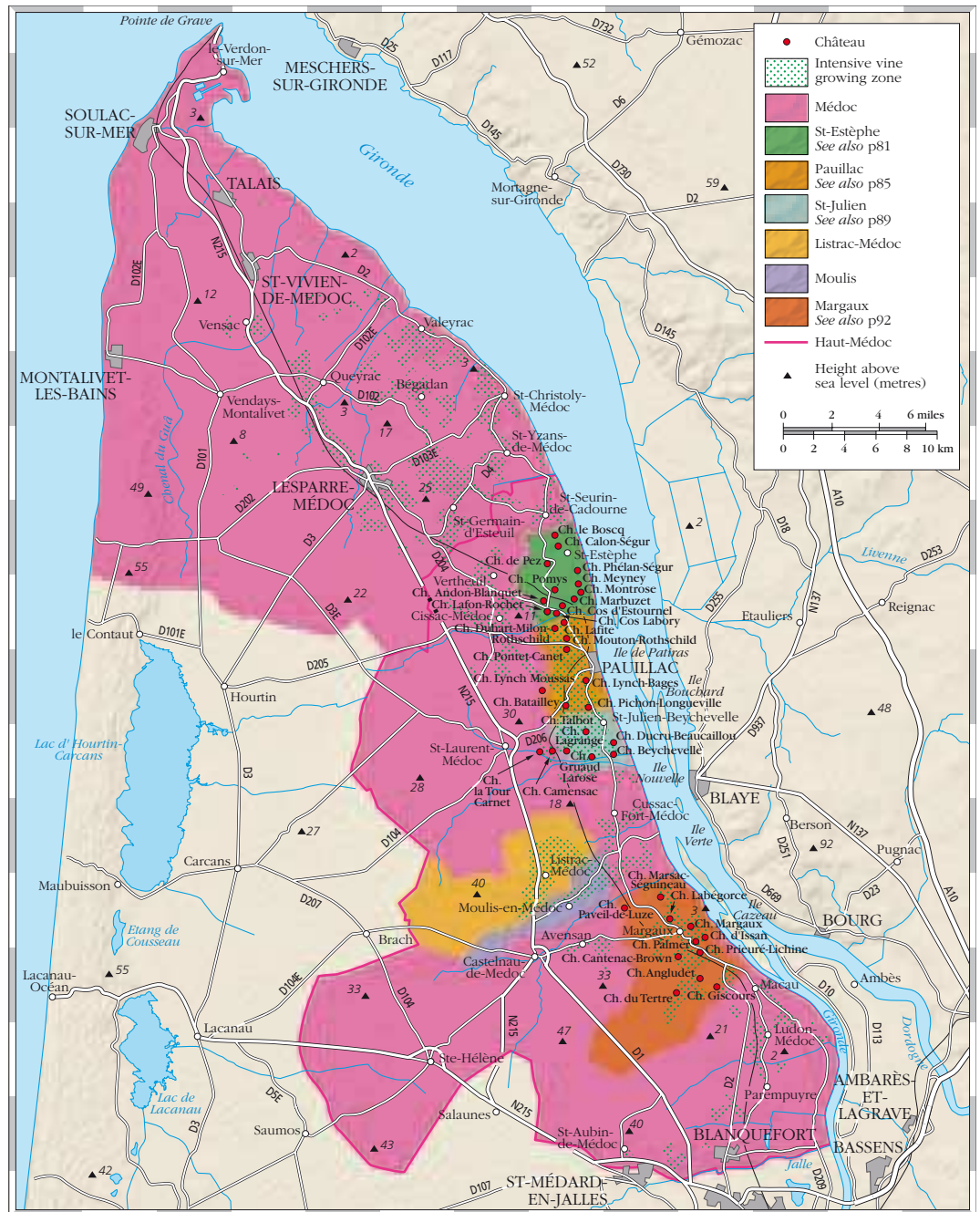
Beyond St-Estèphe lies the commune of St-Seurin-de-Cadourne, whose wines are entitled to use the Haut-Médoc appellation, after which the appellation becomes simply AOC Médoc. This area, formerly known as the Bas-Médoc, has a lesser reputation than the Haut-Médoc. However, many exceptional wines are made here: the triangle formed by St-Yzans, Lesparre, and Valeyrac contains such outstanding minor growths as Loudenne, Potensac, la Cardonne, Blaignan, les Ormes-Sorbet, la Tour-St-Bonnet, la Tour-de-By, and Patache d'Aux. In general the style is more simplistic than in the Haut-Médoc.

PROPORTION OF AOC AREA UNDER VINE REPRESENTED BY CRUS CLASSÉS

APPELLATION	TOTAL ACRES	TOTAL (HA)	TOTAL IN HA (ACRES)	CRUS CLASSÉS REPRESENTS
Médoc	3,240	(5,358)		No crus classés
Haut-Médoc	11,342	(4,590)	630 (255)	6% of AOC, 9% of crus classés
Listrac	1,641	(664)	-	No crus classés
Moulis	1,500	(607)	-	No crus classés
St-Estèphe	3,099	(1,254)	558 (226)	18% of AOC, 8% of crus classés
Pauillac	2,988	(1,209)	2,081 (842)	70% of AOC, 30% of crus classés
St-Julien	2,246	(909)	1,552 (628)	68% of AOC, 22% of crus classés
Margaux	3,464	(1,402)	2,110 (854)	61% of AOC, 31% of crus classés
TOTAL	39,520	(15,993)	6,931 (2,805)	8% of Médoc AOCs, 100% of crus classés

THE FIGHT FOR GRAVEL

The best soils for vine-growing also happen to be the most suitable for gravel quarrying. After WWII, in the absence of any legislation, gravel quarrying started in abandoned vineyards. Once the gravel was gone, the opportunity to reclaim the area as a vineyard was lost. There is plenty of gravel in the Gironde estuary itself, but it is more profitable to take it from an open pit. Quarrying companies will continue to plunder the Médoc's finite resources until the government agrees to protect them, but past administrations have shown little interest.



THE MÉDOC, see also p63

The Médoc, a narrow strip of land between the Gironde estuary and the Atlantic Ocean, stretches northwards from the city of Bordeaux to the Pointe de Grave. The climate is Bordeaux's mildest, moderated by both the estuary and the ocean.



CLASS STRUGGLE

According to the new bourgeois growths law of November 2000, the classification of wines of the Médoc is to be reassessed every 12 years. The first reassessment under this legislation took place in June 2003, and of the 490 châteaux that applied for consideration, only 245 were successful in gaining *cru bourgeois* status. The high failure rate reflects a seriousness often lacking in recent French classifications, and I believe that in most cases the judging panel got it right. However, some château owners objected to the outcome, none more so than Jean-François Mau, who was “outraged” by the exclusion of his Château Preuillac. Mau had purchased this property as recently as 1998, but the panel tasted wines only from the vintages of 1994 to 1999, which is why he was so critical of the process, stating “It is a huge injustice to be judged on the past and not present performance.” My initial reaction was that Mau was wrong, that for a classification to be taken seriously, the successful châteaux must display a firm track record, and that he was impatient, as he will surely do much better in the next reclassification. But on reflection, I think the wines tasted could have had a more recent emphasis. Part of the criteria established by the November 2000 law take

into account the reputation of any proposed bourgeois growth, and that has to be established over a period of time that—objectively—precludes the classification of Château Preuillac. But rather than tasting six vintages, the youngest of which is almost four years old, every single vintage since the last vintage tasted at the previous reclassification should be sampled. Nothing less will do, if this law is to stand the test of time. And, whereas it might not be right to classify according to the latest vintages only, the system could be made sufficiently flexible to award some form of commended classification for those châteaux that have made a profound and demonstrable effort to improve quality in recent years. This would not only be fair to new owners, and established ones who have renewed their efforts, but it would also perform a service for consumers, pointing them in the direction of Médoc wines that are improving with each vintage. This presumes, of course, that the Syndicat des Crus Bourgeois du Médoc is organized for the benefit of consumers, and not just its own glorification. The current 2003 classification consists of 9 *Crus Bourgeois Exceptionnels*, 87 *Crus Bourgeois Supérieurs*, and 151 *Crus Bourgeois* as follows:

**CRUS BOURGEOIS
EXCEPTIONNELS**

Château Chasse-Spleen (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Haut-Marbuzet (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Labegorce Zédé (Soussans, Margaux)
Château Ormes-de-Pez (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château de Pez (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Phélan Ségur (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Potensac (Ordonnac, Médoc)
Château Poujeaux (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Siran (Labarde, Margaux)

**CRUS BOURGEOIS
SUPÉRIEURS**

Château d'Agassac (Ludon-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château d'Angludet (Cantenac, Margaux)
Château Anthonic (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château d'Arche (Ludon-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Arnaud (Arcins, Haut-Médoc)
Château d'Arsac (Arsac, Margaux)
Château Beaumont (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Beau-Site (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Biston-Brillette (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Le Boscq (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Bournac (Civrac, Médoc)
Château Brillette (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Cambon La Pelouse (Macaou, Haut-Médoc)
Château Cap-Léon-Veyrin (Listrac-

Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château La Cardonne (Blaignan, Médoc)
Château Caronne Sainte-Gemme (Saint-Laurent-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Castera (Saint-Germain-d'Esteuil, Médoc)
Château Chambert-Marbuzet (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Charmail (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)
Château Cissac (Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Citran (Avensan, Haut-Médoc)
Château Clarke (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Clauzet (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Clément Pichon (Parempuyre, Haut-Médoc)
Château Colombier-Monpélou (Pauillac, Pauillac)
Château Coufran (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)
Château Le Crock (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Dutruch Grand Poujeaux (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château d'Escurac (Civrac, Médoc)
Château Fonbadet (Pauillac, Pauillac)
Château Fonréaud (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Fourcas Dupré (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Fourcas Hosten (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Furcas Loubaney (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château du Glana (Saint-Julien-Beychevelle, Saint-Julien)
Château Les Grands Chênes (Saint-Christoly-de-Médoc, Médoc)
Château Gressier Grand Poujeaux (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Greysac (Bégadan, Médoc)
Château La Gurgue

(Margaux, Margaux)
Château Hanteillan (Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Haut-Bages Monpélou (Pauillac, Pauillac)
Château La Haye (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Labegorce (Margaux, Margaux)
Château de Lamarque (Lamarque, Haut-Médoc)
Château Lamothe Bergeron (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Lanessan (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Larose Trintaudon (Saint-Laurent-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Lestage (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Lestage Simon (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)
Château Lilian Ladouys (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Liversan (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)
Château Loudenne (Saint-Yzans-de-Médoc, Médoc)
Château Malescasse (Lamarque, Haut-Médoc)
Château de Malleret (Le Pian-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Maucaillou (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Maucamps (Macau, Haut-Médoc)
Château Mayne Lalande (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Meyney (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Monbrison (Arsac, Margaux)
Château Moulin à Vent (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)
Château Moulin de La Rose (Saint-Julien-de-Beychevelle, Saint-Julien)
Château Les Ormes Sorbet (Couquères, Médoc)

Château Paloumey (Ludon-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Patache d'Aux (Bégadan, Médoc)
Château Paveil de Luze (Soussans, Margaux)
Château Petit Bocq (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Pibran (Pauillac, Pauillac)
Château Ramage La Batisse (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)
Château Reysson (Vertheuil, Haut-Médoc)
Château Rollan de By (Bégadan, Médoc)
Château Saransot-Dupré (Listrac-Médoc, Listrac-Médoc)
Château Ségur (Parempuyre, Haut-Médoc)
Château Sénéjac (Le Pian-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Soudars (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)
Château du Taillan (Le Taillan-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Terrey Gros Cailloux (Saint-Julien-Beychevelle, Saint-Julien)
Château La Tour de By (Bégadan, Médoc)
Château La Tour de Mons (Soussans, Margaux)
Château Tour de Pez (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Tour du Haut Moulin (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)
Château Tour Haut Caussan (Blaignan, Médoc)
Château Tronquoy-Lalande (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)
Château Verdignan (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)
Château Vieux Robin (Bégadan, Médoc)
Château Villegorge (Avensan, Haut-Médoc)

CRUS BOURGEOIS

Château Andron Blanquet
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Aney (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château d'Arcins (Arcins, Haut-Médoc)

Château L'Argenteyre
(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château d'Aurillac (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Balac (Saint-Laurent-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Barateau (Saint-Laurent-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Bardis (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Barreyres (Arcins, Haut-Médoc)

Château Baudan (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Beau-Site Haut-Vignoble
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Bégadanet
(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Bel Air (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Bel Air (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Bel Orme Tronquoy-de-Lalande
(Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Bel-Air Lagrave (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)

Château des Belles Graves
(Ordonnac, Médoc)

Château Bessan Ségur
(Civrac, Médoc)

Château Bibian (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Blaignan
(Blaignan, Médoc)

Château Le Boscq
(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Le Bourdieu
(Valeyrc, Médoc)

Château Le Bourdieu
(Vertheuil, Haut-Médoc)

Château de Braude (Macau, Haut-Médoc)

Château du Breuil (Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château La Bridane (Saint-Julien-Beychevelle, Saint-Julien)

Château des Brousteras (Saint-Yzans-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château des Cabans
(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Cap de Haut
(Lamarque, Haut-Médoc)

Château Capbern Gasqueton
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Chantelys (Prignac-en-Médoc, Médoc)

Château La Clare
(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château La Commanderie
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Le Coteau
(Arsac, Margaux)

Château Coutelin Merville
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château de La Croix

(Ordonnac, Médoc)

Château Dasvin-Bel-Air
(Macau, Haut-Médoc)

Château David (Vensac, Médoc)

Château Devise d'Ardilly
(Saint-Laurent-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Deyrem Valentin
(Soussans, Margaux)

Château Dillon (Blanquefort, Haut-Médoc)

Château Domeyne (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Donissan (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Ducluzeau (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Duplessis (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)

Château Duplessis Fabre (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)

Château Duthil (Le Pian-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château L'Ermitage (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château d'Escot (Lesparre-Médoc, Médoc)

Château La Fleur Milon
(Pauillac, Pauillac)

Château La Fleur Peyrabon (Saint-Sauveur, Pauillac)

Château La Fon du Berger (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)

Château Fontesteau (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)

Château Fontis (ffOrdonnac, Médoc)

Château La Galiane
(Soussans, Margaux)

Château de Gironville (Macau, Haut-Médoc)

Château La Gorce (Blaignan, Médoc)

Château La Gorre (Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Grand Clapeau Olivier
(Blanquefort, Haut-Médoc)

Château Grandis (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Granins Grand Poujeaux
(Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)

Château Grivière (Blaignan, Médoc)

Château Haut-Beauséjour (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Haut-Bellevue (Lamarque, Haut-Médoc)

Château Haut Breton Larigaudière
(Soussans, Margaux)

Château Haut-Canteloup (Saint-Christoly-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Haut-Madrac (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)

Château Haut-Maurac (Saint-Yzans-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Houissant (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Hourbanon (Prignac-en-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Hourtin-Ducasse (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)

Château Labadie (Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Ladouys (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Laffitte Carcasset (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Laffitte Laujac

(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Lafon
(Prignac-en-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Lalande (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Lalande (Saint-Julien-Beychevelle, Saint-Julien)

Château Lamothe-Cissac
(Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Larose Perganson (Saint-Laurent-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Larrivau (Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Larruau (Margaux, Margaux)

Château Laujac (Bégadan, Médoc)

Château La Lauzette-Declercq
(Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Leyssac (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Lieujean (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)

Château Liouner (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Lousteauneuf
(Valeyrc, Médoc)

Château Magnol
(Blanquefort, Haut-Médoc)

Château de Marbuzet
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Marsac Séguineau
(Soussans, Margaux)

Château Martinens
(Cantenac, Margaux)

Château Maurac (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Mazails (Saint-Yzans-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Le Meynieu (Vertheuil, Haut-Médoc)

Château Meyre (Avensan, Haut-Médoc)

Château Les Moines
(Couquèques, Médoc)

Château Mongravey (Arsac, Margaux)

Château Le Monteil d'Arsac (Arsac, Haut-Médoc)

Château Morin (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château de Moulin Rouge
(Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château La Mouline (Moulis-en-Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc)

Château Muret (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Noaillac (Jau-Dignac-Loirac, Médoc)

Château du Perier (Saint-Christoly-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Le Pey (Bégadan, Médoc)

Château Peyrabon (Saint-Sauveur, Haut-Médoc)

Château Peyredon Lagravette
(Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Peyre-Lebade (Lustrac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Picard
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Plantey (Pauillac, Pauillac)

Château Poitevin (Jau-Dignac-Loirac, Médoc)

Château Pomys

(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Pontac Lynch
(Cantenac, Margaux)

Château Pontey (Blaignan, Médoc)

Château Pontoise Cabarrus (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Puy Castéra (Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Ramafort (Blaignan, Médoc)

Château du Raux (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château La Raze Beauvallet
(Civrac, Médoc)

Château du Retout (Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Reverdi (Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Roquegrave
(Valeyrc, Médoc)

Château Saint-Ahon (Blanquefort, Haut-Médoc)

Château Saint-Aubin (Saint-Sauveur, Médoc)

Château Saint-Christophe (Saint-Christoly-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Saint-Estèphe
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Saint-Hilaire
(Queyrac, Médoc)

Château Saint-Paul (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Segue Longue
(Jau-Dignac-Loirac, Médoc)

Château Ségur de Cabanac (Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Semeillan Mazeau
(Lustrac-Médoc, Lustrac-Médoc)

Château Senilhac (Saint-Seurin-de-Cadourne, Haut-Médoc)

Château Sipian (Valeyrc, Médoc)

Château Tayac (Soussans, Margaux)

Château Le Temple (Valeyrc, Médoc)

Château Teynac (Saint-Julien-Beychevelle, Saint-Julien)

Château La Tonnelle
(Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Tour Blanche (Saint-Christoly-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château La Tour de Bessan
(Cantenac, Margaux)

Château Tour des Termes
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Tour-du-Roc
(Arcins, Haut-Médoc)

Château Tour Prignac
(Prignac-en-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Tour Saint-Bonnet
(Saint-Christoly-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Tour Saint-Fort
(Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Estèphe)

Château Tour Saint-Joseph
(Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

Château Trois Moulins
(Macau, Haut-Médoc)

Château Les Tuileries
(Saint-Yzans-de-Médoc, Médoc)

Château Vernous
(Lesparre, Médoc)

Château Vieux Château Landon
(Bégadan, Médoc)

Château de Villambis
(Cissac-Médoc, Haut-Médoc)

THE APPELLATIONS OF THE MÉDOC

HAUT-MÉDOC AOC

This AOC encompasses the Médoc's four finest communes—Margaux, St.-Julien, Pauillac, and St.-Estèphe—as well as the less well-known Listrac and Moulis communes. Wines produced outside these six appellations but within the Haut-Médoc are not generally as thrilling, although infinitely superior to those of Médoc. Among these very reliable wines are a few great-value *crus classés* and many high-quality *crus bourgeois*, but although Haut-Médoc is a name to look out for on the label of château-bottled wines, it counts for little on a generic.

RED These dry wines have a generosity of fruit tempered by a firm structure, and are medium- to full-bodied.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot, Carmenère

🕒 6–15 years (*crus classés*);
5–8 years (others)

LISTRAC-MÉDOC AOC

Significant funds have been invested in a number of high-performance châteaux in this commune, although its heavy clay soil does not have anything like as much potential as the gravel ridges found in the most famous Médoc appellations.

RED These dry, medium- to full-bodied wines have the fruit and finesse of St.-Julien combined with the firmness of St.-Estèphe. The most successful wines tend to have a large proportion of Merlot, which enjoys the Haut-Médoc's clay soil.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 5–10 years

MARGAUX AOC



The best Margaux are potentially the greatest wines in the whole of Bordeaux, but this is an appellation that covers five communes encompassing a great diversity of soil and some of its wines not unnaturally have a tendency to disappoint. Margaux benefits enormously from having a namesake château, which is unique in Bordeaux, and the fact that this property sets the most extraordinarily high standards has done no harm to the reputation and price of these wines generally. The phenomenal success of Château Margaux has, however, unfairly raised expectations of many lesser-quality châteaux in the area, but those critics who widely accuse proprietors of sacrificing quality for quantity could not be further from the truth. There are individual châteaux that overproduce and therefore fail to achieve their full potential, but excessive volume is not typically the problem with this appellation, since it has the

lowest yield per acre of the four famous Médoc AOCs.

RED Exquisite, dry, medium-bodied, and sometimes full-bodied, wines that can be deep-colored and fabulously rich, yet they have great finesse and a silky finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 5–20 years (*crus classés*);
5–10 years (others)

MÉDOC AOC

Technically, this appellation covers the entire Médoc, but most wines actually come from north of the Haut-Médoc in the area that was formerly called the Bas-Médoc. Its vineyards have undergone a rapid and extensive expansion since the mid-1970s.

RED The best of these dry, medium-bodied wines are similar in style to good Haut-Médocs, although the style is less sophisticated.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 4–8 years

MOULIS AOC OR MOULIS-EN-MÉDOC AOC

One of the two communal appellations located on the Atlantic side of the Médoc, Moulis-en-Médoc is smaller and potentially more interesting than its neighbor Listrac. Like Listrac, it has no *cru classé* châteaux, despite adjoining Margaux, the appellation that has the highest number of such properties in the Médoc.

RED These dry, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wines have more power than those of Margaux, but far less finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 5–12 years

PAUILLAC AOC



This commune vies with Margaux as the most famous appellation, but is without doubt the most rock solid and consistent of Bordeaux AOCs, while its *premiers crus* of Latour, Lafite, and Mouton make it the most important.

RED Dark and virtually opaque, great Pauillac is a dry, powerfully constructed wine, typically redolent of blackcurrants and new oak. It might be unapproachable when young, but is always rich with fruit when mature. Although it does not have the grace of great Margaux, Pauillac

brings power and style together to produce wines of incomparable finesse for their size.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 9–25 years (*crus classés*);
5–12 years (others)

ST-ESTÈPHE AOC



The potential of St-Estèphe is exemplified by Cos d'Estournel, which is one of the best *deuxièmes crus* in the Médoc, but the strength of this appellation lies in its range of *crus bourgeois*. The area under vine is slightly less than that of Margaux, which has the largest area, but St-Estèphe has far more unclassified châteaux, and even the best wines are wonderfully cheap.

RED If Pauillac is the stallion of the four famous appellations, St-Estèphe must be the dray horse. These dry, full-bodied wines are big and strong, yet not without dignity. St-Estèphe demands affection and, with the rich fruit of a sunny year, deserves it. These most enjoyable, sweet-spice and cedary wines can have lots of honest, chunky fruit. Cos d'Estournel is the thoroughbred of the commune.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 8–25 years (*crus classés*);
5–12 years (others)

ST-JULIEN AOC

St-Julien is the smallest of the four famous appellations and the most intensively cultivated, with almost 50 percent of the commune under vine. There are no first growths, but there are as many as five seconds, and the standard and consistency of style is very high. This AOC overlaps part of the commune of Pauillac, and, historically, châteaux Latour and Pichon-Longueville-Comtesse-de-Lalande could as easily have become St-Julien AOC as Pauillac AOC.

RED These are dry, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wines that have purity of style, varietal flavor, and can be long-lived. Well balanced and elegant, these wines fall somewhere between the lushness that is typical of Margaux and the firmer structure of Pauillac.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Carmenère, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 6–20 years (*crus classés*);
5–12 years (others)

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF THE MÉDOC

CHÂTEAU D'AGASSAC

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆



This is one of the best unclassified wines in the Haut-Médoc. The wine is matured in wood for 15 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Dark-colored, plummy wine, with a lot of soft, ripe fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 47%,
Merlot 50%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Château Pomiès-Agassac*

CHÂTEAU D'AURILHAC

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★

A relative newcomer that has quickly developed a cult following. The grapes are machine harvested, and the wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 35 percent new oak.

RED A flashy, huge, dark, and dense wine with masses of fruit to balance the ripe tannins and extrovert oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 56%,
Merlot 38%, Cabernet Franc
3%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Château La Fagotte*

CHÂTEAU BEAUMONT

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

A large property that consistently produces wines of good quality. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED These are aromatically attractive wines with elegant fruit and supple tannin.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 35%,
Cabernet Franc 2%,
Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Château d'Arvigny*

Other wine: *Tours de
Beaumont*

CHÂTEAU BEL-AIR LAGRAVE

AOC Moulis, Cru Bourgeois
★☆☆

This growth was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 20 months, with 70 percent new oak.

RED These vividly colored wines have a fine bouquet and firm tannic structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 35%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château Peyvigneau*

CHÂTEAU BELGRAVE

AOC Haut-Médoc 5ème Cru Classé
★☆☆

Situated on a good gravel bank behind Château Lagrange, the wine, which is matured in wood for 24 months with up to 50 percent new oak, has improved consistently throughout the 1990s.

RED A good balance of blackcurrant fruit and ripe acidity, with much more supple tannin structure than used to be the case, and vanilla overtones of new oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%,
Merlot 32%, Cabernet Franc
12%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 8–16 years

Second wine: *Diane de Belgrave*

CHÂTEAU BEL-ORME- TRONQUOY-DE-LALANDE

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★

This property has a confusingly similar name to Château Tronquoy-Lalande, St.-Estèphe. Steady improvement since the mid-1990s has turned the once four-square character of these wines into a more classically structured style. This wine is matured in wood for 12 to 14 months, with 10 percent new oak.

