

THE LIBOURNAIS AND FRONSADAIS

The right bank of the Dordogne River, known as the Libournais district, is red-wine country. Dominated by the Merlot grape, the vineyards here produce deep-colored, silky- or velvety-rich wines of classic quality in the St.-Émilion and Pomerol regions, in addition to wines of modest quality, but excellent value and character, in the “satellite” appellations that surround them.

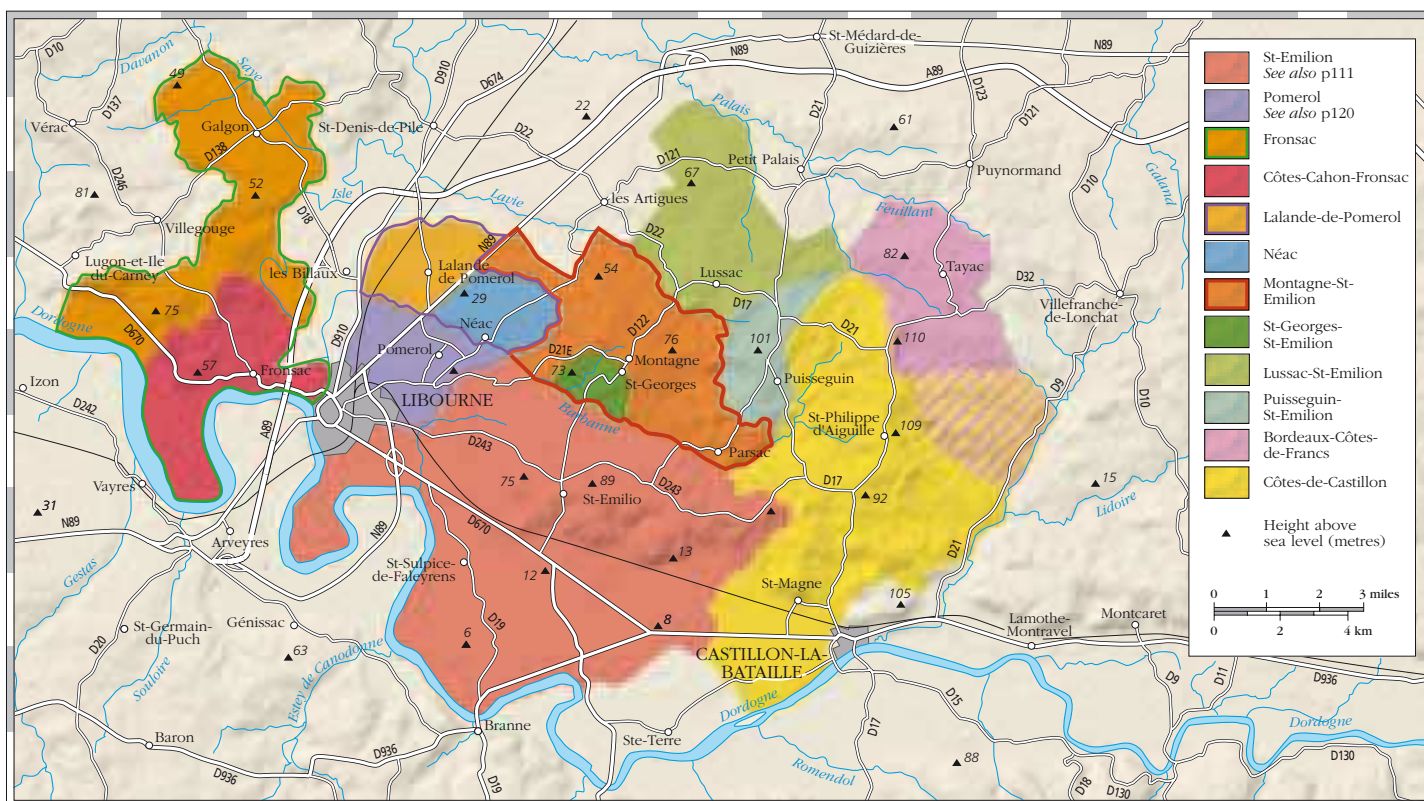
IN THE MID-1950S, many Libournais wines were harsh, and even the best AOCs did not enjoy the reputation they do today. Most growers believed that they were cultivating too much Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec for their particular *terroir* and decided that they should plant more vines of Cabernet Franc. A few growers argued for the introduction of Merlot, which was allowed by the regulations, because it would give their wines the suppleness they desired. Even if they could have agreed on united action, changing the *encépagement* of an entire district would have been very a very long-term project, as well as being extremely expensive. However, in 1956, frost devastated the vineyards, forcing the Libournais growers into action. With poor, short crops inevitable for some years to come, prices soared, enabling them to carry out the massive replanting which, ironically, they could not have afforded prior to the crisis. This devastation led to the wholesale cultivation of Merlot and Cabernet Franc, which established a completely different style of wines, providing the catalyst for the spectacular postwar success of St.-Émilion and Pomerol.

THE GARAGISTE EFFECT

In 1979, Jacques Thienpont, owner of Pomerol’s classy Vieux Château Certan, unintentionally created what would become the “*vin de garagiste*” craze, when he purchased a neighboring plot of land and created a new wine called Le Pin. With a very low yield, 100 percent Merlot, and 100 percent new oak, the decadently rich Le Pin directly challenged Pétrus, less than a mile away. It was widely known that Thienpont considered Vieux Château Certan to be at least the equal of Pétrus, and he could certainly claim it to be historically more famous, but Pétrus regularly got much the higher price, which dented his pride. So Le Pin was born, and although he did not offer his fledgling wine at the same price as Pétrus, it soon trounced it on the auction market. In 1999, a case of 1982 Le Pin was trading at a massive \$19,000, while a case of 1982 Château Pétrus could be snapped up for a “mere” \$13,000. By 2003, the Pétrus had traded up to a mind-boggling \$26,000 and yet Le Pin sold for \$44,000. Unfortunately, Jacques Thienpont died in 1985, long before his little experiment yielded such crazy prices. By the late 1980s, however, Le Pin’s extraordinary financial success had become so obvious to a number of *vignerons* in neighboring St.-Emilion that they attempted to replicate it with small plots of land in their own appellation: Jean-Luc Thunevin with Château de Valandraud (first vintage 1991), Gérard and Dominique Bécot with Château La Gomerie (first vintage 1995), Von Neippberg with Château La Mondotte (first vintage 1996), Francis Gaboriaud with Château L’Hermitage (first vintage 1997), Alain and Françoise Raynaud with Château Quinault l’Enclos (first vintage 1997), and Château

THE LIBOURNAIS DISTRICT *See also p63*

This great red-wine area includes St.-Émilion, Pomerol, and their satellites. In the Libournais district, the Merlot grape reigns supreme, its succulent fruit essential to the local style.



Teyssier with Le Dôme (first vintage 1998). But it was Le Pin's cellar, which is truly a garage under a battered farmhouse, that inspired French wine writer Michel Bettane to coin the phrase "*vins de garage*." It is interesting how this new breed of wines has polarized critics into opposite camps, as if there is something intrinsically right or wrong with producing wine on a small scale. Because that is all it is, and the *garagistes* are popping up in the Graves, the Médoc, and well beyond the borders of Bordeaux. While some consumers (all wealthy) are happy to pay any price demanded for these wines, others seem to take offense at the very mention of the word *garagiste*. Both positions are bizarre. Besides, where do you draw the line between a *vin de garage* and an honest *lieu-dit* wine? Oh dear Jacques and Michel: what have you started?

THE SATELLITE APPELLATIONS OF ST.-ÉMILION AND POMEROL

The wines of Lussac, Montagne, Parsac, Puisseguin, Sables, and St.-Georges were once sold as St.-Émilion, but in 1936 these outer areas were given their own AOCs. This was done to protect the

image of the greatest St.-Émilion châteaux, but through the historical use of this famous name these areas won the right to attach the name of St.-Émilion to theirs. The tiny Sables area was later reclaimed by the St.-Émilion AOC, and in 1972 a new appellation, Montagne-St.-Émilion, was created. This appellation, which covered a large region, could be adopted by growers who had previously used either Parsac-St.-Émilion AOC or St.-Georges-St.-Émilion AOC, but the executive order that created Montagne-St.-Émilion AOC in 1972 did not disband either of these smaller appellations.

So, a situation arose in which growers could choose between two very similar AOCs. In 1993, however, Parsac-St.-Émilion was finally disbanded, since it was noticed that virtually all the producers of Parsac-St.-Émilion were not using the original AOC but opting for Montagne-St.-Émilion AOC. Many growers in St.-Georges-St.-Émilion, however, were still using the original appellation, and so disbanding this would not have been so simple. All five combined St.-Émilion AOCs would in fact benefit from merging, since they all produce wines of essentially similar nature, under identical regulations.

THE GENERIC APPELLATIONS OF THE LIBOURNAIS AND FRONSADAIS

BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR CÔTES-DE-FRANCS AOC

See Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Francis AOC

BORDEAUX- CÔTES-DE-FRANCS AOC

This forgotten area's vineyards are contiguous with those of Puisseguin-St.-Émilion and Lussac-St.-Émilion, and have a very similar clay-limestone over limestone and iron-pan soil. The Bordeaux Supérieur version of these wines differs only in its higher alcohol level.

RED These are essentially robust, rustic, full-bodied wines that are softened by their high Merlot content.

☞ Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 5–10 years

WHITE Little-seen dry, semisweet, and sweet wines of clean, fruity character.

☞ Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, Muscadelle

🕒 5–10 years

BORDEAUX-CÔTES-DE- FRANCS LIQUOREUX AOC

This style of Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Francis wine must by law be naturally sweet and made from overripe grapes that possess at least 223 grams of sugar per liter. The wines must have a minimum level of 11.5 percent alcohol and 27 grams of residual sugar per liter.

WHITE Rich, genuinely *liquoreux* wines; only tiny amounts are made.

☞ Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, Muscadelle

🕒 5–15 years

CANON-FRONSAC AOC

See Côtes-Canon-Fronsac AOC

CÔTES-CANON- FRONSAC AOC

Fronsac AOC and Côtes-Canon-Fronsac AOC will no doubt be the next wines to be "discovered" by budget-minded Bordeaux drinkers. The best of these wines are Côtes-Canon-Fronsac AOC, sometimes called Canon-Fronsac AOC. With lower yields and stricter selection, these wines could equal all but the best of St.-Émilion and Pomerol.

RED Full-bodied, deep-colored, rich, and vigorous wines with dense fruit, fine spicy character, plenty of finesse, and good length.

☞ Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 7–20 years

CÔTES-DE-CASTILLON AOC

This is an attractive hilly area squeezed between St.-Émilion, the Dordogne River, and the Dordogne *département*. Its wine has long been appreciated for quality, consistency, and value. These wines used to be sold as Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur wine until the 1989 vintage, when Côtes-de-Castillon received its own AOC status.

RED Firm, full-bodied, fine-colored wines with dense fruit and finesse.

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

🕒 5–15 years

FRONSAC AOC

This generic appellation covers the communes of La Rivière, St.-Germain-la-Rivière, St.-Aignan, Saillans, St.-Michel-de-Fronsac, Galgon, and Fronsac.

RED These full-bodied, well-colored wines have good chunky fruit and a fulsome, chocolaty character. Not quite the spice or finesse of Côtes-Canon-Fronsac, but splendid value.



☞ Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 6–15 years

LALANDE-DE- POMEROL AOC

This good-value appellation covers the communes of Lalande-de-Pomerol and Néac. No matter how good they are, even the best are but pale reflections of classic Pomerol.

RED Firm, meaty Merlots with lots of character but without Pomerol's texture and richness.

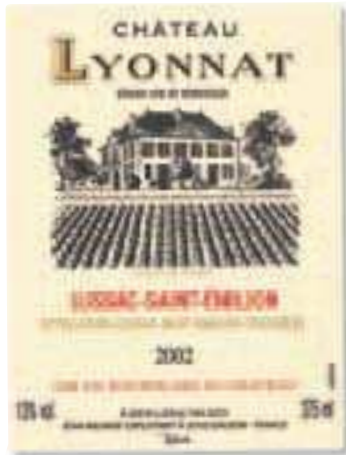
☞ Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 7–20 years

LUSSAC-ST.-ÉMILION AOC

A single-commune appellation 5.5 miles (9 kilometers) northeast of St.-Émilion.

RED The wines produced on the small gravelly plateau to the west of this commune are the lightest, but have the most finesse. Those produced on the cold, clayey lands to the north are robust and earthy, while those from the



clay-limestone in the southeast have the best balance of color, richness, and finesse.

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

🕒 5–12 years

MONTAGNE-ST-ÉMILION AOC

This appellation includes St.-Georges-St-Émilion, a former commune that is today part of Montagne-St.-Émilion. St.-Georges-St-Émilion AOC and Montagne-St.-Émilion AOC are the best of all the appellations that append “St.-Émilion” to their names.

RED Full, rich, and intensely flavored wines that mature well.

🍷 Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 5–15 years

NÉAC AOC

This appellation has not been employed since the proprietors have been allowed to use the Lalande-de-Pomerol appellation. See Lalande-de-Pomerol AOC.

POMEROL AOC



The basic wines of Pomerol fetch higher prices than those of any other Bordeaux appellation. The average Merlot content of a typical Pomerol is around 80 percent.

RED It is often said that these are the most velvety-rich of the world’s classic wines, but they also have the firm tannin structure that is necessary for successful long-term maturation and development. The finest also have surprisingly deep color, masses of spicy-oak complexity, and great finesse.

🍷 Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 5–10 years (modest growths);
10–30 years (great growths)

PUISSEGUIN-ST-ÉMILION AOC



This commune has a clay-limestone topsoil over a stony subsoil and the wines it produces tend to be more rustic than those of the Montagne-St.-Émilion AOC.

RED These are rich and robust wines with a deep flavor and lots of fruit and color, but they are usually lacking in finesse.

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

🕒 5–10 years

ST-ÉMILION AOC

These wines must have a minimum of 10.5 percent alcohol, but in years when chaptalization (the addition of sugar to grape juice to increase alcohol content) is allowed, there is also a maximum level of 13 percent.



RED Even in the most basic St.-Émilions the ripe, spicy-juiciness of the Merlot grape should be supported by the firmness and finesse of the Cabernet Franc. The great châteaux achieve this superbly: they are full, rich, and concentrated, chocolaty and fruitcakey.

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

🕒 6–12 years (modest growths);
12–35 years (great growths)

ST.-GEORGES-ST-ÉMILION AOC

Along with the Montagne region of Montagne-St-Émilion, this is the best parish of the outer areas.

RED These are deep-colored, plummy wines with juicy, spicy fruit, and good supporting tannic structure.

🍷 Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot

🕒 5–15 years



SATELLITE APPELLATIONS IN THE ST-ÉMILION AREA

It would make sound commercial sense if all the St.-Émilion satellites (Lussac-St.-Émilion, Puisseguin-St.-Émilion, and St.-O-Georges-St. Émilion) were combined under the Montagne St.-Émilion appellation.

SAINT-ÉMILION

The Romans were the first to cultivate the vine in St.-Émilion, a small area that has exported its wines to various parts of the world for over eight hundred years. In the first half of the twentieth century it lapsed into obscurity, but in the last forty years it has risen like a phoenix.

ST.-ÉMILION AS WE KNOW IT is a phenomenon of the postwar era, but there are many reminders of this wine's ancient past—from the famous Château Ausone, named after the Roman poet Ausonius, to the walled hilltop village of St.-Émilion itself, which has survived almost unchanged since the Middle Ages. In contrast, the Union des Producteurs, the largest single-appellation *coopérative* in France, is a graphic illustration of the best in modern, technologically sophisticated wine production. Today, there are over a thousand *crus* within 6 miles (10 kilometers) of the village of St.-Émilion that may use this appellation.

THE APPEAL OF ST.-ÉMILION WINES

For those who find red wines too harsh or too bitter, St.-Émilion, with its elegance and finesse, is one of the easiest with which to make the transition from white to red. The difference between the wines of St.-Émilion and those of its satellites is comparable to the difference between silk and satin, whereas the difference between St.-Émilion and Pomerol is like the difference between silk and

velvet: the quality is similar, but the texture is not—although, of course, we must be humble about categorizing such complex entities as wine areas. It could justifiably be argued that the *graves* (gravelly terrain) that produces two of the very best St.-Émilions—Châteaux Cheval-Blanc and Figeac—has more in common with Pomerol than with the rest of the appellation.



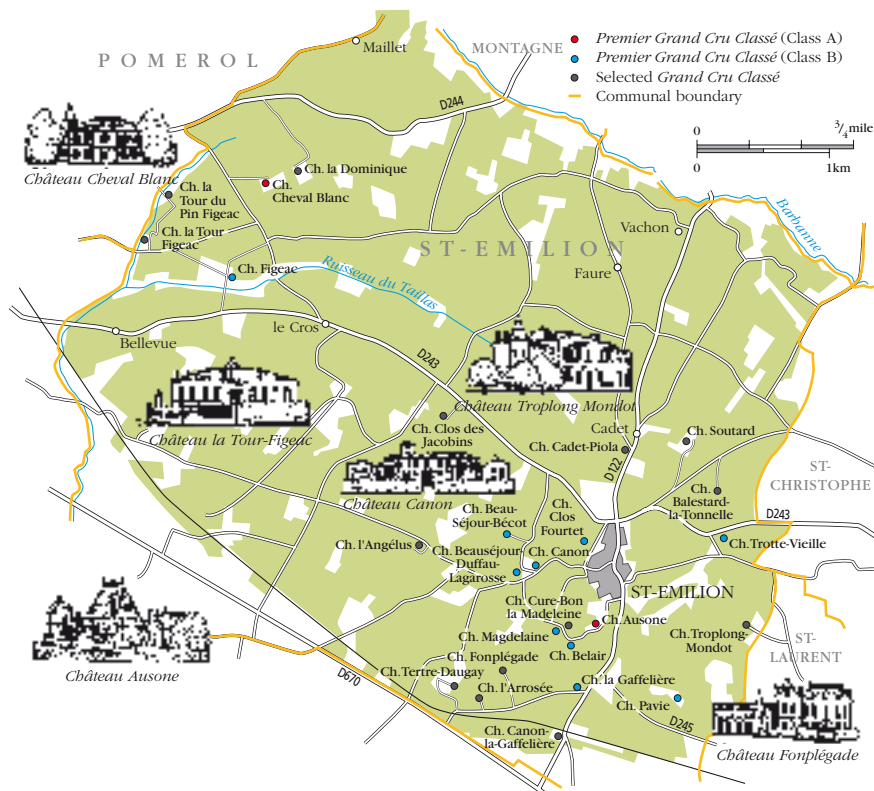
CHÂTEAU FIGEAC

Without doubt in a class of its own within Class B of premiers grands crus classés, Château Figeac has long fought to be classified with Ausone and Cheval Blanc.

A LARGE PRODUCTION

If you look at the map of the entire Bordeaux region (see p63) you will be amazed by how small this appellation of a thousand châteaux really is. It is a surprising but regular occurrence that

an appellation as small as St.-Émilion produces more wine than all the famous appellations of the Médoc combined—St.-Estèphe, Pauillac, St.-Julien, and Margaux.



CHÂTEAU AUSONE

From its hilltop perch, this ancient château commands a spectacular view of the sweeping vineyards below.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF ST.-ÉMILION

St.-Émilion wines were first classified in 1958, with the intention that the classification be revised every 10 years according to the performance of properties during the previous decade. Three basic categories were established: *premier grand cru classé*, *grand cru classé*, and *grand cru*. Of the 12 châteaux that were classified *premiers grands crus classés*, Ausone and Cheval-Blanc were placed in a superior subsection. The rest were listed alphabetically, not qualitatively, as were the 64 *grands crus classés*. The classification was revised in 1969, 1985 (some six years late), and again in 1996—which brought the reclassification period back to that anticipated. Beware the distinction between

grand cru (unclassified growths) and *grand cru classé* (classified growths) because the difference is considerable. In St.-Émilion, *grand cru* merely indicates a minimum alcoholic strength 0.5% higher than that required by the basic St.-Émilion appellation, and a slightly lower yield. Any producer may apply for a *grand cru*, and hundreds do so. It is not a classification, but merely an adjunct to the appellation, and would be more accurately conveyed as a new appellation called St.-Émilion Supérieur, since the difference between *grand cru* and *grand cru classé* is akin to that between basic Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur.

