



# BORDEAUX 2023

## En Primeur Report

© Linden Wilkie, May 2024

## THE VINTAGE

Château Lafleur's Omri Ram seemed to sum up 2023 best when he said to me last week "it was an extreme vintage with no extremes." How can we unravel that paradox? The first extreme refers to the sheer amount of work required to get to the finish line in the right shape. A warm year overall, it was also a wet one, making preventative care against mildew and such like essential. "For everyone working in the vineyard it as very tough, high octane, I was never so tired as I was after winemaking in 2023." But it was also a year that lacked the heatwaves, or drought that has become a common feature of late. With healthy fruit in the vat, 2023 delivers an even temperament, not blockbuster, not weedy. Straight, classic.

The downside? A more regular sort of year delivers fewer benchmarks or blockbusters. Not a single wine in 2023 stopped me in my tracks and made me go 'wow!', not one did I taste that felt truly *exceptional*, of the type that stands in decades to come as a true *legend*. These wines usually come in the more extreme vintages, where either frost, poor flowering, or some other crop-reducing factor combines with a hot summer to produce – when a knife's edge balance comes right – a wine that thrills. 2023 is not a thrilling vintage. It does what it says on the label – Bordeaux. (For an excellent overview of the vintage weather patterns, see Gavin Quinney's free [report](#)).

For me, and all who really love Bordeaux, that's actually the upside to 2023. It's moderate qualities offer a chance for terroirs to shine, and those teams that worked smarter and harder to step out in front, if not dramatically. The vintage plays a supporting role in these cases, not a leading one. Grape variety blends were easy to spot, soil types too. If that sounds like your kind of wine, then 2023 is not to be ignored. And isn't that a sound reason

to buy *Bordeaux*, rather than one of the many successful global incarnations of its key grape varieties, and blends?

The penny dropped for me at Latour. Tasting '23s château to château, it's easy to become inured to the character of the *vintage* because that's the one constant you face all day, sample to sample. The vintage's personality is hidden in plain sight because all the wines tasted are from the same one. It's hard, at times, to step back. But at Latour they always show the three wines of the vintage (2023 Latour, Les Forts de Latour, Pauillac), and also these same three labels from their current ex-Château releases – in this case 2017, 2018, and 2019 respectively. (Latour exited the primeurs system years ago, but still takes the opportunity to show the new wines). Both 2019 and 2018



*Bordeaux is on the Atlantic*

seemed positively sweet next to 2023 (and for that matter, 2017). Discussing the style of '23 with Jean Garandau at Latour he said it reminds him of 2001. I smiled. 2001 was one of those moderate sorts of vintages that produced some lovely wines, some stars even, and very true to Bordeaux style. But 2001 was overshadowed by the widely acclaimed success of 2000, hyped by Robert Parker to his readers, and to a wide audience via a *60 Minutes* TV interview, and with something of the “millennium bump” helping sales too. 2001 followed without fanfare. But it is much admired by connoisseurs of Bordeaux.

But there is a limit to looking so far back in time. 2001 predates the watershed vintage of 2003, when heatwaves and drought produced wines of a style not seen before. Many vintages that have followed have produced variants of the very warm to hot vintage expression, and nature, farming, and the vigneronns involved have adjusted. If we were to go back in time to the 1990s or 1980s, and slotted 2023 in, it would seem quite ripe. Indeed, I suspect it would be hailed as a great vintage.

What really strikes me about 2023 is that I tasted very little that seemed overripe, and I tasted very little that seemed underripe, and with almost all wines showing very nice freshness on the nose and palate. The style is what I would call fresh-ripe, like a fruit that you've picked from the bush yourself that is perfectly ripe to eat. Will I want some in my cellar? Absolutely. I really like this style.

You'll note though that my scores are a little more clustered than in some other years – they are more moderate, reflecting the vintage – fewer big disappointments, and fewer standout thrillers. But make no mistake, if you like Bordeaux, you will want these in your cellar.

## TO BUY 2023 EN PRIMEUR?

The big question though is when to buy them? The Bordeaux system drives for that to be now. It is important to remember that when you buy en primeur, you are not buying wine, you are buying the promise of wine that is still in barrel at the château. You pay us up front for that promise, we pay the négociant in Bordeaux, and they pay the châteaux. Once the wine is bottled, packed and shipped, the châteaux send the wines to the négociant, and we consolidate, ship, and deliver them to you in Hong Kong. You are providing cashflow to the châteaux. What is your upside for doing so? The upside is *if* you judge the price we are offering the '23s at to be sufficiently advantageous compared to what you *anticipate\** you might pay in two years' time when physical stock is on the market. Sometimes that works out well. The 2019s offered in the uncertain times at the beginning of the pandemic proved good bets. (\*guess).