RED These are firm, fruity, classically structured wines.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 35%,
Merlot 55%, Cabernet Franc
10%

🕒 7–15 years

CHÂTEAU BERNADOTTE

AOC Haut-Médoc
★☆☆

Consistently performing above its class, this château is situated on fine, gravelly ground that once had the right to the Pauillac appellation and formed part of a *cru classé*. The quality has improved since the property was purchased in 1996 by the redoubtable Madame Lencquesaing, who also owns Pichon-Longueville-Comtesse-de-Lalande. This wine is now matured in



wood for 12 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED These wines are very stylish, with lush Cabernet fruit backed up by the creamy richness of new oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 62%,
Merlot 36%, Cabernet Franc
and Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Château Le Fournas
Bernadotte*

CHÂTEAU BISTON-BRILLETTE

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

This top-quality Moulis property ages its wines in wood for 12 to 15 months, with up to 35 percent new oak.

RED Wines that are very rich in color and fruit with a full, spicy-cassis character and a supple tannin structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%,
Merlot 40%, Malbec 2%, Petit
Verdot 3%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Château Biston*

Other wine: *Château Graveyron*

CHÂTEAU BOUQUEYRAN

AOC Moulis
★☆☆

A big improvement in quality and value since this 32-acre (13-hectare) property was leased by Philippe Porcheron of nearby Château Rose Saint-Croix. Wines are matured in wood for 18 months with up to 50 percent new oak. La Fleur de Bouqueyran is a superior *cuvée*.

RED Lovely deep-colored, deep-flavored wines of not inconsiderable style and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 41%,
Merlot 57%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Les Tourelles de
Bouqueyran*

CHÂTEAU LE BOURDIEU VERTHEUIL

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois

Situated between Vertheuil and St.-Estèphe, this château was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Well-colored, full-bodied wines of robust character that are not lacking in charm.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc
10%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Château Haut-
Brignays*

Other wines: *Château La Croix
des Sablons, Château Victoria-
Picourneau*

CHÂTEAU BRANAS GRANDPOUJEAUX

AOC Moulis
★☆☆

These excellent and rapidly improving wines are aged in wood for 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Thanks to an increase in Merlot, this wine has plenty of accessible fruit, charming aromatic properties, and increasing finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%,
Merlot 45%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *Clos des Demoiselles*

CHÂTEAU BRILLETTE

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

This château's name reputedly derives from its glinting, pebbly soil. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 40 percent new oak.

RED These are attractively colored wines of full but supple body, with delightful summer-fruit and vanilla aromas. Easily equivalent to *cru classé* quality.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%,
Merlot 48%, Cabernet
Sauvignon 9%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU CAMBON-LA-PELOUSE

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★

Under the same ownership as
Château Grand Barrail-Lamarzelle-

Figeac, this estate was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 45 percent new oak.

RED Soft, medium- to full-bodied wines with fresh and juicy flavors.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 30%, Merlot 50%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 3–8 years

Other wine: *Château Trois Moulins*

CHÂTEAU CAMENSAC

AOC Haut-Médoc 5^{ème} Cru Classé
★🍷

Situated behind Château Belgrave, this property was renovated in the mid-1960s by the new owners, the Former brothers, who are of Spanish origin, and later established Marquès de Cáceres in Rioja. Camensac began making wine equivalent to its classification in the late 1970s, and since 1995 has been performing beyond its class. It is matured in wood for 17 to 20 months, with 35–70 percent new oak.

RED Well-structured wine, with a medium weight of fruit and a certain amount of finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 40%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *La Closerie de Camensac*

Other wine: *Le Batilly de Camensac*

CHÂTEAU CANTEMERLE

AOC Haut-Médoc 5^{ème} Cru Classé
★☆☆



In 1980, new stainless-steel fermentation vats replaced the old wooden ones that had been responsible for some stingy vintages. Also discarded were all the old casks, so the 1980 vintage was uniquely matured in 100 percent new oak. The wine is normally matured in wood for 18 to 20 months, with one-third new oak. It is currently performing above its classification.

RED Deliciously rich wines of fine color, creamy-oaky fruit, beautiful balance, and increasing finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Villeneuve de Cantemerle*

CHÂTEAU CAP-LÉON-VEYRIN

AOC Listrac
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★

Simply called Château Cap-Léon originally, the vines of this property are planted in two plots of clay-gravel soil over marl.

RED Deep-colored, full-bodied, richly flavored wines with high extract levels and a good balance of tannin.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 35%, Merlot 60%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU LA CARDONNE

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This property was purchased by the Rothschilds of Lafite in 1973 and has since been expanded and renovated. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED These are attractive, medium-bodied wines with a good, grapey perfume and a silky texture, made in an elegant style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 50%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 6–10 years

CHÂTEAU CARONNE-STE.-GEMME

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

This property is situated south of Château Lagrange—a superb island of vines on a gravel plateau. Matured in wood for 12 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Full-bodied wines rich in flavor with undertones of creamy oak, and a supple, tannin structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 33%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château Labat*

CHÂTEAU CASTÉRA

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

The original château was reduced to ruins by the Black Prince in the 14th century. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Soft-textured, medium-bodied wines best drunk relatively young.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 7%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Château Bourbon La Chapelle*

Other wines: *Château Moulin de Buscateau, La Chapelle du Castera*

CHÂTEAU CHANTELYS

AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

Owner Christine Courrian Braquissac brings a gentle touch to the naturally firm wines of this district.

RED Well-colored, medium-bodied, gently rich-flavored wines of some elegance.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 40%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 3–8 years

Second wine: *Château Gautbier*

CHÂTEAU CHARMAIL

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

The wines from this château have improved dramatically since its excellent 1996 vintage, and continue to perform well in recent blind tastings. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Rich, spicy, and long, with well-rounded, ripe tannins.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 30%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Merlot 48%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 3–7 years

Second wine: *Château Tours de Charmail*

CHÂTEAU CHASSE-SPLEEN

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel
★★🍷

The proprietor of this quality-conscious property also owns the *cru classé* Château Haut-Bages-Libéral and the excellent unclassified growth of Château la Gurgue in Margaux. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months with 40 percent new oak, and is usually of *cru classé* quality. Certainly, it well deserves being recently classified as one of only nine *crus bourgeois exceptionnels*.

RED Full-bodied wines of great finesse, vivid color, with a luxuriant, creamy-rich flavor of cassis and chocolate with warm, spicy-vanilla undertones. Easily equivalent to *cru classé* quality.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wines: *L'Oratoire de Chasse-Spleen, L'Ermitage de Chasse-Spleen, L'Orangerie de Chasse-Spleen*

CHÂTEAU CISSAC

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

Château Cissac is always good value, especially in hot years. It is fermented in wood and matured in cask with no *vin de presse*. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 50 percent new oak.

RED These are deep-colored, well-



flavored, full-bodied wines made in a *vin de garde* style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 20%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château Les Reflets du Cissac*

Other wine: *Château Abiet*

CHÂTEAU CITRAN

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

This substantial-sized property was once run by Château Coufran, then passed into Japanese ownership, under the Fujimoto company, which invested in improvements in the vineyard and winery. In 1997, it was taken back into French ownership, under the auspices of Groupe Taillan, and is run personally by Céline Villars. This wine is matured in wood for 12 to 14 months, with 40 percent new oak.

RED A once solid, if plodding, Médoc of robust character, the style has become more accessible since the mid-1990s, and since the new millennium has shown a true plumpness of fruit, with not inconsiderable finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 58%, Merlot 42%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Moulins de Citran*

CHÂTEAU LA CLARE

AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

A well-established property that is receiving renewed attention of late. Approximately 30 percent of the wine is matured in wood for 23 months, with 5–10 percent new oak.

RED A rich, nicely colored, medium-bodied wine with some spicy finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 57%, Merlot 36%, Cabernet Franc 7%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wines: *Laveline, Gentilhomme*

CHÂTEAU CLARKE

AOC Listrac
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This estate's vines were dug up and its château pulled down in 1950. All was abandoned until 1973, when it was purchased by Baron Edmund de Rothschild. He completely restored the vineyard and installed an ultramodern winery. Since the 1981 vintage, it has become one of the Médoc's fastest-rising stars. The wine is fermented in stainless steel

and matured in wood for 12 to 18 months, with up to 80 percent new oak.

RED Well-colored wines have a good measure of creamy-smoky oak, soft fruit, and increasing finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%, Merlot 60%

🕒 7–25 years

Second wine: *Château Granges des Domaines Edmond de Rothschild*

CHÂTEAU COUFRAN

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

These wines are matured in wood for 13 to 18 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Frank and fruity, this medium- to full-bodied wine has a chunky, chocolaty flavor, which is dominated by Merlot.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 15%, Merlot 85%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 4–12 years

Second wine: *Domaine de la Rose-Maréchale*

CHÂTEAU DUTRUCH GRAND POUJEAUX

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

Dutruch is one of the best Grand Poujeaux satellite properties. It also makes two other wines from the specific-named plots “La Bernède” and “La Gravière.” Matured in wood for 12 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED These are fine, full-bodied wines of excellent color, fruit, and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 50%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–15 years

Other wines: *La Bernède-Grand-Poujeaux, La Gravière-Grand-Poujeaux*

CHÂTEAU FONRÉAUD

AOC Liscar
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

This splendid château has south-facing vineyards situated on and around a knoll, Puy-de-Menjon. This wine is matured in wood for 12 to 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Attractive medium- to full-bodied wines of good fruit and some style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 42%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *La Tourelle de Château Fonréaud*

CHÂTEAU FOURCAS DUPRÉ

AOC Liscar
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

A charming house, with vineyards situated on gravel over iron-pan

soil, which can excel in hot years. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third new oak.

RED The good color, bouquet, and tannic structure of these wines is rewarded with rich fruit in good years.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 44%, Merlot 44%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU FOURCAS HOSTEN

AOC Liscar Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

Under multinational ownership (French, Danish, and American) since 1972, the winemaking facilities here have been renovated. The wines are matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Deeply colored and full-bodied wines, rich in fruit and supported by a firm tannic structure, although the style is becoming more supple, and can even be quite fat in ripe years like 1982.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Les Cèdres d'Hosten*

CHÂTEAU LES GRANDS CHÊNES

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

The quality here has been excellent since the mid-1990s, but has taken another step up since 1999, when the château was purchased by Bernard Magrez, one of the joint owners of Château Pape Clément. Magrez runs this property personally. The wine is matured in wood for 12 to 15 months, with one-third new oak (except for its “Prestige Cuvée,” which utilizes 100 percent new oak).

RED Lush and charming, with opulent fruit and fine acidity balance.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 6–15 years

Other wine: ✓ *Château Les Grands Chênes Prestige Cuvée*

CHÂTEAU GRESSIER GRAND POUJEAUX

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This château was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not in 1978. It has in recent years produced successful wines that compare well with good *crus classés*. This wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Full-bodied wines with plenty of fruit and flavor. Well worth laying down.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc

10%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU GREYSAC

AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

Since it was purchased by the late Baron de Gunzburg in 1973, the facilities of this château have undergone extensive modernization. The quality of the wine is excellent and its future promising. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Stylish, medium-bodied wines with silky-textured, ripe-fruit flavors.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 6–10 years

CHÂTEAU HANTEILLAN

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

Under the enthusiastic direction of Catherine Blasco, this large property produces a consistently fine wine, and her achievements have been consolidated by the new winemaking facilities. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED The wine has a fine color, spicy bouquet with underlying vanilla-oak tones, ripe fruit, and supple tannins.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 41%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Château Larrivaux Hanteillan*

CHÂTEAU LACOMBE-NOILLAC

AOC Haut-Médoc
★🍷

Jean-Michel Lapalu's property boasts some of the most northerly vines in the Médoc. The wine is matured in wood for 6 months, with 15 percent new oak.

RED Elegant, medium-bodied wines of surprising style and finesse for the location.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 58%, Cabernet Franc 6%, Merlot 32%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Château Les Traverses*

Other wine: *Château Les Traverses La Franque*

CHÂTEAU LA LAGUNE

AOC Haut-Médoc 3ème Cru Classé
★☆☆

Owned by the Ducellier family of Champagne Ayala, the immaculate vineyard of this fine château is the first *cru classé* encountered after leaving Bordeaux, and is situated on sand and gravel soil. The château itself was completely renovated in 2003. This wine is matured in wood

for 16 to 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED These wines are deep-colored with complex cassis and stone-fruit flavors intermingled with rich, creamy-vanilla oak nuances. They are full-bodied but supple.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 5–30 years

Second wine: *Moulin de Lagune*

CHÂTEAU DE LAMARQUE

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This large and constantly improving property is owned and run by Pierre-Gilles and Marie-Hélène Gromand-Brunet d'Évry. The vineyard was systematically replanted in the 1960s and is currently at its optimum age for both quality and volume. While it will gradually decline in yield, the quality should continue to improve. The wine is matured in wood for 12 to 15 months, with one-third new oak.

RED This wine has the supple style of a modern Médoc, with plenty of real fruit flavor, and an enticingly perfumed bouquet.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 46%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 24%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *D de Lamarque*

Other wines: *Réserve du Marquis d'Évry, Noblesse Oblige (saigné rosé)*

CHÂTEAU LAMOÛTHE-CISSAC

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

An up-and-coming wine from one of Bordeaux's oldest properties, Lamoûthe-Cissac is matured in wood for 12 to 14 months, with 20 percent new oak. It has recently started to outperform Cissac.

RED Classically proportioned, Cabernet-dominated wines of excellent potential longevity.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 26%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 4–16 years

CHÂTEAU LANESSAN

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★★🍷

Supposedly missed out from the 1855 classification because the owner forgot to submit samples, or could not be bothered, this château was later classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list. The grapes are machine harvested, and the wines are matured in wood for 15 months, with no claim of any new oak.

RED Big, intensely flavored wines of deep, often opaque, color and a quality that closely approaches that

of a *cru classé*, requiring a similar minimum aging before its fruit shows through.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 1%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *Domaine de Ste-Gemme*

CHÂTEAU LAROSE-TRINTAUDON

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

This is the largest estate in the Médoc and was under the same ownership as Château Camensac until 1986, during which time vast sums were spent on renovation. The standard of these wines, which are matured in wood for 12 months with 25 percent new oak, is as high as it has ever been.

RED Medium-bodied, and sometimes full-bodied, wines with an elegantly rich flavor of juicy summer fruits, vanilla, and truffles, backed up by supple tannins. Larose-Perganson is more of a *tête de cuvée* than a second wine. Representing just 15 percent of the total production, this wine is exclusively from the oldest vines and the grapes are all handpicked, in contrast to Larose-Trintaudon, which is machine-picked.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Larose Saint-Laurent*

Other wines: ✓ *Château Larose-Perganson, Les Hauts de Trintaudon*

CHÂTEAU LESTAGE-DARQUIER

AOC Moulis
★☆☆

This is the least encountered of the many Poujeaux châteaux (formerly sold as Château Lestage-Darquier-Grand-Poujeaux), but well worth digging out. This wine is matured in wood for 9 to 12 months, with 100 percent year-old oak.

RED Densely colored wines, rich in bouquet and fruit, with a powerful structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 2%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 8–20 years

CHÂTEAU LIVERSAN

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

The estate of Château Liverson was purchased in 1984 by Prince Guy de Polignac, when it was inexorably linked with Champagne Pommery, but was first leased and then sold to the owners of Patache d'Aux. The vineyard is on fine, sandy gravel over a limestone subsoil, just under 2 miles (3 kilometers) from Lafite and Mouton-Rothschild. The wine is

fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for 12 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Rich and flavorful wines, of full body and some style. They are gaining in class with each vintage.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 49%, Merlot 38%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *Les Charmes des Liverson*

CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

This pink-washed, Chartreuse-style château, with its lawns running down to the Gironde, once belonged to W. and A. Gilbey, who ran it in a style that harkened back to the last days of the British Empire. It was sold to Jean-Paul Lafgragette in 1999. The wine is matured in wood for 15 to 18 months, with 25 percent new oak. Loudenne also produces a dry white wine that is attractive when drunk one to two years after the harvest.

RED Full-bodied wines with a spicy-blackcurrant bouquet, sometimes silky and hinting of violets, with underlying vanilla oak, a big mouthful of rich and ripe fruit, excellent extract, and great length.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 7%, Malbec 2%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wines: *Château Lestagne, Pavillon de Loudenne*

CHÂTEAU MALESCASSE

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆



Entirely replanted between 1970 and 1992, Château Malescasse was purchased midway through this process by the owner of Pontet-Canet and Lafon-Rochet, only to be sold to Alcatel Alsthon once completed. The wine is matured in wood for 16 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Firm, dependable, good-value

claret, getting better with each vintage.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Le Closerie de Malescasse*

CHÂTEAU DE MALLERET

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

Château de Malleret is a vast estate, which incorporates a stud farm with two training racetracks and stables for both hunting and racing. The vineyard boasts 148 acres (60 hectares). This wine is matured in wood for 12 to 16 months, with up to 50 percent new oak.

RED Delightful wines of good bouquet, medium body, and juicy-rich fruit. Improving.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 3%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU MAUCAILLOU

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

Château Maucailou is consistently one of the best-value wines produced in Bordeaux. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 80 percent new oak.

RED Deep-colored, full-bodied wine with masses of velvety-textured fruit, beautiful cassis and vanilla flavors, and supple tannins.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 36%, Cabernet Franc 2%, Petit Verdot 7%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Château Cap de Haut-Maucailou*

Other wine: *Château Duplessis-Fabre*

CHÂTEAU MAUCAMPS

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

Situated between Macau itself and the *cru classé* Cantemerle to the south, this château makes superb use of its 37 acres (15 hectares) of fine, gravelly vineyards. This wine is matured in wood for 16 months, with up to 40 percent new oak.

RED Always a deep-colored, full-bodied wine with plenty of fruit flavor supported by supple tannins.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 40%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *Clos de May*

CHÂTEAU LE MEYNIEU AOC

Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★☆☆

This property is under the same ownership as Château Lavillotte, which is situated in St.-Estèphe. The

deep-colored wine is not filtered before it is bottled.

RED This is a deep, dark, brooding wine of dense bouquet and solid fruit which promises much for the future.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 62%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 8%

🕒 7–15 years

CHÂTEAU MOULIN-À-VENT

AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

One-third of the property of Château Moulin-à-Vent overlaps the commune of Lustrac, but its appellation is still Moulis. This wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Medium-bodied wines with an elegant bouquet and a full flavor.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 35%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Moulin-de-St.-Vincent*

CHÂTEAU NOAILLAC

AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★☆☆

Under the same ownership as Château La Tour de By. The wine is matured in wood for up to 12 months, with 15 percent new oak.

RED Deliciously fruity style, underpinned by a discreet use of oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 40%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 3–8 years

Second wines: *Moulin de Noillac, La Rose Noillac, Les Palombes de Noillac*

CHÂTEAU LES ORMES-SORBET

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

Owned by the Boivert family since 1764. The wine today is matured in wood for 18 to 20 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Once reputed for its characterful wines of substantial body, dense fruit, and positive flavor, this château has made an increasingly opulent style, with fine aromatics, since the early 1990s, fully justifying its 2003 *cru bourgeois supérieur* classification.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Petit Verdot 2%, Carmenère 1%

🕒 4–15 years

Second wine: *Château de Conques*

CHÂTEAU PALOUMEY

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★☆☆

An old property that enjoyed fame in the 19th century, but was left rundown and forgotten until the current owner, Martine Cazeneuve, replanted it in 1990. The wine is

matured in wood for 12 to 15 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Deliciously rich and ripe, fruit-driven style that is underpinned by a nicely restrained use of oak, with exceptional finesse for such young vines. Can only get better!

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wines: *Les Ailes de Paloumey, Château Haut-Carmaillet*

**CHÂTEAU
PATACHE-D'AUX**
AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This old property once belonged to the Aux family, descendants of the counts of Armagnac, but was purchased by a syndicate headed by Claude Lapalu in 1964. Although Patache-d'Aux is always reliable, it has performed particularly well since its stunning 1990 vintage. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Stylish, highly perfumed, medium-bodied wine with very accessible fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 7%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Le Relais de Patache-d'Aux*

Other wines: *Les Chevaux de Patache-d'Aux*

CHÂTEAU PEYRABON
AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

Virtually unknown until 1998, when it was purchased by Millesima (formerly Les Vins des Grands Vignobles), Château Peyrabon is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Sturdy style, but not lacking in fruit, and usually very good value.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 57%, Merlot 37%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wines: *Lapiey, Château Le Fleur Peyrabon*

Other wines: *Château Pierbone, Domaine du Roman*

CHÂTEAU PLAGNAC
AOC Médoc

Owned by Domaines Cordier since 1972, this property has produced consistently good-value red Bordeaux since the end of that decade. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months.

RED Full-bodied and full-flavored, with some breed; lots of up-front Merlot fruit, and a smooth finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 35%,

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Château Haut de Plagnac*

CHÂTEAU PONTEY
AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois
★★🍷

Owned by the Bordeaux *négociant* Quancard family, this château occupies an excellent location on a gravel plateau. The wines are matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These wines have always been cleverly constructed and brimming with lush, oaky fruit, but they are even more lush than before.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 55%

🕒 3–12 years

Second wine: *Château Vieux Prezart*

Other wine: *Château Pontey Caussan*

CHÂTEAU POTENSAC
AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel
★★🍷

This property is under the same ownership as Château Léoville-Las-Cases in St-Julien, and its wines often aspire to *cru classé* quality, fully justifying the *cru bourgeois exceptionnel* classification in 2003. The wine is fermented in stainless steel, then matured in wood for 18 months, with 20 percent new oak.

RED Classy, full-bodied wines of a lovely, brick-red color, with lots of fruit and underlying chocolate and spice flavors.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 15%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Château Lassalle*

Other wines: *Château Gallais-Belleuve, Goudy la Cardonne*

CHÂTEAUX POUJEAUX
AOC Moulis
Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel
★★🍷

After Chasse-Spleen, this château produces the best wine in Moulis and is easily the equivalent of a good *cru classé*. Hence, it was no surprise that it was classified as one of only nine *crus bourgeois exceptionnels* in 2003.

RED Full-bodied and deep-colored wine with a very expansive bouquet and creamy-rich, spicy fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: *Château La Salle-de-Poujeaux*

CHÂTEAU PREUILLAC
AOC Médoc
★🍷

Purchased in 1998 by Yvon Mau, who has sold his eponymously named *négociant* business to Freixenet in a bid to build up a portfolio of estate properties. Mau devoted a lot of money and attention to renovating this

property, reducing yields, and updating the vinification facilities, which is why he was so upset not to have been included in the 2003 *cru bourgeois* classification (see p72), although there is no doubt that it will succeed at the next reclassification in 2015. Certainly, if the current rate of improvement can be maintained, this château will do very well. The grapes are all handpicked, then sorted on tables, while the wines are fermented in stainless steel (2001 being the first such vintage), then matured in wood for 18 months, with 20 percent new oak.

RED The creamy cassis and chocolaty fruit in these wines is a testament to Mau's efforts. Preuillac used to be rather rustic, but now shows more finesse with each and every vintage.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 54%, Merlot 44%, Cabernet Franc 2%

🕒 4–12 years

**CHÂTEAU
RAMAGE-LA-BATISSE**
AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This property has excelled itself since the late 1980s, making wines of remarkable quality–price ratio which are matured in wood for 14 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Rich, well-flavored, oaky wines that are immediately attractive in light years and ridiculously inexpensive *vins de garde* in the best vintages. Not unlike a poor man's Lynch-Bages (which, in turn, I have called a poor man's Latour!).

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 23%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Le Terrey*

Other wine: *Château Dutellier*

CHÂTEAU ROLLAN DE BY
AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★★



A new cult wine on the Bordeaux scene, it is matured in wood for 18 months, with 60 percent new oak. The wine has a string of blind

tasting victories. The Château Haut-Condessas is a super-selection, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Lots of up-front fruit, but long and classy, with plenty of finesse. Not big and, surprisingly, not overoaked.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 20%, Merlot 70%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 4–12 years

Other wine: *Château Fleur de By*

CHÂTEAU ST-BONNET
AOC Médoc
★

Some 130 of this important estate's 210 acres are planted with vines (53 of 85 hectares). The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Full-flavored wines of promising quality and immediate aromatic appeal.

🍷 Merlot 50%, Cabernet Sauvignon 28%, Cabernet Franc 22%

🕒 5–10 years

CHÂTEAU ST-PAUL
AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

Up-and-coming vineyard pieced together from parcels previously owned by two St-Estèphe châteaux. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Plump, fruit-driven reds of good class and finesse, with a long finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 4–12 years

CHÂTEAU SÉNÉJAC
AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★🍷

This property changed hands in 1999. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 25 percent new oak (up to 100 percent for its prestige *cuvée* Karolus).

RED A firm, full-flavored wine of excellent longevity, Sénéjac is not, however, for the faint-hearted, especially in its rather stern youthful years. The Karolus is bigger, richer, and more concentrated.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 14%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Artique de Sénac*

Other wine: *✓ Karolus*

CHÂTEAU SIGOGNAC
AOC Médoc
🍷

Owned by Colette Bonny, this wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 20 percent new oak.

RED Consistently good-value, lunchtime claret of some elegance.

🍷 Merlot 50%, Cabernet Sauvignon 28%, Cabernet Franc 22%

🕒 3–8 years

Second wine: *Château La Croix du Chevalier*

CHÂTEAU SOCIANDO-MALLET

AOC Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois

★ ★ ①

This property has been making a name for itself since 1970, when Jean Gautreau raised standards to near *cru classé* quality. The quality of Sociando-Mallet has continued to increase throughout the 1990s, when between 80 and 100 percent new oak became the norm. Its owners did not bother to submit wines for the 2003 reclassification, since it already achieves a higher price than a number of *cru classé* wines, but it is undoubtedly at least *cru bourgeois exceptionnel* in quality, if not in name.