ST.-ÉMILION CLASSIFICATIONS OF 1958, 1969, 1985, AND 1996
Incorporating vineyard soil classification

PREMIER GRAND CRU CLASSÉ CLASS A	- Château la Carte ⁴ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and ancient sand</i>	Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	77 Château la Tour du Pin Figeac (Owner: Moueix) Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>
1 Château Ausone Soil: <i>Côte and St.-Émilion plateau</i>	- Château Chapelle-Madeleine ⁵	50 Château Haut-Sarpe ³ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion and St.-Christophe plateaux and côtes</i>	78 Château Trimoulet Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>
22 Château Cheval Blanc Soil: <i>Graves and ancient sand</i>	24 Château le Châtelet ⁹ Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	51 Château Jean Faure ¹ Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	- Château Trois-Moulins ⁴ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>
PREMIER GRAND CRU CLASSÉ CLASS B	25 Château Chauvin Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	52 Château Laniole ³ Soil: <i>Ancient sand and pied de côte</i>	79 Château Troplong Mondot Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>
3 Château l'Angélys ⁷ Soil: <i>Pied de côte and ancient sand</i>	26 Château Clos des Jacobins Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	53 Château Larcis Ducasse Soil: <i>Côte and pied de côte</i>	80 Château Villemaurine Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>
4 Château Beau-Séjour Bécot ^{1,7} Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	27 Château la Clotte Soil: <i>Côte</i>	54 Château Larmande Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	81 Château Yon-Figeac Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>
5 Château Beauséjour (Duffau Lagarosse) Soil: <i>Côte</i>	28 Château la Clusière Soil: <i>Côte</i>	55 Château Laroque ⁸ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	See opposite for an explanation of soil types.
6 Château Belair Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	29 Château Corbin Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	56 Château Laroze Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	Notes
7 Château Canon Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	30 Château Corbin Michotte Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	57 Clos la Madeleine ⁹ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	¹ One <i>premier grand cru classé</i> and six <i>grands crus classés</i> demoted in the 1985 revision.
8 Château-Figeac Soil: <i>Graves and ancient sand</i>	31 Château la Couspaude ^{1,8} Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	58 Château la Marzelle (now Château Lamarzelle) Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>	² This property was not in the original 1958 classification, nor was it included in the 1969 revision, but was awarded <i>grand cru classé</i> status in 1985.
9 Clos Fourtet Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and ancient sand</i>	32 Château Coutet ¹ Soil: <i>Côte</i>	59 Château Matras ³ Soil: <i>Pied de côte</i>	³ These properties were not in the original 1958 classification, but were awarded <i>grand cru classé</i> status in the 1969 revision.
10 Château la Gaffelière Soil: <i>Côte, pied de côte</i>	Château le Couvent ⁶ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	60 Château Mauvezin Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	⁴ These two properties were merged with <i>premier grand cru classé</i> Château Beau-Séjour-Bécot in 1979. Wines bearing both labels can be found up to the 1978 vintage, and it is possible that they might reappear sometime in the future, particularly as the expansion of Château Beau-Séjour-Bécot vineyard was primarily responsible for its demotion in the 1985 classification.
11 Château Magdelaine Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau, côte, and pied de côte</i>	33 Couvent des Jacobins ³ Soil: <i>Ancient sand and pied de côte</i>	61 Château Moulin du Cadet Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	⁵ This property was merged with <i>premier grand cru classé</i> Château Ausone in 1970. Wines with this label can be found up to the 1969 vintage.
12 Château Pavie Soil: <i>Côte and St.-Émilion plateau</i>	34 Château Croque Michotte ⁹ Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>	62 Clos de l'Oratoire ³ Soil: <i>Pied de côte</i>	⁶ This property changed hands prior to the 1985 revision and did not apply to be considered; it was not demoted, but simply ignored.
13 Château Trottevieille Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	35 Château Curé Bon la Madeleine Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	63 Château Pavie Décèsse Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	⁷ Two properties were promoted to <i>premier grand cru classé</i> (B) in 1996.
GRAND CRU CLASSÉ	36 Château Dassault ³ Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	64 Château Pavie Macquin Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau, côte, and sandy gravel</i>	⁸ Four properties were promoted to <i>grand cru classé</i> in 1996.
14 Château l'Arrosée Soil: <i>Côte</i>	37 Château la Dominique Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>	65 Château Pavillon-Cadet ⁹ Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	⁹ Eight properties were demoted to <i>grand cru</i> in 1996.
15 Château Baleau (now Château Côte de Baleau) ^{1,3} Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	38 Château Faurie de Souchard Soil: <i>Pied de côte</i>	66 Château Petit-Faurie-de-Soutard Soil: <i>Ancient sand and côte</i>	
16 Château Balestard la Tonnelle Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	39 Château Fonplégade Soil: <i>Côte</i>	67 Château le Prieuré Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	
17 Château Bellevue Soil: <i>Côte and St.-Émilion plateau</i>	40 Château Fonroque Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	68 Château Ripeau Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	
18 Château Bergat Soil: <i>Côte and St.-Émilion plateau</i>	41 Château Franc-Mayne Soil: <i>Côte</i>	69 Château St.-Georges (Côte Pavie) Soil: <i>Côte and pied de côte</i>	
19 Château Berliquet ² Soil: <i>Côte and pied de côte</i>	42 Château Grand Barrail Lamarzelle Figeac ⁹ Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	70 Clos St.-Martin Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	
20 Château Cadet-Bon ^{1,8} Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	43 Château Grand Corbin ⁹ Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	71 Château Sansonnet ⁹ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	
21 Château Cadet-Piola Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	44 Château Grand-Corbin-Despaigne ⁹ Soil: <i>Ancient sand</i>	72 Château la Serre Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	
22 Château Canon-la-Gaffelière Soil: <i>Pied de côte and sandy-gravel</i>	45 Château Grand Mayne Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	73 Château Soutard Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	
23 Château Cap de Mourlin Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	46 Château Grandes Murailles ^{1,8} Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	74 Château Tertre Daugay ³ Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau and côte</i>	
	47 Château Grand-Pontet Soil: <i>Côte and ancient sand</i>	75 Château la Tour Figeac Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>	
	48 Château Guadet St.-Julien Soil: <i>St.-Émilion plateau</i>	76 Château la Tour du Pin Figeac (Owner: Giraud-Belivier) Soil: <i>Ancient sand and graves</i>	
	49 Château Haut-Corbin		

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY

LOCATION
 St.-Émilion is on the right bank of the Dordogne, 80 miles (50 kilometers) east of Bordeaux.

CLIMATE
 The climate is less maritime and more continental than that of the Médoc, with a greater variation in daily temperatures—there is also slightly more rain during spring, and substantially less during summer and winter.

ASPECT
 The village of St.-Émilion sits on a plateau where vines grow at an altitude of 80–330 ft (25–100 m). These vineyards are quite steep, particularly south of the village where two slopes face each other. The plateau continues eastward in the form of hilly knolls. North and west of the village, the vineyards are on flatter ground.

SOIL
 St.-Émilion's soil is extremely complex (see "The question of quality," left) and is part of the area known as "Pomerol-Figeac *graves*" that encompasses the châteaux Cheval Blanc and Figeac.

VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION
 Some of the *vin de presse*, usually the first pressing only, is considered necessary by many châteaux. Skin-contact usually lasts for 15–21 days, but may last up to four weeks. Some wines spend as little as 12 months in cask, but the average is nearer to 15–22 months.

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

THE QUESTION OF QUALITY

The diverse nature of St.-Émilion's soil has led to many generalizations that attempt to relate the quantity and character of the wines produced to the soils from which they come. Initially the wines were lumped into two crude categories, *côtes* (literally "hillside" or "slope") and *graves* (literally "gravelly terrain"). The term *côtes* was supposed to describe fairly full-bodied wines that develop quickly; the term *graves*, fuller, firmer, and richer wines that take longer to mature.

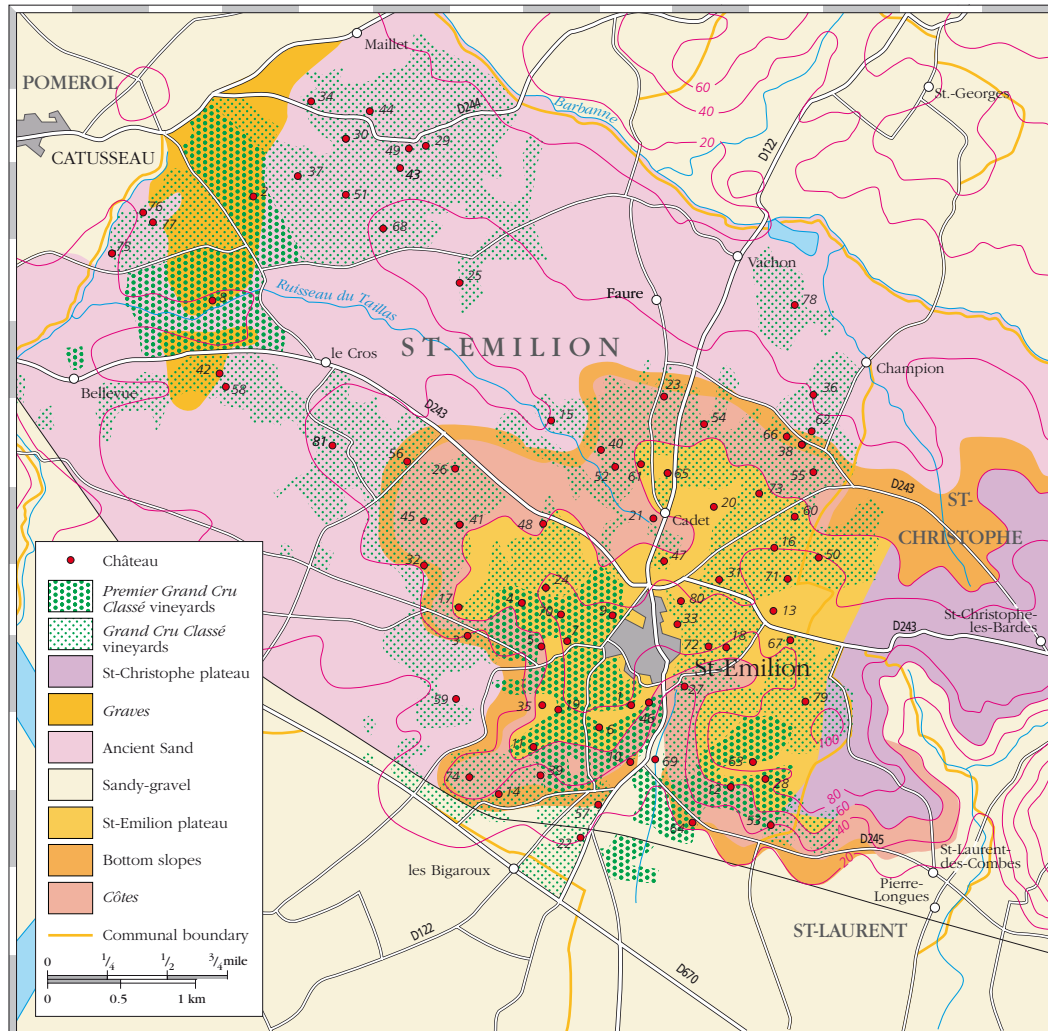
The simplicity was appealing, but it ignored the many wines produced on the stretch of deep sand between St.-Émilion and Pomerol, and those of the plateau, which has a heavier topsoil than the *côtes*. It also failed to distinguish between the eroded *côtes* and the deep-soiled bottom slopes. But most importantly, it ignored the fact that many châteaux are spread across more than one soil type (see the list of classified growths opposite) and that they have various other factors of *terroir*, such as aspect and drainage, which affect the character and quality of a wine (see Soil Survey of St.-Émilion, below).

The map below shows the positions of the 81 classified châteaux of St.-Émilion, listed with their soil types (see opposite). Châteaux la Carte, Chapelle-Madeleine, le Couvent, and Trois-Moulins are listed but do not appear on the map (see notes opposite).

SOIL SURVEY OF ST-ÉMILION

The map below shows the area covered by *premier grand cru classé* and *grand cru classé* châteaux. Each soil type is

described (right) and color keyed on the map. The numbers of the châteaux are listed opposite.



ST-CHRISTOPHE PLATEAU
 Clay-limestone and clay-sand topsoil over limestone and *terra rossa* subsoil. *Terra rossa* is a red, claylike soil.

GRAVES
 Deep gravel topsoil with a subsoil of large-grain sand over a very deep, hard, and impermeable sedimentary rock called *molasse*. The gravel is similar to that found in the Médoc.

ANCIENT SAND
 Thick blanket of large-grain sand over a subsoil of *molasse*. The bulk of this sand extends northeast from the village of St.-Émilion toward Pomerol. Although this area seems to have a gentle slope all around it, and the sand is very permeable, the *molasse* below is flat and impermeable. The water collects, saturating root systems and increasing soil acidity. Some châteaux benefit greatly from underground drainage pipes.

SANDY-GRAVEL
 Sandy and sandy-gravel topsoil over sandy-gravel, ferruginous gravel, and iron-pan.

ST-ÉMILION PLATEAU
 Shallow clay-limestone and clay sand, shell debris, and silt topsoil over eroded limestone subsoil.

BOTTOM SLOPES
 The gentler bottom slopes of the *côtes* have a deep, reddish-brown, sandy-loam topsoil over yellow sand subsoil.

CÔTES
 The lower-middle to upper slopes of the *côtes* have a shallow, calcareous, clay-silty-loam topsoil with a high active lime content. Quite sandy on the middle slopes, the topsoil thins out higher up. The subsoil is mostly *molasse*, not the impermeable type found under the ancient sand and *graves*, but a weathered, absorbent *molasse* of limestone or sandstone.

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF SAINT-ÉMILION

CHÂTEAU ANGÉLUS Premier Grand Cru Classé (B) ★★



This is a large property with a single plot of vines on the south-facing *côtes*. At one time the château produced wines in the old "farmyard" style, but that ended with the 1980 vintage. Two-thirds of the wine is matured for 14 to 16 months in wood with 100 per cent new oak. This château is a rising star, and was promoted to *premier grand cru classé* (B) in 1996.

RED This is a soft, silky, and seductive wine. The luxury of new oak is having a positive effect on the quality, character, and aging potential of this wine.

☞ Merlot 50%, Cabernet 45%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *Carillon de l'Angelus*

CHÂTEAU L'ARROSÉE Grand Cru Classé ★★★

This property sits on the *côtes* above the local *coopérative*. Through excellent selection of only its finest grapes, it has consistently produced wines that are a class above those of many of its peers.

RED This medium- to full-bodied wine has a lovely ruby color, a voluptuous bouquet, and soft, creamy-rich fruit backed up by supple oak tannin.

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

🕒 5–15 years

Second wine: *Les Coteaux du Château l'Arrosée*

CHÂTEAU AUSONE Premier Grand Cru Classé (A) ★★★

After gifted winemaker Pascal Delbeck took control of Château Ausone in 1975, this prestigious property produced wines of stunning quality, and it now deserves its superstar status. In 1997, after a power struggle between the two owners, Alain Vauthier took control

and fired Delbeck and hired Michel Rolland as consultant. The vineyard of Château Ausone has a privileged southeast exposure and its vines are fairly established at between 40 and 45 years of age. They are capable of yielding very concentrated wines, which are then matured in wood for between 16 and 22 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED These rich, well-colored wines have opulent aromas and scintillating flavors. They are full in body, compact in structure, and refined in character, with masses of spicy-cassis fruit and creamy-oak undertones. These wines are the quintessence of class, complexity, and finesse.

☞ Cabernet Franc 50%, Merlot 50%

🕒 15–45 years

CHÂTEAU BALESTARD LA TONNELLE Grand Cru Classé ★

The label of this wine bears a 15th-century poem by François Villon that cites the name of the château. One-third of the wine is matured in 100 percent new oak for up to 24 months, one-third is aged in two-year-old barrels, and the remainder rests in stainless-steel vats until bottling, when it is all blended together.

RED The gentle, ripe aromas of this wine belie its staunchly traditional style. It is a full-bodied wine of great extract, tannin, and acidity that requires time to soften, but it has masses of fruit, and so matures gracefully.

☞ Merlot 65%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 10%, Malbec 5%

🕒 10–30 years

Second wine: *Les Tourelles de Balestard*

CHÂTEAU BEAUSÉJOUR (Owner: Duffau-Lagarosse) Premier Grand Cru Classé (B) ★★

These little-seen wines consistently underwhelmed critics until the 1980s, since when Château Beauséjour began to produce darker, fuller wines with more class, but I was not that impressed until the stellar class 2000 vintage.

RED Lovely rich wine, with concentrated fruit, and great potential longevity from 2000 onward.

☞ Merlot 50%, Cabernet Franc 25%, Cabernet Sauvignon 25%

🕒 7–15 years

Second wine: *La Croix de Mazerat*

CHÂTEAU BEAU-SÉJOUR BÉCOT Premier Grand Cru Classé (B) ★★

Since 1979, this property has almost doubled in size by merging with two *grands crus classés*, Château la Carte and Château Trois Moulins. In 1985, Beau-Séjour Bécot was the only *premier grand cru classé* to be demoted in the revision of the St-Émilion classification. The demotion was not due to its quality or performance, but because of its expansion. However, the general application of such criteria would mean demoting nearly all the Bordeaux châteaux classified in 1855! The problem was that expansion within reasonable limits is allowed in the Médoc, but not in St-Émilion. This has since been rectified and in 1996 this château was promoted and is once again a *premier grand cru classé* (B). The wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for 18 months, with 90 percent new oak.

RED Once lightweight and high-tone, this wine is now full, rich, and truly characterful. The silky Merlot fruit develops quickly, but is backed up with creamy new oak.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%

🕒 7–25 years

Second wine: *La Tournelle des Moines*

CHÂTEAU BELAIR Premier Grand Cru Classé (B) ★★

Pascal Delbeck, the gifted winemaker formerly of Château Ausone, lives here and makes the wine with the same care and attention that he used to apply at Ausone. The wine is matured in wood for 16 to 20 months. Up to half is aged in new oak, the rest in casks that have been used for one wine at Ausone. This is one of the very best *premiers grands crus*.

RED This is a deep-colored, full-bodied wine with a rich flavor of plums, chocolate, black cherries, and cassis. It has great finesse, an alluring style, and a scintillating, spicy-cedarwood complexity.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 40%

🕒 10–35 years

Second wine: *Roc Blanquet*

CHÂTEAU BELLEVUE Grand Cru Classé

This small property was originally called "Fief-de-Bellevue" and belonged to the Lacaze family from 1642 to 1938. It is situated on the *côtes* and produces a wine that is seldom seen outside France.

RED No better than many unclassified St-Émilions.

☞ Merlot 67%, Cabernet Franc 16.5%, Cabernet Sauvignon 16.5%

🕒 5–10 years

CHÂTEAU BERGAT Grand Cru Classé ②

This small vineyard is managed by Philippe Castéja of Château Trotteville. Its wine is rarely seen and I have never tasted it.

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

CHÂTEAU BERLIQUET Grand Cru Classé ★★

This was the only property to be upgraded to *grand cru classé* in the 1985 reclassification. With Patrick Valette consulting since 1997 there has been an upward trend in quality, and if this continues it would be difficult to deny Berliquet *premier grand cru classé* status during a future revision. The wine is made under the supervision of the local *coopérative*. It is fermented in stainless-steel vats and matured in wood for 18 months, with 30 percent new oak.