But not every offer is like that. On the eve of the campaign this year Colin Hay wrote in the *Drinks Business* of the woes of the Bordeaux négociants with unsold inventories of 2022s and 2021s, and rising interest rates to finance them. Hay wrote of a Bordeaux system at a financial '**breaking point**', and speculated that **large discounts** on 2023 prices compared to 2022s would be needed create a successful campaign.

As the campaign gets underway – early and fast this year, as Bordeaux is keen to create some buzz – indications so far are positive on price. Highly acclaimed wines from 2023 are being offered at big discounts to what the 2022s were offered at – Lèoville Las Cases (-40%) and Lafite-Rothschild (-31%), and Mouton-Rothschild (-34%). There is one wrinkle in this 'discount' to work out however. How much and how fast have en primeur prices

risen in recent years. Some châteaux have been modest, some have been... ambitious. To muddy the waters further, some have improved also, more than others. In the end you'll have to work this part out for yourself. But as a rule of thumb, I'd say, do a quick comparison to what it would cost you to buy the same wine from a good recent vintage – say, 2017. Chances are the 2023 is a better wine, perhaps substantially so. But do your research.

Of course there are other benefits to buying en primeur. FOMO is dealt with the moment the order is confirmed, you enter the purchase in your spreadsheet or on Cellartracker, and have that pleasure of ownership and anticipation right away, you can request special bottling formats, and if 2023 was the year you got married, or had a kid, you want to get the right wines secured from the beginning. And you'll never have to be concerned about provenance.

## 115 WINES TASTED – A FORESHORTENED REPORT

My report this year is the product of three and a half days' of visits and tastings on the ground at châteaux in Bordeaux. The day after the paulée-style Gala Dinner that concluded the two weeks of The Fine Wine Experience Burghound Symposium I flew to Paris, took the train to Bordeaux and got straight into the primeurs. But that was already a late start. That, and some unexpected logistical challenges, meant that I missed the UGC St.-Julien, Pauillac and St.-Estèphe tastings entirely, as well as the chance to visit a number of top châteaux.

Nonetheless, the days were intensive (thank you Manu and Pierre), and I got the chance to discuss the vintage with a number of châteaux, and I offer my 115 tasting notes and ratings\* below. (The Guinaudeau family wines, including Lafleur, and the Jean family's Couvent des Jacobins and Calicem I exclude from this report as we represent them, and I will write to you about them separately).

As always, I suggest you *read* widely what your favourite critics have written – not just the scores – but to see if they are *describing* wines you would like to drink some day. If, like me, you want to taste a fine, fresh, pure expressions of great terroir, then you will want some 2023s in your cellar.

## FAVOURITES?

Too much was missed for me to conclude like usual, at least comparatively. But if you want the skip skimming my notes for the top results, here are my top-rated wines...

2023 Château Lafite-Rothschild, 95-97+  
 2023 Château Canon, 95-97  
 2023 Château Troplong Mondot, 95-97  
 2023 Château Angelus, 95-96+  
 2023 Château La Conseillante, 95-96  
 2023 Vieux Château Certan, 95-96  
 2023 Château Haut Bailly, 94-96  
 2023 Château Montrose, 94-96  
 2023 Château Smith Haut Lafitte, 94-96  
 2023 Château Léoville Las Cases, 94-96  
 2023 Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 94-96  
 2023 Château Haut Brion, 94-96  
 2023 Château Cheval Blanc, 94-96  
 2023 Château Mouton-Rothschild, 94-96  
 2023 Château Latour, 94-96

...and one or two that stood out in the value range...

2023 Château Clerc Milon, 93-95  
 2023 Château Berliquet, 93-94  
 2023 Carillon d'Angelus, 92-94  
 2023 Château Beauregard, 92-94  
 2023 Château La Clotte, 92-94  
 2023 La Dame de Montrose, 92-94  
 2023 Château Moulin St Georges, 92-94  
 2023 Château Quinault L'Enclos, 92-94

But again, I missed much this year, so no 'Top Ten' tables.