RED These are powerfully built wines that are rich in color and extract. Often totally dominated by vanilla oak in their youth, they are backed up with plenty of concentrated cassis fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 42%, Cabernet Franc 2%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: *La Demoiselle de Sociando-Mallet*

CHÂTEAU SOUDARS

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★ ①

Soudars was formed by the combination of several parcels of rock-strewn land that had become

overgrown with brambles until Eric Miaillhe took over the property in 1973 and spent several years clearing it. The wine is fermented in stainless steel, and matured in wood for 12 to 14 months, with up to 40 percent new oak.

RED Excellent, well-colored wines of good structure and accessible fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 44%, Merlot 54%, Cabernet Franc 1%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Château Marquis de Cadourne*

CHÂTEAU LE TEMPLE

AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois

★ ①

Starting to live up to its reputation in the early 1900s, when it was known as “Lafite of the Bas-Médoc,” this wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 22 percent new oak.

RED Increasingly lush and fruit-dominant, without losing its classic, tannin structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 35%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Château Bairac*

Other wine: *Château La Croix des Sablons*

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR DE BY

AOC Médoc Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★ ①

The tower of Tour de By was once a lighthouse. The wine is of very good quality; it is matured in wood for 16 months, with up to 30 percent new oak.

RED These deeply colored, full-

bodied, richly flavored wines have good spicy fruit, backed up by a firm tannic structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 36%, Cabernet Franc 4%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Château La Roque-de-By*

Other wines: *Château Moulin de Roque, Château Moulin de La Roque*

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR-CARNET

AOC Haut-Médoc
4ème Cru Classé

★

This charming, 13th-century miniature moated castle has a well-kept vineyard. Its wines used to be lackluster, but have been transformed by the new owner, Bernard Magez of Pape-Clément, who purchased the property in 1999. The wine is now matured in wood for 12 to 18 months, with 60 percent new oak.

RED Much riper, more opulent fruit, with some lush new oak in a supporting role, this wine has the richness of flavor it used to lack, with improvements noticeable from one year to the next.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 53%, Merlot 33%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Douves de Carnet*

CHÂTEAU TOUR HAUT-CAUSSAN

AOC Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★ ★

An up-and-coming property owned by Philippe Courrian, who also

makes wine in Corbières. The grapes are all hand-harvested, and the wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Rich, well-colored wines with a great concentration of fruit and nicely integrated, creamy oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 50%

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Château Landotte*

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR SAINT-BONNET

AOC Médoc

★ ①

Situated on fine, gravelly ridges, this property was known as Château la Tour Saint-Bonnet-Cazenave in the 19th century. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Firm, full-flavored, well-colored wines of consistent quality.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 45%, Malbec 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Château La Fuie-Saint-Bonnet*

CHÂTEAU VERDIGNAN

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★ ①

Since 1972, the property of the Miaillhe family, who continue to improve the quality. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for 12 to 14 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Medium-bodied, fruity wines, made in a soft and silky style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Château Plantey-de-la-Croix*

CHÂTEAU VILLEGORGE

AOC Haut-Médoc
Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★ ①

This château was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932. It was purchased by Lucien Lurton in 1973, but he then resigned from the Syndicat and, therefore, the château was not included in its 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. He was succeeded by his daughter, Marie-Louise, the present incumbent, who has continued improving the quality, achieving *supérieur* status in the 2003 reclassification. The wine is matured in wood for 10 to 24 months, with up to 30 percent new oak.

RED Full-bodied wines, with a lovely color, increasingly lush and opulent fruit, understated, creamy oak, and an increasing spicy finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%, Merlot 60%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Reflot de Villegorge*



VINEYARDS THRIVING IN THE MEDOC

In Ancient Roman times this area was considered too marshy for cultivation, yet today it is one of the most prized areas under vine in the world, envied by winemakers worldwide.

SAINT-ESTÈPHE

Although St.-Estèphe can be considered the least sexy of the Médoc's famous four appellations, it has an abundance of high-quality bourgeois growths, which make it indubitably the "bargain basement" of Bordeaux wines.

WITH ONLY FIVE *CRUS CLASSÉS* covering a mere 6 percent of the commune, St.-Estèphe is a rich source of undervalued clarets, where the prices paid by wine drinkers are unlikely to be outbid by wine investors. Enthusiasts rather than speculators will benefit from the fact that no fewer than 4 of the Médoc's 9 *crus bourgeois exceptionnels* are to be found in this commune.

CHÂTEAU COS D'ESTOURNEL

St.-Estèphe might lack *crus classés*, but it is not lacking in class. If it had only one *cru classé*—the stunning, stylish Château Cos d'Estournel—St.-Estèphe would still be famous. The reputation of this château soared after Bruno Prats took over control in 1971. Essentially, this success can be put down to his maximizing the true potential of Cos d'Estournel's exceptional *terroir*, a superb, south-facing ridge of gravel with perfect



HARVEST, CHÂTEAU COS D'ESTOURNEL

The bizarre eastern façade of this specially built winery overlooks the vineyards. The château was owned by perfectionist Bruno Prats before it was sold to the Bernard Taillan group in October 1998.

ST-ESTÈPHE PROFILE

Appellation area Covers parts of the commune of St.-Estèphe only	Surface area of <i>crus classés</i> 558 acres (226 ha), 6% of commune, 16% of AOC
Size of commune 9,284 acres (3,757 ha)	Special comments Approximately 12.5 acres (5 ha) of vineyards within St.-Estèphe are classified as AOC Pauillac
AOC area under vine 3,099 acres (1,254 ha), 33% of commune	

ST-ESTÈPHE CRU CLASSÉ STATISTICS

<i>Crus classés</i> in AOC St.-Estèphe 5 châteaux (by number: 8% of <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc) with 558 acres (226 ha) of vineyards (by area: 8% of <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc and 18% of this AOC)	<i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc) with 119 acres (48 ha) of vineyards (by area: 11% of 3 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc)
1^{er} <i>crus classés</i> None	4^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> 1 château (by number: 10% of 4 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc) with 111 acres (45 ha) of vineyards (by area: 10% of 4 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc)
2^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> 2 châteaux (by number: 14% of 2 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc) with 299 acres (121 ha) of vineyards (by area: 15% of 2 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc)	5^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> 1 château (by number: 6% of 5 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc) with 30 acres (12 ha) of vineyards (by area: 2% of 5 ^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> in the Médoc)
3^{ème} <i>crus classés</i> 1 château (by number: 7% of 3 ^{ème}	

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY

LOCATION
St.-Estèphe is the most northerly of the four classic communes of the Médoc. It is situated 11 miles (18 kilometers) south of Lesparre, bordering the Gironde.

CLIMATE
As for the Médoc (see p.00).

ASPECT
St.-Estèphe has well-drained, well-sited, softly sloping vineyards. The southeast-facing crest of gravel overlooks Château Lafite-Rothschild in Pauillac and is relatively steep for the Médoc.

SOIL
The topsoil is gravelly and more fertile than in communes farther south, with clay subsoil exposed in parts, consisting of clay beds, stony-clay, and limestone over iron-pan.

VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION
Only the red wines have the right to the appellation in this commune. With increasing emphasis placed on the Merlot grape, which can now account for up to 50 percent of the vines cultivated in some châteaux, reduced use of *vin de presse*, and improved vinification techniques, these wines are becoming far more accessible in less sunny years. During the vinification, all grapes must be destalked, and duration of skin contact averages three weeks. Maturation in cask currently varies between 15 and 24 months.

GRAPE VARIETIES
Primary varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
Secondary varieties: Carmenère, Malbec, Petit Verdot

drainage. Those vineyards on heavier soil with less gravel and more clay tend to produce more rustic wines.

MODERN ST-ESTÈPHE

Most wines from St.-Estèphe have always been well structured, with natural longevity, but they now have more lushness of fruit, which allows the wines to be accessible when relatively young. It was once essential to buy only the greatest vintages and wait 20 years or more before drinking them. The increasing use of the Merlot grape as well as Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc, and a tendency to favor vinification techniques that extract color and fruit in preference to the harsher tannins, provide richer, fruitier, and eminently drinkable wines in most vintages.

ST-ESTÈPHE, see also p63

Of the Haut-Médoc's four best-known communes, St.-Estèphe is the most northerly, although the actual AOC area covers only part of the commune.



THE WINE PRODUCERS OF SAINT-ESTÈPHE

CHÂTEAU ANDRON-BLANQUET

Cru Bourgeois
★●

Under the same ownership as Château Cos Labory, the vineyards of this property are situated above the gravel crest of *cru classé* châteaux that overlook Château Lafite-Rothschild in Pauillac. This wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED An exceptionally well-made wine that consistently rises above its *petit château* status. Fermented and matured in cask, it has good fruit and a distinctive style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 25%

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Château St.-Roch*

Other wine: *Château Blanquet*

CHÂTEAU BEAU-SITE

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★●

This property should not be confused with Château Beau-Site Haut-Vignoble, a lesser St.-Estèphe. This wine is matured in wood for 16 to 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED A stylish, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wine that often has an elegant finish reminiscent of violets.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%,
Merlot 30%

🕒 3–10 years

CHÂTEAU LE BOSCOQ

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★★●

This property has always produced good wine, but quality increased dramatically in the 1980s. It was taken over by Dourthe-Kressman in 1995.

RED Superbly aromatic, almost exotic, full-bodied wine that is elegant and rich with the flavor of summer fruits, and is nicely backed up with new oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 42%,
Merlot 51%, Petit Verdot 7%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *Héritage de Le Boscoq*

CHÂTEAU CALON-SÉGUR

3ème Cru Classé
★★●

From the Gallo-Roman origins of this château grew the community of St.-Estèphe. The first wine estate in the commune, it used to boast "*Premier Cru de St.-Estèphe*" on its label until other producers objected. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Full, fruity, well-structured wine that has a creamy, rich flavor. It is of consistently good quality and improves well in bottle.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 3–20 years

Second wine: *Marquis de Ségur*

CHÂTEAU CAPBERN GASQUETON

Cru Bourgeois
★●

This property is under the same ownership as Château Calon-Ségur. The vineyards are found north and south of the village of St.-Estèphe. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Medium-weight, ripe, and fruity wine of consistent quality; it is mellowed by 24 months in wood.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 15%

🕒 4–12 years

CHÂTEAU CHAMBERT-MARBUZET

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★★●

Technically faultless, hand-harvested wine produced in limited quantities from the sister château of Haut-Marbuzet. Many would rate it easily equivalent to a *cru classé*. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Aromatically attractive, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wine. It is rich, ripe, and fruity, with plenty of caramel-oak and sufficient tannin to age well.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%,
Merlot 30%

🕒 3–10 years

Second wine: *Château Grand-Village Capbern*

CHÂTEAU COS D'ESTOURNEL

2ème Cru Classé
★★★●

This was one of the very first superseconds to emerge and this was the achievement of one man, Bruno Prats, although he would claim it to be teamwork. In 1998 Prats was forced by French tax laws to sell out to Groupe Taillan, who in 2001 sold it on to Michel Reybier, a Geneva-based food manufacturer. Cos d'Estournel has no château as such, merely a bizarre façade to the winery with huge, elaborately carved oak doors that once adorned the palace of the Sultan of Zanzibar. Bruno Prats' son Jean-Guillaume manages the property for Reybier, and the wine is made in the same

careful way that his father introduced. This involves some of the wine being fermented in stainless steel, but all of it is matured in cask for 18 to 24 months, with 100 percent new oak for big years, and up to 70 percent for lighter vintages.

RED A rich, flavorful, and attractive wine of full body, great class, and distinction; without doubt the finest wine in St.-Estèphe. It is uniquely generous for the appellation and capable of amazing longevity, even in the poorest years. This is a complex wine with silky fruit and great finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 40%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Les Pagodes de Cos*

CHÂTEAU COS LABORY

5ème Cru Classé
★

Until the late 19th century, this property formed part of Château Cos d'Estournel. During the 1920s, it was purchased by distant cousins of Madame Audoy, the current owner. The wine is matured in wood for 15 to 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These wines used to be merely light and elegant with a certain degree of finesse, even when at their best. However, recent vintages have displayed a very welcome change to a distinctly fuller, fruitier, and fatter style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Château Charme Labory*

CHÂTEAU LE CROCK

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel
★★●

This property is under the same ownership as Château Léoville-Poyferré of St.-Julien, and was promoted to *exceptionnel* status in the 2003 reclassification. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 20 percent new oak.

RED These dark-colored, substantial wines have surged in quality since 1995 under the personal guidance of Michel Rolland.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 58%,
Merlot 24%, Cabernet Franc 12%, Petit Verdot 6%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Château Croix Saint-Estèphe*

Other wine: *Château Fatin*

CHÂTEAU DOMEYNE

Cru Bourgeois
★●

This property was not classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, nor was it listed by the Syndicat in 1978, but it certainly should have been. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 40 percent new oak.

RED These are typically deep-colored, rich-flavored wines that have an excellent marriage of fruit and oak. They are smooth and well-rounded wines that can be drunk while fairly young.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 3–8 years

CHÂTEAU FAGET

★●

Château Faget was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but was not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list. However, this *coopérative*-produced wine is now superior to some that were included. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third new oak.

RED This is a well-made wine that gives a solid mouthful of flavor, and ages well.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 6–10 years

CHÂTEAU HAUT-MARBUZET

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel
★★●

This is one of several properties belonging to Henri Duboscq. These wines receive 18 months in 100 percent new oak, which is extremely rare even for *cru classé* châteaux.

RED These full-bodied, deep-colored wines are packed with juicy fruit, backed up by supple tannin. They are marked by a generous buttered-toast and creamy-vanilla character.

🍷 Merlot 50%, Cabernet Sauvignon 40%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 4–12 years

Second wine: *Tour de Marbuzet*

CHÂTEAU LA HAYE

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★●

New equipment, 25 percent new oak casks every year, and a fair proportion of old vines combine to produce some exciting vintages at this property.

RED Always limpid, this medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wine is rich in color and flavour, well balanced, and lengthy, with vanilla-oak evident on the finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%,
Merlot 42%, Petit Verdot 8%

🕒 5–8 years

Second wine: *Fief de la Haye*

CHÂTEAU LAFON-ROCHET

4ème Cru Classé

★🍷

When Guy Tesseron purchased this vineyard, which is situated on the borders of Pauillac, in 1959, he embarked on a project to increase the proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes used in the wine. However, this proved to be a mistake for Lafon-Rochet's *terroir* and has been rectified in recent years. The wine produced here is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 50 percent new oak.

RED More fruit and finesse from the mid-1990s onward.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%,
Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: ✓ *Numero 2*

CHÂTEAU LAVILLOTTE

★🍷

This star-performing *petit château* gives good value. This wine is matured in wood for 16 months, with up to 40 percent new oak.

RED These are dark-colored wines with a deep and distinctive bouquet. Smoky, full-bodied, intense, and complex.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 72%,
Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *Château Aillan*

CHÂTEAU DE MARBUZET

Cru Bourgeois

★

Under the same ownership as Cos d'Estournel, Marbuzet used to include the wines rejected from the *grand vin* of that "super-second." However, all the wine from this château has been produced exclusively from its own 42-acre (17-hectare) vineyard since 1994. The wine is matured in wood for 12 to 14 months in used barrels.

RED These elegant, medium-bodied, and sometimes full-bodied, wines are well balanced and have good fruit and a supple finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%,
Merlot 60%

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Château Charme Labory*

LE MARQUIS DE SAINT-ESTÈPHE

★🍷

This wine is produced by the conscientious Cave Coopérative Marquis de Saint-Estèphe, who mature it in wood for 12 months, with a whopping 70 percent new oak.

RED A consistently well-made,

good-value, usually medium-bodied (although sometimes full-bodied) wine, with increasingly more noticeable oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%,
Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 3%, Malbec 3%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 3–6 years

CHÂTEAU MEYNEY

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★🍷

This château is consistent in managing to produce fine wines in virtually every vintage.

RED These wines used to be big, beefy, chunky, and chewy, and required at least 10 years in bottle. They have changed, and for the better, acquiring a silky-textured finesse and aging gracefully without so many years in bottle.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 67%,
Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 5–25 years

Second wine: *Prieuré de Meyney*

CHÂTEAU MONTROSE

2ème Cru Classé

★🍷

This "youngest" of the *cru classé* vineyards, this property grew out of an inconsequential plot of vines retained by a Mr. Dumoulin, the former owner of Calon-Ségur, when he sold that château in 1824. These vines were on a 12–15 acre (5–6 hectare) plot of land called Escargeon, which for some reason he changed to Montrose the very next year. There are rumors about the origin of this new name, but no one really knows the true story.

What we do know, however, is that by 1855, Montrose had grown to 237 acres (96 hectares), as Dumoulin bought and exchanged parcels of land from and with his neighbors. Despite the newfound importance of Montrose, Calon-Ségur was still considered by locals to be its superior, thus there was much surprise when Montrose was classified as a *deuxième cru classé*, above *troisième cru* Calon-Ségur. The wines are matured in wood for 19 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED The inhibiting factor at Montrose had always been its "stemmy" tannins. A vintage of exceptional richness and fatness was required to overcome the aggressive character produced by these tannins. The excellent 1994 gave me hope that this château has started to harvest the grapes when they are tannin-ripe (see p66) and was applying more specific maceration techniques. Happily, my hopes were not dashed, and Montrose's performance since the mid-1990s has clearly demonstrated that this wine is a true *deuxième cru classé*.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%,
Merlot 25%,

Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: ✓ *La Dame de Montrose*

CHÂTEAU LES ORMES DE PEZ

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel

★★🍷



Owner Jean-Michel Cazes of Château Lynch-Bages in Pauillac installed new stainless-steel vats in 1981 and has raised the quality of these wines from good to sensational. Matured in wood for at least 12 to 15 months, with 50 percent new oak, this relatively cheap wine is easily equivalent to a good *cru classé*.

RED Dark and fruity, yet capable of aging with a herbal complexity.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%,
Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 3–15 years

CHÂTEAU DE PEZ

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel

★★🍷

This property was purchased by Louis Roederer of Champagne in 1995. The wines are fermented in wooden vats, then matured in small casks for 18 months, with 40 percent new oak. These wines are easily the equivalent of *cru classé* quality.

RED Consistently one of the best *bourgeois* growths in the entire Médoc. A medium-bodied wine, it has a rich fruit flavor and good tannic structure, and can mature into a sublime, cedary wine.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%,
Merlot 44%, Cabernet Franc 8%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 6–20 years

CHÂTEAU PHÉLAN-SÉGUR

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel

★★🍷

This château was purchased in 1984 by its present owners, the Gardinier family, one year after selling Champagnes Pommery and Lanson. In retrospect, it is quite clear to see that there have been two steps up in quality; the first in 1988 and the second in 1999, with obvious consolidation achieved during the

intervening decade, with serious investment going into the infrastructure of vineyard and winery. Now one of the best-value wines in the Médoc, this wine is matured in wood for 16 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Increasingly stylish wines of good color and a certain plumpness of fruit, without loss of true St.-Estèphe structure. Unlike most other success stories in the commune, this has not been achieved by increasing Merlot; the reverse, in fact.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Franck Phélan*

Other wine: *Croix Bonis*

CHÂTEAU POMYS

Cru Bourgeois

★🍷

This property was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but was not included in the 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 15 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Substantial wines with good fruit and tannin balance.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%,
Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 15%

🕒 3–10 years

Other wine: *Château Saint-Louis*

CHÂTEAU TOUR DE PEZ

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel

★★🍷

The huge investments made since this château changed hands in 1989 paid off in 2003 when it became one of only nine *crus bourgeois exceptionnels*. This wine is matured in wood for 16 to 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Consistently elegant, medium-bodied wine with good, plump, fleshy fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%,
Cabernet Franc 10%, Merlot 40%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 3–7 years

Second wine: *T de Tour de Pez*

Other wines: *Château les Hauts de Pez, Château L'Hereteyre Château Haut-Coutelin*

CHÂTEAU TRONQUOY-LALANDE

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★🍷

Owned by Arlette Castéja-Texier with active input from the Dourthe-Kressman winemaking team.

RED This wine can be dark and tannic, but as from the 1996 vintage it has displayed more fruit and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%,
Merlot 45%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 3–7 years

PAUILLAC

If any Bordeaux appellation can be described as “big, black, and beautiful,” it is Pauillac—the commune most famous for the three premiers crus of Latour, Lafite, and Mouton. The wine is allowed to evolve very slowly, achieving an astonishing degree of finesse for its weight.

PAUILLAC IS, HOWEVER, an appellation of quite surprising contrasts. Although it boasts three-quarters of the Médoc’s premiers crus, it also contains two-thirds of the region’s *cinquièmes crus*. Very little lies between these two extremes, and *crus bourgeois* are, therefore, the exception rather than the rule. Cabernet Sauvignon is at its most majestic in Pauillac, and while the much-vaunted blackcurrant character of this grape may be elusive in many clarets, it is certainly very much in evidence in Pauillac. In this wine, the cassis character is always beautifully balanced by a tannic structure.

PAUILLAC CRU CLASSÉ STATISTICS

Crus classés in AOC Pauillac

18 châteaux (by number: 30% of *crus classés* in the Médoc) with 2,080 acres (842 ha) of vineyards (by area: 30% of *crus classés* in the Médoc and 70% of this AOC)

1er crus classés

3 châteaux (by number: 75% of *1er crus classés* in the Médoc) with 568 acres (230 ha) of vineyards (by area: 75% of *1er crus classés* in the Médoc)

2ème crus classés

2 châteaux (by number: 14% of *2ème crus classés* in the Médoc) with 222 acres (90 ha) of vineyards (by area: 11% of *2ème crus classés* in the Médoc)

3ème crus classés

None

4ème crus classés

1 château (by number: 10% of *4ème crus classés* in the Médoc) with 111 acres (45 ha) of vineyards (by area: 10% of *4ème crus classés* in the Médoc)

5ème crus classés

12 châteaux (by number: 67% of *5ème crus classés* in the Médoc) with 1,179 acres (477 ha) of vineyards (by area: 63% of *5ème crus classés* in the Médoc)

Note: Only Margaux has more *cru classé* châteaux than Pauillac, and no communal AOC has a greater concentration of *cru classé* vines.



CHÂTEAU LATOUR

Due to radical changes in vinification techniques introduced in the 1960s, Château Latour became the most consistent of Bordeaux’s great premiers crus classés. It produces the archetypal Pauillac wine, which is full of finesse.

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY

LOCATION
 Pauillac is sandwiched between St.-Estèphe to the north and St.-Julien to the south.

CLIMATE
 As for the Médoc (see p.00)

ASPECT
 Pauillac consists of two large, low-lying plateaux, one to the northwest of the town of Pauillac, the other to the southwest. Exposure is excellent, and both drain down gentle slopes, eastward to the Gironde, westward to the forest, or north and south to canals and streams.

SOIL
 Pauillac's two plateaux are massive gravel beds, reaching a greater depth than any found elsewhere in the Médoc. The water

drains away before the iron-pan subsoil is reached. St.-Sauveur consists of shallow sand over a stony subsoil to the west, and gravel over iron-pan (or more gravel) in the center and south.

VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION
 Only red wines have the right to the Pauillac appellation. Some *vin de presse* is traditionally used by most châteaux. Skin contact duration averages between 3 and 4 weeks, and maturation in cask currently varies between 18 and 24 months.

GRAPE VARIETIES
Primary varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
Secondary varieties: Carmenère, Petit Verdot, Malbec



CAVEAU PRIVÉ, CHÂTEAU PICHON-LONGUEVILLE-COMTESSE-DE-LALANDE
 One wall of the château's private cellars encapsulates a winemaking history, particularly of Bordeaux, stretching back nearly 200 years.

PAUILLAC PROFILE

Appellation area
 Covers parts of the commune of Pauillac, plus 84 acres (34 ha) in St.-Sauveur, 40 acres (16 ha) in St.-Julien, 12.4 acres (5 ha) in St.-Estèphe, and 2.5 acres (1 ha) in Cissac

Size of commune
 6,274 acres (2,539 ha)

AOC area under vine
 2,988 acres (1,209 ha), 48% of commune

Surface area of crus classés
 2,080 acres (842 ha), 3% of commune, 70% of AOC

PAUILLAC, see also p63

Blessed with three premiers crus, Lafite-Rothschild and Mouton-Rothschild in the north, and Latour to the south, Pauillac is sandwiched between St.-Estèphe and St.-Julien.



PAUILLAC
 The town of Pauillac, the largest of the Médoc, sits on the west bank of the Gironde. Despite its size and position, it retains a quiet, rural character.

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF PAUILLAC

CHÂTEAU D'ARMAILHAC

5ème Cru Classé

★★



Baron Philippe de Rothschild purchased Château Mouton d'Armailhac in 1933. In 1956 he renamed it Château Mouton Baron-Philippe. In 1975 it was changed to Mouton-Baronne-Philippe in honor of the baron's late wife. In 1991 it reverted to d'Armailhac, but without the Mouton tag because the baron believed the wine to be in danger of assuming second wine status due to the overwhelming prestige of Mouton-Rothschild. This property borders that of Mouton, and one of Baron Philippe's reasons for acquiring it was to provide an easier, more impressive access to the famous *premier cru*. The wines, which are matured in wood for 16 months, with 25 percent new oak, are produced with the same care and consideration. Despite this attention, I have criticized the "austere, light, and attenuated style" of Château d'Armailhac in the past, which "proves that even money cannot buy *terroir*," but within limits improvements can always be made, and by tweaking harvesting and vinification techniques, owners Baron Philippe de Rothschild S.A. produced the greatest wine this property has ever known in 2000. That was an extraordinary vintage, but the style shift and giant stride in quality continued in 2001, 2002, and 2003.