RED These are deep, dark, and dense wines with spicy-cassis fruit and good vanilla oak.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 30%

🕒 10–30 years

CHÂTEAU CADET-BON Grand Cru Classé ★

This property was demoted from *grand cru classé* status in the 1985 reclassification, but after a period of progress Cadet-Bon was reinstated in the 1996 reclassification. Quality continues to improve.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 40%

CHÂTEAU CADET-PIOLA Grand Cru Classé ★

With the exception of the vintages of 1980 and 1981, which were very light, this property usually shows great consistency and exquisite style. Up to 50 percent of the wine is matured in new oak.

RED These are full-bodied, intensely flavored wines with powerful, new-oak character and great tannic strength.

☞ Merlot 51%, Cabernet Sauvignon 28%, Cabernet Franc 18%, Malbec 3%

🕒 12–25 years

Second wine: *Chevalier de Malte*

CHÂTEAU CANON

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)

★★★

Many years ago this château used to produce a second wine called "St.-Martin-de-Mazerat," which was the old parish name before Château Canon was absorbed by St.-Émilion. Excellent wines were made under Eric Forner and although he sold out in 1996 the quality has been maintained. In summer 2000 the new owners, Chanel Inc., bought the nearby property Curé Bon la Madeleine with INAO agreement to incorporate it into Canon from the 2000 vintage. So goodbye Curé Bon! The *grand vin*, fermented in oak vats and matured in wood for 20 months with 50 percent new oak, is one of the best of St.-Émilion's *premiers grands crus classés*.

RED These wines have a deep purple color, an opulent cassis bouquet, and are very rich and voluptuous on the palate with masses of juicy Merlot fruit and spicy complexity.

🍷 Merlot 55%, Cabernet Franc 40%, Cabernet Sauvignon 4%

🕒 8–30 years

Second wine: *Clos J. Canon*

CHÂTEAU
CANON-LA-GAFFELIÈRE

Grand Cru Classé

★★



Owned since 1985 by Comte Von Neipperg, Château Canon-la-Gaffelière is one of the oldest properties in St.-Émilion. Its wine was fermented in stainless-steel vats until wooden vats were installed in 1997, and the quality soared the very next year. Malolactic fermentation is carried out in barrel and the wines matured for 18 months, with up to 50 percent new oak.

RED This wine has been on form since 1998. It has been really plump, displaying vivid, concentrated, spicy fruit, finishing with creamy oak.

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

🕒 8–20 years

Other wines: *Côte Mignon-la-Gaffelière*

CHÂTEAU
CAP DE MOURLIN

Grand Cru Classé

★

Until 1982 there were two versions of this wine, one bearing the name of Jacques Capdemourlin and one that of Jean Capdemourlin. This property is run by Jacques. The wine is matured in wood for up to 24 months, with one-third new oak.

RED An improving, attractive, well-made, medium-bodied wine, with exquisitely fresh fruit, and a smooth finish.

🍷 Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 25%, Cabernet Sauvignon 12%, Malbec 3%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Mayne d'Artagnon*

CHÂTEAU LA CARTE

Grand Cru Classé

Since 1980, the vineyards of this property have been merged with those of *premier grand cru classé* Château Beau-Séjour-Bécot.

CHÂTEAU
CHAPELLE-MADELEINE

Grand Cru Classé until 1996

Since 1971, these vineyards have been merged with those of *premier grand cru classé* Château Ausone.

CHÂTEAU CHAUVIN

Grand Cru Classé

★

This property's wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak. It is difficult to find, but its quality makes it deserving of better distribution.

RED When on form, Château Chauvin can have excellent color, an aromatic bouquet, full body, and plummy fruit. More hits than misses these days, as the wines are made with an increasing degree of finesse.

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

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Chauvin Variation*

CHÂTEAU
CHEVAL BLANC

Premier Grand Cru Classé (A)

★★★

The unusual aspect of this great wine is its high proportion of Cabernet Franc, which harks back to the pre-1956 era. Switching to a majority of Merlot vines was advantageous for most Libournais properties but keeping a proportion of 60 percent Cabernet Franc was even better for Château Cheval Blanc. In 1998 this château was bought by two businessmen, Albert Frère from Belgium and Bernard Arnault, the head of LVMH. The wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED These wines have all the sweet, spicy richness one expects from a classic St.-Émilion property situated on *graves*.

🍷 Cabernet Franc 60%, Merlot 37%, Malbec 2%, Cabernet Sauvignon 1%

🕒 12–40 years

Second wine: *Le Petit Cheval*

CLOS FOURTET

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)

★★★

This property had an inconsistent record, but has steadily improved throughout the 1990s. The wines are matured in wood for 12 to 18 months, using 70 percent new oak.

RED Opulent and medium-bodied with silky Merlot fruit, gaining in complexity and finesse.

🍷 Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%

🕒 6–12 years

Second wine: *Domaine de Martialis*

CHÂTEAU
CLOS DES JACOBINS

Grand Cru Classé

★

Clos des Jacobins, which is kept in the impeccable style to which all the Cordier properties are accustomed, is impressive even during "off vintages."

RED These are rich, fat wines, bursting with chocolate and black-cherry flavors.

🍷 Merlot 85%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%

🕒 8–25 years

CLOS DE
L'ORATOIRE

Grand Cru Classé

★★

This property belongs to Stephan Von Neipperg, who should develop a cult following for this wine. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These fine, full-flavored wines tend to have great concentration and style.

🍷 Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc 25%

🕒 7–15 years

CLOS ST-MARTIN

Grand Cru Classé

★

These wines are made at Château Côte Baleau alongside those of that property and those of Château Grandes Murailles. Of these three wines, only Clos St.-Martin retained *grand cru classé* status after the reclassification of 1985. It is aged in wood with 25 percent new barrels every four years.

RED Vivid color with ripe Merlot fruit, silky texture, and elegant style.

🍷 Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc 25%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU LA CLOTTE

Grand Cru Classé

②

This property is under the same

ownership as the Logis de la Cadène restaurant in St.-Émilion, where much of its wine is sold. The Libournais *négociant* Jean-Pierre Moueix takes three-quarters of the crop.

RED Although not as consistent as some *grands crus classés*, when successful this estate can make attractive and elegant wines with lots of soft, silky fruit that are a match for its peers.

🍷 Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU
LA CLUSIÈRE

Grand Cru Classé

②

This is a small enclave within the property of Château Pavie and is under the same ownership as Pavie and Château Pavie Décèsse. This wine is fermented in stainless-steel vats and matured in wood (two-year-old barrels from Château Pavie) for up to 24 months.

RED This wine has a certain elegance, but lacks finesse and has a high-tone style that does not appeal to me. To be fair, I must point out that those who appreciate this style often find la Clusière solid and characterful.

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

🕒 5–10 years

CHÂTEAU
CORBIN

Grand Cru Classé

②

This property has the same owners as Château Grand Corbin—the Corbin estate, which is now divided into five separate properties bordering the Pomerol district. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and one-third of the production is matured in 100 percent new oak.

RED Deep-colored, full-bodied, and deliciously rich, but rather rustic for a classified growth.

🍷 Merlot 67%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 33%

🕒 6–12 years

Other wines: *Latour Corbin, Château Corbin-Vieille-Tour*

CHÂTEAU
CORBIN MICHOTTE

Grand Cru Classé

★

This is one of five Corbin and two Michotte estates! This wine is fermented in stainless steel and some is matured in wood, with one-third new oak.

RED A dark, deeply flavored, full-bodied wine that has rich, juicy Merlot fruit and some finesse.

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

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *Les Abeilles*

CHÂTEAU CÔTE DE BALEAU

Grand Cru Classé until 1985



This property was unjustly demoted from its *grand cru classé* status in the 1985 revision. Côte de Baleau deserves its former classification and is under the same ownership as Château Grandes Murailles and Clos St.-Martin, the former of which was also unfairly demoted. This wine is aged in wood and 25 percent of the barrels are renewed every four years.

RED Full, rich, and well-balanced wines that have good fruit, some fat, and an attractive underlying vanilla character.

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

🕒 4–12 years

Second wine: *Des Roches Blanches*

CHÂTEAU LA COUSPAUDE

Grand Cru Classé



This property was demoted from its *grand cru classé* status in 1985 but, following a string of good vintages, was promoted back to its original classification in 1996, since when the quality has continued to improve. The wine is matured in wood, with up to 80 percent new oak.

RED This wine now has lots of upfront, juicy-Merlot fruit with an increasing amount of finesse.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 40%

🕒 3–7 years

Second wine: *Hubert*

CHÂTEAU COUTET

Grand Cru Classé until 1985



This property was demoted from its *grand cru classé* status in 1985. It has a record of producing finer wines than la Couspaude (see previous entry), but, unfortunately, has the same lack of consistency.

RED Most vintages have a light but elegant style, with a firm tannin structure.

☞ Cabernet Franc 45%, Merlot 45%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%, Malbec 5%

🕒 4–8 years

COUVENT DES JACOBINS

Grand Cru Classé



The wine from the young vines of this property is not included in its *grand vin*, but is used to make a second wine called “Château Beau Mayne.” One-third of the production is matured in wood, with 100 percent new oak.

RED The delicious, silky-seductive fruit in this consistently well-made wine is very stylish and harmonious.

CHÂTEAU CROQUE MICHOTTE

Grand Cru Classé until 1996



This property certainly deserves its *grand cru classé* status. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for between 18 and 24 months, with up to one-third new oak.

RED A delightful and elegant style of wine, brimming with juicy, soft, and silky Merlot fruit.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 20%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU CURÉ BON LA MADELEINE

Grand Cru Classé

Surrounded by *premiers grands crus classés* such as Ausone, Belair, and Canon, this property has had an excellent record, but was absorbed by Château Canon in the summer of 2000.

CHÂTEAU DASSAULT

Grand Cru Classé



This property was promoted to *grand cru classé* in the 1969 revision of the 1954 St.-Émilion classification. It has an excellent record and more than deserves its classification. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for 12 months, with one-third of the casks being new oak, and undergoes as many as six rackings. With its beautifully understated Lafite-like label, Dassault's presentation is perfect.

RED Supremely elegant wines that always display a delicate marriage of fruit and oak in perfect balance, with fine acidity and supple tannin.

☞ Merlot 65%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Merissac*

CHÂTEAU LA DOMINIQUE

Grand Cru Classé



This property, one of the best of the *grands crus classés*, is situated close to Château Cheval Blanc on the *graves* in the extreme west of St.-Émilion. The wine is fermented in stainless-steel vats that are equipped with grilles to keep the *marc* (residue of pips, stalks, and skin) submerged during the *cuvaison* (skin-contact fermentation). It is matured in wood for 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Very open and expressive wines that are plump and attractive, full of ripe, creamy fruit with elegant underlying oak.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%, Malbec 10%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *St.-Paul de la Dominique*

CHÂTEAU FAURIE DE SOUCHARD

Grand Cru Classé

Lackluster, underperformer.

RED As from 1986 the vintages have increased in color and concentration, but the wines are not special.

☞ Merlot 65%, Cabernet Franc 26%, Cabernet Sauvignon 9%

🕒 4–7 years

Other wines: *Cadet-Peychez*

CHÂTEAU-FIGEAC

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)



Some critics suggest that the unusually high proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon in the *encépagement* (varietal blend) of this great château is wrong, but owner Thierry de Manoncourt refutes this. He has bottles of pure varietal wines produced at Figeac going back 30 years. As far as I am concerned, his blended *grand vin* says it all every year. This château belongs with the elite of Ausone and its *graves* neighbor, Cheval Blanc. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 20 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Impressively ripe, rich, and concentrated wines with fine color, a beautiful bouquet, stunning creamy-ripe fruit, great finesse, and a wonderful spicy complexity.

☞ Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 35%, Cabernet Sauvignon 35%

🕒 12–30 years

Second wine: *La Grange Neuve*

CHÂTEAU FONPLÉGADE

Grand Cru Classé

Under the same ownership as Château la Tour du Pin Figeac, this property belongs to Armand Moueix, cousin of Jean-Pierre Moueix of Château Pétrus *et al.* The wine is matured in wood for 12 to 15 months, using one-third new oak.

RED I used to find this wine astringent and vegetal, earthy even, but then it appeared to pick up, only to lapse. There have been so many false starts in its perceived improvement that I no longer expect any consistency. Even though the best vintages (1982, 1990, 2000, and 2001) have been delightfully clean and attractive, literally bursting with the soft, ripe, juicy fruit flavors of raspberries and strawberries, mostly this is an

austere, tannic wine with attenuated fruit, and lacking style.

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

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *Clos Goudichaud*

CHÂTEAU FONROQUE

Grand Cru Classé



Located just northwest of St.-Émilion itself, this secluded property has belonged to the négociant J.-P. Moueix since 1931. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months.

RED This is a deep-colored, well-made wine with a fine plummy character that shows better on the bouquet and the initial and middle palate than on the finish.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU LA GAFFELIÈRE

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)



This property belongs to Comte Léo de Malet-Roquefort, who also owns the very old estate of Château Tertre Daugay, a *grand cru classé*. After a string of aggressive, ungenerous vintages, Gaffelière has produced increasingly excellent wines since the mid-1980s. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED These wines are concentrated and tannic, but they now have much more finesse, fat, and mouth-tingling richness than previously.

☞ Merlot 65%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%

🕒 12–35 years

Second wine: *Clos la Gaffelière*

Other wines: *Roquefort*

CHÂTEAU LA GOMERIE

Grand Cru



Owned by Gérard and Dominique Bécot of Beau-Séjour-Bécot fame, I rather get the impression that the tiny production of this 100 percent Merlot vinified in 100 percent new oak is the vinous equivalent of giving the finger to the authorities. The unfair demotion of Beau-Séjour-Bécot in 1985 (rectified in 1996) was a cruel and unjustified blow to the Bécots, who had improved the quality of their wine. By producing an unclassified superpremium St.-Émilion that demands and receives a higher price than its own *premier grand cru classé*, the Bécots have demonstrated that the classification is meaningless.

RED Masses of rich, ripe Merlot fruit dominate this wine, despite its 100 percent new oak. A stunning wine that deserves its cult following.

☞ Merlot 100%

🕒 4–18 years

CHÂTEAU GRAND-CORBIN-DESPAGNE

Grand Cru Classé until 1996

★①

This part of the Corbin estate was bought by the Despagne family—hence the name. It was demoted in the 1996 St.-Émilion Classification. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for up to 18 months, with some new oak.

RED A well-colored wine of full and rich body with plenty of creamy fruit and oak, supported by supple tannin.

☞ Merlot 90%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 7–25 years

Second wine: *Reine-Blanche*

CHÂTEAU GRANDES MURAILLES

Grand Cru Classé

★

This property was demoted from its *grand cru classé* status in 1985, unjustly I think. The wines produced here are better and more consistent than those of many châteaux that were not demoted at that time. Château Grandes Murailles was, however, promoted back to its previous status in the 1996 St.-Émilion Classification. It is under the same ownership as Château Côte de Baleau and Clos St.-Martin, the former of which was also unfairly demoted. The wine is fermented in stainless-steel vats and matured in wood for 20 months, using up to 25 percent new oak.

RED These elegant, harmonious wines have good extract and a supple tannin structure that quickly softens. They are a delight to drink when relatively young, although they also age gracefully.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%

🕒 5–20 years

CHÂTEAU GRAND MAYNE

Grand Cru Classé

★☆☆

This château ferments its wine in stainless-steel vats and ages it in wood with 80 percent new oak.

RED This is a firm, fresh, and fruity style of wine that had a rather inconsistent reputation until the 1990s, when the wines have had much more richness than in previous years.

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

🕒 4–10 years

Second wine: *Les Plantes du Mayne*

Other wines: *Cassevert, Château Beau Mazerat*

CHÂTEAU GRAND-PONTET

Grand Cru Classé

★☆☆

Since 1980 this property has been under the same ownership as

Château Beau-Séjour Bécot. The wine is matured in wood for 12–18 months with 50 percent new oak.

RED After a string of very dull vintages, this property is now producing full-bodied wines of fine quality and character. They are fat and ripe, rich in fruit and tannin, with delightful underlying creamy-oak flavors.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 40%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU GUADET ST.-JULIEN

Grand Cru Classé

★

This property consistently produces wines that well deserve their status. They are matured in wood for 18 to 20 months, using up to one-third new oak.

RED These are wines that show the silky charms of Merlot very early, and then tighten up for a few years before blossoming into finer and fuller wines.

☞ Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 25%

🕒 7–20 years

CHÂTEAU HAUT-CORBIN

Grand Cru Classé

★

This wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with up to 20 percent new oak. Same ownership as Canteneste, with a string of good vintages since the 1990s.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 30%

Second wine: *Vin d'Edouard*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-SARPE

Grand Cru Classé

★

Although not one of the top performers, this château certainly deserves its status. The wine is matured in wood for 20 to 22 months, using 25 percent new oak.

RED Elegant, silky, and stylish medium-bodied wines that are best appreciated when young.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU JEAN FAURE

Grand Cru Classé until 1985

This property was demoted from its *grand cru classé* status in 1985. I have not tasted vintages beyond 1983. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED These wines have good color and easy, attractive, supple fruit.

☞ Cabernet Franc 60%, Merlot 30%, Malbec 10%

🕒 3–8 years

CHÂTEAU L'HERMITAGE

★

Owned by Véronique Gaboriaud, a friend of *garagiste* Jean-Luc

Thunevin, this well-sited property produces just 750 cases annually, with wines matured in 100 percent new oak.

RED So succulent and luscious is the fruit, and so supple the tannins, that this wine is accessible from a remarkably youthful age, yet will still improve.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Sauvignon 40%

🕒 5–15 years

CHATEAU LAMARZELLE

Grand Cru Classé

★

Under the same ownership as Grand Barrail Lamarzelle Figeac, this property preserved its classification in 1996, while the other château was demoted.

RED Forward, fruity wines that have improved throughout the 1990s.

☞ Cabernet Franc 80%, Merlot 20%

🕒 3–7 years

CHÂTEAU LANIOTE

Grand Cru Classé

★

An old property that incorporates the “Holy Grotto” where St.-Émilion lived in the 8th century. The wine is fermented and matured in wood with 25 percent new oak.

RED Stylish medium-bodied wines, with plenty of fresh, elegant fruit.

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

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU LARCIS DUCASSE

Grand Cru Classé

★★

This property, whose vineyard is situated on the Côte de Pavie, matures its wine in vat and wood for 24 months.

RED Fuller, richer wines in the 1990s, particularly in the best years.

☞ Merlot 65%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 35%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU LARMANDE

Grand Cru Classé

★★★

Consistently one of the best *grands crus classés* in St.-Émilion, fermented in stainless-steel vats and matured in wood for 12 to 18 months, with 35 to 50 percent new oak.

RED These superb wines are typified by their great concentration of color and fruit. They are rich and ripe with an abundance of creamy cassis and vanilla flavors that develop into a cedarwood complexity.

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

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Le Cadet de Larmande*

Other wines: *Des Templiers*

CHÂTEAU LAROQUE

Grand Cru Classé

★

Made a *grand cru classé* in 1996, this is one of three *grands crus classés* châteaux that are not situated in the commune of St.-Émilion itself.

RED As smooth and fruity as might be expected, with good tannic edge and increasing oak influence.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%

🕒 4–16 years

Second wine: *Les Tours de Laroque*

CHÂTEAU LAROZE

Grand Cru Classé

★①

This 19th-century château was named Laroze after a “characteristic scent of roses” was found in its wines. The wine is matured in wood for one to three years.

RED The wine does have a soft and seductive bouquet, although I have yet to find “roses” in it. It is an immediately appealing wine of some finesse that is always a delight to drink early.