*Just one glass....*



*I'll have...*

## THE RATINGS

### Dry Whites

Aile d'Argent	(89-91)	P.8
Château Carbonnieux Blanc	(89-91)	P.8
L'Esperit de Chevalier Blanc	(87-88)	P.8
Domaine de Chevalier Blanc	(93-94)	P.8
Pagodes de Cos Blanc	(NOT RATED)	P.8
Château Cos d'Estournel Blanc	(90-93)	P.9
Château Malartic Lagraviere	(90-92)	P.9
La Clarté de Haut-Brion	(89-90)	P.9
Château La Louviere Blanc	(90-92)	P.10
Château La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc	(92-94)	P.10
Château Haut-Brion Blanc	(91-93+)	P.10
Château Latour Martillac Blanc	(90-91)	P.10
Château Pape Clement Blanc	(92-94)	P.10
Les Hauts de Smith Blanc	(90-91)	P.11
Château Smith Haut Lafitte	(93-95)	P.11
Château La Tour Carnet Blanc	(89-90)	P.11

### POMEROL

Château Beaugard	(92-94)	P.12
Château Le Bon Pasteur	(87-91)	P.12
Château Clinet	(92-94+)	P.12
Château La Conseillante	(95-96)	P.12
Château La Croix de Gay	(88-90)	P.12
Château Le Gay	(92-94)	P.13
Château Gazin	(91-93)	P.13
Château Montviel	(89-91)	P.13
Château Nenin	(90-91)	P.14
Château Petit Village	(88-90)	P.14
Château La Pointe	(86-88)	P.14
Château La Violette	(92-94)	P.15
Vieux Château Certan	(95-96)	P.15
Château Vray Croix de Gay	(91-92)	P.15

### ST EMILION

Carillon d'Angelus	(92-94)	P.16
Château Angelus	(95-96+)	P.16
Chapelle d'Ausone	(91-93)	P.16
Château Ausone	(93-95)	P.16
Château Berliquet	(93-94)	P.16

Château Canon	(95-97)	P.17
Château Canon-la-Gaffelière	(88-90)	P.17
Château Clos Fourtet	(93-95)	P.17
Château Figeac	(92-94)	P.17
Cheval Blanc	(94-96)	P.18
Petit Cheval Blanc	(91-94)	P.18
Château La Clotte	(92-94)	P.19
Château du Fonbel	(89-91)	P.19
Château Larmande	(90-92)	P.19
Château Moulin St Georges	(92-94)	P.19
Château Le Prieuré	(90-91)	P.19
Château Quinault L'Enclos	(92-94)	P.19
Château Simard	(91-93)	P.20
Château Soutard	(89-91)	P.20
Mondot	(90-91)	P.20
Château Troplong Mondot	(95-97)	P.21
Château Valandraud	(92-94)	P.21
Château Villemaurine	(90-92)	P.21

### GRAVES

Château Carbonnieux	(91-92)	P.21
'C' de Carmes Haut-Brion	(91-93)	P.21
Château Carmes Haut-Brion	(94-95)	P.22
L'Esperit de Chevalier	(86-88)	P.22
Domaine de Chevalier	(NOT RATED)	P.23
Château Haut Bailly II	(90-93)	P.23
Château Haut Bailly	(94-96)	P.23
Le Clarence de Haut-Brion	(90-92)	P.23
Château Haut-Brion	(94-96)	P.23
Château Larrivet Haut-Brion	(88-90)	P.24
Château Latour Martillac	(90-92)	P.24
Château La Louviere	(89-91)	P.24
Château Malartic-Lagraviere	(91-92)	P.24
La Chapelle de La Mission Haut-Brion	(91-93)	P.24
Château La Mission Haut-Brion	(94-96)	P.24
Château Pape Clement	(92-93)	P.25
Château Smith Haut Lafitte	(94-96)	P.25
Château de Thil	(91-92)	P.25

**MÉDOC**

Château Potensac	(89-91)	P.25
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**HAUT-MÉDOC**

Château La Tour Carnet	(89-91)	P.25
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**MARGAUX**

Château Angludet	(88-90)	P.26
Château Cantenac Brown	(91-92)	P.26
Château Giscours	(90-91)	P.26
Blason d'Issan	(86-89)	P.26
Château d'Issan	(90-92)	P.26
Château Kirwan	(87-91?)	P.26
Château Labégorce	(91-92)	P.27
Château Lascombes	(90-92)	P.27
Château Marquis d'Alesme Becker	(91-93)	P.27
Château Marquis de Terme	(90-91+)	P.27
Château Rauzan Gassies	(NOT RATED)	P.27
Château du Tertre	(85-90?)	P.27