RED Since 2000, much riper tannins, and a more supple structure has given this wine more velvety fruit than previous vintages had established. The start of a new era.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 52%, Merlot 26%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU BATAILLEY

5ème Cru Classé

★★★

This is a château that responds well to sunny years and produces underrated and undervalued wine.



The 1985 was possibly the best bargain in Bordeaux, and the 1986 is probably even better. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 60 percent new oak.

RED This wine has sometimes been rustic and too assertive in the past, but now shows its class with fine, succulent fruit supported by a ripe tannic structure and a complex creamy-oak aftertaste.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 3%, Petit Verdot 2%

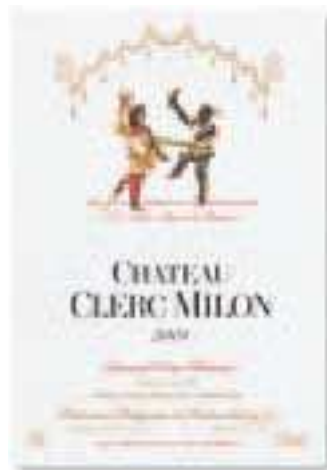
🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: *Château Haut-Bages Monpelou*

CHÂTEAU CLERC MILON

5ème Cru Classé

★



This property was purchased by Baron Philippe de Rothschild in 1970. After more than a decade of investment and quite a few disappointing vintages along the way, it came good in 1981, achieved sensational quality in 1982, and now consistently performs well above its classification. This wine, which is matured in wood for 18 months with one-third new oak, is one worth watching.

RED A deep-colored, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wine with cassis-cum-spicy-oak aromas and rich berry flavors well balanced by ripe acidity.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 10–20 years

CHÂTEAU COLOMBIER-MONPELOU

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★

In the third edition of *Bordeaux and its Wines*, published in 1874, this property was described as a *quatrième cru*. Of course, it was never classified as such, but its recent *cru bourgeois supérieur* achievement is about right.

This wine is matured in wood for 16 months, with 40 percent new oak.

RED Rich, spicy, fruit with fine Cabernet characteristics, backed up by good, ripe tannic structure and vanilla-oaky undertones.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–12 years

Other wines: *Château Grand Canyon*, *Château Pey la Rose*, *Château Coubersant*, *Château de Puy la Rose*

CHÂTEAU CORDEILLAN-BAGES

★



Jean-Michel Cazes of Château Lynch-Bages was the driving force behind the group of growers from the Médoc who renovated Château de Cordeillan, turning it into an extensive complex comprising a hotel, restaurant, and wine school. With only a very small production from just five acres of vineyard this hand-harvested wine that is produced by the Lynch-Bages winemaking team, is matured in wood for up to 15 months, with a massive 100 percent new oak.

RED As dark and as dense as might be expected from a wine produced with the Lynch-Bages influence, with smoky oak, tobacco plant, and violet aromas weaving their way through the chocolaty Cabernet fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 3–8 years

CHÂTEAU CROIZET-BAGES

5ème Cru Classé

★★

Under the same ownership as Château Rauzan-Gassies of Margaux, and situated on the Bages plateau, Croizet-Bages is a classic example of a "château with no château." Its wine is matured in wood for 18 months and although not unattractive, it lacks class and rarely excites. Improvements started slowly in the mid-1990s, then stepped up a gear at the turn of the millennium.

RED Not one of the most deeply colored Pauillacs, this medium-bodied wine has always been easy-drinking, but has been more stylish since 1999, gaining both in gravitas and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 37%, Cabernet Franc 30%, Merlot 30%, Malbec and Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Enclos de Moncabon*

CHÂTEAU DUHART- MILON-ROTHSCHILD

4ème Cru Classé

★★★



Another "château with no château," Duhart-Milon was purchased by the Lafite branch of the Rothschild family in 1962. Its wines prior to this date were almost entirely Petit Verdot, and so only in abnormally hot years did it excel with this late-ripening grape, which is traditionally cultivated for its acidity. Interestingly, in the near-tropical heat of 1947, Duhart-Milon managed to produce a wine that many considered to be the best of the vintage. The Rothschilds expanded these vineyards bordering Lafite and replanted them with the correct combination of varieties to suit the *terroir*. In 1994 Charles Chevalier arrived, and since 1996 he has moved these wines up a gear. The wine is matured for at least 18 months in wood, with 50 percent new oak.

RED These wines are elegantly perfumed, deliciously rich in

creamy-oaky fruit, and have exceptional balance and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 80%, Merlot 20%

🕒 8–16 years

Second wine: *Moulin de Dubart*

CHÂTEAU LA FLEUR-MILON

Cru Bourgeois

A "château with no château," La Fleur-Milon produces a wine accumulated from various parcels of vines bordering such prestigious properties as Lafite, Mouton, and Duhart-Milon. This wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED A consistently firm, solid, and decent kind of wine, which somehow fails to live up to the favored origins of its vines.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Merlot 35%

🕒 4–10 years

Other wines: *Château Chanteclerc-Milon, Château Buisson-Milon*

CHÂTEAU FONBADET

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur
★●

This growth was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but was not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were, and achieved due recognition in the 2003 reclassification. Many of the vines are in excess of 80 years old, with an average age of 50 years for the entire 50-acre (20-hectare) vineyard. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 30 percent new oak. Great-value Pauillac.

RED This typical Pauillac has a deep, almost opaque color, an intense cassis, cigar-box, and cedarwood bouquet, a concentrated spicy, fruit flavor with creamy-oak undertones, and a long finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Malbec and Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 6–15 years

Other wines: *Château Haut-Pauillac, Château Padarnac, Château Montgrand-Milon, Château Tour du Roc-Milon, Pauillac*

CHÂTEAU GRAND-PUY-DUCASSE

5ème Cru Classé
★★●

Under the same owners as Château Rayne-Vigneau in Sauternes, this property produces an undervalued wine that comes from various plots scattered across half the commune. One of the best value, improving *cru classé* wines available, this wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with up to 40 percent

new oak.

RED Well-balanced, relatively early-drinking, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wine of classic Pauillac cassis character and more suppleness than is usual for this commune.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 61%, Merlot 39%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Prélude à Grand-Puy Ducasse*

Other wine: *Château Artigues-Arnaud*

CHÂTEAU GRAND-PUY-LACOSTE

5ème Cru Classé
★★●



Under the same ownership as Château Ducru-Beaucaillou, Grand-Puy-Lacoste is going from strength to strength under the skillful guidance of François-Xavier Borie. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Deep-colored with complex cassis, cigar-box spice, and vanilla bouquet, with lots of fruit, length, and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 25%

🕒 10–20 years

Second wine: *Lacoste-Borie*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-BAGES-LIBÉRAL

5ème Cru Classé
★

Under the same ownership as the bourgeois growth of Château Chasse-Spleen in Moulis and the excellent unclassified Château la Gurgue in Margaux, this dynamic property is currently producing sensational wines. They are matured for 16 months in wood, with up to 40 percent new oak.

RED Dark, full-bodied wines with masses of concentrated spicy-cassis fruit, great tannic structure, and ripe, vanilla oak. In a word—complete.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 80%, Merlot 17%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Chapelle de Bages*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-BATAILLEY

5ème Cru Classé
★●



This property is under the same ownership as châteaux Grand-Puy-Lacoste and, in St-Julien, Ducru-Beaucaillou. When the Borie family purchased Château Batailley in 1942, this part of the vineyard was given to one son, while the bulk of the property, including the château itself, was given to the other. The wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Haut-Batailley is well-colored and medium-bodied and shows more elegance and finesse than Batailley, although it can lack the latter's fullness of fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Château La Tour l'Aspic*

Other wine: *Château La Couronne*

CHÂTEAU LAFITE-ROTHSCHILD

1er Cru Classé
★★★



Since 1994 this famous château, the vineyard of which includes a small plot in St-Estèphe, has been run along traditional lines and with fastidious care by Charles Chevalier for Baron Eric of the French branch of the Rothschilds. The St-Estèphe portion of the Lafite vineyard is allowed to bear the Pauillac appellation, having been part of the Lafite-Rothschild estate for several hundred years. A change of style occurred in the mid-1970s, when the decision was made to give the wines less time in cask, but under Chevalier they have gone into hyperdrive and are often the very best of the *premiers crus*. Well into

the first decade of the new millennium, Lafite is arguably the best performing of all *premiers crus*. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Not the biggest of the *premiers crus*, but Lafite is nevertheless textbook stuff: a rich delicacy of spicy fruit flavors, continuously unfolding, supported by an array of creamy-oak and ripe tannins; a wine with incomparable finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 3%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 25–50 years

Second wine: *Carruades de Lafite*

Other wine: *Moulin des Carruades*

CHÂTEAU LATOUR

1er Cru Classé
★★★

The Pearson Group (which now owns the publisher of this book) was accused by the French of turning a Bordeaux *premier cru* into a dairy when temperature-controlled, stainless-steel vats were installed in 1964. These French critics conveniently ignored the fact that Château Haut-Brion had done the same three years earlier. Pearson actually owned just over half of Latour at the time and Harveys of Bristol owned a quarter. Together they paid less than three million dollars for almost 80 percent of this *premier cru*. It was a bargain, for although they invested heavily in renovating the vineyards and winery, Allied-Lyons (owners of Harvey's) paid almost \$110 million in 1989 for Pearson's share, valuing the entire property at \$180 million. Allied-Lyons lost out, however, when in 1993 they needed to liquidate various shareholdings to finance takeovers and sold Latour to François Pinault, the French industrialist, for \$130 million. Pinault appointed Frédéric Engerer, a graduate of one of France's top business schools, as the new young president of Latour. He has revolutionized working practices in both the vineyard and winery and with Frédéric Ardouin, his new, even younger winemaker at his side, the change in gear at Latour promised to be as dramatic as it was at Margaux. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Despite its close proximity to the neighboring commune of St-Julien, Latour is the archetypal Pauillac. Its ink-black color accurately reflects the immense structure and hugely concentrated flavor of this wine. If Lafite is the ultimate example of finesse, then Latour is the ideal illustration of how massive a wine can be while still retaining great finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 15–60 years

Second wine: ✓ *Les Forts de Latour*

Other wine: *Pauillac de Latour*

CHÂTEAU
LYNCH-BAGES
5ème Cru Classé
★★★



This château is sited on the edge of the Bages plateau, a little way out of Pauillac. It is on the southern fringe of the small town of Bages. Jean-Michel Cazes produces wines that some people describe as “poor man’s Latour (or Mouton).” Well, that cannot be such a bad thing, but if I were rich, I would drink as many *cinquièmes crus* from this château as *premiers crus* from elsewhere. No expense was spared in building the new vinification and storage facilities at this château, and since 1980 the successes in off-vintages have been extraordinary, making it more consistent than some *deuxièmes crus*. This hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 12 to 15 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED An intensely deep purple-colored wine of seductive character that is packed with fruit and has obvious class. It has a degree of complexity on the nose, a rich, plummy flavor, supple tannin structure, and a spicy, blackcurrant and vanilla aftertaste.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 15%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 8–30 years

Second wine: ✓ *Château Haut-Bages-Avérous*

Other wine: *Blanc de Lynch-Bages* (rare “*Médoc*” white wine)

CHÂTEAU
LYNCH-MOUSSAS
5ème Cru Classé
★

Owned by Emile Costéja of Borie-Manoux, this property has been renovated and the wines could well improve. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 60 percent new oak.

RED After a false start in the mid-1980s, when an exceptionally stylish 1985 turned out to be exactly that (an exception), this château continued to produce light, rather insubstantial wines of no specific character or quality, but with better selection, riper fruit, less time in cask, and more than twice the

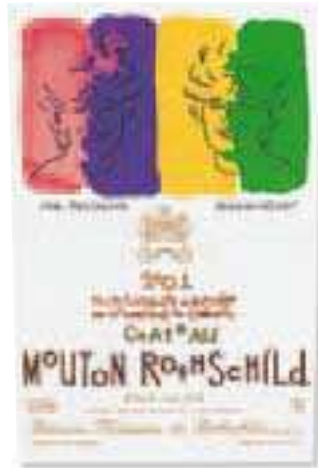
amount of new oak Lynch-Moussas used to receive, it has made significantly better wines since the mid-1990s.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 25%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Château Haut-Madrac*

CHÂTEAU MOUTON-ROTHSCHILD
1er Cru Classé
★★★★



The famous case of the only wine ever to be officially reclassified since 1855, Baron Philippe de Rothschild’s plight ended with Mouton’s status being justly raised to *premier cru* in 1973. Through promotion of Mouton’s unique character, he was probably responsible for elevating the Cabernet Sauvignon grape to its present high profile. Part of his campaign to keep this château in the headlines was the introduction of a specially commissioned painting for the label of each new vintage. The hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for up to 22 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED It is difficult to describe this wine without using the same descriptive terms as those used for Latour, but perhaps the color of Mouton reminds one more of damsons and the underlying character is more herbal, sometimes even minty. And although it ages just as well as Latour, it becomes accessible slightly earlier.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 77%, Merlot 11%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 12–60 years

Second wine: *Le Petit Mouton de Mouton-Rothschild*

Other wines: *Aile d’Argent* (another rare “*Médoc*” white)

CHÂTEAU PEDESCLAUX
5ème Cru Classé

Little-seen *cru classé* produced from two very well-situated plots of vines, one bordering Lynch-Bages, the other between Mouton-

Rothschild and Pontet-Canet. Most of its exported production goes to Belgium. It is matured in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak. Wine rejected for the *grand vin* is blended into the wine of Château Belle Rose, a *cru bourgeois* under the same ownership.

RED Full, firm, traditional style of Pauillac that is slow-maturing and long-lasting.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 15–40 years

Second wine: *Château Haut-Pardanac*

CHÂTEAU PICHON-LONGUEVILLE BARON
PICHON-LONGUEVILLE
2ème Cru Classé
★★★

The smaller of the two Pichon vineyards and until very recently the less inspiring, although many experts reckoned the *terroir* of Pichon-Baron to be intrinsically superior to that of its neighbor, the star-performing Pichon-Comtesse. Indeed, 10 years ago, I even suggested that Madame de Lencquesaing should buy this château and cast her seemingly irresistible spell on what would inevitably be the still greater *terroir* of the two properties combined. Whether she had such an ambition, or even the cash to consider it, AXA-Millesimes got there first, and has been remarkably successful at conjuring the most incredible quality from Pichon-Baron.

Essentially by reducing Cabernet Sauvignon in favor of Merlot and almost tripling the amount of new oak used, AXA has ensured that Pichon-Baron now lives up to its potential. The wine is matured in wood for 15 to 18 months, with 80 percent new oak.

RED Intensely colored, full-bodied wine with concentrated spicy-cassis fruit backed up by supple tannins, which are rich and heady with smoky-creamy oak and complexity. True super-second quality.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 4%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: ✓ *Les Tourelles de Longueville*

CHÂTEAU PICHON-LONGUEVILLE
COMTESSE-DE-LALANDE
2ème Cru Classé
★★★

There is a limit to the quality of any wine and this is determined by the potential quality of its grapes. But at Pichon-Comtesse (as it is known), the formidable Madame de Lencquesaing demands the maximum from her *terroir*—and consistently gets it. The wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with 50 percent new oak.



RED This temptress is the Château Margaux of Pauillac. It is silky-textured, beautifully balanced, and seductive. A wine of great finesse, even in humble vintages.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 12%, Petit Verdot 8%

🕒 10–30 years

Second wine: ✓ *Réserve de la Comtesse*

Other wines: *Les Gartieux*

CHÂTEAU
PONTET-CANET
5ème Cru Classé
★★

The reputation of this château has suffered in recent decades, but many thought the situation would be reversed when Guy Tesseron purchased the property in 1975. The 1985 vintage gave a glimmer of hope, but it was not until 1995 that the breakthrough occurred, and the 1998 vintage is nothing less than outstanding. Definitely one to watch, this hand-harvested wine is matured in wood for 15 to 20 months, with 60 percent new oak.

RED Since the mid-1990s, these wines have been fruity and graceful with a rich, smooth, oaky touch.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 68%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Malbec 2%

🕒 6–12 years

Other wine: *Les Hauts de Pontet*

CHÂTEAU LA
TOUR-PIBRAN
★

This growth was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but was not in the Syndicat’s 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were.

RED This wine has bags of blackcurrant fruit, yet retains the characteristic Pauillac structure and firm finish. The superb 1985 is not unlike a “mini-Mouton.”

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 15%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 6–16 years

SAINT-JULIEN

The commune's fame is disproportionate to its size, since it is smaller than any of the other three classic Médoc appellations—St.-Estèphe, Pauillac, or Margaux.

ST.-JULIEN HAS NO *PREMIERS CRUS*, nor *cinquièmes crus*, although some châteaux sometimes produce wines that are undeniably of *premier cru* quality. The concentration of its 11 *crus classés* in the middle of the classification is St.-Julien's real strength, enabling this commune justly to claim that it is the most consistent of the Médoc appellations; these quintessential clarets have a vivid color, elegant fruit, superb balance, and great finesse.

It is perhaps surprising that wines from as far as 40 acres (16 hectares) inside St.-Julien's borders may be classified as AOC Pauillac, particularly in view of the perceived difference in style between these appellations. This illustrates the "gray area" that exists when communal boundaries overlap the historical borders of great wine estates, and highlights the existence and importance of blending, even in a region reputed for its single-vineyard wines. We should not be too pedantic about communal differences of style: if these borders of the Médoc followed local history, Château Latour, the most famous château of Pauillac, would today be in St.-Julien—and that makes me wonder how the wines of this commune might be described under such circumstances?

ST.-JULIEN PROFILE

Appellation area Covers part of the commune of St.-Julien only	Surface area of <i>crus classés</i> 1,552 acres (628 ha), 40% of commune, 68 of AOC
Size of commune 3,840 acres (1,554 ha)	Special comments Some 40 acres (16 ha) of St.-Julien are classified as AOC Pauillac
AOC area under vine 2,246 acres (909 ha), 59% of commune	

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY

LOCATION
St.-Julien lies in the center of the Haut-Médoc, 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) south of Pauillac.

CLIMATE
As for the Médoc (see p70).

ASPECT
The gravel crest of St.-Julien slopes almost imperceptibly eastward toward the village and drains into the Gironde.

SOIL
Fine, gravel topsoil of good-sized pebbles in vineyards within sight of the Gironde. Farther inland, the particle size decreases and the soil begins to mix with sandy loess.

The subsoil consists of iron-pan, marl, and gravel.

VITICULTURE & VINIFICATION

Only red wines have the right to the appellation. All grapes must be destalked. Some *vin de presse* may be used according to the needs of the vintage. Skin contact duration averages 2 to 3 weeks and most châteaux allow 18 to 22 months' maturation in cask.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Primary varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
Secondary varieties: Carmenère, Malbec, Petit Verdot

ST.-JULIEN CRU CLASSÉ STATISTICS

***Crus classés* in AOC St.-Julien**
11 châteaux (by number: 18% of *crus classés* in the Médoc) with 1,552 acres (628 ha) of vineyards (by area: 22% of *crus classés* in the Médoc and 68% of this AOC)

1er crus classés

None

2ème crus classés

5 châteaux (by number: 36% of *2ème crus classés* in the Médoc) with 786 acres (318 ha) of vineyards (by area: 40% of *2ème crus classés* in the Médoc)

3ème crus classés

2 châteaux (by number: 14% of *3ème crus classés* in the Médoc) with 170 acres (69 ha) of vineyards (by area: 16% of *3ème crus classés* in the Médoc)

4ème crus classés

4 châteaux (by number: 40% of *4ème crus classés* in the Médoc) with 596 acres (241 ha) of vineyards (by area: 51% of *4ème crus classés* in the Médoc)

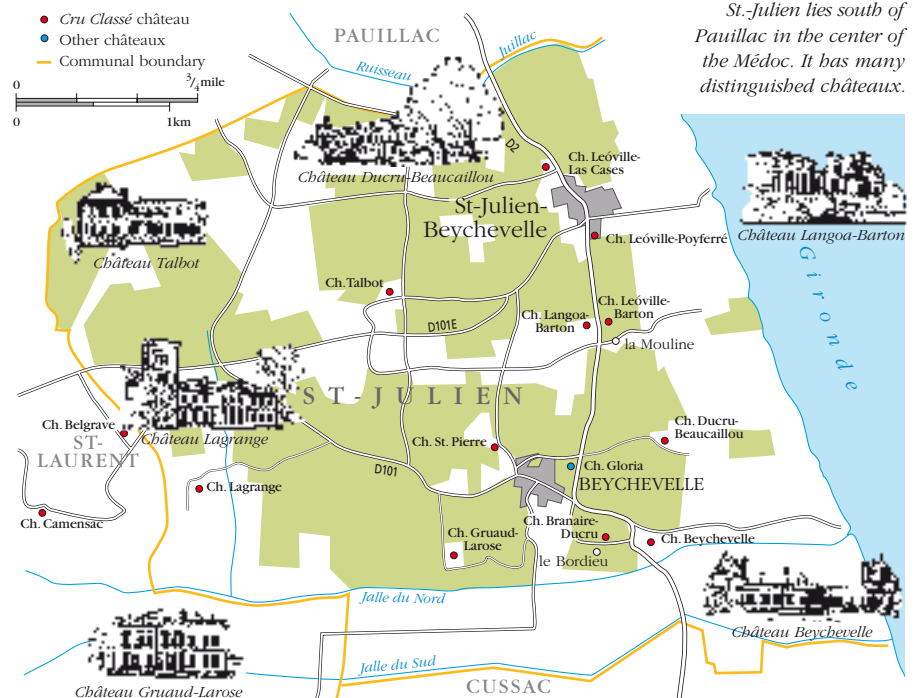
5ème crus classés

None



ST.-JULIEN-BEYCHEVELLE

The Médoc's most consistent appellation has two small villages as its major centers, St.-Julien-Beychevelle itself and, to the south, Beychevelle.



THE WINE PRODUCERS OF SAINT-JULIEN

CHÂTEAU BEYCHEVELLE

4ème Cru Classé
★★

The immaculate and colorful gardens of this château never fail to catch the breath of passers-by. Beychevelle also boasts one of the most famous legends of Bordeaux: its name is said to be a corruption of "basse-voile," the command to "lower sail." This arose because the Duc d'Épernon, a former owner who was also an admiral of France, apparently required the ships that passed through the Gironde to lower their sails in respect. His wife would then wave her kerchief in reply. This story, however, is not true. Épernon actually held the title of Baron de Beychevelle prior to being made the Amiral de Valette, and did not actually live at Beychevelle. I prefer the story of the sailors who lowered their pants and revealed their sterns, which shocked the duchess but made her children laugh. The wines are matured in wood for 20 months with 40 percent new oak.

RED Medium- to full-bodied wines of good color, ripe fruit, and an elegant oak and tannin structure. They can be quite fat in big years.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 59%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 8%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 12–20 years

Second wine:  Réserve de l'Amiral

Other wine: *Les Brulières de Beychevelle*

CHÂTEAU BRANAIRE-DUCRU

4ème Cru Classé
★🍷

The vineyards of this château are situated farther inland than those of Beychevelle and Ducru-Beaucaillou and its soil contains more clay and iron-pan than theirs, so the wine here is fuller and can be assertive, although never austere. It is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 50 percent new oak, and is remarkably consistent.

RED This is a quite full-bodied wine, which is richly flavored and can show a certain chocolate character in big years. It has a distinctive bouquet that sets it apart from other St.-Juliens.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 12–25 years

Second wine: *Duluc*

CHÂTEAU LA BRIDANE

Cru Bourgeois

The owners of this property have maintained a vineyard here since the 14th century.

RED Attractive, fruity, medium-

bodied wine that is easy to drink.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 45%

🕒 3–6 years

CHÂTEAU DUCRU- BEUCAILLOU

2ème Cru Classé
★★★



One of the super-second, the quality of this classic St.-Julien château, the flagship property of the Borie empire, is both legendary and inimitable. In both good years and bad it remains remarkably consistent and, although relatively expensive, the price fetched falls short of those demanded by *premiers crus*, making it a relative bargain. The wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED This wine has a fine, deep color that can belie its deft elegance of style. There is richness of fruit, complex spiciness of oak, great finesse, and exquisite balance.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 15–30 years

Second wine: *La Croix*

CHÂTEAU DU GLANA

Cru Bourgeois
★🍷

This property is under the same ownership as Château Plantey in Pauillac and Château la Commanderie in St.-Estèphe.

RED Du Glana is normally an unpretentious and medium-weight wine, but it excels in really hot years, when it can be deliciously ripe and juicy.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 68%, Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 5%, Cabernet Franc 2%

🕒 3–6 years

CHÂTEAU GLORIA

★

Gloria excites opposite passions in wine drinkers: some consider it the equal of several *cru classé* wines—even superior in some cases—while others believe it earns an exaggerated price based on the reputation of merely a handful of vintages. Certainly the owners saw nothing to be gained by entering

this wine for consideration in the 2003 reclassification, although it should have easily made *cru bourgeois supérieur* status had they done so. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 40 percent new oak.

RED A deep plum-colored, full-bodied wine with masses of fruit and a rich, exuberant character.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 12–30 years

Second wine: *Peymartin*

Other wine: *Haut-Beychevelle-Gloria*

CHÂTEAU GRUAUD-LAROSE

2ème Cru Classé
★★🍷




This large property produces consistently great wines of a far more solid structure than most other St.-Julien wines. Anyone who has tasted the supposedly mediocre 1980 Sarget de Gruaud-Larose (made from the wines rejected from the *grand vin*) will realize the true potential of Château Gruaud-Larose in any year. If anything, the quality of Gruaud-Larose is still improving.