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

🕒 4–10 years

CHÂTEAU MAGDELAINE

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)

★★★①



This could be considered the Pétrus of St.-Émilion. It is the grandest St.-Émilion estate in the Jean-Pierre Moueix Libournais empire, but as fine as the *terroir* is, and as much as Moueix does to extract maximum quality, the wine falls short of Pétrus. The wine matures in wood for 18 months, with a third new oak.

RED These well-colored wines have excellent concentration, yet great finesse and a certain delicacy. The flavor is multilayered with a long, elegant, and complex finish.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 10–35 years

CHÂTEAU MATRAS

Grand Cru Classé

★

This wine is matured in tank for 12 months, followed by 12 months in one-third new oak. A fine 1990.

RED Opulent, silky fruit.

☞ Cabernet Franc 60%, Merlot 40%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU MAUVEZIN

Grand Cru Classé



This property deserves its *grand cru classé* status. The wine is fermented and matured in new oak.

RED The style usually has been aromatic and supple with some oaky finesse.

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

🕒 7–15 years

CHATEAU MONBOUSQUET

Grand Cru



This was hypermarket owner Gérard Perse's first venture into wine and he openly admits that he bought the property because of its beauty, rather than out of any detailed analysis of its viticultural potential. That said, he has, with the help of consultant Michel Rolland, taken this château to unbelievable heights and, having done so, set about analyzing what could and should be purchased in St.-Émilion from a purely viticultural perspective. He set his sights on Pavie and Pavie Décésse, which he purchased in 1998 and 1997. Monbousquet remains his home.

RED Voluptuous, velvety, and hedonistic, these wines lack neither complexity nor finesse, but they are so delicious to drink that their more profound qualities easily slip by. Or should that be slip down?

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

🕒 4–15 years

CHATEAU MONDOTTE

Grand Cru



Since the 1996 vintage, Stephan Von Neipperg's unclassified *vin de garage* has surpassed the quality and price of his excellent *grand cru classé* Château Canon-la-Gaffelière. Low yield, 100 percent oak, and ludicrous prices.

RED Extraordinary color, density, and complexity for a wine that is not in the slightest bit heavy and makes such charming and easy drinking.

🍷 Cabernet Franc 10%, Merlot 90%

🕒 5–20 years

CHÂTEAU MOULIN DU CADET

Grand Cru Classé



This château, which is farmed by the Libournais *négociant* J.-P. Moueix, is consistently one of the best *grands crus classés*. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with a small proportion of new oak.

RED These wines have good color, a fine bouquet, delightfully perfumed Merlot fruit, excellent finesse, and some complexity. They are not full or powerful, but what they lack in size, they more than make up for in style.

🍷 Merlot 85%, Cabernet Franc 15%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU PAVIE

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)



This top-performing château was purchased in 1998 along with Pavie Décésse and La Clusière by Gérard Perse. Perse used to own a group of hypermarkets, but his love of fine wine began to take over his working life in 1993, when he purchased Monbousquet. The link between Pavie under its previous owners, the Valette family, and now is Michel Rolland, who has been retained as consultant. Although Pavie has produced some of the greatest wines of St.-Émilion in recent decades, the obvious advantage for Rolland is that Perse has poured a small fortune into new installations. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Great, stylish wines packed with creamy fruit and lifted by exquisite new oak. Fabulous concentration since 1998, without losing any finesse, although I will keep an open mind about the 2003 for a decade or so!

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

🕒 8–30 years

CHÂTEAU PAVIE DÉCESSE

Grand Cru Classé



This property was under the same ownership as Château Pavie when the Valette family were the owners, and still is under Perse. Although it is not one of the top *grands crus classés*, it is consistent and certainly worthy of its status.

RED Huge seachange in color, quality, and concentration in the 1998 and 1999 vintage.

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

🕒 6–12 years

CHÂTEAU PAVIE MACQUIN

Grand Cru Classé



This property was named after Albert Macquin, a local grower who pioneered work to graft European vines on to American rootstock.

These wines have noticeably improved throughout the 1990s, when Nicolas Thienpont of Vieux Château Certan has overseen the production.

RED Much richer, with more fruit and new oak in recent years.

🍷 Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 25%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU PETIT-FAURIE-DE-SOUTARD

Grand Cru Classé



This excellent property used to be part of the neighboring Château Soutard, but is now run by Jacques Capdemourlin, who also runs Château Cap de Mourlin and Château Balestard la Tonnelle. Half of its production is matured in wood for up to a year.

RED This wine has soft, creamy aromas on the bouquet, some concentration of smooth Merlot fruit on the palate, a silky texture, and a dry, tannic finish. It is absolutely delicious when young but gains a lot from a little bottle-age.

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

🕒 3–8 years

CHÂTEAU PIPEAU

Grand Cru



Up and coming château, Pipeau is matured in wood for 18 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED Rich, stylish, and quite striking wines that are full of fruit, underpinned by creamy-smoky oak, and easier to drink younger than most St.-Émilions.

🍷 Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Cabernet Sauvignon 10%

🕒 4–10 years

CHÂTEAU LE PRIEURÉ

Grand Cru Classé



This property is under the same ownership as Château Vray Croix de Gay in Pomerol and Château Siaurac in Lalande-de-Pomerol. The wine produced here is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with 25 percent new oak.

RED Light but lengthy wines of some elegance that are best enjoyed when young and fresh.

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

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *L'Olivier*

QUINAULT L'ENCLOS

Grand Cru



Increasingly impressive since being purchased by Dr. Alain Raynaud in 1997, this wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Exceptionally concentrated

and complex.

🍷 Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%, Malbec 5%

🕒 6–20 years

CHÂTEAU ST.-GEORGES (CÔTE PAVIE)

Grand Cru Classé



Owned by Jacques Masson, this small property's vineyard is well situated, lying close to those of châteaux Pavie and la Gaffelière. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wooden casks for 24 months.

RED This is a delicious, medium-bodied wine with plump, spicy-juicy Merlot fruit, made in an attractive early-drinking style that does not lack finesse.

🍷 Merlot 50%, Cabernet Franc 25%, Cabernet Sauvignon 25%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU SANSONNET

Grand Cru Classé until 1996



Supposedly purchased in 1999 by François d'Aulan, the former owner of Piper-Heidsieck and the master puppeteer behind numerous wine-related deals ever since. One of my spies reports that the previous owner is still there. If d'Aulan is serious about taking this château on, then we can expect some investment and improvement. However, if it's just part of one of his deals, don't hold your breath.

RED This wine is inconsistent and many vintages lack concentration, but the 1982, which is very light for the year, is supple and attractive.

🍷 Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%

🕒 3–7 years

CHÂTEAU LA SERRE

Grand Cru Classé



This is another property that is improving tremendously in quality. It occupies two terraces on St.-Émilion's limestone plateau, one in front of the château and one behind. The wine is fermented in lined concrete tanks and matured in wood for 16 months with a small proportion of new oak.

RED This wine initially charms, then goes through a tight and sullen period, making it reminiscent of Château Guadet St.-Julien. Their styles, however, are very different. When young, this is quite a ripe and plump wine, totally dominated by new oak. In time, the fruit emerges to form a luscious, stylish wine of some finesse and complexity.

🍷 Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 8–25 years

Second wine: *Menuts de la Serre*

CHÂTEAU SOUTARD

Grand Cru Classé

★★★

The large and very fine château on this estate was built in 1740 for the use of the Soutard family in the summer. Vines have grown here since Roman times. The wine of Soutard is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to one-third new oak casks.

RED This dark, muscular, and full-bodied wine is made in true *vin de garde* style, which means it improves greatly while aging. It has great concentrations of color, fruit, tannin, and extract. With time it can also achieve great finesse and complexity.

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

🕒 12–35 years

Second wine: *Clos de la Tonnelle*

CHÂTEAU TERTRE DAUGAY

Grand Cru Classé

★

This property was purchased in 1978 by Comte Léo de Malet-Roquefort, the owner of *premier grand cru classé* Château la Gaffelière. The wine of Château Tertre Daugay, which is matured in wood with one-third new oak, is excellent and is getting better by the vintage.

RED These wines are rich, plump, and fruity with a fine bouquet, ripe underlying oak, great finesse, and surprising longevity.

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

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *De Roquefort*

Other wines: *Moulin du Biguey*

CHÂTEAU TERTRE-RÔTEBOEUF

★★★

François Mitjavile's cult wine is yet more proof that the only important classification is made by the consumer. This was considered to be outrageously expensive before Mondotte. The price has not gone down, but in France you can get four or five bottles of Tertre-Rôteboeuf for the cost of one bottle of Mondotte.

RED Huge, oaky, complex, and cultish: the Leonetti of St.-Émilion!

☞ Cabernet Franc 20%, Merlot 80%

🕒 5–20 years

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR FIGEAC

Grand Cru Classé

★★★

This property was attached to Château Figeac in 1879 and today it is one of the best of the *grands crus classés*. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These are fat and supple wines with a very alluring bouquet

and masses of rich, ripe cassis fruit gently supported by smoky-creamy oak.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 40%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR DU PIN FIGEAC

(Giraud-Bélivier)

Grand Cru Classé

②

This property is run by André Giraud, who also owns Château le Caillou in Pomerol. Unfortunately, these wines have never impressed me and so I am unable to recommend them.

☞ Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc 25%

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR DU PIN FIGEAC

(Moueix)

Grand Cru Classé

★★★

This property is one of the best of the *grands crus classés*. It is now part of the Armand Moueix stable of châteaux. The wine is matured in wood for 12 to 15 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These consistently well-made wines always show a beautiful balance of spicy-juicy Merlot fruit, creamy oak, and supple tannin.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 30%, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec 10%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU TRIMOULET

Grand Cru Classé

★

This is an old property overlooking St.-Georges-St.-Émilion. The wine is matured in wood for 12 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED This well-colored wine has an overtly ripe and fruity aroma, lots of creamy-oaky character, a fruit flavor, and supple tannin.

☞ Merlot 60%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%

🕒 7–20 years

CHÂTEAU TROIS-MOULINS

Grand Cru Classé

These vineyards have been incorporated with those of Château Beau-Séjour Bécot since 1979.

CHÂTEAU TROPLONG MONDOT

Grand Cru Classé

★★

This property is owned by Claude Valette and is run by his daughter Christine. Half the production is matured in wood for 18 months with 80 percent new oak.

RED Since the introduction of temperature-controlled fermentation and a second wine in 1985, some critics have believed the quality of this wine to be on a par with that of a *premier grand cru classé*, but for me, Troplong Mondot came on board with the sensational 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, and 1996 (those in between being merely excellent!).

☞ Merlot 65%, Cabernet Franc and Malbec 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Mondot*

CHÂTEAU TROTTEVIEILLE

Premier Grand Cru Classé (B)

★★★

This property has the reputation of producing a star wine every five years or so, interspersed by very mediocre wines indeed, but has been made very consistent since 1985, and now makes true *premier grand cru classé* quality wine every year. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 100 percent new oak.

RED The quality has dramatically improved since the mid-1980s. It has fabulous Merlot-fruit richness with new oak and the power of a true *premier grand cru classé*.

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

🕒 8–25 years (successful years only)

CHÂTEAU VALANDRAUD

Grand Cru

★★★

Owned by Jean-Luc Thunevin, Château Valandraud is one of St.-Émilion's best-known *vins de garage*, although it has grown from its original small plot of 1½ acres to 11 acres (0.6 hectares to 4.5 hectares), making it more of a *parc de stationnement*.

RED Wines that even Gary Figgins of Leonetti in Washington state might complain were too oaky!

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 6–25 years

CHÂTEAU VILLEMAURINE

Grand Cru Classé

Château Villemaurine belongs to Robert Giraud, which is a *négociant* concern owning not only this property, but also some 20 other *petits châteaux* in various Bordeaux districts. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED These are full-bodied wines of excellent, spicy Merlot fruit, good underlying oak, and firm structure.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Sauvignon 30%

🕒 8–25 years

Other wines: *Maurinus, Beausoleil*

CHÂTEAU YON-FIGEAC

Grand Cru Classé

★

This is an important property situated near Pomerol. The wine is matured for 18 months with 100 percent new oak.

RED This wine was merely attractive and easy-to-drink until 1997, since when it has shown admirable concentration of rich, spicy fruit of increasing complexity and finesse.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 6–20 years

THE BEST OF THE REST

With more than a thousand châteaux in this one district, it not practical to feature every recommendable wine, thus I list here the best of the rest: châteaux that consistently make wine that stands

out for either for quality or value, sometimes both. Those marked with a star sometimes produce wines that are better than many *grands crus classés*.

Château Bard-Haut
Château du Barry
*Château Bellegard-Figeac
*Château Carteau Côtes Daugay
*Château Le Castelot
*Château Le Châtelet
Château Cheval Noir
*Château la Commanderie
*Château Destieux
*Château Faugères
Château de Ferrand
*Château la Fleur

*Château Fleur Cardinale
*Château Fleur-Cravignac
Château la Fleur Pourret
*Château Fombrauge
Château Franc Bigoroux
Château Grand Barrail
Lamarzelle-Figeac
Château Grand Champs
*Château la Grave Figeac
*Château Haut Brisson
*Château Haut Plantey
*Château Haut-Pontet
*Haut-Quercus

Clos Labarde
Château Lapelletrie
*Château Laroque
*Château Magnan la Gaffelière
Château Martinet
Clos des Menuts
*Château Monbousquet
*Château Moulin-St.-Georges
Château Patris
*Château Pavillon Figeac
*Château Petit-Figeac
Château Petit-Gravet

*Château Petit Val
Château Peyreau
*Château Pindefleurs
*Château Plaisance
Château de Pressac
Château Puy Razac
Château Roc Blancquant
*Château Rolland
*Château Rolland-Maillet
Château Sansonnet
*Château Teyssier
Château Tour St.-Christophe

POMEROL

The most velvety and sensuous clarets are produced in Pomerol, yet the traveler passing through this small and rural area, with its dilapidated farmhouses at every turn, few true châteaux and no really splendid ones, must wonder how this uninspiring area can produce such magnificently expensive wines.

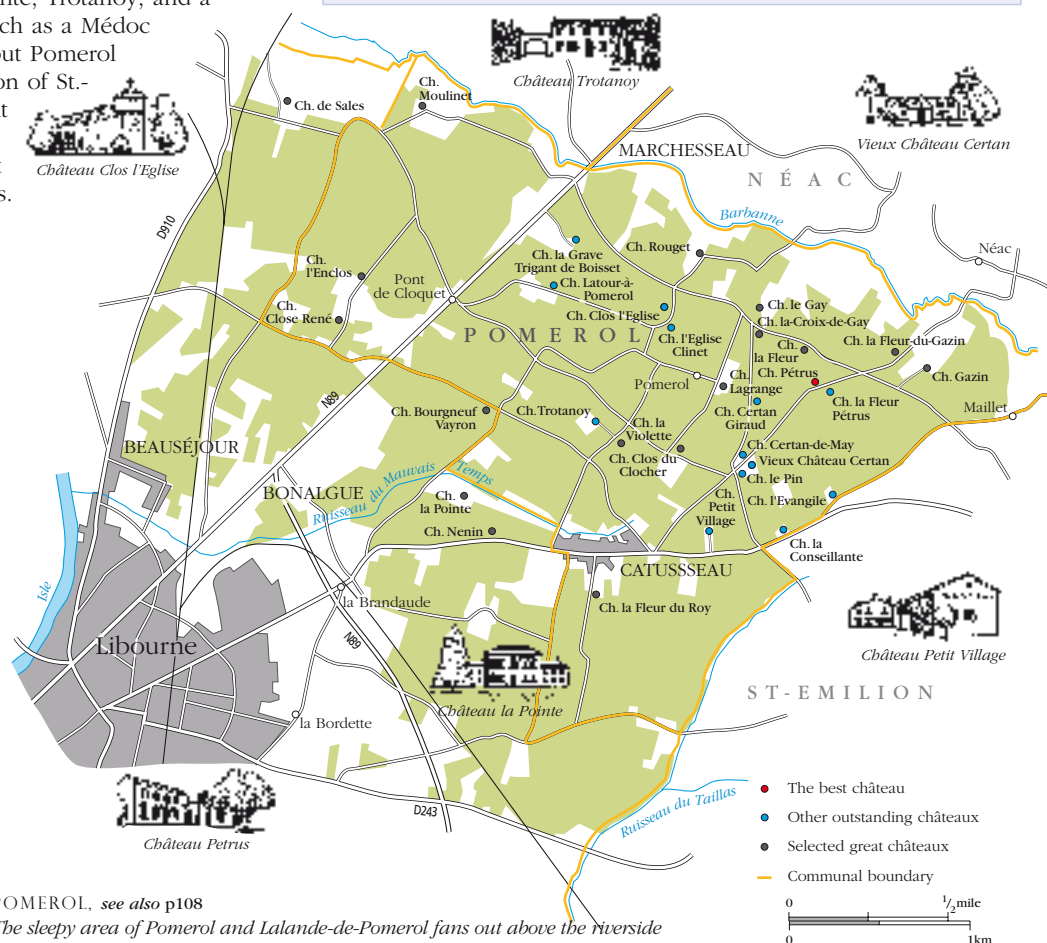
THE PROSPERITY OF RECENT YEARS has enabled Pomerol's properties to indulge in more than just an extra lick of paint, but renovation can only restore, not create, and Pomerol essentially remains an area with an air of obscurity. Even Château Pétrus, which is the greatest growth of Pomerol and produces what for the last 20 years has been consistently the world's most expensive wine, is nothing more than a simple farmhouse.

There has been no attempt to publish an official classification of Pomerol wines, but Vieux Château Certan was considered to be its best wine in the 19th century. Today, however, Pétrus is universally accepted as the leading growth. It commands prices that dwarf those of wines such as Mouton and Margaux, so could not be denied a status equivalent to that of a *premier cru*. Indeed, Le Pin has become considerably more expensive than Pétrus itself. If, like the 1885 classification, we classify Pomerol according to price, next would come Lafleur, followed by a group including L'Évangile, La Fleur Pétrus, La Conseillante, Trotanoy, and a few others, all of which can cost as much as a Médoc First Growth. It is difficult to imagine, but Pomerol was ranked as an inferior sub-appellation of St.-Émilion until it obtained its independent status in 1900. Even then it was a long hard struggle, since even Pétrus did not become sought after until the mid-1960s.



THE VINEYARDS OF VIEUX CHÂTEAU CERTAN

After Château Pétrus, this is one of the best wine-producing properties in Pomerol. A quaint signpost marks the boundary of the vineyard.



POMEROL, see also p108

The sleepy area of Pomerol and Lalande-de-Pomerol fans out above the riverside town of Libourne. None of the so-called "châteaux" is particularly imposing; among the most attractive are Château Nénin and Vieux Château Certan.

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY



LOCATION

Pomerol is a small rural area on the western extremity of the St.-Émilion district, just northeast of Libourne.



CLIMATE

The same as for St.-Émilion (see p.113).

ASPECT

This modest mound, with Château Pétrus and Château Vieux Certan situated at its center, is the eastern extension of the Pomerol-Figeac *graves* (gravelly terrain). The vines grow on slightly undulating slopes that, over a distance of 1½ miles (2 km), descend from between 115 and 130ft above sea level (35–40 m) to 33 ft (10 m).

SOIL

Pomerol's soil is sandy to the west of the national highway and to the east, where the best properties are situated on the sandy-gravel soil of the Pomerol-Figeac *graves*. The subsoil consists of an iron-pan known as *crasse de fer* or *machefer*,

with gravel in the east and clay in the north and center. The château of Pétrus lies in the very center of the Pomerol-Figeac *graves*, on a unique geological formation of sandy-clay over *molasse* (sandstone).



VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION

Some of Pomerol's châteaux use a proportion of *vin de presse* according to the requirement of the vintage. At Pétrus, the *vin de presse* is added earlier than is normal practice, in order to allow it to mature with the rest of the wine—this is believed to reduce harshness. The duration of skin-contact is usually between 15 and 21 days, but is sometimes as brief as 10 days or as long as four weeks. The wines stay in cask for between 18 and 20 months.