RED Full-bodied, rich, and plummy wine with masses of fruit. Its spicy blackcurrant flavor is supported by a structure of ripe tannins.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 57%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 7%, Petit Verdot 4%, Malbec 2%

🕒 10–40 years

Second wine:  *Sarget de Gruaud-Larose*

Other wines: *La Roseraie de Gruaud-Larose*, *Chevalier de Gruaud-Larose*

CHÂTEAU HORTEVIE

★★🍷

There is no château as such on this property. This tiny vineyard's wine

is made at Château Terrey-Gros-Caillou by Henri Pradère, the owner of both properties.

RED This is a silky-soft, rich, and succulent wine of excellent quality. This great-value wine is easily equivalent to *cru classé* quality.

🍷 Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–15 years

CHÂTEAU DE LACOUFOURQUE

This tiny 3-acre (1.25-hectare) vineyard is mentioned not because of its past performance but because it is unique in Bordeaux in being a 100 percent Cabernet Franc varietal, and it should be preserved.

RED This wine is sold in bulk as generic St.-Julien, which makes it impossible to make generalizations about its character.

🍷 Cabernet Franc 100%

CHÂTEAU LAGRANGE


3ème Cru Classé
★★★🍷

When the *Ban de Vendanges* was held at this Japanese-owned château in 1986, everyone realized that the Japanese were not simply content to apply state-of-the-art technology; they seriously intended to make Lagrange the best-quality wine in St.-Julien. They could very well succeed in this ambition. The formidable Bordeaux oenologist Professor Peynaud has dubbed Lagrange a "dream estate," and describes its vinification center as "unlike any other in the whole of Bordeaux." Each vat is, according to Peynaud, a "winemaking laboratory." The wine spends 18 months in wood, with up to 60 percent new oak.

RED A deeply colored wine with intense spicy-fruit aromas. It is full-bodied, silky-textured, and rich, with an exquisite balance and finish.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 28%, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot 7%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine:  *Les Fiefs de Lagrange*

CHÂTEAU LALANDE-BORIE

★🍷

Under the same ownership as the illustrious Château Ducru-Beaucaillou, Lalande-Borie is an inexpensive introduction to the wines of St.-Julien.

RED These are well-colored wines, dominated by rich, blackcurranty Cabernet Sauvignon flavors. Some vintages are fat and juicy, while others are more

ethereal and tannic.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 5–10 years

CHÂTEAU LANGOIA-BARTON

3ème Cru Classé

★●



This beautiful château was known as Pontet-Langlois until 1821, when it was purchased by Hugh Barton, grandson of “French Tom” Barton, the founder of Bordeaux *négociant* Barton & Guestier, and is now run by Anthony Barton. Both Langoia-Barton and Léoville-Barton are made here using very traditional techniques. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with a minimum of one-third new oak.

RED Attractive, easy-drinking wine with good fruit and acidity. It is lighter than the Léoville and can sometimes taste a little rustic in comparison, but has gained a degree of extra elegance and finesse in recent years.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 8%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: ✓ *Lady Langoia* (a blend of Langoia-Barton and Léoville-Barton formerly sold simply as “St-Julien”)

CHÂTEAU LÉOVILLE-BARTON

2ème Cru Classé

★★★●



A quarter of the original Léoville estate was sold to Hugh Barton in 1826, but the château remained in the hands of the Léoville estate and is now called Château Léoville-Las Cases (*see below*). This wine is made by Anthony Barton at Langoia-Barton (*see above*). It is matured in wood for 24 months, with a minimum of one-third new oak. Although it is the better of the two Barton estates, it has been considered significantly beneath the standard set by Léoville-Las Cases—since the late 1980s, however, it has performed equally well. A great château in ascendancy.

RED Excellent wines of great finesse and breeding; they are darker, deeper, and richer than the Langoia-Barton, which is itself of very good quality. With maturity, a certain cedarwood complexity develops in this wine and gradually overwhelms its youthful cassis and vanilla character.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 8%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 15–30 years

Second wine: ✓ *Lady Langoia* (a blend of Langoia-Barton and Léoville-Barton formerly sold simply as “St-Julien”)

CHÂTEAU LÉOVILLE-LAS CASES

2ème Cru Classé

★★★

The label reads “*Grand Vin* de Léoville du Marquis de Las Cases,” although this wine is commonly referred to as “Château Léoville-Las Cases.” This estate represents the largest portion of the original Léoville estate. This is a great wine, and it certainly qualifies as one of the super-second, while “Clos du Marquis” is one of the finest second wines available and probably the best value St-Julien. The *grand vin* spends 18 months in wood, with 50 percent new oak.

RED This dark, damson-colored, full-bodied, and intensely flavored wine is complex, classy, and aromatically stunning. A skillful amalgam of power and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 19%, Cabernet Franc 13%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 15–35 years

Second wine: ✓ *Clos du Marquis*
Other wines: *Domaine de Bigarnon*

CHATEAU LÉOVILLE POYFERRÉ

2ème Cru Classé

★★

This property once formed a quarter of the original Léoville estate, and probably suffers from being compared to the other two châteaux, whose properties were also part of Léoville—Léoville-Barton and Léoville-Las Cases. Yet in the context of St-Julien as a whole, it fares very well, and since



1982 it has had some extraordinary successes. Since the involvement of Michel Rolland from the mid-1990s, quality has gone up another notch. Wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED This wine has always been tannic, but is now much fuller in fruit, richer in flavor, and darker in color, with oaky nuances.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 12–25 years

Second wine: *Moulin-Riche*

CHÂTEAU MOULIN-DE-LA-ROSE

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★●

This vineyard is well situated, being surrounded by *cru classés* on virtually all sides. Its wine is fermented in stainless steel and aged in cask for 18 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED This attractively aromatic wine is unusually concentrated and firm for a minor St-Julien, but rounds out well after a few years in bottle.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 8%, Cabernet Franc 2%

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU ST-PIERRE

4ème Cru Classé

★★●

This property was bought in 1982 by Henri Martin, who owns the *bourgeois* growth Château Gloria. The wine is matured in wood for between 18 and 20 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Once an astringent, coarse wine; now ripe, fat, and full of cedarwood, spice, and fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Saint-Louis-le-Bosq*
Other wine: *Clos d'Uza*

CHÂTEAU TALBOT

4ème Cru Classé

★★●

Named after the English Commander who fell at the Battle of Castillon in 1453, this property remains under Cordier family ownership, while its sister château Gruaud-Larose now belongs to Groupe Taillan. To contrast the style



of these two St-Julien is justifiable, but to compare their quality is not: Château Talbot is a great wine and closer to the style of a classic St-Julien, but intrinsically it does not have the quality nor the consistency of Château Gruaud-Larose. Talbot is matured in wood for between 15 and 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED A graceful wine, medium-bodied, with elegant fruit, gently structured by ripe oak tannins and capable of considerable finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 66%, Merlot 24%, Cabernet Franc 3%, Petit Verdot 5%, Malbec 2%

🕒 8–30 years

Second wine: ✓ *Commétable Talbot*

Other wine: *Caillou Blanc*

CHÂTEAU TERREY-GROS-CAILLOU

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★★●

This establishment is under the same ownership as Château Horteve (whose wine it also makes), and is itself a top-performing property.

RED This beautifully colored, medium- to full-bodied wine always has rich fruit and is often equivalent to a good *cru classé*.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU TEYNAC

Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

★●

This fine gravel vineyard once formed part of *cru classé* Château Saint-Pierre.

RED Well-balanced, medium- to full-bodied wine with good spice and a firm tannin structure.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 35%

🕒 6–10 years

MARGAUX

Situated in the south of the Médoc district, Margaux is the most famous of all Bordeaux appellations. While it bathes in the reflected glory of its name-sake premier cru, it is also the largest and least consistent of the four classic Médoc appellations.

WHILE THE OTHER THREE great Médoc AOCs—St.-Estèphe, Pauillac, and St.-Julien—are connected in one unbroken chain of vineyards, Margaux stands alone to the south, with its vines spread across five communes—Labarde, Arsac, and Cantenac to the south, Margaux in the center, and Soussans to the north. Margaux and Cantenac are the most important communes and, of course, Margaux contains the *premier cru* of Château Margaux itself. Cantenac has a slightly larger area under vine and no fewer than eight classified growths, including the star-performing Château Palmer, which was partly owned by the late Peter Sichel.

Margaux and Pauillac are the only appellations in the Médoc with *premier cru* vineyards, but only Margaux can boast vineyards in all five categories of the classification. It also has more *cru classé* châteaux than any other Médoc appellation, including an impressive total of 10 *troisièmes crus*.

MARGAUX CRU CLASSÉ STATISTICS

Crus classés in AOC Margaux

21 châteaux (by number: 35% of *cru classés* in the Médoc) with 2,110 acres (854 ha) of vineyards (by area: 35% of *cru classés* in the Médoc and 61% of this AOC)

1er cru classés

1 château (by number: 25% of *1er cru classés* in the Médoc) with 185 acres (75 ha) of vineyards (by area: 25% of *1er cru classés* in the Médoc)

2ème cru classés

5 châteaux (by number: 36% of *2ème cru classés* in the Médoc) with 670 acres (271 ha) of vineyards (by area: 34% of *2ème cru classés* in the Médoc)

3ème cru classés

10 châteaux (by number: 72% of *3ème cru classés* in the Médoc) with 754 acres (305 ha) of vineyards (by area: 72% of *3ème cru classés* in the Médoc)

4ème cru classés

3 châteaux (by number: 30% of *4ème cru classés* in the Médoc) with 259 acres (105 ha) of vineyards (by area: 22% of *4ème cru classés* in the Médoc)

5ème cru classés

2 châteaux (by number: 11% of *5ème cru classés* in the Médoc) with 242 acres (98 ha) of vineyards (by area: 13% of *5ème cru classés* in the Médoc)

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY



LOCATION

In the center of the Haut-Médoc, some 17 miles (28 kilometers) northwest of Bordeaux, encompassing the communes of Cantenac, Soussans, Arsac, and Labarde, in addition to Margaux itself.



CLIMATE

As for the Médoc (see p70).



ASPECT

One large, low-lying plateau centering on Margaux, plus several modest outcrops that slope west toward the forest.



SOIL

Shallow, pebbly, siliceous gravel over a gravel subsoil interbedded with limestone.



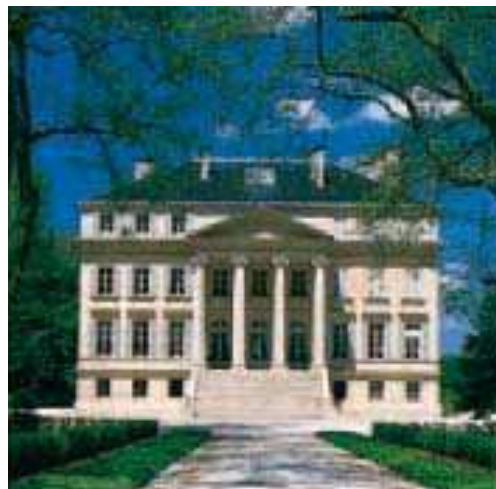
VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION

Only red wines have the right to the appellation. All grapes must be destalked. On average, between 5 and 10 percent *vin de presse* may be used in the wine, according to the needs of the vintage. Skin contact duration averages 15 to 25 days, with the period of maturation in cask currently varying between 18 and 24 months.



GRAPE VARIETIES

Primary varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
Secondary varieties: Carmenère, Malbec, Petit Verdot



CHÂTEAU MARGAUX

Margaux's celebrated premier cru vineyards are matched by the grandeur of the building itself. Both the building and the wine are justifiably famous.



MARGAUX, SEE ALSO P.00

*Of the classic Médoc appellations, Margaux—the most famous—stands alone to the south, and can boast more *cru classé* châteaux than any of the others.*

MARGAUX PROFILE

Appellation covers: parts of the communes of Arsac, Cantenac, Labarde, Margaux, and Soussans as follows.

REGION	SIZE OF COMMUNE	AOC AREA UNDER VINE	VINE AREA AS PROPORTION OF COMMUNE	VINE AREA AS PROPORTION OF APPELLATION
Arsac	7,954 acres (3,219 ha)	524 acres (212 ha)	7%	15%
Cantenac	3,502 acres (1,417 ha)	963 acres (387 ha)	27%	28%
Labarde	1,174 acres (475 ha)	279 acres (113 ha)	24%	8%
Margaux	2,083 acres (843 ha)	1,006 acres (407 ha)	48%	29%
Soussans	3,850 acres (1,558 ha)	699 acres (283 ha)	18%	20%
TOTAL	18,562 acres (7,512 ha)	3,464 acres (1,402 ha)	19%	100%

Total size of all five communes: 18,562 acres (7,512 ha)

Total AOC area under vine: 3,311 acres (1,402 ha) (19% of communes)

Surface area of crus classés: 2,110 acres (854 ha) (11% of communes, 64% of AOC)



NEW CELLAR AT CHÂTEAU MARGAUX

Evidence of the investment made in Château Margaux since the late 1970s is the refurbished wine store and its full complement of new oak barrels.



SOUTIRAGE CHÂTEAU MARGAUX

As the wine matures in the barrel its clarity is checked regularly. It spends between 18 and 24 months in new oak.

AN OUTSTANDING WINE

If the massive Pauillac wines of Château Latour and Château Mouton are an object lesson in how it is possible to bombard the senses with power and flavor, and yet retain quite remarkable finesse, then the exquisite wines of Margaux at their very best are perfect proof that complexity does not necessarily issue from an intense concentration of flavor.

However, this is not to suggest that Margaux wines do not actually possess some concentration; indeed, Château Margaux has a particularly remarkable concentration of flavor, and it remains the quintessential wine of this appellation.



CHÂTEAU CANTENAC BROWN

This third growth was originally part of Château Boyd, but after the Boyds and Browns—who were joined by marriage in the late 18th century—had a family crisis, the property was divided into Château Boyd-Cantenac and Château Cantenac Brown.



CHÂTEAU D'ANGLUDET

Angludet, home of the Sichel family, dates back to Bertrand d'Angludet, who in 1313 swore allegiance to Edward II of England. Owned by Sichel from 1960 till 1999, this property exudes its English heritage, with swans gliding on the brook at the bottom of the property.

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF MARGAUX

CHÂTEAU D'ANGLUDET

Cru Bourgeois

★★



This château is owned by the Sichel family, who are also part-owners of the star-performing Château Palmer. Since the late 1980s this château has established itself as *cru classé* quality. It will be interesting to see what the next decade brings. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with up to one-third new oak.

RED Vividly colored, medium- to full-bodied wines with excellent fruit, finesse, and finish—classic Margaux.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 35%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 10–20 years

Second wine: *La Ferme d'Angludet*

Other wine: *Clairet d'Angludet*

CHÂTEAU D'ARSAC

AOC Margaux
Cru Bourgeois

Until recently this was the only property in Arsac not to benefit from the Margaux appellation. Since a change in ownership this estate has expanded its vineyards from just over 27 acres (11 hectares) to 252 acres (102 hectares), of which 100 (40 hectares) are now classified as Margaux. The wines are matured in wood for 12 to 18 months, with 20 percent new oak.

RED These are deep-colored, full-bodied wines.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 80%, Merlot 15%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Château Ségur-d'Arsac*

Other wine: *Château Le Monteil-d'Arsac*

CHÂTEAU BEL-AIR MARQUIS D'ALIGRE

①

Château Bel-Air Marquis d'Aligre was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but was not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. The vineyard has limestone subsoil and only organic fertilizers are used.

RED Well-made wines of fine color, elegant fruit, with a distinctive style are produced by Château Bel-Air Marquis d'Aligre.

🍷 Merlot 35%, Cabernet

Sauvignon 30%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Petit Verdot 15%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Château Bel-Air-Marquis-de-Pomereu*

CHÂTEAU BOYD-CANTENAC

3ème Cru Classé

Château Boyd-Cantenac is a property producing traditional-style wines from old vines. The wine is made at owner Mr. Guillemet's other property, Château Pouget, under the supervision of Professor Peynaud. It is matured in wood for 24 months, with 30 percent new oak and, in my opinion, would benefit from more Merlot and no Petit Verdot.

RED Full-bodied, firm wine of good color that needs a long time in bottle to soften. The mediocre 1980 was particularly successful.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 12–20 years

CHÂTEAU BRANE- CANTENAC

2ème Cru Classé

★★①



This property is a superb plateau of immaculately kept vines situated on gravel over limestone and is owned and run by Henri Lurton. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 25 to 30 percent new oak.

RED These stylish wines have a smoky-cream and new-oak bouquet, deliciously rich fruit, and finesse on the palate. They are top-quality wines, velvety and beautifully balanced.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Merlot 13%, Petit Verdot 2%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Le Baron de Brane*

Other wines: *Domaine de Fontarney, Château Notton*

CHÂTEAU CANTENAC BROWN

3ème Cru Classé

Ever since I drank a 50-year-old half-bottle of 1926 Cantenac Brown in splendid condition, I have had a soft spot for this château, which

has, frankly, been disproportionate to the quality of its wines. Despite heavy investment after being purchased by AXA, these wines have not noticeably improved, although in the late 1980s to early 1990s there was hope and some evidence that they might. The wines are matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED This wine has always had a similar weight to Brane-Cantenac, but with a less velvety and generally more rustic style. The vintages of the 1980s have more finesse than those of the 1970s, but the quality and concentration took a sharp upward turn in 1989 and 1990.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: *Camuet*

Other wine: *Lamartine*

CHÂTEAU CHARMANT

This property was not classified as a *cru bourgeois* in 1932, nor listed by the Syndicat in 1978, but it certainly deserves recognition today.

RED An elegant wine with plenty of fruit and a soft finish, it makes delightful drinking when young.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 3–8 years

CHÂTEAU DAUZAC

5ème Cru Classé

★

Now owned by MAIF and managed by Vignobles André Lurton, the quality of the wines from this château has steadily increased since the mid-1990s. The wine, which is matured in wood for 16 to 18 months with one-third new oak, is steadily improving.

RED Ruby-colored, medium-bodied, round, and attractively fruity wines that are easy to drink.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Labarde*

Other wine: *La Bastide*

CHÂTEAU DESMIRAIL

3ème Cru Classé

★

A “château with no château” (because the building that was its château was purchased by Château Marquis d'Alesme-Becker), Desmirail has been on the ascent since its purchase by the Lurton family, but it still has some way to go before it becomes a true *troisième cru*. It is owned and run by Denis Lurton, while oenologist Professor Peynaud advises. The wine is matured in

wood for 20 months, with 25 to 50 percent new oak.

RED A medium-bodied wine that is nicely balanced, with gentle fruit flavors and supple tannins. It is well-made and gradually gaining in finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 80%, Merlot 10%, Cabernet Franc 9%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Château Baudry*

Other wine: *Domaine de Fontarney*

CHÂTEAU DEYREM-VALENTIN

This château was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but was not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. Its vineyards adjoin those of Château Lascombes.

RED Honest, medium-bodied, fruity wine of some elegance.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 4–10 years

CHÂTEAU DURFORT-VIVENS

2ème Cru Classé

★①

Owned by Gonzague Lurton, who is married to Claire Villars, the administrator of châteaux Chasse-Spleen and Haut-Bages-Libéral. Dufort-Vivens has become one of the best-value *cru classé* wines of Margaux since the mid-1990s. This property matures its wine in wood for 18 to 20 months, with up to one-third new oak.

RED Higher tannic structure than Brane-Cantenac, but without the luxurious new-oak character, and with less fruit and charm. The 1985 was particularly rich and impressive.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 82%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Merlot 8%

🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: *Second de Dufort*

Other wine: *Domaine de Curé-Bourse*

CHÂTEAU FERRIÈRE

3ème Cru Classé

★①

When managed by Château Lascombes this was little more than second-label status, but it has gained in both exposure and quality since this property was purchased by the Villars family.

RED Quick-maturing wine of medium weight and accessible fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 20%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Les Remparts de Ferrière*

CHÂTEAU GISCOURS3ème Cru Classé
★★

This property is situated in the commune of Labarde. It was purchased in 1952 by the Tari family, who have restored the château, the vineyard, and the quality of its wine to their former glory. In 1995 the château was sold to Eric Albada Jelgerms, a Dutch businessman who has at least maintained the quality and, arguably, improved it. The wine is matured in wood for 20 to 34 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Vividly colored wine, rich in fruit and finesse. Its vibrant style keeps it remarkably fresh for many years.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 22%, Cabernet Franc 2%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 8–30 years

Second wine: *La Sirène de Giscours*

Other wine: *Cantelaude*

CHÂTEAU LA GURGUE

This property was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. Its proprietor also owns the *cru classé* Haut-Bages-Libéral, and the *cru bourgeois* Chasse-Spleen.

RED Soft, elegant, medium-bodied wine of attractive flavor and some finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 4–12 years

CHÂTEAU D'ISSAN3ème Cru Classé
★★

This beautiful 17th-century château is frequently cited as the most impressive in the entire Médoc, and its remarkable wines, matured in wood for 18 months, with up to one-third new oak, are consistently just as spectacular.

RED This wine really is glorious! Its luxuriant bouquet is immediately seductive, its fruit is unbelievably rich and sumptuous. A great wine of great finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 85%, Merlot 15%

🕒 10–40 years

Second wine: *Blason d'Issan*

Other wine: *De Candel*

CHÂTEAU KIRWAN3ème Cru Classé
★★

Château Kirwan is a well-run and improving property owned by the Bordeaux négociant Schröder & Schÿler with Michel Rolland consulting. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with up to 50 percent new oak.

RED Deep-colored, full-bodied, rich and concentrated wines that are well-made and gaining in generosity, riper tannins, and new oak influence with each passing vintage.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 10–35 years

Second wine: *Les Charmes de Kirwan*

CHÂTEAU LABÉGORCE

★

This château was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list. Since Hubert Perrodo, a wine-loving oil tycoon, purchased Labégorce in 1989, the quality and price of its wines have increased steadily. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to one-third new oak.

RED Well-colored wine with good balance of concentration and finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 5–15 years

CHÂTEAU LABÉGORCE-ZÉDÉ

★★

Classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the 1978 list, although it is one of the best non-*cru classé* wines of the commune.

RED Fine flavor and great length, combined with a certain complexity, give the wines of this château a slight edge over those of Château Labégorce.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Château de l'Amiral*

CHÂTEAU LASCOMBES2ème Cru Classé
★★

Owned by Bass Group, the wines of this large property have always been good, yet they have improved dramatically under René Vanatelle. It was Vanatelle who recognized that only 125 of Lascombes' 208 acres (50 of 83 hectares) were of authentic *deuxième cru* potential. He therefore segregated the vineyard and sold the lesser wines as Château Segonnes. This accounted for the noticeable step up in quality in the 1980s. Then in 1997, the year before he retired, Vanatelle introduced a true second

wine, Chevalier des Lascombes, which has pushed standards up yet another notch, before handing over to Bruno Lemoine, formerly of Montrose. The wine is matured in wood for 14 to 20 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Full-bodied, rich, and concentrated wine with ripe fruit, a lovely cedarwood complexity, and supple tannin.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 40%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–30 years

Second wine: *Chevalier Lascombes*

Other wines: *Château Segonnes, Gombaudo, Rosé de Lascombes, Vin Sec Chevalier Lascombes*

CHÂTEAU MALESCOT ST-EXUPÉRY3ème Cru Classé
★

English-owned until 1955, when it was purchased by Roger Zuger, whose brother owns Château Marquis-d'Alesme-Becker. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 20 percent new oak.

RED Richer, more complex wines have been produced since 1996.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wines: *Château De Loyac, La Dame de Malescot*

Other wine: *Balardin*

CHÂTEAU MARGAUX1er Cru Classé
★★★★

This is the most famous wine in the world and, since its glorious rebirth in 1978, the greatest. Its quality may occasionally be matched, but it is never surpassed. Purchased in 1977 for 72 million francs (\$14.5 million) by the late André Mentzelopoulos, who spent an equal sum renovating it, this fabulous jewel in the crown of the Médoc is now run by his daughter, Corinne Mentzelopoulos. Both Château Margaux and its second wine, "Pavillon Rouge," are vinified in oak vats and matured for 18 to 24 months in 100 percent new oak.

RED If finesse can be picked up on the nose, then the stunning and complex bouquet of Château Margaux is the yardstick. The softness, finesse, and velvety texture of this wine belies its depth. Amazingly rich and concentrated, with an elegant, long, and complex finish supported by ripe tannins

and wonderful smoky-creamy oak aromas. This is as near perfection as we will ever get.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 20%, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 15–50 years

Second wine: *Pavillon Rouge du Château Margaux*

Other wine: *Pavillon Blanc du Château Margaux*

CHÂTEAU MARQUIS D'ALESME-BECKER

3ème Cru Classé

Like Château Malescot St-Exupéry, this was English-owned until purchased by Jean-Claude Zuger, who also purchased the maison of neighboring Desmirail to act as its château. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with one-sixth new oak.

RED Austere and charmless wines from my point of view, although they have their admirers. They are well-made, but lack sufficient selection, although the terroir has potential.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 40%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Petit Verdot 10%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Marquise d'Alesme*

CHÂTEAU MARQUIS-DE-TERME

4ème Cru Classé

Situated next to Château Margaux, this once majestic estate developed the reputation for producing tight, tannic, one-dimensional wines, but its quality has picked up since the late 1970s and has been performing extremely well since 1983. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Appears to be developing a style that is ripe and rich, with definite and delightful signs of new oak. The 1984 was quite a revelation.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 30%, Petit Verdot 7%, Cabernet Franc 3%

🕒 10–25 years

Second wine: *Terme des Goudat*

CHÂTEAU MARSAC-SÉGUINEAU

This property was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. The vineyards of this château include some plots that originally belonged to a *cru classé*.