GRAPE VARIETIES

Primary varieties: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot
Secondary varieties: Malbec

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF POMEROL

CHÂTEAU BEAUREGARD

★★

An American architect who visited Pomerol after World War I built a replica of Beauregard called "Mille Fleurs" on Long Island, New York. Quality changed dramatically at Beauregard in 1985, two years before the arrival of Michel Rolland, who followed 1985's superb wine with others and was generally responsible for turning this château around. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months with 60 percent new oak.

RED Firm, elegant, and lightly rich wine with floral-cedarwood fruit.

🍷 Merlot 48%, Cabernet Franc 44%, Cabernet Sauvignon 6%, Malbec 2%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Le Benjamin de Beauregard*

CHÂTEAU BONALGUE

This small property lies on gravel and sand northwest of Libourne. The wine is matured in wood.

RED This medium- to full-bodied wine has always been of respectable quality with a frank attack of refreshing fruit flavors, a supple tannin structure, and a crisp finish.

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

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Burgrave*

CHÂTEAU LE BON PASTEUR

★

This good and steadily improving wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with 35 percent new oak.

RED These intensely colored, full-bodied, complex wines are packed with cassis, plum, and black-cherry flavors.

🍷 Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc 25%

🕒 8–25 years

CHÂTEAU BOURGNEUF-VAYRON

★

This property is situated close to Château Trotanoy. It has an honorable, if not exciting, record and a 25-acre (10-hectare) vineyard.

RED Made in a quick-maturing style with soft fruit and a light herbal finish.

🍷 Merlot 85%, Cabernet Franc 15%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU LA CABANNE

★

This is a fine estate producing increasingly better wine. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wines have fine, rich, chocolaty fruit.

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

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *Domaine de Compostelle*

CHÂTEAU CERTAN DE MAY DE CERTAN

★★

This can be a confusing wine to identify because the "De May de Certan" part of its name is in very small type on the label and it is usually referred to as "Château Certan de May." It is matured in wood for 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED This is a firm and tannic wine that has a powerful bouquet bursting with fruit, spice, and vanilla.

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

🕒 15–35 years

CHÂTEAU CLINET

★★

This wine, which is matured in wood with one-third new oak, has undergone a revolution in recent years. It used to disappoint those looking for the typically fat, gushy-juicy style of Pomerol, and critics often blamed this on the wine's high proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon. The 1985 vintage was more promising (a touch plumper than previous vintages, with more juicy character), so Clinet's previous lack of typical Pomerol character was evidently not entirely due to the blend of grape varieties, although the vineyard has since undergone a radical change in varietal proportions. There was talk of a turnaround in quality beginning with the 1986 vintage, but it was not until the stunning 1989 and 1990 vintages that we really saw this wine take off. There has, however, been inconsistency, going through phases of better, and not so good, quality, although currently on the up.

RED Château Clinet is now producing exceedingly fine, rich, ripe wine with ample, yet supple tannin structure mixed with oak tannins to produce a creamy-herbal-menthol complexity.

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

🕒 7–20 years

CLOS DU CLOCHER

★★

This belongs to the Libournaise négociant Audy. The wine is rotated in thirds between new oak, one-year-old casks, and vat, and is one of the most undervalued Pomerols.

RED These are deliciously deep-colored, attractive, medium-bodied, sometimes full-bodied, wines that have plenty of plump, ripe fruit, a supple structure, intriguing vanilla undertones, and plenty of finesse.

🍷 Merlot 80%, Cabernet 20%

🕒 8–20 years

Second wine: *Esprit de Clocher*

Other wine: *Château Monregard-Lacroix*

CLOS L'ÉGLISE

★★

There are several "Église" properties in Pomerol. The wine from this one is matured in wood for 24 months, with some new oak.

RED A consistently attractive wine with elegant, spicy Merlot fruit and firm structure; it is eventually dominated by violet Cabernet perfumes.

🍷 Merlot 55%, Cabernet Sauvignon 25%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 6–15 years

Second wine: *La Petite Église*

CLOS RENÉ

★

This property is situated just south of l'Enclos on the western side of the N89. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months with up to 15 percent new oak. An underrated wine, it represents good value.

RED These wines have a splendid spicy-blackcurrant bouquet, plenty of fine plummy fruit on the palate, and a great deal of finesse. They are sometimes complex in structure, and are always of excellent quality.

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

🕒 6–12 years

Other wine: *Moulinet-Lasserre*

CHÂTEAU LA CONSEILLANTE

★★★



If Pétrus is rated a "megastar," this property must be rated at least a "superstar" in the interests of fairness. The wine is matured in wood for 20 to 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED This wine has all the power and concentration of the greatest wines of Pomerol, but its priorities are its mindblowing finesse and complexity.

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

🕒 10–30 years

CHÂTEAU LA CROIX

★

This property's wine is matured in wood for 20 to 24 months.

RED These attractive wines are quite full-bodied, yet elegant and quick-maturing, with fine, spicy Merlot fruit.

🍷 Merlot 60%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 5–10 years

Second wine: *Le Gabachot*

CHÂTEAU LA CROIX DE GAY

★

This property is situated in the north of Pomerol on sandy-gravel soil, and the wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with up to 100 percent new oak.

RED Used to be somewhat lightweight, but attractive, with easy-drinking qualities, the fruit in Croix de Gay has plumped-up in recent vintages.

🍷 Merlot 80%, Cabernet Sauvignon 10%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 4–8 years

Other wines: *Château le Commandeur, Vieux-Château-Groupe*

CHÂTEAU LA CROIX-ST-GEORGES

★

Under the same ownership as Château La Croix-de-Gay, this wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Rich, soft and seductive.

🍷 Merlot 95%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 4–10 years

Other wines: *Château le Commandeur, Vieux-Château-Groupe*

CHÂTEAU DU DOMAINE DE L'ÉGLISE

This is the oldest estate in Pomerol. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months, with one-third new oak.

RED This is another attractive, essentially elegant wine that is light in weight and fruit.

☞ Merlot 90%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU L'ÉGLISE-CLINET

★★



The wine produced by Château L'Église-Clinet, which is matured in wood for up to 24 months with as much as 50 percent new oak, is fast becoming one of the most exciting Pomerols. Quality in overdrive since the 1990s.

RED These are deeply colored wines with a rich, seductive bouquet and a big, fat flavor bursting with spicy blackcurrant fruit and filled with creamy-vanilla oak complexity.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 8–30 years

Second Wine: *La Petite l'Église*

CHÂTEAU L'ENCLOS

★

The vineyard is situated on an extension of the sandy-gravel soil from the better side of the N89. The wine is matured in wood for 20 months, with a little new oak.

RED These are deliciously soft, rich, and voluptuous wines, full of plump, juicy Merlot fruit and spice.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 19%, Malbec 1%

🕒 7–15 years

CHÂTEAU L'ÉVANGILE

★★★

Situated close to two superstars of Pomerol, Vieux Château Certan and Château la Conseillante, this château produces stunning wines that are matured in wood for 15 months with 40 percent new oak.

RED Dark but not brooding, these fruity wines are rich and packed with summer fruits and cedarwood. More Merlot and new oak since 1998 has given the wine more generosity.

☞ Merlot 78%, Cabernet Franc 32%

🕒 8–20 years

CHÂTEAU FEYTIT-CLINET

★

J.-P. Moueix, who is not this château's owner, does produce the wine and sells it on an exclusivity basis. Some vines are over 70 years old. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 22 months.

RED Consistently well-colored and stylish wines that are full of juicy plum and black-cherry flavors.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 7–15 years

CHÂTEAU LA FLEUR-DE-GAY

★★

Owned by the Raynaud family, with the ubiquitous Michel Rolland consulting, this wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with 100 percent new oak.

RED Big, concentrated fruit underpinned by firm tannic structure.

☞ Merlot 100%

🕒 8–20 years

CHÂTEAU LA FLEUR-PÉTRUS

★★

Château La Fleur-Pétrus, producer of one of the best Pomerols, is situated close to Château Pétrus, but on soil that is more gravelly. Ten acres (four hectares) of Château le Gay were purchased in 1994 and incorporated in this property, fattening out the style. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 22 months.

RED Although recent vintages are relatively big and fat, these essentially elegant wines rely more on exquisiteness than richness. They are silky, soft, and supple.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 20%

🕒 6–20 years

CHÂTEAU LE GAY

★

This is another château exclusive to the Libournais négociant J.-P. Moueix. The wine is matured in wood for 18 to 22 months.

RED Firm and ripe, this big wine is packed with dense fruit and coffee-toffee oak.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 10–25 years

CHÂTEAU GAZIN

★★★

This château's record was disappointing until the stunning 1985 vintage, and it has been on a roll ever since, having abandoned harvesting by machine, introduced new, thermostatically controlled vats, and employed various quality-enhancing practices, not the least being a second wine, which enables stricter selection of grapes. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months



with up to one-third new oak.

RED Marvelously ripe and rich wine with plump fruit. It should have a great future.

☞ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%

🕒 8–20 years

Second Wine: *Hospitalet de Gazin*

CHÂTEAU LA GRAVE

★

The gravelly vineyard of this property has an excellent location. The Trignant de Boisset element of this château's name has been dropped. It is owned by Christian Moueix and farmed by J.-P. Moueix. The wine is matured in wood with 25 percent new oak.

RED Supple, rich and fruity, medium-bodied wines of increasing finesse.

☞ Merlot 85%, Cabernet Franc 15%

🕒 7–15 years

CHÂTEAU HOSANNA

★★★

This property was called Château Certan-Marzelle until 1956 and was purchased in 1999 by Jean-Paul Moueix, with Christian Moueix in control. Almost immediately 10 acres (four hectares) of less well-positioned vineyards were sold to Nénin and strict selection imposed on the 1999 vintage. Watch this space! The wine is matured in wood for 24 months, with 15 percent new oak.

RED These ripe, voluptuous wines become darker and denser since 1999.

☞ Merlot 67%, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon 33%

🕒 8–20 years

Second Wine: *Clos du Roy*

Other wines: *Château Certan-Marzelle*

CHÂTEAU LAFLEUR

★★★

This property has a potential for quality second only to Château Pétrus itself, but it has a very inconsistent record. The quality and concentration of the wines have soared since 1985.

RED This is a well-colored wine with a rich, plummy-porty bouquet, cassis fruit, a toasty-coffee oak complexity and great finesse.

☞ Cabernet Franc 50%, Merlot 50%

🕒 10–25 years

Second Wine: *Les Pensées de Lafleur*

CHÂTEAU LAFLEUR-GAZIN

★

This property has been run by the J.-P. Moueix team on behalf of its owners since 1976. It produces a wine that is matured in wood for 18 to 22 months.

RED Well-made wines of good color and bouquet, supple structure, and some richness and concentration.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 6–15 years

CHÂTEAU LAGRANGE

★

Not to be confused with its namesake in St-Julien, this property belongs to the firm J.-P. Moueix.

The wine is aged in wood for 18 to 22 months, with some new oak.

RED The recent vintages of this full-bodied wine have been very impressive, with an attractive and accessible style.

☞ Merlot 90%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 8–20 years

CHÂTEAU LATOUR À POMEROL

★★★

Château Latour à Pomerol now belongs to the last surviving sister of Madame Loubat, Madame Lily Lacoste (owner of one-third of Château Pétrus). The wine is matured in wood with 25 percent new oak.

RED These deep, dark wines are luscious, voluptuous, and velvety. They have a great concentration of fruit and a sensational complexity of flavors.

☞ Merlot 90%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 12–35 years

CHÂTEAU MAZEYRES

★

Two-thirds of this wine is matured in wood with 40 percent new oak, and one-third is aged in vat.

RED These elegant wines are rich, ripe, and juicy, and have silky Merlot fruit and some oaky finesse.

☞ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 30%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU MOULINET

★

This large estate belongs to Armand Moueix. The wine is matured in wood for 18 months, with one-third new oak.

RED These red wines are attractively supple with a light, creamy-ripe fruit and oak flavor.

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

🕒 5–10 years

CHÂTEAU NÉNIN

★

A large and well-known property between Catussau and the outskirts of Libourne. The wine has had a disappointing record, but there has been a noticeable improvement since this property was purchased by Jean-Hubert Delon in 1997, who added 10 acres (four hectares) from Certan-Giraud.

RED No similarity to Nenin of the past, vintages from 1998 onward have been increasingly full, deep, and concentrated, with a lush, opulent fruit, and a silky finish.

☼ Merlot 75%, Cabernet Franc 25%

🕒 5–18 years

Second wine: ✓ *Fugue de Nenin*

CHÂTEAU PETIT-VILLAGE

★★

This property borders Vieux Château Certan and Château La Conseillante, and it therefore has the advantage of a superb terroir and a meticulous owner. The result is a wine of superstar quality, even in poor years. Petit-Village is matured in wood for 18 months with at least 50 percent of the casks made from new oak.

RED These wines seem to have everything. Full and rich with lots of color and unctuous fruit, they have a firm structure of ripe and supple tannins and a luscious, velvety texture. Classic, complex, and complete.

☼ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Cabernet Sauvignon 10%

🕒 8–30 years

CHÂTEAU PÉTRUS

★★★

The Libournais *négociant* Jean-Pierre Moueix was in technical control of this estate from 1947 until his death at the age of 90 in March 2003. Before the previous owner, Madame Loubat, died in 1961, she gave one-third of Pétrus to Monsieur Moueix. She had no children, just two sisters who were not on the best of terms, so Madame Loubat wisely gave Moueix the means of ensuring that family disagreements would not be able to harm the day-to-day running of Château Pétrus. In 1964 Moueix purchased one of the other two shares and his family has controlled the destiny of this world-famous château ever since.

RED The low acidity of Château Pétrus makes it an intrinsically soft wine which, when combined with the inherent lusciousness of the Merlot grape, enables Pétrus to

produce intensely colored, superconcentrated wines that would otherwise be too harsh to drink.

☼ Merlot 95%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 20–50 years

CHÂTEAU LE PIN

★★

This tiny property was purchased in 1979 by the late Jacques Thienpont. The yield is very low, the wine is fermented in stainless steel and matured in wood for 18 months with 100 percent new oak.

RED These oaky wines are very full-bodied, and powerfully aromatic with a sensational spicy-cassis flavor dominated by decadently rich, creamy-toffee, toasty-coffee oak. Those who are not convinced by Le Pin keep asking whether there is enough concentration in these wines to match the oak; my guess is that there is, and that their wonderfully voluptuous style belies their true size and structure, but it will be a long time before we really know the answer.

☼ Merlot 100%

🕒 10–40 years

CHÂTEAU PLINCE

★

This property is owned by the Moreau family, but its wines are sold by the Libournais *négociant* J.-P. Moueix. It is matured in vats for six months and in wood for 18 months, with 15 percent new oak.

RED These wines are fat, ripe, and simply ooze with juicy Merlot flavor. Although they could not be described as aristocratic, they are simply delicious.

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

🕒 4–8 years

CHÂTEAU LA POINTE

●

After hoping that the mid-1980s would prove to be a turning point in the reputation of this important château, it now seems that this did not happen until 1998, although there is still a lot of room for improvement before La Pointe can be described as a truly lush Pomerol.

RED Lightweight, lackluster wines until 1998, when they have shown more fruit, with plummy-chocolate overtones. Getting there.

☼ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Malbec 5%

🕒 5–12 years

Second wine: *La Pointe Riffat*

CHÂTEAU ROUGET

★

One of the oldest properties in Pomerol. The proprietor also owns the neighboring estate of Vieux Château des Templiers. The wine is matured in wood for 24 months.

RED Château Rouget produces excellent red wines with a fine

bouquet and elegant flavor. Fat and rich, with good structure and lots of ripe fruit, they are at their most impressive when mature.

☼ Merlot 90%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 10–25 years

CHÂTEAU DE SALES

★

At 119 acres (48 hectares), this is easily the largest property in the Pomerol appellation. It is situated in the very northwest of the district. Despite an uneven record, it has demonstrated its potential and inherent qualities on many occasions and the wine, which is matured in wood for 18 months with 35 percent new oak, is one to watch for the future.

RED When successful, these wines have a penetrating bouquet and a palate jam-packed with deliciously juicy flavors of succulent stone fruits such as plums, black cherries, and apricots.

☼ Merlot 70%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%

🕒 7–20 years

Second wine: *Château Chantalouette*

Other wine: *Château de Délias*

CHÂTEAU DU TAILHAS

The wines of this château are matured in wood for 18 months with 50 percent new oak.

RED Consistently attractive, with silky Merlot fruit and creamy oak.

☼ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 10%, Cabernet Sauvignon 10%

🕒 5–12 years

CHÂTEAU TAILLEFER

This potentially excellent property belongs to Bernard Moueix. The wines are matured in wood for between 18 and 22 months, with the addition of some new oak.

RED At best these wines are attractively light and fruity, revealing their potential, but more often than not they are simply light and dilute. The 2000 was the best vintage this château has produced, but it was very difficult not to make fine wine that year.

☼ Merlot 55%, Cabernet Franc 30%, Cabernet Sauvignon 15%

🕒 4–8 years

Second wine: *Clos Toulifaut*

CHÂTEAU TROTANOY

★★★

Some consider this to be second only to Château Pétrus, although in terms of price L'Évangile and Lafleur have overtaken it. The wine is matured in wood for up to 24 months, with 50 percent new oak.

RED This inky-black, brooding wine has a powerful bouquet and a rich flavor, which is supported by a firm tannin structure and a complex, creamy-toffee, spicy-coffee oak character.

☼ Merlot 90%, Cabernet Franc 10%

🕒 15–35 years

VIEUX CHÂTEAU CERTAN

★★★



This was once regarded as the finest-quality growth in Pomerol. It has not so much dropped its standards as witnessed the rapid rise of a new star—Pétrus—and all its pretenders. Vieux Château Certan remains one of Bordeaux's great wines. This wine is matured in wood for 18 to 24 months with up to 60 percent new oak.

RED This is an attractive, garnet-colored, full-bodied wine that has a smouldering, smooth, and mellow flavor. It displays great finesse and complexity of structure.

☼ Merlot 50%, Cabernet Franc 25%, Cabernet Sauvignon 20%, Malbec 5%

🕒 12–35 years

Second wine: *La Gravette de Certan*

CHÂTEAU LA VIOLETTE

★

In the same way as Château Laroze in St.-Émilion is said to be named after its aroma of roses, so this château is named after its aroma of violets—or so the story goes. It is located in Catussau and its vineyards are scattered around the commune. The wine, matured in wood for up to 24 months, can be inconsistent, but I think it has great potential.

RED I have not tasted this wine as frequently as I would like, but I can enthusiastically recommend the best vintages, when they have a rich and jubilant flavor of Merlot fruit, which is ripe and fat.

☼ Merlot 95%, Cabernet Franc 5%

🕒 5–15 years

CHÂTEAU VRAY CROIX DE GAY

A small property on good gravelly soil next to Château le Gay and under the same ownership as Château le Prieuré. The wine is matured in wood in 18 months.

RED The wine can be full, rich, chocolate- and black-cherry-flavored, with the best vintages showing more fat and oak.

☼ Merlot 80%, Cabernet Franc 15%, Cabernet Sauvignon 5%

🕒 5–10 years

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF THE FRONSADAIS AND THE SAINT-ÉMILION AND POMEROL SATELLITES

CHÂTEAU D'AIGUILHE

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon

★①

Purchased in 1998 by Stephan Von Neipperg, who has restored the property. One to watch.

Second wine: *Seigneurs d'Aiguible*

CHÂTEAU DES ANNÉREAUX

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

Attractive, fruity, medium-bodied wines of some elegance.

CHÂTEAU BARRABAQUE

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

Situated on the mid-*côte*, this 70 percent Merlot has really shone since the late 1990s.