RED Medium- to full-bodied wines of good bouquet and a soft style.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 35%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *Château Gravières-de-Marsac*

CHÂTEAU MONBRISON

Cru Bourgeois
★

These vineyards used to be part of *cru classé* Château Desmirail; the wines were excellent 10 years ago, and now vie with those of true *cru classé* standard.

RED This château's second label offers a brilliant selection of beautifully deep-colored wines with spicy-oak, superrich juicy fruit, and a fine structure of supple tannin.

☼ Merlot 35%, Cabernet Franc 30%, Cabernet Sauvignon 30%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 8–15 years

Second wine: *Château Cordat*

CHÂTEAU MONTBRUN

Château Montbrun was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. This used to be part of *cru classé* Château Palmer.

RED Beautifully made, ripe, and juicy, medium- to full-bodied, Merlot-dominated wines.

☼ Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 25%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU PALMER

3ème Cru Classé
★★★

Only Château Margaux outshines this property, jointly owned by Belgian, French, and British (the Sichel family) interests. Château Palmer 1961 and 1966 regularly fetch prices at auction that equal those fetched by the *premiers crus*. Judged at the very highest level, it could be more consistent. It is usually excellent, but not always astonishing—although when it is, it can stand shoulder to shoulder with *premiers crus* in a blind tasting. A true supersecond that promises to achieve even greater heights since the introduction of Alto Ego, a sort of superpremium of second wines, in 1998. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Deep, almost opaque-colored wine with masses of cassis fruit and an exceedingly rich, intense, and complex construction of creamy, spicy, cedarwood, and vanilla flavors, supported by a fine tannic structure.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 7%, Petit Verdot 3%

🕒 12–35 years

Second wines: *Alto Ego, Réserve du Général*

CHÂTEAU PONTAC-LYNCH

★

This property was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. The vineyards are well-situated, and surrounded by *crus classés*.

RED Richly perfumed, deeply colored, full-bodied wines of good structure.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot 47%, Cabernet Franc 45%, Petit Verdot 8%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Château Pontac-Phénix*

CHÂTEAU POUGET

4ème Cru Classé
②

Under the same ownership as Boyd-Cantenac, this property houses the winemaking and storage facilities for both châteaux. The wine is matured in wood for 22 to 24 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED Well-colored, full-bodied wine with good depth of flavor. Good, but not great, and could be more consistent.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 70%, Merlot 17%, Cabernet Franc 8%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 10–25 years

CHÂTEAU PRIEURÉ-LICHINE

4ème Cru Classé
★

The late Alexis Lichine purchased Château Prieuré in 1951 and added his name to it. To develop the small rundown vineyard, he bought various prized plots of vines from Palmer, Kirwan, Giscours, Boyd-Cantenac, Brane-Cantenac, and Durfort-Vivens—some 148 acres (60 hectares). The composite classification must be higher than its official status—the wines certainly are. Lichine's son Sacha ran the property until 1999, when he sold it to its current owners, the Ballande family. The wines are matured in wood for 19 months, with one-third new oak.

RED Well-colored, full-bodied wines, plummy and rich, with good blackcurrant fruit supported by supple tannins and a touch of vanilla-oak.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 54%, Merlot 39%, Cabernet Franc 2%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *Château De Clairefont*

CHÂTEAU RAUZAN-GASSIES

2ème Cru Classé
★

Until the French Revolution of 1789, this property and Château Rauzan-Ségla were one large estate. The globe-trotting Professor Peynaud was brought in to steer this wine back on course in the early 1980s, but he failed miserably. Jean-Louis Camp, formerly of Loudenne, seems to be having more success. The wine is matured in wood for 17 to 20 months, with 20 percent new oak, although there is little evidence

of it on the palate.

RED The last vintage I really enjoyed was 1961; 1996 and particularly 1998 could herald an upturn in quality.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 40%, Merlot 39%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Petit Verdot 1%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *Enclos de Moncabon*

CHÂTEAU RAUZAN-SÉGLA

2ème Cru Classé
★★



The quality of this once-disappointing château began to lift in the 1980s due to significant investment in the property from its owner, the Bordeaux négociant house of Eschenauer, which also instigated a far stricter selection of the *grand vin*. In 1994 Rauzan-Ségla was sold to Chanel, the underbidder for Latour (sold by Allied-Lyons to the French industrialist François Pinault). Since then key personnel from the *premier cru* have been brought in to keep the improvements in full swing. The wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with 50 percent new oak, and is currently one of Bordeaux's top-performing *deuxièmes crus*.

RED In classic years, this wine is deep and dark, with a powerful tannic construction, and more than enough intensely flavored fruit to match. Lesser vintages are dark for the year, but much more lush, with softer tannins.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 15–30 years

Second wine: *Ségla*

Other wines: *Lamouroux*

CHÂTEAU SIRAN

★★

Château Siran was classified *cru bourgeois* in 1932, but not included in the Syndicat's 1978 list, although it is superior to a few that were. The vineyard is well-situated, with immaculately manicured vines that border those of châteaux Giscours and Dauzac. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with one-third new oak, in air-conditioned cellars. Monsieur Mialhe, the owner, also likes to provide his guests with every facility.

RED Stylish, aromatic wines of good body, creamy-spicy fruit,

length, and obvious class. Easily equivalent to *cru classé* quality.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 25%, Petit Verdot 15%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château Bellegarde*

Other wines: *Château St-Jacques*

CHÂTEAU TAYAC

Cru Bourgeois

As Bernard Ginestet, whose family owned Château Margaux for 40 years, once wrote, "this is one of the largest of the smaller properties, and one of the smallest of the larger."

RED Firm, medium- to full-bodied wines of good character, although somewhat rustic; they tend to be coarse in lesser years.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU DU TERTRE

5ème Cru Classé
★★

An underrated *cru classé*, this château has well-situated vineyards. It is under the same ownership as Giscours since 1998. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Although the scent of violets is supposed to be common to Margaux wines, this is one of the few in which I pick it up. The wine is medium- to full-bodied, rich in fragrant fruit, and has excellent balance, with obvious class.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 85%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Merlot 10%

🕒 8–25 years

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR DE MONS

Cru Bourgeois

These wines are aged in wood for 22 months, with 20 percent new oak and have improved enormously since the late 1980s. Easily equivalent to *cru classé* quality.

RED As richly flavored as ever, but without the tannins or acidity that used to be this wine's pitfall.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 45%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 10–30 years

Second wine: *Château Rucheterre*

CHÂTEAU DES TROIS-CHARDONS

★

A tiny production of very high-quality wine from a château named after the current owner, a Monsieur Chardon, and his two sons.

RED Ultraclean, soft, fruity but serious wines of some finesse and well-defined Margaux character.

☼ Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 6–15 years

GRAVES, CÉRONS, SAUTERNES, AND BARSAC

The finest red Graves wines are produced in Pessac-Léognan, good red and improving dry white wines in the center of Graves, and the great sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac in the south. The emphasis in production is on classic red wines.

THE SILKY-SMOOTH red wines of the Graves district have been famous since the Middle Ages, when they were protected by local laws that punished those who dared to blend them with other Bordeaux wines. Château Haut-Brion was the only red wine outside the Médoc to be classified in 1855, and such was its reputation that it was placed alongside the *premiers crus* of Latour, Lafite, Mouton, and Margaux. Beneath Haut-Brion, there are a few great wines equivalent in quality to *deuxième* or *troisième cru*, but only a few.

The relative lack of superstars in Graves is offset by a higher base quality of wine and greater consistency of performance in the red wines at least. There are 43 communes in this appellation. Much the best are Léognan, Talence, and Pessac, after which Martillac and Portets are the most outstanding, followed by Illats and Podensac. All the greatest wines are therefore in the north of the Graves district, amid the urban sprawl of Bordeaux, and this presents something of a problem. The once-peaceful left bank of the Garonne is slowly and inexorably disappearing. As the city bursts outward, more rural vineyards are encircled by the concrete jungle, and many quite simply vanish. How many Bordeaux

aficionados who fly directly to the airport in Mérignac stop to consider the cost of such progress? In 1908 there were 30 winemaking properties in the commune of Mérignac; today there is just one—Château Picque-Caillou. The conurbated communes of Cadaujac, Gradignan, Léognan, Martillac, Mérignac, Pessac, Talence, and Villenave d'Ornon have lost 214 wine châteaux over the same period.

THE PROBLEM OF WHITE GRAVES SOLVED

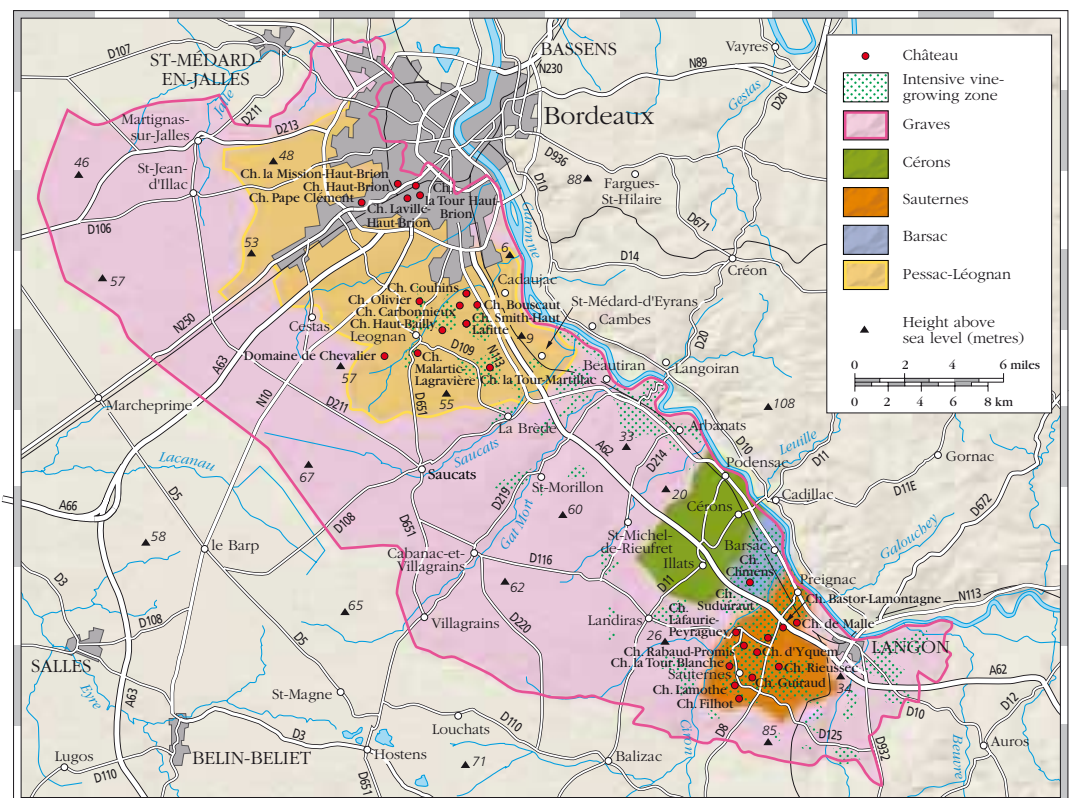
Well almost! While the quality and reputation of the red wines have always been well established, white Graves had a serious identity problem that came to a crisis point in the mid-1980s. Although fine white Graves were being produced, most of it was in the northern communes, but they were tarred with the same brush as the worst white wines from farther south. It was not simply a north-south divide; there was also an identity problem—should they be making rich, oak-aged blends or light and fluffy Sauvignon Blanc? Paradoxically, the worst wines came from some of the best properties in the north, produced by winemakers who either did not know how to, or did not care to, clean up their act, as they continued to sell tired, oversulfured, oxidized, and flabby wines on the backs of their decaying reputations.

An official north-south divide, however, proved to be the solution for, since 1987, when the Pessac-Léognan AOC was introduced, things have never looked better for Graves. The Pessac-Léognan appellation is a single appellation for both red and white wines from the communes Cadaujac, Canéjan, Gradignan, Léognan, Martillac, Mérignac, Pessac, St.-Médard-d'Eyrans, Talence, and Villenave d'Ornon. This has had the effect of giving to the northern châteaux the official quality recognition

GRAVES, CÉRONS, SAUTERNES, AND BARSAC, see also p63
The winemaking area that includes Graves, Cérons, Sauternes, and Barsac forms a swathe that sweeps down from Bordeaux, parallel with the Garonne.



VINES AT HAUT-BRION
Rose bushes at the end of each row act as a pest early-warning system.



THE CLASSIFICATION OF GRAVES

The only Graves property to be classified in 1855 was Château Haut-Brion. The Syndicat, for the defense of the Graves appellation, wanted to create its own classification, but was prevented from doing so until the 1921 law was changed in 1949. The first classification was not made until 1953, and this itself was later modified in 1959.

Distinction is made between red wines and white wines, but no attempt at ranking between the various growths is made—they all have the right to use the term *cru classé*. It can be seen from the 1,320 acres (535 hectares) of classified properties listed below that this represents not much more than 13 percent of the total 1,745 acres (4,350 hectares) of delimited vineyards planted in the Graves and Pessac-Léognan appellation.

RED WINES	COMMUNE	AREA CURRENTLY UNDER VINE	AREA CURRENTLY UNDER VINE
Château Bouscaut	Cadaujac	96 acres	(39 ha)
Château Carbonnieux	Léognan	124 acres	(50 ha)
Domaine de Chevalier	Léognan	82 acres	(33 ha)
Château de Fieuzal	Léognan	96 acres	(39 ha)
Château Haut-Bailly	Léognan	69 acres	(28 ha)
Château Haut-Brion	Pessac	106 acres	(43 ha)
Château La Mission-Haut-Brion	Pessac	52 acres	(21 ha)
Château Latour-Haut-Brion	Talence	12 acres	(5 ha)
Château La Tour-Martillac	Martillac	69 acres	(28 ha)
Château Malartic-Lagravière	Léognan	91 acres	(37 ha)
Château Olivier	Léognan	94 acres	(38 ha)
Château Pape-Clément	Pessac	74 acres	(30 ha)
Château Smith-Haut-Lafite	Martillac	109 acres	(44 ha)
TOTAL AREA UNDER VINE		1,075*ACRES	(435 HA)

WHITE WINES	COMMUNE	AREA CURRENTLY UNDER VINE	AREA CURRENTLY UNDER VINE
Château Bouscaut	Cadaujac	20 acres	(8 ha)
Château Carbonnieux	Léognan	104 acres	(42 ha)
Domaine de Chevalier	Léognan	12 acres	(5 ha)
Château de Fieuzal	Léognan	20 acres	(8 ha)
Château Couhins-Lurton	Villenave	13 ha	(32 acres)
Château Haut-Brion	Pessac	10 acres	(3 ha)
Château La Tour-Martillac	Martillac	25 acres	(10 ha)
Château Laville-Haut-Brion	Talence	10 acres	(4 ha)
Château Malartic-Lagravière	Léognan	17 acres	(7 ha)
TOTAL AREA UNDER VINE		250*ACRES	(100 HA)

*Note—These figures are not precise conversions of the hectare totals, but are column totals and differ because of rounding up.



THE GLOWING TINTS OF CHÂTEAU D'YQUEM
Château d'Yquem vintages, stretching back from a bottle of the 1980. The younger wines are a rich gold with a greenish tinge, deepening to old gold and amber with the older vintages.



CHÂTEAU D'YQUEM:
THE INNER COURTYARD
A huge stone well dominates the square central courtyard of this beautiful château, which comprises disparate elements dating from the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries.

they both wanted and deserved. It was a bit slow to start off—after all, Pessac-Léognan hardly trips off the tongue and there were worries about its marketability. There is still a tendency to put Graves on labels,

and use Pessac-Léognan to qualify the wine as if it were a higher classification of Graves, which for all practical purposes it is.

Once the châteaux realized that foreign markets were picking up on the superior connotation of Pessac-Léognan, use of the appellation soon became widespread. Whether by their own volition or due to peer pressure, many of the underperformers have become the most quality-conscious châteaux in the appellation, and it has spurred producers in the south to improve their wines. They do not like being considered inferior, and as they intend to prove they are not, the consumer can only gain.

CÉRONS

This is an area situated within the boundaries of Graves. It is the stepping stone between dry white Graves, and sweet white Sauternes and Barsac. The châteaux of Cérons have been given the official right to make both red and white Graves, Graves Supérieur (which may be dry but is usually sweet) and, of course, the sweet wine of Cérons—a wine that has enjoyed a modest reputation for nearly 200 years. In fact, only 20 percent of the production in this area is sold as Cérons since the appellation covers three communes, those of Illats, Podensac, and Cérons itself. Many of the vineyards comprise scattered plots, some of which are partially planted with acacias.

SAUTERNES AND BARSAC

The gap between ordinary sweet white wines and the great wines of Sauternes and Barsac is as wide as that between sweet and dry wines. What creates this gap is something called “complexity”—to



VINEYARDS AT CHÂTEAU D'YQUEM

Here, the winter vineyard shows the characteristic sandy-pebbly clay topsoil and the system of wires and stakes that supports the vines. Yquem's clay subsoil contains 62 miles (100 kilometers) of terra-cotta pipes, which were laid down at the end of the 19th century to provide perfect drainage.



TRADITIONAL HORSE-DRAWN PLOW

At *Château d'Yquem* workhorses are used to help plow the topsoil between the rows, both after the harvest and again in March.

find out what that is, sample the aroma of a glass of mature Sauternes. The wines produced in Sauternes are not only the world's most luscious, but also the most complex wines. I have seen hardened men who resolutely refuse to drink anything sweeter than lemon juice go weak at the knees after one sniff of *Château Suduiraut*, and I defy the most stubborn and bigoted anti-sweet wine drinker not to drool over a glass of *Château d'Yquem* 1967. Astonishingly, there are dissenters, but for me Yquem is by far the best wine of these two appellations, Sauternes and Barsac. The battle for second place is always between the soft, luscious style of *Suduiraut*, and the rich, powerful character of *Rieussec*, with *Climens*, *Nairac*, and the nonclassified growths of *Gillette* and *de Fargues* in close pursuit. *Guiraud* has the potential to go right to the top, and with so many châteaux seriously improving, they could all end up chasing each other for the number two spot.

The “noble rot”

Yquem might be the ultimate sweet white wine, but many other great wines are made in these two small areas tucked away in the Bordeaux backwaters. What gives all these wines their hallmark of complexity is, literally, a lot of rot—namely “noble rot,” or the fungal growth *Botrytis cinerea*. The low-lying hills of Sauternes and, to a lesser extent, of Barsac, together with a naturally warm but humid climate, provide a natural breeding ground for botrytis, the spores of which are indigenous to the area. They remain dormant in the vineyard soil and on vine bark until they are activated by suitable conditions—alternate moisture and heat (the early-morning mist being followed by hot, mid-morning sunshine). The spores latch on to the skin of each grape, replacing its structure with a fungal growth and feeding on moisture from within the grape. They also devour five-sixths of the grape's acidity and one-third of its sugar, but as the amount of water consumed is between one-half and two-thirds, the effect is to concentrate the juice into a sticky, sugar-rich pulp. A healthy, ripe grape with a potential of 13 percent alcohol is thus converted into a mangy-looking mess with a potential of between 17.5

percent and 26 percent. The spread of botrytis through a vineyard is neither orderly nor regular, and the harvest may take as long as 10 weeks to complete, with the pickers making various sorties, or *tries*, through the vineyard. On each *trie*, only the affected grapes should be picked, but care must be taken to leave some rot on each bunch to facilitate its spread. The longer the growers await the miraculous “noble rot,” the more the vines are prone to the ravages of frost, snow, hail, and rain, any of which could destroy an entire crop.

The viticulture of Sauternes and Barsac is the most labor-intensive of any region. The yield is very low, officially a maximum of 112 cases per acre (25 hectoliters per hectare), about half that in the Médoc, and the levels achieved in the best châteaux are much lower, around 67 to 90 cases per acre (15 to 20 hectoliters per hectare). At Yquem it is even less, the equivalent of one glass per vine. On top of all this, the vinification is, at the very least, difficult to handle, and maturation of a fine sweet wine demands a good proportion of very expensive new oak.

Variations in character

Not all the sugar is used up during fermentation, even when a wine of perhaps 14 to 15 percent alcohol is made. The remaining unfermented sugar, often between 50 and 120 grams per liter, gives the wine its natural sweetness. However, unlike Sauternes' German counterparts, its alcohol level is crucial to its character. Its strength, in harmony with the wine's sweetness, acidity, and fruit give it a lusciousness of concentration that simply cannot be matched. Its complexity is not, however, the effect of concentration, although an increased mineral level is no doubt an influence. Complexity is created by certain new elements that are introduced into the grape's juice during the metabolic activities of its botrytis—glycerol, gluconic acid, saccharic acid, dextrin, various oxidizing enzymes, and an elusive antibiotic substance called “botrycine.”

It is easy to explain how these components of a botrytized wine that form its inimitably complex character can vary. When tasting wine from different *tries* at the same château, the intensity of botrytized character varies according to the “age” of the fungus when the grapes are harvested. Wines made from the same percentage of botrytized grapes collected at the beginning and end of the harvest are noticeably mute compared to those in the middle when the rot is at its most rampant. If it is not surprising that youthful *Botrytis cinerea* has an undeveloped character, the same cannot be said of late-harvested. Many people believe that the longer botrytis establishes itself, the more potent its effect, but this is not true.



CHÂTEAU DE FARGUES

The original family home of the Lur-Saluces family is now a ghostly ruin. The family moved to Yquem in 1785 upon its union with the De Sawage family.



THE "POURRITURE NOBLE," OR NOBLE ROT

A bunch of Sémillon grapes ready for the first trié. Some of the grapes are still unaffected by the fungus, some are affected and discolored but not shriveled, others are dried, withered, and covered with the fungus bloom.

The rewards, the reality, and the future

A good Sauternes is the most arduous, expensive, and frustrating wine in the world to produce—and what is the winemaker's reward? Very little, I'm afraid. Aside from Château d'Yquem—not only the greatest Sauternes but the greatest wine *per se*—the wines of this region fail to realize their true worth. This is predictable in a world where the trend is toward lighter and drier styles of wine, and may have a positive effect for Sauternes aficionados, for it means a cheaper supply of their favorite wine. In the long term this is not a positive way to operate, and some proprietors simply cannot afford to go on. The Comte de Pontac uprooted all the vines at his *deuxième cru* Château de Myrat in Barsac, and even the ever-optimistic Tom Heeter, former owner of Château Nairac, once said "You have to be at least half-crazy to make a living out of these wines." I feel we certainly do not deserve the luscious wines of Sauternes and Barsac if we continue to ignore them, but if the authorities had more sense, and the owners more business acumen, these wines could literally become "liquid gold."

The only way ahead

The vineyards of Sauternes and Barsac should also be allowed to sell red and dry white wines under the Graves appellation. If this is a right accorded to modest Cérons, why not to its illustrious neighbors? Many châteaux already make red and dry white wines, but they are sold under the cheaper "Bordeaux" appellation. Tom Heeter was right, the proprietors must be half-crazy, because their motivation for producing these alternative products is to subsidize the cost of making their botrytized wine, when they should be trying to supplement their incomes. Given the incentive of a

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY



LOCATION

The left bank of the Garonne river, stretching southeast from just north of Bordeaux to 6 miles (10 kilometers) east of Langon. Cérons, Sauternes, and Barsac are tucked into the southern section of the Graves district.



CLIMATE

Very similar to the Médoc, but fractionally hotter and with slightly more rainfall. In Sauternes and Barsac it is mild and humid, with an all-important fall alternation of misty mornings and later sunshine, the ideal conditions for "noble rot."



ASPECT

The suburbs of Bordeaux sprawl across the northern section of this district, becoming more rural beyond Cadaujac. Graves has a much hillier terrain than the Médoc, with little valleys cut out by myriad streams that drain into the Garonne. Some of the vineyards here are very steep. The communes of Sauternes, Bommès, and Fargues are hilly, but Preignac and Barsac, on either side of the Ciron—a small tributary of the Garonne—have gentler slopes.



SOIL

Traveling south through the district, the gravelly topsoil of Graves gradually becomes mixed with sand, then with weathered limestone and eventually with clay. The subsoil also varies, but basically it is iron-pan, limestone, and clay, either pure or mixed. Cérons has a stony soil, mostly flint and gravel, over marl; there is reddish clay-gravel over clay, or gravelly iron-pan in Sauternes, and clay-

limestone over clay-gravel in Fargues. The gravel slopes of Bommès are sometimes mixed with heavy clay soils, while the plain is sandy clay with a reddish clay or limestone subsoil. Preignac is sand, gravel, and clay over clay-gravel in the south, becoming more alluvial over sand, clay, and limestone closer to Barsac. Where the classified growths of Barsac are situated, the soil is clay-limestone over limestone, elsewhere the topsoil mingles with sandy gravel.



VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION

Some châteaux add a certain amount of *vin de presse* to the red wine. The *cuvaison* varies between eight and 15 days, although some Graves châteaux permit 15–25 days. Maturation in cask is generally between 15 and 18 months. The sweet white wines of Sauternes and Barsac are made from several *tries* of late-harvested, overripe grapes which, ideally, have "noble rot." Destalking is usually unnecessary. The fermentation of grape juice so high in sugar content is difficult to start and awkward to control, but it is usually over within two to eight weeks. The exact period of fermentation depends upon the style desired. Many of the best wines are matured in cask for one and a half to three and a half years.