CHÂTEAU BEL-AIR

AOC Puisseguin-St.-Émilion

This property makes generous, fruity, early-drinking wines.

CHÂTEAU DE BEL-AIR

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

One of the best of the appellation, this property has fine, sandy gravel.

CHÂTEAU BELAIR-MONTAIGUILLON

AOC St.-Georges-St.-Émilion

★①

Consistently rich, deliciously fruity. The best wine selected from old vines and matured in cask, including some new oak, is sold as Château Belair-St.-Georges.

CHÂTEAU DE BELCIER

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Francis and Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Francis

This property produces fruity wines that can claim the Côtes de Castillon or Côtes de Francis appellations.

CHÂTEAU CALON

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion and AOC St.-Georges-St.-Émilion

★

This château is under the same ownership as the *grand cru classé* Château Corbin-Michotte. The wine is good quality, with a juicy style, and very Merlot in character. Part of this vineyard falls within the St.-George-St.-Émilion area and this produces the best wine.

CHÂTEAU CANON

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★★①

This is one of several Fronsadais properties formerly owned, and still managed by, J.-P. Moueix. It was sold to a member of the Carrefour family in September 2000. It produces the best wine in this appellation from 100 percent Merlot.

CHÂTEAU CANON DE BREM

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

No longer owned by J.-P. Moueix, Château Canon de Brem was sold to a member of the Carrefour family in September 2000. It produces fine, firm, and flavorsome *vins de garde* that are deep-colored and powerful, yet complex and spicy.

Second wine: *Château Pichelèbre*

CHÂTEAU CANON MOUEIX

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

Sold to a member of the Carrefour family in September 2000, this property was known as Château Pichelèbre until 1985, when it was purchased by J.-P. Moueix. Although under new ownership, it is still managed by J.-P. Moueix; whether the name remains is uncertain.

CHÂTEAU CAP DE MERLE

AOC Lussac-St.-Émilion



Château Cap de Merle is wine guru Robert Parker's best Lussac performer for the 1981, 1982, and 1983 vintages.

CHÂTEAU CARLES

AOC Fronsac

★①

The producer's primary wine is attractive and juicy, but it is the 1.5 blockbusting 95 percent Merlot selection which is sold as Château Haut Carles that really stands out here.

Other wine: *Château Haut Carles*

CHÂTEAU CASSAGNE-HAUT-CANON

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

Château Cassagne-Haut-Canon produces a selection of rich, full, fat, fruitcake-flavored wines that are especially attractive when they are still young.

CHÂTEAU DE CLOTTE

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

★①

This property has the right to both the Côtes-de-Castillon and Côtes-de-Francis appellations, but uses only the former.

CHÂTEAU LA CROIX CANON

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

Another former Moueix property that has sold to a member of the Carrefour family and yet remains managed by the established team. Attractive, Merlot-dominated wines are full of juicy fruit.

CHÂTEAU DU COURLAT

AOC Lussac-St.-Émilion

These are spicy-tannic wines with good fruit flavors.

CHÂTEAU COUSTOLLE VINCENT

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

Château Coustolle Vincent's wines are well-flavored, and matured in up to 20 percent new oak.

CHÂTEAU DALEM

AOC Fronsac

★★①

These soft and velvety wines develop quickly but have finesse and are among the very best of their appellation.

CHÂTEAU DE LA DAUPHINE

AOC Fronsac

This property has been sold to a member of the Carrefour family, but is still run by the Moueix team, which produces fresh and fruity wines that mature in oak, 20 percent of which is new.

CHÂTEAU DURAND LAPLAIGNE

AOC Puisseguin-St.-Émilion

★①

The excellent-quality wine produced by Château Durand Laplaigne is grown using clay-and-limestone soil, with a strict selection of grapes and modern vinification techniques.

CHÂTEAU LA FLEUR DE BOÛIARD

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

Very good wines, getting much better since this property was purchased by the owner of Angelus in 1998.

Second wine: *Château La Fleur St.-Georges*

CHÂTEAU FONTENIL

AOC Fronsac

★★①

This rich, velvety 90 percent Merlot high-flyer has heavy helpings of new oak and is from Michel Rolland's own property.

CHÂTEAU GRAND ORMEAU

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

A rich and lusciously fruity wine that is matured in 50 percent new oak, Grand Ormeau is very classy for its appellation.

Second wine: *Château d'Haurange*

CHÂTEAU GRAND-BARIL

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion

Attractive, fruity wine made by the agricultural school in Libourne.

CHÂTEAU GUIBEAU-LA FOURVIEILLE

AOC Puisseguin-St.-Émilion

★★①

Much investment has gone into this property, the wines of which are now considered to be the best in Puisseguin.

Second wines: *Le Vieux Château Guibeu, Château La Fourvieille*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-CHAIGNEAU

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

Look out for Château Le Sergue 1.5, which is selected from this property's best wines and matured in 80 percent new oak. A poor man's Mondotte?

Other wines: *Château Le Sergue*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-CHATAIN

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★★①

Fat, rich, and juicy wines with definite hints of new-oak vanilla are made by Château Haut-Chatain.

CHÂTEAU LES HAUTS-CONSEILLANTS

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

Château les Hauts-Conseillants is another fine Néac property.

Other wines: *Château les Hauts-Tuileries* (export label)

CHÂTEAU HAUT-TUQUET

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

This wine is consistently good.

CHÂTEAU JEANDEMAN

AOC Fronsac

This château produces fresh, fruity wine with good aroma.

CHÂTEAU JUNAYME

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

Well-known wines of finesse.

CHÂTEAU DES LAURETS

AOC Puisseguin-St.-Émilion

The appellation's largest property.
Other wines: *Château la Rochette, Château Maison Rose*

CHÂTEAU DE LUSSAC

AOC Lussac-St.-Émilion

Château de Lussac produces well-balanced, early-drinking wine.

CHÂTEAU DU LYONNAT

AOC Lussac-St.-Émilion

The appellation's largest property.
Other wines: *La Rose Peruchon*

CHÂTEAU MAISON BLANCHE

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion

Château Maison Blanche produces attractive wine that is easy to drink.

CHÂTEAU MAQUIN-ST.-GEORGES

AOC St.-Georges-St.-Émilion

This wine is 70 percent Merlot.
Other wines: *Château Bellonne-St-Georges*

CHÂTEAU MAUSSE

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

Wines with good aroma and flavor.

CHÂTEAU MAYNE-VIEIL

AOC Fronsac

Easy-drinking wines with good Merlot spice and fruit.

CHÂTEAU MAZERIS

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

There is an unusually high proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon in these wines.

CHÂTEAU MILON

AOC Lussac-St.-Émilion

★①

A château that produces a fine-quality, full, yet fragrant, wine.

CHÂTEAU MONCETS

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

This Néac property makes a fine, rich, and elegant Pomerol look-alike.

CHÂTEAU MOULIN HAUT-LAROQUE

AOC Fronsac

Well-perfumed, rather fat wines with lots of fruit and good tannin.

CHÂTEAU MOULIN NEUF

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

★①

These wines regularly win medals.

CHÂTEAU LA PAPETERIE

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion

Wines with a rich nose and a big fruit-filled palate.

CHÂTEAU DU PONT DE GUESTRES

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

This château produces full, ripe, fat wines of good quality.

CHÂTEAU PUYCARPIN

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

This property produces a well-made red, and a little dry white.

CHÂTEAU DU PUY

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Francis and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Francis

★①

Red wines from this property are rustic and overtly fruity.

CHÂTEAU PUYGUERAUD

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Francis and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Francis

Aromatically attractive wines with good color and supple fruit.

CHÂTEAU DE LA RIVIÈRE

AOC Fronsac

★★①

Magnificent wines that are built to last: they are rich, tannic, and fruity, and matured in up to 40 percent new oak.

CHÂTEAU ROBIN

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

★①

Château Robin produces award-winning red wines.

CHÂTEAU LA ROCHE-GABY

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

★①

Château La Roche-Gaby produces intensely flavored, attractive, and well-structured wines, which are designed to have a long life.

CHÂTEAU ROCHER-BELLEVUE

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

★①

A good St-Émilion look-alike that

regularly wins medals.

Other wines: *La Palène, Coutet-St.-Magne*CHÂTEAU ROUIDIER

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion

★★①

Quality wines that are well-colored, richly flavored, finely balanced, and long and supple.

CHÂTEAU SIAURAC

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

Fine, firm, and fruity wines.

CHÂTEAU ST.-GEORGES

AOC St.-Georges-St.-Émilion

★★①

Super quality wine of great finesse.

CHÂTEAU STE-COLOMBE

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon

★①

This château was purchased in 1999 by Gérard Perse of Pavie *et al* and Alain Reynaud of La Croix-de-Gay. These wines look very promising indeed.CHÂTEAU TARREYO

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

Château Tarreyo (Gascon for "knoll of stones") is sited on a limestone mound, as its name suggests.

CHÂTEAU THIBAUD-BELLEVUE

AOC Bordeaux-Côtes-de-Castillon and

AOC Bordeaux Supérieur Côtes-de-Castillon

Medium-bodied, fruity red wine.

CHÂTEAU TOUMALIN

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

Fresh, fruity wine from a property under the same ownership as Château La Pointe in Pomerol.

CHÂTEAU TOUR-DU-PAS-ST.-GEORGES

AOC St.-Georges-St.-Émilion

★①

An excellent and inexpensive *entrée* into the world of *premier cru* claret.CHÂTEAU DES TOURELLES

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★①

Fine wines with vanilla undertones.

CHÂTEAU TOURNEFEUILLE

AOC Lalande-de-Pomerol

★★①

This rich, long-lived wine is the best of the appellation.

CHÂTEAU DES TOURS

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion

★①

The largest property in the

appellation. The wine is big, full, and fleshy, yet soft and easy to drink.

CHÂTEAU LA VALADE

AOC Fronsac

★①

Elegant, aromatic, and silky-textured wines, which are made exclusively from Merlot grapes.

CHÂTEAU LA VIEILLE CURE

AOC Fronsac

★★

Very fresh and velvety with delightful floral, summer fruit aromas, these wines are at the very top of their appellation. The 1998 is stunning.

VIEUX-CHÂTEAU-ST.-ANDRÉ

AOC Montagne-St.-Émilion

★★①

A soft, exciting wine, full of cherry, vanilla, and spice flavors.

CHÂTEAU LA VILLARS

AOC Fronsac

★①

Soft, fat, and juicy wines of excellent quality, one-third of which are matured in new oak.

CHÂTEAU VRAY-CANON-BOYER

AOC Côtes Canon-Fronsac

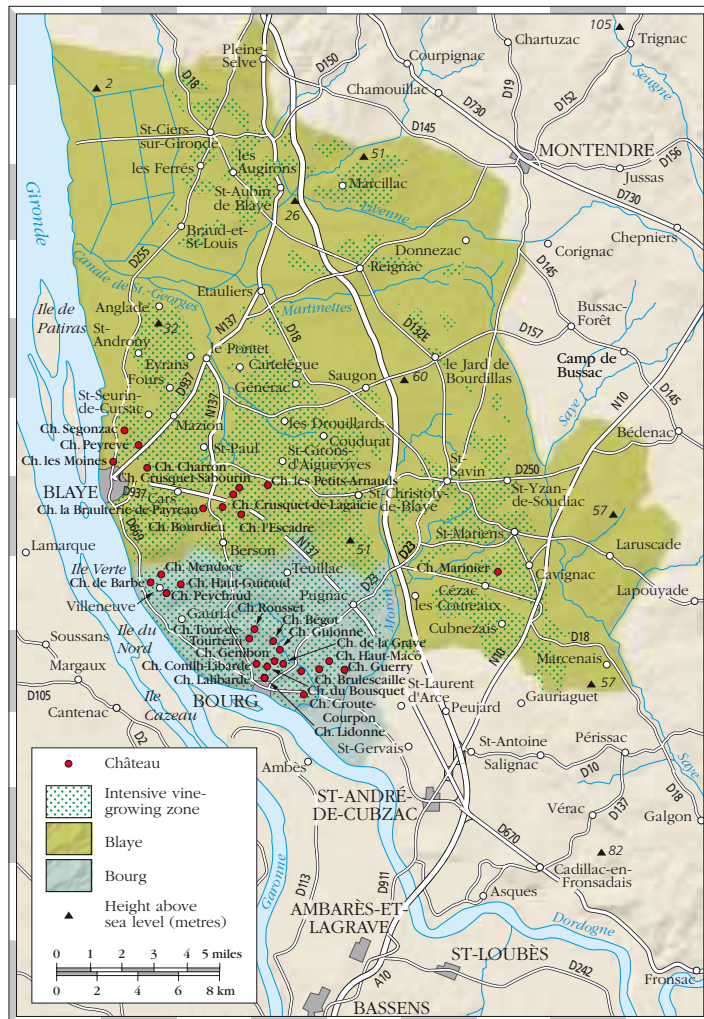
This château produces a fruity, medium-bodied wine that is attractive for early drinking from 90 percent Merlot grapes.

BOURG AND BLAYE

Ninety-five percent of the wine produced in Bourg and Blaye is good-value red. Tiny Bourg makes more wine than its five-times-larger neighbor, Blaye, and most of the vines grown in Blaye come from a cluster of châteaux close to the borders of Bourg.

AS ONE WOULD EXPECT of an area that has supported a settlement for 400,000 years, Bourg has a close-knit community. Comparatively recently, the Romans used neighboring Blaye as a *castrum*, a fortified area in the defense system that shielded Bordeaux. According to some sources, the vine was cultivated in Bourg and Blaye as soon as the Romans arrived. Vineyards were certainly flourishing here long before those of the Médoc, just on the other side of the Gironde.

Bourg is a compact, heavily cultivated area with pretty hillside vineyards at every turn. The vine is less important in Blaye, which has other interests, including a caviare industry based at its ancient fishing port where sturgeon is still a major catch. The south-facing vineyards of Blaye are mostly clustered in the countryside immediately bordering Bourg and, despite the similarity of the countryside, traditionally produce slightly inferior



FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY



LOCATION

The vineyards fan out behind the town of Bourg, which is situated on the right bank of the confluence of the Dordogne and the Garonne, some 12.5 miles (20 kilometers) north of Bordeaux. Blaye is a larger district that unfolds beyond Bourg.



CLIMATE

These two areas are less protected than the Médoc from westerly and northwesterly winds, and have a higher rainfall.



ASPECT

Bourg is very hilly with vines cultivated on steep limestone hills and knolls up to a height of 260 ft (80 m). In the southern section of Blaye the country is rich and hilly, with steep slopes overlooking the Gironde that are really just a continuation of those in Bourg. The northern areas are gentle and the hills lower, with marshes bordering the viticultural areas.



SOIL

In Bourg the topsoil is clay-limestone or clay-gravel over a hard limestone subsoil, although in the east the subsoil sometimes gives way to gravel and clay. The soil in

Blaye is clay or clay-limestone over hard limestone on the hills overlooking the Gironde, getting progressively sandier going east.



VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION

There are many grape varieties here, some of which are far too inferior or unreliable to contribute to the quality of these wines, particularly the whites. Bourg produces the best reds, Blaye the best whites, but there is relatively little white wine made in both appellations—even Blaye is 90 percent red and Bourg is in excess of 99 percent red. Very few *petits châteaux* in both areas can afford the use of casks, let alone new ones, and much of the wine in Bourg is made by one of its five *coopératives*.



GRAPE VARIETIES

Primary varieties: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon
Secondary varieties: Malbec, Prolongeau, Cahors, Béguingol (Fer), Petit Verdot, Merlot Blanc, Folle Blanche, Colombar, Chenin blanc, Muscadelle, Ugni Blanc



THE TOWN OF BLAYE

The attractive fishing port of Blaye with, in the foreground, the ruins of its ancient citadel guarding against the approach of marauders from the sea.

BOURG AND BLAYE, *see also* p63

Most of the best growths of Bourg and Blaye are clustered behind the respective ports that give this wine-producing area its name. Bourg, the smaller area, has a higher concentration of vineyards and generally produces the better wines.

wines to those of Bourg. The D18 highway appears to be a barrier beyond which the less intensely cultivated hinterland takes on a totally different topography, where the more expansive scenery is dotted with isolated forests.

THE POTENTIAL OF BOURG AND BLAYE

To the Romans, these south-facing vineyards overlooking the Gironde seemed the ideal place to plant vines. Indeed, the quality achieved today in these vineyards would have surpassed the most optimistic hopes of those past masters of the vine. However, by today's expectations, Bourg and Blaye have been relegated to a viticultural backwater. This is a pity, since there are some exciting quality wines being made here. Perhaps when the world has woken up to the gems in Canon-Fronsac, more curious consumers might turn their attention to the better producers in this district. As soon as wine lovers are prepared to pay higher prices for these wines, so its proprietors will be able to restrict yields, improve vinification techniques, and indulge in a percentage of new oak.



CHENIN BLANC IN BORDEAUX

The Chenin Blanc of Loire fame (or infamy, as the case may be) is allowed in the white wines of Bourg, albeit restricted to a maximum of 10 percent. However, in the AOCs of Blayais and Côtes de Blaye (but not Premières Côtes de Blaye), this interloper from the north has a free run, or could have, if a producer wanted to market a pure Chenin Blanc varietal wine. I have never been a fan of Chenin Blanc in the Loire, except in those idyllic vintages when the sublime *moelleux* style can be produced in quantity, and it is very hard not to produce liquid magic. The problem with Chenin in the Loire is that it grows like a weed, but rarely has the degree of sunshine this grape likes to luxuriate in. Combine that with the inclination of far too many growers to overyield and season it with those who have less than clinically clean vinification habits, and it is clear why Loire Chenin, particularly dry Loire Chenin, has such a poor reputation. On the other hand, even cheap, mass-produced Chenin Blanc wines in the New World have lovely ripe, tropical fruit flavors. Not all of them, of course, the New World has its good, bad, and ugly too, but I believe that the longer hours of warmer sunshine in Bordeaux could produce some excellent dry Chenin wines. A pure Chenin Blanc Bordeaux would be a novelty.

VINEYARDS ALONG THE DORDOGNE AT BOURG

The Romans planted these south-facing vineyards, believing this to be a far more ideal place to grow vines than on the other side of the confluence of the Dordogne and Garonne estuaries where, understandably, they failed to realize the possibilities of the Médoc concealed beyond its virtually impenetrable marshes.

CHÂTEAU SEGONZAC, ST.-GENÈS-DE-BLAYE

A short distance from the fortress of Blaye, these sweeping vineyards belong to Château Segonzac, a wine estate created in 1887 by Jean Dupuy, the owner of the Petit Parisienne, the largest-circulation newspaper in the world at the time.



THE APPELLATIONS OF BOURG AND BLAYE

The number of appellations in this area, and their various differences, are very confusing for the consumer. The system should be neaten up and there is no reason why just two AOCs—Côtes de Blaye and Côtes de Bourg—could not be used for all the wines produced here.

BLAYAIS AOC

See Blaye AOC

BLAYE AOC

Blaye or Blayais is a large and diverse appellation of variable quality.

RED Few properties cultivate obscure varieties such as Prolongeau and Béguignol, thus many utilize the prestigious sounding Premières Côtes de Blaye AOC; hence, hardly anyone bothers to sell the wine under this plain appellation.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Prolongeau, Béguignol, Petit Verdot

🕒 3–7 years

WHITE Since 1997 Ugni Blanc has dominated, with Merlot Blanc and Folle Blanche banned. The ripeness level has been lowered from 170 to 153 grams of sugar, with no more than four grams residual allowed in the finished wine, and a maximum of 12.5 percent alcohol imposed, thus ensuring fresher, crisper wines. These wines may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

🍷 Ugni Blanc plus up to 10% in total of Folle Blanche, Colombard, Chenin Blanc,

Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle

🕒 1–2 years

BOURG AOC

Also called Bourgeais, this appellation, which covers both red and white wines, has fallen into disuse because the growers prefer to use the Côtes de Bourg AOC, which is easier to market but conforms to the same regulations. *See also* Côtes de Bourg AOC.