GRAPE VARIETIES

Primary varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc.
Secondary varieties: Malbec, Petit Verdot, Muscadelle

superior appellation, the châteaux should concentrate on making the finest red and dry white wines every year. Only when conditions appear favorable should some of the white grape crop be left on the vine, with fingers crossed for an abundance of *Botrytis cinerea*. Instead of these châteaux investing in new oak for modest vintages, they should utilize the casks for the red and the dry white. The result would be a tiny amount of the world's most luscious wine, maybe three or four years in 10. It would no longer be necessary to attempt the impossible task of selling an old-fashioned image to young wine drinkers; the limited supply would outstrip the current demand. After 30 years of watching this area's vain attempts to win over popular support for its wines, I have come to accept the view of Comte Alexandre de Lur-Saluces, proprietor of Château d'Yquem. When asked to justify the price of Yquem, he simply said his wines are not made for everyone; they are made for those who can afford them.

THE APPELLATIONS OF GRAVES, CÉRON, SAUTERNES, AND BARSAC

BARSAC AOC

The commune of Barsac is one of five that have the right to the Sauternes appellation. (The others are Preignac, Fargues, Bommes, and Sauternes itself.) Some generic wines sold in bulk may take advantage of this, but all individual properties are sold as Barsac. The wine must include overripe botrytized grapes harvested in *tries*.

WHITE Luscious, intensely sweet wines similar in style to Sauternes, but perhaps lighter in weight, slightly drier, and less rich. As in Sauternes, 1983 is one of the best vintages of the 20th century.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
 ⌚ 6–25 years for most wines; between 15–60 years for the greatest

CÉRON AOC

These inexpensive wines from an area adjacent to Barsac are the best value-for-money sweet wines in Bordeaux. They must include overripe botrytized grapes harvested in *tries*.

WHITE Lighter than Barsac, but often just as luscious, the best of these wines can show true botrytis complexity.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
 ⌚ 6–15 years for most wines

GRAVES AOC

This appellation begins at the Jalle de Blanquefort, where the Médoc finishes and runs for 37 miles (60 kilometers) along the left bank of the Garonne. Almost two-thirds of the wine is red, and is consistently high in quality and value.

RED I was brought up on the notion that with full maturity a Graves reveals itself through a certain earthiness of character. Experience has taught me the opposite. The biggest Graves from hot years can have a denseness that may combine with the smoky character of new oak to give the wine a roasted or tobacco-like

complexity, but Graves is intrinsically clean. Its hallmark is its vivid fruit, clarity of style, silky texture, and hints of violets.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
 Secondary grape varieties: Malbec, Petit Verdot

⌚ 6–15 years

WHITE This is the disappointing half of the appellation: light- to full-bodied, from pure Sauvignon to pure Sémillon (with all proportions of blends in between, flabby to zingy, and unoaked to heavily oaked). Pay strict attention to the château profiles on the following pages. These wines may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
 ⌚ 1–2 years for modest wines; 8–20 years for the best

GRAVES SUPÉRIEUR AOC

Some surprisingly good would-be Barsacs lurk beneath this appellation that is rarely seen, yet accounts for more than one-fifth of all white Graves produced.

WHITE This wine can be dry, but most is a sweet style, similar to Barsac.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
 ⌚ 6–15 years

PESSAC-LÉOGNAN AOC

Introduced in September 1987, this appellation covers the 10 best communes that have the right to the Graves AOC, and it is not by chance that it also encompasses 55 of the best estates, including all the *crus classés*. The technical requirements are similar to Graves except that the Carmenère may be used for red wines; white wines must contain at least 25 percent Sauvignon Blanc and a slightly stricter yield. If you are not sure which château to buy in the Graves, it is worth remembering this appellation

and paying a premium for it.

RED Soft, silky reds of great violet elegance, and not lacking either concentration or length. Most have been aged in a percentage of new oak, which adds a smoky or tobacco-like complexity.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot, Carmenère

⌚ 6–20 years

WHITE The serious styles are invariably oaked these days, with oodles of flavor, often tropical and fruity, with a firm acid structure. These wines may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

☞ A minimum of 25% Sauvignon Blanc, plus Sémillon, Muscadelle

⌚ Usually 3–8 years, but up to 20 years for the best

SAUTERNES AOC

The much hillier communes of Bommes, Fargues, and Sauternes produce the richest of all Bordeaux's dessert wines, while the châteaux in the lower-lying, flatter Preignac make wines very close in style to Barsac. The wine must include overripe botrytized grapes harvested in *tries*.

WHITE Golden, intense, powerful, and complex wines that defy the senses and boggle the mind. They are rich in texture, with masses of rich, ripe, and fat fruit. Pineapple, peach, apricot, and strawberry are some of the lush flavors that can be found, and the creamy-vanilla character of fruit and new oak matures into a splendid honeyed sumptuousness that is spicy and complex. Above all, these wines are marked by the distinctive botrytis character.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
 ⌚ 10–30 years for most wines; between 20 and 70 years for the greatest

THE GENERIC APPELLATIONS OF GRAVES AND CÉRON

CHÂTEAU D'ARCHAMBEAU

Illats
 ★★●

Sited in Podensac, one of the communes of Cérons, this fine property is owned by Dr. Jean Dubourdieu, nephew of Pierre Dubourdieu of Doisy-Daëne, a *deuxième cru* in Barsac. He produces a fine-quality, fragrant, and attractively aromatic red wine, which has the typical silky Graves texture. The deliciously fresh, crisp, and fruity dry white Graves is better than some efforts by certain *cru classé* châteaux. His soft, fruity Cérons is *moelleux* with the emphasis more on perfume than richness.

Second wines: *Château Mourlet, Château La Citadelle*

CHÂTEAU LA BLANCHERIE

La Brède
 ●★★

This fresh and lively dry white Graves is cool fermented, and has plenty of juicy fruit flavor balanced with ripe acidity.

CHÂTEAU LA BLANCHERIE-PEYRAT

La Brède
 ●★★

The red wine of La Blancherie is sold under this label. It is a medium- to full-bodied wine that is matured in casks and has an engaging, spicy bouquet and a rich, fruity flavor.

CHÂTEAU BOUSCAUT

Cadaujac
 Cru Classé (red and white)
 ★★

Belongs to Sophie and Louis Lurton. The red wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 25 percent new oak. The white wine is fermented and matured for up to six months in 100 percent new oak.

RED Until the 1980s this wine was big, tough, and tannic with little charm. Recent vintages have shown increasing suppleness, but the wine still struggles to find form. The second wine, Château Valoux, is a really excellent wine for its class.

☞ Merlot 55%, Cabernet Sauvignon 35%, Cabernet Franc 5%, Malbec 5%

⌚ 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château Valoux*

WHITE This dry, medium-bodied white wine has exotic fruit flavors supported by gentle oak.

☞ Sémillon 70%, Sauvignon 30%
 ⌚ 5–10 years

CHÂTEAU CARBONNIEUX

Léognan
 Cru Classé (red and white)
 ★★●

This is the largest wine estate in Graves. The white wine, the better known of the two styles, is cool-fermented in stainless steel and matured in 100 percent new oak for three months.

RED I frankly did not care for this wine until the splendid 1985

vintage, which seduced me with its creamy-oak nose, silky-textured fruit, and supple tannin, but similar joys have been few and far between.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Malbec, and Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 6–18 years

WHITE Once solid and uninspiring, this wine has really come into its own since the early 1990s. From this time Château Carbonnieux has been lush and creamy with well-integrated new oak and not a little finesse.

🍷 Sauvignon 60%, Sémillon 40%

🕒 2–5 years

Second wine: *Château La Tour Léognan*

CHÂTEAU DE CARDAILLAN

Toulence

★★★

Under the same ownership as Château de Malle, this is a *deuxième cru* Sauternes in the commune of Preignac. This excellent property produces a technically brilliant red Graves with a voluptuous blackcurrant flavor, which develops quickly, yet ages well.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 80%, Merlot 20%

CHÂTEAU LES CARMES-HAUT-BRION

Pessac

★

From 1584 until the French Revolution in 1789, this property belonged to the white friars Carmes, hence the name. This soft, Merlot-dominated wine has always been in the shadow of its more famous neighbor, Haut-Brion, and always will, but there has been a noticeable shift upward in quality.

CHÂTEAU DE CÉRON

Cérons

This 17th-century château, which makes an attractively light, sweet white Cérons, is owned by Jean Perromat, owner of Mayne-Binet, de Bessanes, Ferbos, Ferbos-Lalanette in Cérons, and Prost in Barsac.

CHÂTEAU DE CHANTEGRIVE

Podensac

★★

This château produces a substantial quantity of an excellent, soft, and fruity red Graves (Cabernet Sauvignon 50 percent, Merlot 40 percent, Cabernet Franc 10 percent) that is matured in wooden vats for six months and then transferred to casks for a further 12 months with 20 percent new oak. It also produces an elegant, aromatic, cool-fermented dry white Graves that is produced entirely from the first pressing (Sémillon 60 percent, Sauvignon 30 percent, Muscadelle

10 percent). The proprietor also owns Château d'Anice.

Second wine: *Château Mayne-Lèvêque*

Other wine: *Château Bon-Dieu-des-Vignes*

DOMAINE DE CHEVALIER

Léognan

Cru Classé (red and white)

★★★

One of the top three Graves after Haut-Brion, this extraordinary property gives me more pleasure than any other in this AOC. It utilizes the most traditional methods to produce outstanding red and dry white wine. Fermenting red wine at a temperature as high as 89°F (32°C) might encourage some problems elsewhere, but under the meticulous care of those at the Domaine de Chevalier, this practice, designed to extract the maximum tannins and coloring material, is a positive advantage. The red wine is matured in wood for up to 24 months, with 50 percent new oak. The white wine is fermented and matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 25 percent new oak.

RED Deep-colored, medium-to-full or full-bodied wines, stunningly rich in fruit and oak, with intense cedarwood and tobacco overtones, yet subtle, seductive, and full of finesse. These are wines of great quality, longevity, and complexity.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 65%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 15–40 years

WHITE Even better than the red, but produced in frustratingly small quantities, this star-bright, intensely flavored dry wine is almost fat with exotic fruit and epitomizes finesse.

🍷 Sauvignon 70%, Sémillon 30%

🕒 8–20 years

CHÂTEAU CHICANE

Toulence

Château Chicane is one of the châteaux that produce only red wine. It is typical of the large number of properties in the area that consistently make an excellent basic Graves. Here is an elegant, medium-bodied red wine, with a bouquet of violets, and heaps of clean, silky-smooth fruit.

CLOS FLORIDÈNE

Pujols-sur-Ciron

★★★

Owned by Bordeaux's white wine revolutionary, Denis Dubourdieu, who is producing a sensational dry white Graves (Sémillon 70 percent, Sauvignon 30 percent) from this small estate. The red Clos Floridène (Cabernet Sauvignon 80%, Merlot 20%) possesses an extraordinary combination of rich fruit and elegant new oak, and is the equivalent of a top *cru classé*.

Second wine: *Second de Floridène*

CLOS SAINT-GEORGES

Illats

★★

This property produces a small amount of red Graves, but is most famous for its scintillating sweet Graves Supérieur. A stunningly rich and flavorsome wine, full of botrytis complexity.

CHÂTEAU COUHINS

Villeneuve-d'Ornon

Cru Classé (white only)

The Institut National de La Recherche Agronomique (INRA) and Lucien Lurton share this estate. INRA produces a separate wine, which is cool fermented with no maturation in wood.

WHITE Clean, crisp, and fruity dry white wines that are well made.

🍷 Sauvignon 50%, Sémillon 50%

🕒 2–4 years

Note Château also produces a red Graves, but it is not a *cru classé*.

CHÂTEAU COUHINS-LURTON

Villeneuve-d'Ornon

Cru Classé (white only)

★★

The highest-performing half of the Couhins estate owned by André Lurton. The wine is fermented and matured in 100 percent new oak.

WHITE Delicious dry wines that have all the advantages of freshness and fruitiness, plus the complexity of oak. Surprisingly fat for pure Sauvignon.

🍷 Sauvignon 100%

🕒 3–8 years

Second wine: *Château Cantebau*

CHÂTEAU DE CRUZEAU

St.-Médard-d'Eyrans

★★

Situated on a high, south-facing crest of deep, gravel soil, this property belongs to André Lurton, owner of Château Couhins-Lurton, the high-performance white Graves *cru classé*. De Cruzeau makes 18,000 cases of full-bodied red Graves (Cabernet Sauvignon 60 percent, Merlot 40 percent) that is ripe and velvety with a spicy-cedarwood complexity.

This château also produces around 5,000 cases of a fine-quality white Graves (Sauvignon 90 percent, Sémillon 10 percent) that after some five years of maturation develops an intense citrus bouquet and flavor.

CHÂTEAU FERRANDE

Castres

A large property that, like so many in Graves, makes better red wine than white. The red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon 35 percent, Merlot 35 percent, Cabernet Franc 30 percent) is a consistently good-quality, chocolatey Graves that is matured in

wood for 15 to 18 months, with 10 to 15 percent new oak. The dry white Graves (Sémillon 60 percent, Sauvignon 35 percent, Muscadelle 5 percent) is somewhat less inspiring.

CHÂTEAU DE FIEUZAL

Léognan

Cru Classé (red only)

★★

This property occupies the highest and best exposed gravel crest in the commune. The vineyard and the château are immaculate, which is reflected in the style of its wines.

RED A deeply colored, full-bodied, rich, stylish wine with typical Graves silky texture and ample finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 30%, Malbec 5%, Petit Verdot 5%

🕒 12–30 years

Second wine: *L'Abeille de Fieuzal*

Note De Fieuzal also produces a rich, exotic, and oaky dry white wine that is not *cru classé*, yet is one of the finest white Graves produced.

GRAND ENCLOS DU CHÂTEAU DE CÉRON

Cérons

★★

This property, entirely enclosed by a wall, once formed the largest part of the estate of Château de Cérons. The wines produced here—far superior to those of Château de Cérons, and possibly the best of the appellation—are fat and rich, with good aging potential and some complexity. The proprietor also makes dry white wines at nearby Château Lamouroux.

DOMAINE DE LA GRAVE

Portets

★★

Formerly owned by maestro Peter Vinding-Diers, the Danish-born, Australian-trained winemaker who isolated the famous “RZ” yeast strain. Vinding-Diers sold this property along with Landiras to Van Quikelberg in 1998. The wines are for medium-term consumption, with a very soft, vibrantly fruity, easy-to-drink red and a lovely oak-aged white.

CHÂTEAU HAURA

Illats

Château Haura produces wines under the Cérons appellation. Although not as consistent as it should be, it can sometimes produce a fine, honey-sweet wine with some distinction and concentration. The residence on this property is known as Château Hillot and red and dry white Graves are sold under this name that come from vines contiguous with those of Haura. The proprietor also owns Château Tucau in Barsac.

CHÂTEAU HAUT-BAILLY

Léognan
Cru Classé (red only)
★★★

This château's well-kept vineyard is located on an excellent gravel crest bordering the eastern suburbs of Léognan. This red Graves is matured in wood for up to 20 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED The class of fruit and quality of new oak is immediately noticeable on the creamy-ripe nose of this medium-bodied wine. Never block-busting stuff, but always elegant and stylish.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc
10%

🕒 12–25 years

Second wine: *Le Pardre de Haut-Bailly*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-BRION

Pessac
Cru Classé (red and white)
★★★



In 1663 this famous château was mentioned in Pepys's Diary as "Ho Bryan." It has been under American ownership since 1935, when it was purchased by Clarence Dillon, the banker. The parent company is called Domaine Clarence Dillon, and Dillon's granddaughter, the Duchesse de Mouchy, is the president. Jean Delmas is the technical director. The red wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for 24 to 27 months, with 100 percent new oak. The white wine is fermented and matured in 100 percent new oak.

RED This supple, stylish, medium- to full-bodied wine has a surprisingly dense flavor for the weight, and a chocolaty-violet character. The ideal commercial product, it develops quickly and ages gracefully.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon 55%,
Merlot 25%,
Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 10–40 years

Second wine: ✓ *Babans-Haut-Brion*

WHITE This is not one of the biggest white Graves, but it is built to last. It is sumptuous, oaky, and teeming with citrus and more exotic fruit flavors.

☞ Sauvignon 50%,
Sémillon 50%

🕒 5–20 years

CHÂTEAU LANDIRAS

Landiras

Mr. and Mrs. van Quikelberg purchased this property in 1998. Production is four-fifths white and potentially of *cru classé* quality.

CHÂTEAU LARRIVET-HAUT-BRION

Léognan
★★

Originally called Château Canolle, the name was at one point changed to Château Haut-Brion-Larrivet. Larrivet is a small stream that flows through the property, and Haut-Brion means "high gravel," referring to the gravel plateau west of Léognan on which the vineyard is situated.

Château Haut-Brion took legal action over the renaming, and since 1941 the property and its wines have been known as Château Larrivet-Haut-Brion. The red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon 55 percent, Merlot 45 percent), which is matured in wood for 18 months with 25 percent new oak, is certainly *cru classé* standard, being a well-colored and full-bodied Graves with good flavor, spicy-cedarwood undertones, and a firm tannin structure. The white wine (Sauvignon Blanc 85 percent, Sémillon 15 percent) has leapt in quality since 1996.

CHÂTEAU LAVILLE-HAUT-BRION

Talence
Cru Classé (white only)
★★

Since 1983, this small vineyard has been owned by Clarence Dillon, American proprietor of Château Haut-Brion. This "château with no château" is thought of as the white wine of La Mission. The wine is fermented and matured in cask.

WHITE Until 1982, the style was full, rich, oaky, and exuberant, tending to be more honeyed and spicy with a floral finesse since 1983. Both styles are stunning and complex.

☞ Sauvignon 60%, Sémillon 40%
🕒 6–20 years

CHÂTEAU LA LOUVIÈRE

Léognan
★★★

Part of André Lurton's Graves empire, this château has made a clear about-face since 1985 as far as the quality of its red wine goes. A string of dull, lifeless vintages has come to an end with the beautiful, deep, and vividly colored wines of the years 1985 and 1986. There was another step up in quality in the mid-1990s, since when this has been a truly splendid, full-bodied red Graves that is rich in spicy-blackcurranty fruit and new oak (Cabernet Sauvignon 70 percent, Merlot 20 percent, Cabernet Franc 10 percent). The white wines of Château La Louvière have always

been excellent, but even here there has been a gigantic leap in quality. These are exciting and complex wines that deserve to be among the very best *cru classés*.

Second wine: *Château Coucheroy*

Other wines: "L" de Louvière (dry white), *Château Les Agumelles*, *Château Cantebau*, *Château Clos-du-Roy*, *Château Le Vieux-Moulin*

CHÂTEAU MAGENCE

St.-Pierre-de-Mons
★

A good property making 5,000 cases of a supple, well-perfumed, red wine (Cabernet Sauvignon 40 percent, Cabernet Franc 30 percent, Merlot 30 percent) and 10,000 cases of attractive, aromatic, cool-fermented dry white Graves (Sauvignon 64 percent, Sémillon 36 percent).

CHÂTEAU MALARTIC-LAGRAVIÈRE

Léognan
Cru Classé (red and white)
★★

This 50-acre (20-hectare) vineyard forms a single block around the château. An underrated property, which has consistently produced much higher quality wines since the 1980s. The red wine is fermented in stainless steel at a low temperature (61°F/16°C), and matured in wood for 20 to 22 months, with one-third new oak. The white wine is now matured in 100 percent new oak for seven to eight months.

RED Rich, garnet-colored with an opulent sweet-oak nose, penetrating flavor, and supple tannin structure.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon 50%,
Cabernet Franc 25%, Merlot 25%

🕒 7–25 years

WHITE Recent vintages of this once lackluster white Graves prove the worth of new oak. It is not difficult to mistake this honey-rich, ripe, and succulent wine for pure Sémillon.

☞ Sauvignon 100%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU MAYNE-BINET

Cérons

Proprietor Jean Perrotat also owns several other châteaux, namely De Cérons, De Bessanes, Ferbos, and Ferbos-Lalanette in Cérons and Château Prost in Barsac. At Mayne-Binet he produces a fine sweet white Cérons.

CHÂTEAU MILLET

Portets
★ (red only)

The red is a deep, dark-colored wine made in a traditional style with a dense flavor of concentrated spicy fruit. Although it has a firm tannin structure, this quickly rounds out with a few years in bottle. There is a dry white Graves, but it lacks the boldness and character of the red.

Other wine: *Château Du Clos Renon*

CHÂTEAU LA MISSION-HAUT-BRION

Pessac
Cru Classé (red only)
★★★

Under the ownership of Henri Woltner, this was the pretender to the throne of Graves. Little wonder, then, that Clarence Dillon of Haut-Brion snapped it up when the opportunity arose in 1983. The red wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Despite different winemaking techniques, Dillon's La Mission is no less stunning than Woltner's. Both styles are deeper, darker, and denser than any other wine Graves can manage. They are essentially powerful wines that require great bottle-age, but they do lack finesse.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon 60%,
Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc
10%

🕒 15–45 years

Second wine: *La Chapelle de la Mission-Haut-Brion*

CHÂTEAU OLIVIER

Léognan
Cru Classé (red and white)
★

There has never been any doubt about this château's *terroir*, which has as much potential as any Graves *cru classé*, but it was one of the appellation's most disappointing producers until 1990. Since then progress has been agonizingly slow and patchy, but recent vintages have revived hopes that this remains a château to watch. The red wine is matured in wood for 18 months; the white wine up to three months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED The fruit is now easier-drinking and the oak, which used to be aggressive, more supple and creamy.

☞ Cabernet Sauvignon 70%,
Merlot 30%

WHITE This wine actually began to sparkle as early as 1985, with some quite outstanding vintages in the 1990s, since when has been an added freshness, real fruit flavor, and some positive character developing.

☞ Sémillon 65%, Sauvignon 30%,
Muscadelle 5%

🕒 3–7 years

CHÂTEAU PAPE-CLÉMENT

Pessac
Cru Classé (red only)
★★

After a disastrous period in the 1970s and early 1980s, Pape-Clément began to improve in 1985 and 1986, due to stricter selection of the *grand vin* and the introduction of a Second Wine. Some critics rate these two vintages highly, and they were very good wines, but when examined in the context of the enormous potential of this vineyard, my brain tells me they were not at

all special, even if my heart wants them to be.

The trio of 1988, 1989, and 1990 wines turned out to be the best this château has produced since 1953, although they are nowhere near as great and still not special at the very highest level of Graves wine. However, even in the string of lesser vintages Bordeaux experienced in the early 1990s, Pape-Clément managed to produce good wines, and with 1995, 1996, 1998, and 1999, it has truly regained the reputation of its former glory years. The red wine from this château is matured in wood for 24 months, with a minimum of 50 percent new oak.

RED Medium-bodied wines of excellent deep color, a distinctive style, and capable of much finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 67%, Merlot 33%

Second Wine: Le Clémentin

Note This château also produces a little non-*cru classé* white Graves, made from equal proportions of Sémillon, Sauvignon, and Muscadelle.

CHÂTEAU RAHOUL

Portets

The wine produced by Château Rahoul is not quite as exciting as it was in the 1980s, when the property was home to—although never owned by—the maestro, Peter Vinding-Diers (see *Domaine de la Graves* and *Château Landiras*). However, both red and white wines are still reliable sources of very good value oak-aged Graves.

Second wine: *Château Constantin*

Other wine: *Petit Raboul*

CHÂTEAU RESPIDE-MÉDEVILLE

Toulence

★🍷

Christian Médeville, the man responsible for Château Gilette, the rising star of Sauternes, produces excellent wines here using a totally different wine philosophy. Both the red and the white are fine examples of the best of modern vinification combined with new oak. The red is

a well-colored wine with rich, ripe fruit, some spice, and a creamy, new-oak aftertaste, good for early drinking. The white is a rich, creamy-vanilla concoction with soft, succulent fruit and a fat finish.

CHÂTEAU DU ROCHEMORIN

Martillac

★🍷

Originally called “La Roche Morine,” (the Moorish rock) this estate has a history that extends at least as far back as the eighth century, when Bordeaux was defended by the Moors from attacking Saracens. Another château belonging to André Lurton, Rochemorin produces a fine, elegant, fruity red Graves that is well-balanced and has a good spicy finish (Cabernet Sauvignon 60 percent, Merlot 40 percent). Rochemorin also produces a very clean and correct dry white Graves.

CHÂTEAU DE ROQUETAILLADE-LA-GRANGE

Mazères

★🍷

This is a very old property, that produces some 12,000 cases of an attractive, well-colored red Graves that has an aromatic bouquet and a delicious spicy-cassis flavor. This wine is made from Merlot 40 percent, Cabernet Sauvignon 25 percent, Cabernet Franc 25 percent, Malbec 5 percent, and Petit Verdot 5 percent. Its firm, tannic structure means it matures gracefully over 15 or more years. The white wine, which is made from Sémillon 80 percent, Sauvignon 20 percent, is less successful.

Second wine: *Château de Carolle*

Other wines: *Château de Roquetaillade-le-Bernet*

CHÂTEAU DU SEUIL

Cérons

Up-and-coming Graves property producing fine, elegant reds and fruity, oak-aged whites, both proving to be of increasingly excellent value.