BOURGEAIS AOC

See Bourg AOC

CÔTES DE BLAYE AOC

Unlike the Bourg and Côtes de Bourg appellations, which cover red and white wines, Côtes de Blaye is white only. Blaye, however, may be red or white.

WHITE As much white Côtes de Blaye is produced as basic Blaye. The wines are similar in style and quality.

🍷 Merlot Blanc, Folle Blanche, Colombard, Chenin Blanc, Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle

🕒 1–2 years

CÔTES DE BOURG AOC

Bourg is one-fifth the size of Blaye, yet it traditionally produces a greater quantity and, more importantly, a much finer quality of wine than that produced at Blaye.

RED Excellent value wines of good color, which are full of solid, fruity flavor. Many are very stylish indeed.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec

🕒 3–10 years

WHITE A very small quantity of this light, dry wine is produced and sold each year. It may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

🍷 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle, Merlot Blanc, Colombard, plus a maximum of 10% Chenin Blanc

🕒 1–2 years

PREMIÈRES CÔTES DE BLAYE AOC

This covers the same area as Blaye and Côtes de Blaye, but only classic grapes are used and the minimum alcoholic strength is higher. The area has very good potential for producing quality wines.

RED There are one or two excellent properties that use a little new oak.

🍷 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec

🕒 4–10 years

WHITE Dry, light-bodied wines that may have a fresh, lively, grapey flavor.

🍷 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle

🕒 1–2 years

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF

BOURG

CHÂTEAU DE BARBE

Villeneuve

Château de Barbe is a property that makes substantial quantities of light-styled, Merlot-dominated, gently fruity red wines that are easy to drink.

CHÂTEAU BÉGOT

Lansac

This property produces some 5,000 cases of agreeably fruity red wine, which is best drunk young.

CHÂTEAU DU BOUSQUET

Bourg-sur-Gironde

★🕒

This large, well-known château produces some 40,000 cases of red wine of excellent value for money. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and aged in oak, has a big bouquet, and a smooth feel.

CHÂTEAU BRULESCAILLE

Tauriac

Château Brulescaille's vineyards are very well-sited and produce agreeable wines for early drinking.

CHÂTEAU CONILH-LIBARDE

Bourg-sur-Gironde

Soft, fruity red wines are made at this small vineyard overlooking Bourg-sur-Gironde and the river.

CHÂTEAU CROUTE-COURPON

Bourg-sur-Gironde

A small but recently enlarged estate, it produces honest, fruity red wines.

CHÂTEAU EYQUEM

Bayon-sur-Gironde

Owned by the serious winemaking Bayle-Carreau family, which also owns several other properties, this wine is not normally, however, purchased for its quality. It is enjoyable as a light luncheon claret, but the real joy is in the spooof of serving a red "Yquem."

CHÂTEAU FALFAS

Bourg-sur-Gironde

🍷★🕒

Owned by John and Vonique Cochran, whose biodynamic wines

are consistently rich, midterm drinkers of no little finesse.

CHÂTEAU GÉNIBON

Bourg-sur-Gironde

This small vineyard produces attractive wines that have all the enjoyment upfront and are easy to drink.

CHÂTEAU GRAND-LAUNAY

Teuillac

★🕒

This property has been developed from the vineyards of three estates: Domaine Haut-Launay, Château Launay, and Domaine les Hermats. Mainly red wine is produced, although a very tiny amount of white is also made. The star-performing wine at this château is a superb, special reserve *cuvée* of red that is sold under the Château Lion Noir label.

CHÂTEAU DE LA GRAVE

Bourg-sur-Gironde

★🕒

An important property situated on one of the highest points of Bourg-

sur-Gironde, it produces a large quantity of light, fruity Malbec-influenced red wine and a very tiny amount of white.

CHÂTEAU GUERRY

Tauriac

★🕒

Some 10,000 cases of really fine wood-aged red wines are produced at this château. The wines have good structure, bags of fruit, and a smooth, elegant flavor.

CHÂTEAU GUIONNE

Lansac

These are easy-drinking wines, full of attractive Merlot fruit, good juicy flavor, and some finesse. A little white wine of some interest and depth is also made.

CHÂTEAU HAUT-MACÔ

Tauriac

This rustic red wine is full of rich, fruity flavors, and good acidity. The proprietors also own a property called Domaine de Lilotte in Bourg-sur-Gironde producing attractive, early-drinking red wines under the

Bordeaux Supérieur appellation.

Other wine: *Les Bascauds*

CHÂTEAU HAUT-ROUSSET

Bourg-sur-Gironde

Some 12,000 cases of decent, everyday-drinking red wine and 1,000 cases of white are produced at this fairly large property. The red wines from a small vineyard close by are sold under the Château la Renardière label.

CHÂTEAU DE LIDONNE

Bourg-sur-Gironde

★

This very old property produces an

excellent-quality red wine, powerfully aromatic and full of Cabernet character. Its name comes from the 15th-century monks who looked after the estate and offered lodgings to passing pilgrims: "Lit-Donne" or "Give Bed."

CHÂTEAU PEYCHAUD

Teuillac

★

These fruity red wines are easy to drink when young. A little white is also made. It is under the same ownership as Château Peyredouille and Château le Peuy-Saincrit.

CHÂTEAU ROC DE CAMBES

Bourg-sur-Gironde

★★

You can expect to pay five times the price of any other Côtes de Bourg for this blockbuster, which is made by François Mitjavile, the owner of Tertre-Rôteboeuf. However, some vintages are worth it.

CHÂTEAU ROUSSET

Samonac

★

A fine estate of gravel vineyards producing lightly rich, juicy, Merlot-dominated wines of some finesse; they are perfect to drink when two or three years old.

CHÂTEAU SAUMAN

Villeneuve

These immaculate vineyards produce a good-quality red wine for medium-term maturity. The proprietor also owns the red-wine producing Domaine du Moulin de Mendocce in the same commune.

CHÂTEAU TOUR-DE-TOURTEAU

Samonac

★

This property was once part of Château Rousset. However, the wines are definitely bigger and richer than those of Rousset.

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF BLAYE

CHÂTEAU BARBÉ

Cars

★

This château produces well-made, and overtly fruity red and white wines. Château Barbé is one of several properties owned by the Bayle-Carreau family (*see also* La Carelle and Pardaillan).

CHÂTEAU BOURDIEU

Berson

This is an old and well-known property producing Cabernet-dominated red wines of a very firm structure that receive time in oak. Seven hundred years ago this estate was accorded the privilege of selling "clairet," a tradition it maintains today by aging the blended production of various vineyards in oak. It is also producing white wines of improving quality.

CHÂTEAU LA CARELLE

St.-Paul

More than 11,000 cases of agreeable red wines and just 1,500 cases of white are made at this property. The owner also runs châteaux Barbé and Pardaillan in Cars.

CHÂTEAU DE CASTETS

Plassac

A promising property, it produces attractive red and white wines for early drinking.

CHÂTEAU CHARRON

St.-Martin-Lacaussade

★

These very attractive, well-made, juicy-rich, Merlot-dominated red wines are matured in oak, some of which is new. A small amount of white wine is also made.

CHÂTEAU CRUSQUET-DE-LAGARCIE

Cars

★★

A tremendously exciting, richly styled red wine, which is deep colored,

bright, big, full of fruit, vanilla, and spice. A small amount of dry white wine is sold under the name "Clos-des-Rudel" and an even smaller quantity of sweet white wine as "Clos-Blanc de Lagarcie." The châteaux Les-Princesses-de-Lagarcie and Touzignan, also in Cars, are under the same ownership.

CHÂTEAU L'ESCADRE

Cars

★

These elegant red wines are well-colored, full, and fruity. They can be enjoyed young, but also improve with age. A small amount of fruity white wine is produced.

Second wine: *Château la Croix*

DOMAINE DU GRAND BARRAIL

Plassac

★

This château makes a fine-quality red wine that attracts by its purity of fruit. A little white wine is produced. The proprietor also owns Château Gardut-Haut-Cluzeau and Domaine du Cavalier in Cars.

CHÂTEAU DU GRAND PIERRE

Berson

★

This property can produce tremendous value medium- to full-bodied red wine with sweet, ripe fruit. Fresh, zesty, dry white wine of agreeable quality is also made.

CHÂTEAU HAUT BERTINERIE

Cubnezais

★★

The consistent class of this wine, with its silky fruit and beautifully integrated oak, makes it stand out above the rest as the best-value dry white currently made in Bordeaux.

CHÂTEAU DE HAUT SOCIONDO

Cars

Agreeably light and fruity red and white wines are made here.

CHÂTEAU LES JONQUEYRES

St.-Paul-de-Blaye

★★

This château produces lush Merlot-dominated reds with lots of well-integrated creamy oak. The wines are impeccably produced.

CHÂTEAU LACAUSSEADE SAINT MARTIN "TROIS MOULINS"

St.-Martin Lacaussade

★

Owned by Jacques Chardat, but managed and marketed by Vignobles Germain, both the sumptuous red and classy dry white benefit from 100 percent new oak.

CHÂTEAU LAMANCAEU

St.-Androny

★

Production at this property is entirely red and of an excellent standard: richly colored wine full of the juicy spice of Merlot.

CHÂTEAU LES MOINES

Blaye

A red-only château, producing a light- to medium-bodied, fresh and fruity wine for easy drinking

CHÂTEAU MARINIER

Cézac

★

Twice as much red wine as white is produced. The red is agreeably fruity, but the white is much the better wine: smooth, well-balanced, lightly rich, and elegant. Red and rosé wines are also produced under the Bordeaux appellation.

CHÂTEAU MAINE-GAZIN "LEVENNE" VIEILLES VIGNES

Plassac

★

With one-third new oak, this 90 percent Merlot wine is rich, sumptuous, and above its class.

CHÂTEAU MENAUDAT

St.-Androny

★

These are extremely attractive, full, and fruity red wines.

CHÂTEAU PARDAILLAN

Cars

Well-made, enjoyable, fruity red wines that are best drunk young.

CHÂTEAU LES PETITS ARNAUDS

Cars

★

Attractively aromatic red wines, pleasingly round and fruity. Dry white Blaye and a *moelleux* white.

CHÂTEAU PEYREDOUILLE

Berson

★

This 15th-century property produces mainly good-quality red wine, although some white is made. The proprietors also own Château Peychaud in the Bourgeois commune of Teuillac and the Bordeaux AOC of Château le Peuy-Saincrit.

CHÂTEAU PEYREYRE

St.-Martin-Lacaussade

★

This château produces rich-flavored reds of some finesse. Bordeaux Rosé is also made.

CHÂTEAU SEGONZAC

St.-Genès-de-Blaye

★

Château Segonzac's easy-drinking red wines are light, well-made, fresh, firm, and agreeably fruity.

ENTRE-DEUX-MERS

Entre-Deux-Mers, which literally means “between two seas” is situated between the Dordogne and Garonne rivers. It is Bordeaux’s largest district, and produces inexpensive dry white wines and an increasing volume of excellent value-for-money red wines that are entitled to the Bordeaux, Bordeaux Supérieur, and Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux appellations.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS in winemaking occurred earlier and more quickly in Entre-Deux-Mers than in any other district of Bordeaux. As early as the 1950s and 1960s, there was a grassroots viticultural movement to drop the traditional low vine-training systems and adopt the revolutionary “high-culture” system contrasted with the low vine-training methods common throughout Bordeaux. These new vineyard techniques were followed in the 1970s by a widespread adoption of cool-fermentation techniques. With fresh, light, and attractively dry white wines being made at many châteaux, the major export markets suddenly realized it would be easier to sell the name Entre-Deux-Mers rather than continue to sell what had become boring Bordeaux Blanc. This was even better if the wine could boast some sort of individual *petit château* personality.

THE “HIGH-CULTURE” SYSTEM OF VINE TRAINING Entre-Deux-Mers in the late 1940s and early 1950s was a sorry place. The wines were sold in bulk, ending up as anonymous Bordeaux Blanc, and much of the decline in the Bordeaux region was centered on this district. But the new postwar generation of

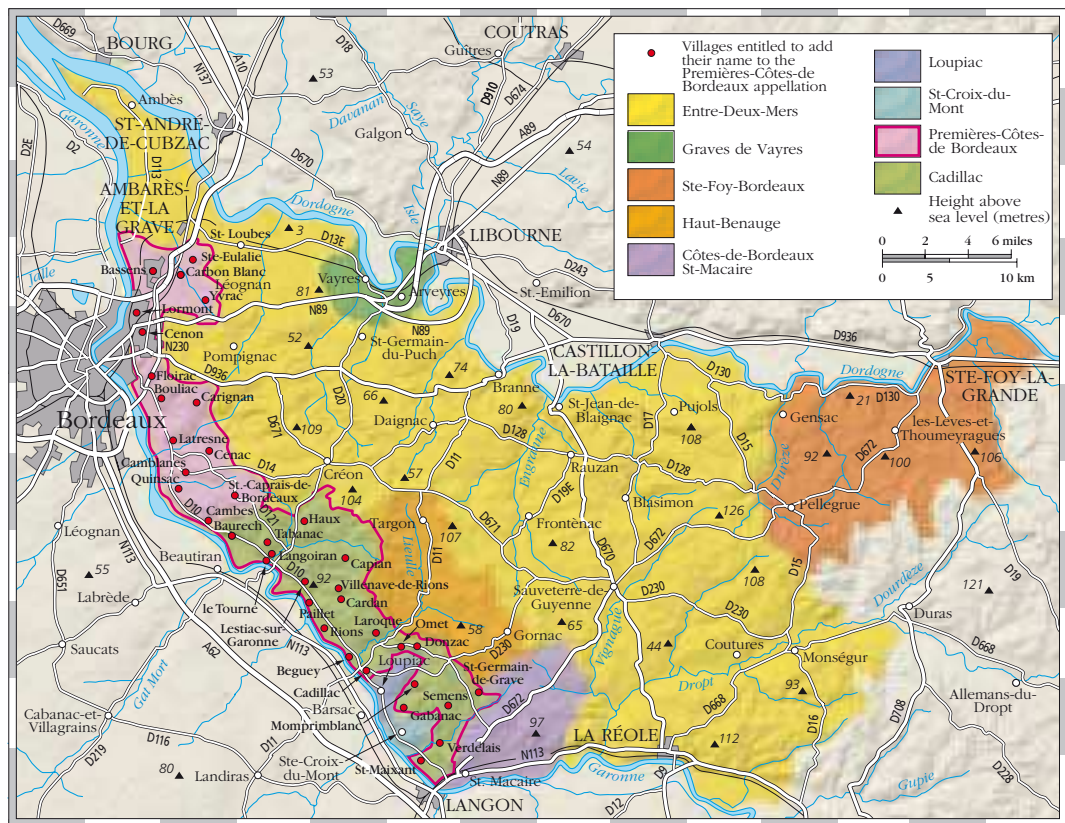


CHÂTEAU BONNET
In 1898 this vineyard was acquired by Léonce Recapet, one of the first to carry out replanting after the devastation of the Gironde vineyard by phylloxera at the turn of the century. His son-in-law, François Lurton, succeeded him, and in 1956 his grandson, André Lurton, became the owner.

winegrowers were not content with this state of affairs. Although times were difficult and the economy was deteriorating, the young, technically minded *vignerons* realized that the district’s compressed *boulbènes* soil, which was choking the vines, could not be worked by their ancestors’ outdated methods, and they therefore took a considerable financial risk to rectify the situation. They grubbed up every other row of vines, thus increasing the spacing between the rows, and trained the plants on a “high-culture” system similar to that practiced farther south in Madiran and Jurançon (also in Austria where it was originally conceived



LOUPIAC CHURCH
The local church neighbors the vineyards of Cbâteau Loupiac, which are situated on the right bank of the Garonne.



ENTRE-DEUX-MERS
 See also p55

The varied countryside of this district spreads out between the rivers Dordogne and Garonne as their paths diverge. The Premières Côtes form a narrow strip along the south side.

FACTORS AFFECTING TASTE AND QUALITY



LOCATION

A large area east of Bordeaux between the Garonne and Dordogne rivers.



CLIMATE

More windy and wetter than the Médoc; areas near the rivers are liable to flood.



ASPECT

Quiet and very attractive countryside of vine-covered hillsides, orchards, and meadows.



SOIL

Very varied topsoils, ranging from alluvium by the river to gravel on some hillsides and crests, and clay-gravel or clay-limestone on various plateaux. At the western end of the district a soil called *boulbènes* dominates. This is extremely fine and sandy and has a tendency to compress into an impermeable barrier. Vines must be grafted on to

special rootstock in order to be productive in such soil. Much of the subsoil is limestone or limestone-based, but sandy-clay, clay-and-limestone rubble, a quarry stone called *aslar*, and *ribot*—a sandstone containing gravel and iron deposits—are also found.



VITICULTURE AND VINIFICATION

This area is famed for its "high and wide" method of vine training, which was developed in the early 1950s and is similar to the Lenz Moser system used in Austria. Greater emphasis is now placed on the Sauvignon grape and cool fermentation in stainless-steel vats.



GRAPE VARIETIES

Primary varieties: Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
Secondary varieties: Merlot Blanc, Colombard, Mauzac, Ugni Blanc

and was called the Lenz Moser system). This system allowed machinery to work the land and break up the soil. It also increased the canopy of foliage, which intensified chlorophyll assimilation and improved ripening.

COOL FERMENTATION

In the 1970s, university-trained personnel at the well-funded Entre-Deux-Mers *coopératives* invested in temperature-controlled stainless-steel vats and led the way in cool-fermentation techniques. Prior to this, fermentation temperatures were often in excess of 83°F (28°C), but it was soon discovered that the lower the temperature, the more aromatic the compounds released. They discovered that fermentation could take place at temperatures as low as 39°F (4°C), although the risk of stuck-fermentation (when the fermentation process stops) was greater at such low temperatures. It soon became clear that the ideal fermentation temperature was somewhere between 50°F (10°C) and 64°F (18°C). This increased the yield of alcohol and important aromatic and flavor compounds. It also reduced both the loss of carbonic gas and the presence of volatile acidity and required less sulfur dioxide. In the mid-1980s it was confirmed that 64°F (18°C) is the optimum temperature for fermentation. Lower temperatures also produce amylic aromas, which in small quantities are fine, but the lower the temperature, the more the wine is dominated by these nail-polish aromas.

THE APPELLATIONS OF

ENTRE-DEUX-MERS

BORDEAUX
HAUT-BENAUGE AOC

Situated above the Premières Côtes, opposite Cérons, this area corresponds to the ancient and tiny county of Benauge. To claim this appellation, as opposed to Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge, the grapes are restricted to the three classic varieties and must be riper, with a minimum sugar level of 195 grams per liter instead of 170 grams per liter. The yield is 10 percent lower and the minimum alcoholic level 1.5 percent higher.

WHITE Dry, medium-sweet, and sweet versions of this light-bodied, fruity wine may be made.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle

☞ 1–3 years for dry and medium-sweet wines;
3–6 years for sweet wines

CADILLAC AOC

Of the trio of sweet-wine areas on the right bank of the Garonne, Cadillac is the least known. It encompasses 21 communes, 16 of which form the canton of Cadillac, yet very little wine is produced under this appellation—just one-fifth of that made in Loupiac, or one-tenth of that made in Ste.-Croix-du-Mont. The regulations state that the wines must be made from botrytized grapes harvested in successive *tries*, but there is little evidence of this in the wines, which at best have the character of *passerillage*. The *terroir* could produce wines of a much superior quality, but it would be costly to do so, and sadly, this appellation does not fetch a high enough price to justify the substantial investment needed.

WHITE Attractive honey-gold wines with fresh, floral aromas and a semisweet, or sweet, fruity flavor.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle

☞ 3–8 years

CÔTES-DE-
BORDEAUX-ST.-MACAIRE AOC

These little-seen wines come from an area at the eastern extremity of the Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux. Of the 6,000 acres (2,300 hectares) of vineyards that may use this appellation, barely 75 acres (30 hectares) bother to do so.

WHITE Medium-bodied, medium-sweet, or sweet wines that are attractive in a fruity way, but unpretentious.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle

☞ 1–3 years

ENTRE-DEUX-MERS AOC

This is the largest district in the region, and after the generic Bordeaux Blanc, it is its greatest-volume white-wine appellation. Entre-Deux-Mers has a growing reputation for exceptional-value wines of a high technical standard.

WHITE Crisp, dry, light-bodied wines that are fragrant, aromatic, and usually predominantly Sauvignon Blanc. These are clean, cool-fermented wines. They may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

☞ At least 70 percent Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscadelle, plus a maximum of 30 percent Merlot Blanc and up to 10 percent in total of Colombard, Mauzac, and Ugni Blanc

☞ 1–2 years

ENTRE-DEUX-MERS-
HAUT-BENAUGE AOC

These wines are drier than those of the Bordeaux-Haut-Benauge appellation, and their blends may include a greater number of grape varieties, although the same nine communes

comprise both appellations. The wines comply with the less rigorous regulations of Entre-Deux-Mers and, consequently, this AOC produces four times the volume of wine than does Bordeaux-Haut-Benauge. Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge has so far produced only dry wines, with the exception of 1983, when a luscious vintage arrived that was easy to make into sweet wines.

WHITE These dry wines are very similar to those of Entre-Deux-Mers.

☞ At least 70 percent Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscadelle, plus a maximum of 30 percent Merlot Blanc and up to 10 percent in total of Colombard, Mauzac, and Ugni Blanc

☞ 1–3 years

GRAVES DE VAYRES AOC

An enclave of gravelly soil on the left bank of the Dordogne, this appellation produces a substantial quantity of excellent-value red and white wines.

RED These are well-colored, aromatic, medium-bodied wines with fragrant, juicy-spicy, predominantly Merlot fruit. They are richer than those found elsewhere in Entre-Deux-Mers.

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

☞ 4–10 years

WHITE Mostly dry and off-dry styles of fresh, fragrant, and fruity wines made for early drinking. Occasionally, sweeter styles are made. These wines may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

☞ Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscadelle plus a maximum of 30 percent Merlot Blanc

☞ 1–3 years

LOUPIAC AOC

This appellation is located on the right bank of the Garonne, opposite Barsac. It is by far the best sweet-wine appellation in Entre-Deux-Mers and its wines are always excellent value. According to the regulations, Loupiac must be made with the "assistance" of overripe botrytized grapes and, unlike Cadillac, these wines often have the honeyed complexity of "noble rot." The best Loupiac wines come from vineyards with clay-and-limestone soil.

WHITE Luscious medium- to full-bodied wines that are sweet or intensely sweet, honey-rich, and full of flavor. They can be quite complex, and in suitable years have evident botrytis character.

🍇 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
🕒 5–15 years (25 in exceptional cases)

PREMIÈRES-CÔTES-DE-BORDEAUX AOC

A 37-mile (60-kilometer) strip of southwest-facing slopes covering 420 acres (170 hectares) of vines scattered through 37 communes, each of which has the right to add its name to this appellation. They are: Bassens, Baurech, Béguey, Bouliac, Cadillac, Cambes, Camblanes, Capian, Carbon Blanc, Cardan, Carignan, Cenac, Cenon, Donzac, Floirac, Gabarnac, Haux, Langoiran, Laroque, Lestiac, Lormont, Monprimblanc, Omet, Paillet, Quinsac, Rions, Sémens, St.-Caprais-de-Bordeaux, St.-Germain-de-Graves, St.-Maixant, Ste.-Eulalie, Tabanac, Le Tourne, La Tresne, Verdelaix, Ville-nave de Rions, and Yvrac.

RED The best red wines come from the northern communes. These well-colored, soft,

and fruity wines are a cut above basic Bordeaux AOC.

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

🕒 4–8 years

WHITE Since the 1981 harvest, no dry wines have been allowed under this generally unexciting appellation. They must have at least some sweetness, and most are in fact semisweet. Simple, fruity wines, well-made for the most part, but lacking character.

🍇 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
🕒 3–7 years

STE.-CROIX-DU-MONT AOC



This is the second-best sweet-white appellation on the right bank of the Garonne, and it regularly produces more wine than Barsac. Like Loupiac wines, these wines must be made with the "assistance" of overripe botrytized grapes. They have less honeyed complexity of "noble rot" than Loupiac wines, but often have more finesse.

WHITE Fine, viscous, honey-sweet wines that are lighter in body and color than Loupiac wines. Excellent value when they have rich botrytis character.

🍇 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle
🕒 5–15 years (25 in exceptional cases)

STE.-FOY-BORDEAUX AOC

Until relatively recently, Ste.-Foy-Bordeaux was known primarily for its white wines, but it now produces as much red as white. There is a high proportion of "organic" winemakers in this area.

RED Ruby-colored, medium-bodied wines made in a soft, easy-drinking style.

🍇 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot

🕒 3–7 years

WHITE Mellow, semisweet wines of uninspiring quality, and fresh, crisp dry white wines that have good aroma and make attractive early drinking. These wines may be sold from December 1 following the harvest without any mention of *primeur* or *nouveau*.

🍇 Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscadelle, and up 10 percent in total of Merlot Blanc, Colombard, Mauzac, and Ugni Blanc

🕒 1–3 years

THE WINE PRODUCERS OF ENTRE-DEUX-MERS

CHÂTEAU ARNAUD-JOUAN

Cadillac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★🍷

This large, well-situated vineyard makes interesting, attractive wines.

DOMAINE DU BARRAIL

Monprimblanc

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★🍷

Both the red Premières Côtes and sweet white Cadillac produced at this property are worth watching.

CHÂTEAU DE BEAUREGARD

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers and AOC Bordeaux-Haut-Benauges

The red and white wines are well-made. The red has good structure, but is softened by the spice of the Merlot.

CHÂTEAU BEL-AIR

Vayres

AOC Graves de Vayres

Most of the wines made here are

red and well-colored. They are aromatic wines of a Cabernet character.

CHÂTEAU BIROT

Béguey

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★🍷

Popular for its easy-drinking whites, this property also produces well-balanced red wines of some finesse.

CHÂTEAU LA BLANQUERIE

Mérignas

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

Dry white wine with a Sauvignon character and a fine finish.

CHÂTEAU BONNET

Grézillac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

★★

This top-performing Entre-Deux-Mers chateau is owned by André Lurton. It produces crisp, fresh, and characterful white wines, and soft, fruity, extremely successful

(Bordeaux Supérieur) red.

Second wine: *Le Colombey*

Other wines: *Tour-de-Bonnet, Chateau Gourmin, Chateau Peyraud*

CHÂTEAU BRÉTHOUS

Camblanes-et-Meynac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★🍷

The red wines are forward and attractive, yet well-structured, while the whites are succulent and sweet.

CHÂTEAU CANET

Guillac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

★🍷

These excellent white wines are clean and crisp, with good fruit and an elegant balance.

CHÂTEAU CAYLA

Rions

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

★🍷

The reds are elegant and accessible with just a touch of new oak.

CHÂTEAU DE CÉRONS

Cérons

AOC Cérons

★🍷

Jean Perromat also owns Château d'Arche, and consistently produces superb, white botrytized wines.

Other wine: *De Calvimont* (dry white)

DOMAINE DE CHASTELET

Quinsac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★🍷

Domaine de Chastelet produces red wine that is delicious, yet firm and complex, with very well-balanced blackcurrant fruit flavors and a hint of vanilla oak.

CLOS BOURGELAT

Cérons

AOC Cérons

★★🍷

These botrytized wines have great aroma, finesse, and complexity.

CLOS JEAN

Loupiac

AOC Loupiac

The wines produced by Clos Jean are similar quality to those of Château du Cros, but more refined and ethereal in character.

CHÂTEAU LA CLYDE

Tabanac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★●

These aromatic, deep-colored, ruby-red wines show good spice and fruit. The white has finesse and balance.

CHÂTEAU DU CROS

Loupiac

AOC Loupiac

★●



The fine, fat, succulent sweet wines of this château are among the best of the appellation.

CHÂTEAU DINTRANS

Ste.-Eulalie

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

This château produces attractive, nicely colored, fruity red wines.

CHÂTEAU DE L'ESPLANADE

Capian

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

Produced by Patrick and Sabine Bayle of Château Plaisance, these primarily Merlot wines are cheaper and simpler than those of Château Plaisance, but are easy-drinking nevertheless. They are also sold under the Château Florestan label.

CHÂTEAU FAYAU

Cadillac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

This château produces succulent sweet wines in addition to red, claret, and dry white wines.

Other wine: *Clos des Capucins*

CHÂTEAU FLORESTAN

See Château de l'Esplanade

CHÂTEAU FONGRAVE

Gornac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

These dry white wines have a fresh and tangy taste.

Second wine: *Château de la Sablière Fongrave* (red wines)

CHÂTEAU DE GORCE

Haux

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

This château produces fruity reds and fresh, floral whites.

CHÂTEAU GOUDICHAUD

Vayres

AOC Graves de Vayres

This property also extends into St.-Germain-du-Puch in Entre-Deux-Mers, where it produces some very respectable wines.

CHÂTEAU GOUMIN

Dardenac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

Goumin is another successful André Lurton château. It produces up to 10,000 cases of pleasant, soft, fruity red wine and 5,000 cases of white wine that is slightly fuller than other similar Lurton products.

GRAND ENCLOS DU CHÂTEAU DE CÉRONS

Cérons

AOC Cérons

Although historically part of Château de Cérons, this is not under the same ownership. The original estate belonged to the Marquis de Calvimont, but was split in two by the route from Bordeaux to Spain, which was constructed in 1875. The marquis then sold the property in three separate lots, one of which was called Grand Enclos and was purchased by the Lataste family, who are still the owners today. The white wines of Grand Enclos are equally as rich and potentially complex as those of Château de Cérons itself (which is so called because it retains the marquis' château).

CHÂTEAU GRAND MONEIL

Salleboeuf

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

★●

Barely more than a thousand cases of white, but 35,000 cases of excellent-quality, soft, easy-drinking red.

CHÂTEAU DU GRAND-MOÛIEYS

Capian

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

★●

Excellent-value reds for medium-term aging are currently made at this château.

CHÂTEAU GRAVELINES

Sémens

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★●

This large property produces equal quantities of excellent red and white wines.

CHÂTEAU GROSSOMBRE

Branne

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

★●

The daughter of André Lurton runs this property, which produces lush yet elegant white wines and a beautifully concentrated red, the latter of which is sold under the Bordeaux Supérieur AOC and must be one of Bordeaux's greatest bargains.

CHÂTEAU DU GUA

Ambarès-et-Lagrave

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

An attractive, well-structured red wine is produced from this 20-acre (8-hectare) vineyard of fine gravel.

CHÂTEAU HAUT-BRIGNON

Cénac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

★

This property has been steadily improving since the late 1980s, producing a soft, velvety red and crisp, dry white, plus one of Cadillac's better wines.

CHÂTEAU DE HAUX

Haux

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

★●

These red and white wines are gorgeously ripe and ready to drink, absolutely fresh, and very elegant, and, under the Château Frère label, a fabulous oak-fermented white is also produced. Probably the top-performing château in the Premières Côtes for both red and white.

CHÂTEAU DU JUGE

Haux

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

These promising red wines are easy drinking, and full of juicy fruit flavors. Decent, if unexciting whites are also made.

CHÂTEAU DU JUGE

Cadillac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

Respectable red and dry white wines are produced at Château du Juge, and in some years, a little sweet white wine of high quality is also made. Both red and white wines are extraordinarily good value.

CHÂTEAU LABATUT

St.-Maixant

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

The red wines are aromatic and full of flavor, while the sweet white wines are exceptional quality. Decent dry white is also produced.

CHÂTEAU LAFITTE

Camblanes-et-Meynac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

Nothing like the real thing (the famous *premier cru*), of course, but the wine is decent, well structured, and capable of improving with age—a cheap way to get a Château Lafitte on the table, even if it is not *the* Château Lafitte.

CHÂTEAU LAFUE

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

★

Attractive, sweet white wines with more of a fruity than a botrytis character. Nearly a quarter of the production is red wine.

CHÂTEAU LAGAROSSE

Tabanac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

The red is easy-drinking with soft fruit and an easy finish.

CHÂTEAU LAGRANGE-HAMILTON

Rions

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

This property is run by Hamilton Narby, formerly of Château Guiraud in Sauternes. I have not yet tracked down this wine, but if Hamilton Narby devotes a mere fraction of the effort he put into reviving Guiraud to this place, then it should be worth keeping an eye on.

CHÂTEAU LAMOTHE

Haux

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac



Some exceptionally good wines have been produced in recent years at this château, which derives its name from "La Motte," a rocky spur that protects the vineyard.

CHÂTEAU L AROCHE BEL AIR

Baurech

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

Absolutely delicious-drinking reds under the basic Château Laroche label, and an even better selection

of oak-aged reds under Laroche Bel Air.

CHÂTEAU LATOUR

St.-Martin-du-Puy

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

From this ancient château, parts of which date back to the 14th century, 10,000 cases of attractive, well-balanced, smooth red Bordeaux Supérieur are produced every year. This château's technically sound wines often win prizes and enable its devotees to claim that they can afford to drink Château Latour every day, at minimum expense.

CHÂTEAU LATOUR

Camblanes-et-Meynac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

This is another everyday-drinking claret with this prestigious name.

CHÂTEAU LAUNAY

Soussac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

This large property produces 40,000 cases of a fresh dry white wine and 15,000 cases of a red wine sold under the "Haut-Castanet" label.

Other wines: *Bradoire, Château Dubory, Château Haut-Courgeaux, Château La Vaillante*

CHÂTEAU LAURETTE

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

★

This property is under the same ownership as Château Lafue and runs along similar lines.

CHÂTEAU LOUBENS

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

★

This château produces rich, liquorous, superbly balanced sweet white wines. Dry white wines are sold as "Fleur Blanc," and a little red wine is also made.

Other wine: *Fleur Blanc de Château Loubens*

CHÂTEAU LOUPIAC-GAUDIET

Loupiac

AOC Loupiac

Fine, honey-rich sweet wines hinting of crystallized fruit are produced here.

CHÂTEAU LOUSTEAU-VIEIL

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

★

This property produces richly flavoured, high-quality sweet wines.

CHÂTEAU MACHORRE

St.-Martin-de-Sescas

AOC Côtes-de-Bordeaux-St.-Macaire

★

The sweet white wine of this château has an attractive, fresh, fruit-salad flavor and is one of the best examples of the appellation. Very respectable red and dry Sauvignon wines are also produced, which are sold under the Bordeaux appellations.

CHÂTEAU DES MAILLES

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

Some outstanding sweet wines are produced at Château des Mailles, but the wines can occasionally be disappointing.

CHÂTEAU LA MAUBASTIT

AOC Ste.-Foy-de-Bordeaux

Some 5,000 cases of white and 2,000 of red, both "organic" wines, are sold under the Bordeaux appellation.

CHÂTEAU MORLAN-TUILIÈRE

St.-Pierre-de-Bat

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge and Bordeaux Haut-Benauge

One of the best properties of the area, producing a vibrant, crystal-clear Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge, a Bordeaux Supérieur in the *moelleux* style, and a fairly full-bodied red AOC Bordeaux.

CHÂTEAU MOULIN DE LAUNAY

Soussac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

Despite the vast quantity produced, the dry white wine is crisp and fruity, and of a very fine standard. A little red is also produced.

Other wines: *Plessis, Château Terre-de-Launay, Château de Tuilerie, Château la Vigerie*

CHÂTEAU MOULIN DE ROMAGE

AOC Ste.-Foy-de-Bordeaux

This château produces equal quantities of "organic" red and white.

DOMAINE DU NOBLE

Loupiac

AOC Loupiac

This property consistently produces fine botrytized wines that combine sweetness and strength with elegance and a fresh, long finish.

CHÂTEAU PETIT-PEY

St.-André-du-Bois

AOC Côtes-de-Bordeaux-St.-Macaire

Good, sweet white St.-Macaire and agreeably soft red AOC Bordeaux are made at this property.

CHÂTEAU PEYREBON

Grézillac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

Produces red and white wine in almost equal quantities. The dry white is fine and flavorsome.

CHÂTEAU PEYRINES

Mourens

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge and Bordeaux Haut-Benauge

★★

The vineyard of this château has an excellent southern exposure and produces fruity red and white wines.

CHÂTEAU DE PIC

Le Tourne

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

The basic red is a lovely, creamy-sweet, easy-drinking, fruity wine. A superb oak-aged red under the *Cuvée Tradition* label is also made.

CHÂTEAU PICHON-BELLEVUE

Vayres

AOC Graves de Vayres

The red wines are variable, but the dry whites are delicate and refined.

CHÂTEAU PLAISANCE

Capian

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

The *Cuvée Tradition*, in which the wine is aged in oak and is unfiltered, gives rich, ripe fruit with supple tannin structure and smoky oak.

Other wines: *De l'Esplanade, Château Florestin*

CHÂTEAU DE PLASSAN

Tabanac

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

The basic red has a lot of character, with cherry-minty undertones in riper years. However, the fuller, more complex *cuvée spéciale* is worth paying for, particularly if you want a wine to accompany food.

CHÂTEAU PONTETTE-BELLEGRIVE

Vayres

AOC Graves de Vayres

This property has a reputation for subtly flavored, dry white wines.

CHÂTEAU PUY BARDENS

Cambes

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

This top-performing château produces reds with sweet, ripe, fat fruit and a soft, velvety finish.

CHÂTEAU LA RAME

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

One of the top wines of the appellation, La Rame can have fruit, with cream and honey flavors.

CHÂTEAU REYNON-PEYRAT

Béguey

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux

This property produces a superb, oak-aged Premières Côtes red wine,

and two dry white wines under the Château Reynon label.

CHÂTEAU RICAUD

Loupiac

AOC Loupiac

The wines of Château Ricard are once again the best in the Loupiac appellation. They suffered a significant decline under the previous proprietor, but have at last recovered, and now display great class under new ownership.

CHÂTEAU DE LA SABLIERE-FONGRAVE

Gornac

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge and Bordeaux Haut-Benauge

Sold as a Bordeaux Supérieur, the red wine of Château de la Sablière-Fongrave is fairly robust and requires time in bottle to soften. A much better quality dry white is produced and sold under the Entre-Deux-Mers appellation.

CHÂTEAU TANESSE

Langoiran

AOC Premières-Côtes-de-Bordeaux and AOC Cadillac

A Cordier property, Château Tanesse produces a decent Cabernet-dominated red, and fine-quality, Sauvignon-style dry white.

CHÂTEAU DES TASTES

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

★

The sweet white wine is truly exciting; luxurious in texture, with creamy-rich flavors showing the classic complex character of botrytis.

CHÂTEAU TERFORT

Cadillac

AOC Ste.-Croix-du-Mont

★

A small amount of excellent sweet white wine is produced by Château Terfort.

CHÂTEAU THIEULEY

La Sauve

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers

★

Château Thieuley is owned by Professor Courselle, a former Médoc professor of viticulture and oenology. His dry white combines good fruit flavor with a fine Sauvignon style, while the red is good and silky.

CHÂTEAU DE TOUTIGEAU

Targon

AOC Entre-Deux-Mers-Haut-Benauge and Bordeaux Haut-Benauge

★

Château de Toutigeac is a well-known property that produces full, rich red wine. It is made for early drinking, and is the best the château produces.