CHÂTEAU SMITH-HAUT-LAFITTE

Martillac

Cru Classé (red only)

★🍷



This château has 124 acres (50 hectares) of fine vineyards. Michel Rolland consults on the reds and Christophe Olivier on the whites; reputation and quality are soaring. The red wine matures in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED These wines are now in a richer style with creamy-oak undertones and up-front fruit.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 69%, Merlot 20% Cabernet Franc 11%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Les Hauts-de-Smith-Haut-Lafitte*

Note A white Graves is also made. It is not a *cru classé*, yet ironically now considered one of the finest white wines in Pessac-Léognan.

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR-HAUT-BRION

Talence Cru Classé (red only)

★★

This château is situated close to Château La Mission-Haut-Brion. By 1980 wine sold under the label of this château was merely regarded as the Second Wine of Château La Mission-Haut-Brion. All the grapes from both vineyards were vinified together, and the two wines made

by selection. However, after acquisition by Domaine Clarence Dillon in 1983, some 11 acres (4.5 hectares) of vines were delimited as Château La Tour-Haut-Brion, and from 1984 all its wines can be said to be from one specific site. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED This very dark, tannic, full-bodied wine is full of chocolate, tannic fruit above an earthy-smoky bitterness of undeveloped extract. Despite its awesome attack of flavor it shows great finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 20–40 years

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR-MARTILLAC

Martillac

Cru Classé (red and white)

★★

This property has its own herd of cattle to supply manure for the château's strictly “organic” wine. Its red wine is not as consistent as the very best Graves and tends to lack charm in cask. These factors make it an underrated wine. It is matured in wood for 18 to 22 months with one-third new oak. The white is fermented in stainless steel and matured in 100 percent new oak.

RED Not big or bold wines with immediate appeal; the reds are elegant with some finesse. The fruit in recent vintages has tended to be a bit plumper, but it is in bottle that these wines take on richness, developing creamy-oak flavor.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon 60%, Merlot 25%, Cabernet Franc 6%, Malbec 5%, Petit Verdot 4%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château La Grave-Martillac*

WHITE The stunning 1986 vintage heralded a new era of exciting dry whites. This is very fresh, elegant wine, the fruit gently balanced by complex nuances of oak.

🍷 Sémillon 55%, Sauvignon 35%, Muscadelle 3%, old diverse varieties 7%

🕒 4–8 years

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF SAUTERNES AND BARSAC

CHÂTEAU D'ARCHE

Sauternes

2ème Cru Classé

★🍷

This property dates from 1530. It was known as Cru de Bran-Eyre until it was bought by the Comte d'Arche in the 18th century. It has been inconsistent. The wine sees up to 50 percent new oak.

WHITE The successful Château d'Arche is an elegantly balanced wine that is more in the style of

Barsac than Sauternes. It is sweet, rich, and has complex botrytis flavors, which often puts it on par with a *premier cru*, although it is less plump than most Sauternes. Easily equivalent to a classed growth in quality and the *Crème de Tête* is even better.

🍷 Sémillon 80%, Sauvignon 15%, Muscadelle 5%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Cru de Braneyre*

Other wine: *d'Arche-Lafaurie*

CHÂTEAU BASTOR-LAMONTAGNE

Preignac

★🍷

A large property that deserves *deuxième cru* status. The wine is matured in wood for up to 36 months, with 10 to 15 percent new oak. Lighter years such as 1980, 1982, and 1985 lack botrytis but are successful in an attractive mellow, citrus style. Big years such as 1983 lack nothing: the wines are full,

rich, and stylish with concentrated botrytis flavor and ample class. 1989, 1990, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 all very successful.

Second wine: *Les Remparts du Bastor*

CHÂTEAU BOUYOT

Barsac

★★🍷

Jammy Fonbeney, the winemaker at this little-known property, is producing some stunning wines that

deserve recognition. They have classic Barsac elegance, light in body, but not in flavor, with rich pineapple and creamy botrytis fruit, some spice, and fine length.

CHÂTEAU BROUSTET

Barsac 2ème Cru Classé

★☆☆

The wine produced at Château Broustet is matured in wood for 20 months with what was until recently just 10 percent new oak, but this increased to 40 percent after the 1986 vintage.

WHITE Château Broustet can be a delightful wine, with a fruit-salad-and-cream taste, a very elegant balance, and some spicy-botrytis complexity.

🍷 Sémillon 63%, Sauvignon 25%, Muscadelle 12%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Château de Ségur*

CHÂTEAU CAILLOU

Barsac
2ème Cru Classé

★★☆☆

This château gets its name from the *cailloux*, the stones that are brought to the surface during plowing. These have been used to enclose the entire 37-acre (15-hectare) vineyard and to provide hardcore for the tennis courts. Mr. Bravo, the owner, has run out of uses but he is still churning them up. This is not one of the better-known *deuxièmes crus*, but it consistently produces wines of a very high standard, and so deserves to be.

WHITE A rich, ripe, and spicy-sweet Barsac with concentrated botrytis flavors underscored by refined oak. Not the fattest of Barsacs, but made in the richer rather than lighter style.

🍷 Sémillon 90%, Sauvignon 10%

🕒 8–30 years

Second wine: *Petit-Mayne*

Other wines: *Cru du Clocher (red)*, *Château Caillou Sec (dry white)*, *Rosé St.-Vincent (dry rosé)*

CHÂTEAU DE LA CHARTREUSE

Preignac

★☆☆

This is the same stunning wine as Château Saint-Amande, but under a different exclusive label. See also Château Saint-Amande.

CHÂTEAU CLIMENS

Barsac
1er Cru Classé

★★★☆☆



Under the ownership of Bérénice Lurton, this property has long been considered one of the top wines of both appellations. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months with up to one-third new oak.

WHITE The fattest of Barsacs, yet its superb acidity and characteristic citrus style give it an amazingly fresh and zippy balance. This wine has masses of creamy-ripe botrytis fruit supported by good cinnamon and vanilla-oak flavors.

🍷 Sémillon 98%, Sauvignon 2%

🕒 10–40 years

Second wine: *Les Cyprès de Climens*

CHÂTEAU CLOS HAUT-PEYRAGUEY

Bommès
1er Cru Classé

★★★☆☆

Originally part of Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey, this property has been owned by the Pauly family since 1934. A good dose of sulfur dioxide used to be the method of stopping fermentation at Clos Haut-Peyraguey and the bouquet was often marred by an excess of sulfur. Thankfully, this has not been evident since the 1985 vintage, when coincidentally, the wines began to benefit from some new oak. The wine is now matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 25 percent new oak.

WHITE This wine now flaunts a positively eloquent bouquet, and has a rich flavor with complex botrytis creamy-oak nuances—very stylish.

🍷 Sémillon 83%, Sauvignon 15%, Muscadelle 2%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Château Haut-Bommès*

CHÂTEAU COUTET

Barsac
1er Cru Classé

★★★☆☆



This château is usually rated a close second to Climens, but in fact it is capable of matching it in some vintages and its occasional production of tiny quantities of *tête de cuvée* called “Cuvée Madame” often surpasses it. It is fermented and matured for 24 months in cask with 30 to 50 percent new oak. The dry white “Vin Sec” is an AOC Graves and very disappointing.

WHITE This wine has a creamy vanilla-and-spice bouquet, an

initially delicate richness that builds on the palate, good botrytis character, and oaky fruit.

🍷 Sémillon 75%, Sauvignon 23%, Muscadelle 2%

🕒 8–25 years (15–40 years for *Cuvée Madame*)

Other wines: *Cuvée Madame*, *Vin Sec du Château Coutet*

CHÂTEAU DOISY-DAËNE

Barsac
2ème Cru Classé

★★☆☆

Owner Pierre Dubourdieu cool ferments this wine in stainless steel until the desired balance of alcohol and sweetness is achieved, and then matures it in 100 percent new oak for a short while. The wine also undergoes various low-sulfur techniques. The result is a wine equal to a Barsac *premier cru*.

WHITE This is a wine of great floral freshness and elegance, with a delightful honeyed fragrance of deliciously sweet fruit, delicate botrytis character, hints of creamy oak, and perfect balance.

🍷 Sémillon 100%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Château Cantegril*

Other wine: *Vin Sec de Doisy-Daëne*

CHÂTEAU DOISY-DUBROCA

Barsac
2ème Cru Classé

This property is run in conjunction with Climens, and is the smallest part of the original Doisy estate. But the wine, although consistent, is not in the same class as Doisy-Daëne, let alone Climens. It is matured in cask for 24 to 30 months with 25 percent new oak.

🍷 Sémillon 90%, Sauvignon 10%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *La Demoiselle de Doisy*

CHÂTEAU DOISY-VÉDRINES

Barsac
2ème Cru Classé

★★☆☆

This is the original and largest of the three Doisy châteaux. It is owned by Pierre Castéja, the head of Bordeaux *négociant* Roger Joanne. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months with one-third new oak.

WHITE This wine was somewhat lackluster until 1983, since when it has exploded with character. Rich, ripe, and oaky, with a concentrated botrytis complexity.

🍷 Sémillon 80%, Sauvignon 20%

🕒 8–25 years

Other wine: *Château La Tour-Védrières*

CHÂTEAU DE FARGUES

Fargues

★★★☆☆



The eerie ruin of Château de Fargues is the ancestral home of the Lur-Saluces family. The small production of ultrahigh-quality wine is made by essentially the same fastidious methods as Yquem, including fermentation and maturation in 100 percent new oak. It is powerful and viscous, very rich, succulent, and complex, with a fat, toasty character (Sémillon 80 percent, Sauvignon 20 percent). Easily equivalent to a classed growth.

CHÂTEAU FILHOT

Sauternes
2ème Cru Classé

★☆☆☆☆

The beautiful Château Filhot was built between 1780 and 1850. This splendid château has a potentially great vineyard that consistently produces boring wine. Investment is required on a large scale in nearly every department: the proportion of Sémillon should be increased, the number of *tries* should be increased, the wine should contain more botrytized grapes and should be matured in cask, with some new oak.

WHITE At best these are well-made, simply fruity, and sweet.

🍷 Sémillon 60%, Sauvignon 37%, Muscadelle 3%

CHÂTEAU GILLETTE

Preignac

★☆☆☆☆

Christian Médeville rejects modern marketing methods, preferring instead to keep his precious nectar (made from Sémillon 94 percent, Sauvignon 4 percent, Muscadelle 2 percent) in vats under anaerobic conditions for an amazing 20 years before bottling and selling it. The *Crème de Tête* is *premier cru* quality with a powerful bouquet and intense flavor of liquorice and peaches and cream, followed by a long barley-sugar aftertaste. The *Crème de Tête* deserves ★★★, but I am less impressed with Château Gillette's regular bottlings (if, indeed, any bottling at this property can be so described!).

CHÂTEAU GUIRAUD

Sauternes
1er Cru Classé

★★★☆☆

This property has been on the up since 1981, when the Narby family of Canada purchased it. The château

and vineyards were in a very rundown state. Narby dug up much of the Sauvignon and planted Sémillon, then totally reequipped the winery and renovated the château. Only Yquem is on as high ground as Guiraud and since drainage is a key factor affecting the quality of the greatest Sauternes, where heavy clay soils dominate, the potential for this wine is very exciting and one that has been skillfully exploited with the help of Xavier Plantey, ex-manager of Château la Gaffelière. The wine is matured in wood for 30 months with at least 50 percent new oak. The first vintages of the dry white Vin Blanc Sec "G" were dull, but subsequent efforts have improved.

WHITE After two dismal decades, great Sauternes arrived at this château with the classic 1983 vintage, the first true botrytis wine under Narby's ownership. Guiraud is now plump with Sémillon fruit and fat with botrytis character. A deliciously sweet wine with luxuriant new oak, complexity, and considerable finesse.

☞ Sémillon 70%, Sauvignon 30%
 🍷 12–35 years

Second wine: *Le Dauphin*

Other wine: *Vin Blanc Sec "G"* (dry white)

CHATEAU HAUT-BOMMES

Bommes

The owner, Jacques Pauly, prefers to live here rather than at his *premier cru* Château Clos Haut-Peyraguey. Occasionally the wine used to excel for an unclassified growth; the recent improvements at Château Clos Haut-Peyraguey augur well for the future.

CHÂTEAU LES JUSTICES

Preignac

★🍷

Under the same ownership as the star-performing Château Gilette, but here Christian Médeville gives his wines only four years of aging in vats. Les Justices is a consistent wine of excellent quality that is riper and fruitier than Gilette and the equivalent of a *deuxième cru*.

CHATEAU LAFURIE- PEYRAGUEY

Bommes

1er Cru Classé

★★★🍷



As with Cordier properties, this wine shows remarkable consistency. It is matured in wood for between 18 and 20 months with up to 50

percent new oak.

WHITE The combination of botrytis and oak is like pineapples and peaches and cream in this elegant wine that keeps fresh and retains an incredibly light color in old age.

☞ Sémillon 98%, Sauvignon 2%
 🍷 8–30 years

CHÂTEAU LAMOTHE- DESPUJOLS

Sauternes
 2ème Cru Classé

In 1961 the Lamothe vineyard was split in two. The section belonging to Jean Despujols has been the most disappointing half up until the 1985 vintage, but it has really come into its own since 1990.

WHITE Fuller, richer, and sweeter than previously expected, and in an oily, fuller-bodied style, with overtly attractive tropical fruit character.

☞ Sémillon 70%, Sauvignon 20%,
 Muscadelle 10%

CHÂTEAU LAMOTHE- GUIGNARD

Sauternes
 2ème Cru Classé

★🍷

The Guignards are really trying to achieve something with their section of the Lamothe vineyard. It was called Lamothe-Bergey until the name was changed in 1981. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months with 20 percent new oak.

WHITE Rich, spicy, and concentrated wines of full body and good botrytis character.

☞ Sémillon 85%, Muscadelle 10%,
 Sauvignon 5%

🍷 7–20 years

CHÂTEAU LIOT

Barsac

★🍷

This wine is elegant, with light but fine botrytis character and creamy vanilla of new oak—probably the equivalent of a *deuxième cru* in quality and is excellent value. Owner Jean-Nicol David also produces Château Saint-Jean, a dry white Graves, and Château Pinsas, a fruity red Graves.

CHÂTEAU DE MALLE

Preignac

2ème Cru Classé

Dry white wine is produced under the "Chevalier de Malle" label, and red Graves from contiguous vineyards under the Château du Cardaillan label. While this vineyard does not shine every year (1989 and 1990 are its best-ever vintages), when it does, it can be superb value.

WHITE These are firm, well-concentrated wines often influenced more by *passerillage* than botrytis. Delicious, rich, and luscious.

☞ Sémillon 75%, Sauvignon 22%,
 Muscadelle 3%

🍷 7–20 years



Second wine: *Château St.-Hélène*

Other wine: *Chevalier de Malle*

CHÂTEAU DU MAYNE

Barsac

🍷

There is a good proportion of old vines at this property which adds concentration and weight to these wines, which are fatter than the norm for Barsac. Owned by the Sanders family of the splendid Château Haut-Bailly of Graves.

CHÂTEAU MÉNOTA

Barsac

🍷

This quaint old property—with its historic towers and ramparts—has exported its wines to England since the 16th century. Château Ménota produces very good Barsac, despite the unusually high proportion of Sauvignon Blanc (60 percent).

CHATEAU NAIRAC

Barsac

2ème Cru Classé

★★

Tom Heeter established the practice of fermenting and maturing his wine in up to 100 percent new oak—Nevers for vanilla and Limousin for backbone—and his perfectionist ex-wife, Nicole Tari, has continued this format with great success.

WHITE These are rich and oaky wines that require ample aging to show true finesse. With enough bottle maturity the tannin and vanilla harmonize with the fruit, and the rich botrytis complexity emerges.

☞ Sémillon 90%, Sauvignon 6%,
 Muscadelle 4%

🍷 8–25 years

CHÂTEAU PERNAUD

Barsac

★🍷

This property was once part of the Sauvage d'Yquem estate. It was then owned by the Lur-Saluces family, but was abandoned after the oidium fungus devastated Bordeaux in the late 18th century. It has been completely replanted and renovated, and is now building up something of a reputation. This slightly richer style of Barsac (Sémillon 70 percent,

Sauvignon 25 percent, Muscadelle 5 percent) has a typically elegant balance and is certainly a wine to watch.

CHÂTEAU RABAUD-PROMIS

Bommes
 1er Cru Classé

★★

The wines of this once-grand property used to be awful. It was sad to see the vineyard, château, and wine so neglected. What a joy to witness such a dramatic change. It began with the 1983; and the vintages are now something special.

WHITE A lovely gold-colored wine with full, fat, and ripe botrytis character on the bouquet and palate.

☞ Sémillon 80%, Sauvignon 18%,
 Muscadelle 2%

🍷 8–25 years

CHÂTEAU RAYMOND- LAFON

Sauternes

As I wrote in the last edition, it is easy to understand how people can get carried away by the idea of a vineyard so close to Yquem as Raymond-Lafon, especially when its owner, Pierre Meslier, was régisseur at Yquem. This was, however, an overrated and overpriced wine in the mid-1980s, and although things have improved since the 1989 and 1990 vintages, it is performing at only *deuxième cru* level and is consequently overrated and overpriced. Now that the style has been cleaned up and plumped out, Raymond-Lafon (Sémillon 80 percent, Sauvignon 20 percent) is a nice Sauternes, but not worth three times the price of Rieussec or two-and-a-half times as much as Climens.

CHÂTEAU RAYNE- VIGNEAU

Bommes

1er Cru Classé

★

The quality of Rayne-Vigneau had plummeted to dismal depths until as recently as 1985. The wine is now matured in wood for 24 months with 50 percent new oak. It has a higher Sémillon content than the statistics would suggest, due to the 5,000 cases of dry Sauvignon Blanc that are sold as "Rayne Sec."

WHITE Château Rayne-Vigneau is now a very high-quality wine that has an elegant peachy ripeness to its botrytis character.

☞ Sémillon 65%, Sauvignon 35%

🍷 8–25 years

Second wine: *Clos l'Abeille*

Other wines: *Rayne Sec*

CHÂTEAU RIEUSSEC

Fargues

1er Cru Classé

★★★

This fine property promises to make even better wine since its acquisition by Domaines Rothschild in 1984. None of the Sauvignon



produced here is used for Château Rieussec (it goes in the "R"), effectively making the wine 96 percent Sémillon. It is barrel-fermented and cask matured for 18 to 30 months with 50 percent new oak.

WHITE This wine is one of the richest and most opulent of Sauternes, with intense pineapple fruit and a heavily botrytized character.

☼ Sémillon 75%, Sauvignon 22%, Muscadelle 3%

🕒 12–35 years

Second wines: *Clos Labère, Mayne des Carmes*

Other wine: "R" de Château Rieussec (dry white)

CHÂTEAU DE ROLLAND

Barsac

The château of this estate has been turned into a hotel with a good restaurant, and is under separate ownership. The vineyard of Château de Rolland belongs to Jean and Pierre Guignard, who also own the excellent Château de Roquetaillade-la-Grange at Mazères in Graves. The wines (Sémillon 60 percent, Sauvignon 20 percent, Muscadelle 20 percent) are fresh and elegant with a particular emphasis on fruit.

CHÂTEAU ROMER

Fargues

2ème Cru Classé

②

The original Romer estate was divided in 1881, and at just 13 acres (five hectares) this is the smallest part. I have never come across the wine.

☼ Sémillon 50%, Sauvignon 40%, Muscadelle 10%

CHÂTEAU ROMER-DU-HAYOT

Fargues

2ème Cru Classé

①

Monsieur André du Hayot owns these 25 acres (10 hectares) of vines on a fine clayey-gravel crest that was once part of the original Romer estate. The wines are little seen, but represent very good value.

WHITE The 1980 and 1983 are in the fresh, not oversweet, fruit-salad and cream style, with light botrytis character and an elegant balance. More recent vintages have not been tasted.

☼ Sémillon 70%, Sauvignon 25%, Muscadelle 5%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU ROUMIEU

Barsac

★①

This property, which borders the classified growths of Climens and Doisy-Védrières, has produced luscious sweet wines of a richer than normal style in some vintages (Sémillon 90 percent, Sauvignon 10 percent).

CHÂTEAU ROUMIEU-LACOSTE

Barsac

★①

A Dubourdiu property producing consistently fine Barsac (Sémillon 80 percent, Sauvignon 20 percent) with good botrytis concentration.

CHÂTEAU SAINT-AMANDE

Preignac

★①

An elegant and stylish wine (Sémillon 67 percent, Sauvignon 33 percent) that is very attractive when young, yet some vintages have potentially excellent longevity and are often equivalent to a classed growth in quality. Part of the production of this property is sold under the Château de la Chartreuse label.

Second wine: *Château de la Chartreuse*

CHÂTEAU SIGALAS-RABAUD

Bommes

1er Cru Classé

★★

This is the largest part of the original Rabaud estate. The proprietor contracted Cordier to manage this property as from 1995 and the wines have already shown a marked improvement.

WHITE A stylish early-drinking wine with an elegant botrytis bouquet and deliciously fresh fruit on the palate.

☼ Sémillon 85%, Sauvignon 15%
🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU SIMON

Barsac

2ème Cru Classé

A combination of modern and traditional methods produces a mildly sweet wine from Sémillon 70 percent, Sauvignon 30 percent. Most Sauternes and Barsacs are aged in Nevers or Limousin oak. Sometimes Allier is used, but at Simon they mature the wine in Merrain oak for two years.

CHÂTEAU SUAU

Barsac

2ème Cru Classé

The vineyard belongs to Roger Biarnès, who makes the wine at his Château Navarro in Cérons because the château is under different ownership. These wines do not have a particularly high reputation, but if the attractive wine produced

in the very modest 1980 vintage is anything to go by it is worth giving them the benefit of the doubt.

WHITE The 1980 is an attractive, fresh, and fragrantly fruity wine with a gentle citrous-and-spice botrytis complexity.

☼ Sémillon 80%, Sauvignon 10%, Muscadelle 10%

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU SUDUIRAUT

Preignac

1er Cru Classé

★★★

This splendid 17th-century château, with its picturesque parkland, effectively evokes the graceful beauty found in its luscious wines. Suduiraut's superb 245-acre (100-hectare) vineyard enjoys a good susceptibility to "noble rot," and adjoins that of Yquem. The wines went through an inconsistent patch in the 1980s, but have improved dramatically under the watchful eye of Jean-Michel Cazes's AXA insurance group. The wines are fermented and matured in cask for 24 months, with at least one-third new oak.

WHITE Soft, succulent, and sublime, this is an intensely sweet wine of classic stature. It is rich, ripe, and viscous, with great botrytis complexity that benefits from good bottle-age.

☼ Sémillon 80%, Sauvignon 20%

🕒 8–35 years

Second wine: *Castelnau de Suduiraut*

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR BLANCHE

Sauternes

1er Cru Classé

★★★

This property was placed at the head of the *premiers crus* in 1855, when only Yquem was deemed to be superior, but until relatively recently it failed to live up to this reputation. Even at its lowest ebb, few critics would have denied that these vineyards possessed truly great potential, but the wines were ordinary. This was made all the more embarrassing by the fact that the state-owned La Tour Blanche was a school of agriculture and oenology that was supposed to teach others how to make Sauternes. This depressing situation began to change, however, in the mid-1980s when Château la Tour Blanche started increasing the proportion of Sémillon, picking much riper grapes, and implementing stricter selection in both vineyard and chais.

Fermentation is in wood (with up to 90 percent new oak but averaging 25 percent in most years), and the results have been exciting with excellent wines produced in 1988, 1989, 1990, (its greatest ever), 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998.

WHITE These are now so rich they

are almost fat and bursting with plump, ripe, juicy fruit and oodles of complex botrytis character.

☼ Sémillon 78%, Sauvignon 19%, Muscadelle 3%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Mademoiselle de Saint-Marc*

CHÂTEAU D'YQUEM

Sauternes

1er Cru Supérieur

★★★

This most famous of all châteaux belonged to the English crown from 1152 to 1453. It then passed into the hands of Charles VII, King of France. In 1593 Jacques de Sauvage acquired tenant's rights to the royal property and in 1711 his descendants purchased the fiefdom of Yquem. In 1785 it passed into the hands of the Lur-Saluces family. The *tries* tradition was kept alive at Yquem when it was long forgotten by other noble châteaux. Like Pétrus, one of Yquem's "secrets" is its pickers. They are all skilled; they know what to pick and, just as important, what to leave. The gap between *tries* can vary from three days to several weeks. Housing and feeding 120 pickers for several weeks of inactivity is not cheap.

The property has been run with passionate care by succeeding generations, although LVMH (which owns Moët & Chandon in Champagne) purchased a majority shareholding in 1999 (after three years of acrimony between members of the Lur-Saluces family). Alexandre Lur-Saluces lost his independence, but won a handsome contract to remain in his former home. He is still very much in charge.

In 1972 the harvest consisted of 11 *tries* spread over 71 days. In that year no wine was sold as Château d'Yquem. This is not to say that Yquem's fastidious attention to selection and quality does not pay off in some poor vintages. But in good years, because of the strict selection in the vineyard, the amount of wine that is finally used is as high as 80 to 90 percent. The wines are matured for up to 42 months with 100 percent new oak. Other *terroirs* in Sauternes and Barsac are potentially comparable, but, no matter how conscientious their owners, none makes the same sacrifices as Yquem.

WHITE This wine represents the ultimate in richness, complexity, and class. No other botrytis wine of equal body and concentration has a comparable finesse, breeding, and balance. Some of the characteristic aromas and flavors include peach, pineapple, coconut, nutmeg, and cinnamon, with toasty-creamy vanilla and caramel flavors of new oak.

☼ Sémillon 80%, Sauvignon 20%

🕒 20–60 years

Other wines: "Y" de Château d'Yquem (dry white)