**ST JULIEN**

Clos du Marquis	(91-93)	P.28
Château Léoville Las Cases	(94-96)	P.28

**PAUILLAC**

Château d'Armailhac	(91-93)	P.28
Pastourelle de Clerc Milon	(87-89)	P.28
Château Clerc Milon	(93-95)	P.29
Moulin de Duhart	(89-91)	P.29
Château Duhart Milon	(91-93)	P.29
Carruades Lafite	(91-93)	P.29
Château Lafite-Rothschild	(95-97+)	P.29
Pauillac	(89-90)	P.30
Les Forts de Latour	(93-95)	P.30
Château Latour	(94-96)	P.30
Le Petit Mouton	(87-89)	P.30
Château Mouton-Rothschild	(94-96)	P.30
Château Pontet Canet	(94-95)	P.31

**SAUTERNES**

Château Clos Haut Peyraguey	(92-94)	P.31
Château Coutet	(93-95)	P.31

## DRY WHITES (All Districts)

### 2023 Aile d'Argent

89-91

(a white of Château Mouton-Rothschild, Pauillac)

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50% Sauvignon Blanc, 44.4% Semillon, 5% Sauvignon Gris, 0.5% Muscadelle  
At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24

Mid straw; an exuberant and fresh aroma, nashi pears, fuji apples, and a touch of kumquat on the nose; mid-weight, nice fruit per the nose, there's a roundness, a plump, almost fat feel, but there is also a nice natural ripe acidity tucking it in gently. A full sort of white.

### 2023 Château Carbonnieux Blanc (Pessac-Léognan)

89-91

At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24

Bright straw; a low key nose, a touch grassy, fresh; low key, gently creamy, ripe acidity, straightforward and pleasant. Lighter style, elegant white.

### 2023 L'Esperit de Chevalier Blanc

87-88

(Second white wine of Domaine de Chevalier, Pessac-Léognan)

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At Domaine de Chevalier, 24/04/24

Bright, pale; a fresh light aroma of pear, melon and a hint of grass; fruity, straightforward, a nice mix of melon and pear with a little twist. Moderate length.

### 2023 Domaine de Chevalier Blanc (Pessac-Léognan)

93-94

At Domaine de Chevalier, 24/04/24

Bright pale; fresh pear, honeysuckle, lovely freshness, an inviting aroma; fresh and creamy on the palate, supple, and really beautifully integrated and flowing, there's a juicy little phenolic twist. A little hint of fresh mint in the aroma. Juicy, lively, delicious.

### 2023 Pagodes de Cos Blanc

Not Rated

(Second white wine of Château Cos d'Estournel, Saint Estèphe)

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At Château Cos d'Estournel, 25/04/24

Bright, pale; still fresh 'samply' – it's difficult to judge from the sample today the quality and personality of the wine as the fermentation elements and the oak are too awkward today.





Château Cos d'Estournel choreography

## 2023 Château Cos d'Estournel Blanc (North Médoc)

90-93

At Château Cos d'Estournel, 25/04/24

Bright pale; a reserved nose, fine fruit, low key, some wood; pear, melon, a hint of something tropical, but this is more reserved in flavour profile overall and with nice acidity. Good, promising.

## 2023 Château Malartic Lagraviere (Pessac-Léognan)

90-92

At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24

Bright pale gold; fresh melon and musk, with some lift to the aroma; gently creamy on the palate, moderate in weight, a touch of yellow banana, as well as melon and musk, a soft balanced acidity. Nice.

## 2023 La Clarté de Haut-Brion (Pessac-Léognan) (Second white wine of Châteaux Haut-Brion and La Mission Haut-Brion)

89-90

56.3% Sauvignon Blanc, 43.7% Semillon

At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

Pale gold; a juicy nose, musky, melon notes, creamy and fresh; juicy, fleshy, stylish, moderate in weight, plump, with fresh acidity, this is a rounded style, moderate in length, for its early appeal. Nice.

## 2023 Château La Louviere Blanc (Pessac-Léognan)

**90-92**

At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24

Not yet bright – i.e. a sample still to settle and clear fully; spicy, creamy, leesy nose; creamy, there's a sweetness, and some vanillin oak, the phenolics are fine – the acidity is ripe and well integrated, and there's a pleasant tanginess. A fleshy style.

## 2023 Château La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc (Pessac-Léognan)

**92-94**

65.3% Sauvignon Blanc, 34.7% Semillon

At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

Bright pale green-gold; a fresh, attractive, low key aroma, fresh pineapple, melon, passionfruit, there is a panoply of fruit on swirling, but you have to prompt it; fine, good concentration and focus on the palate, fruity extract released from a fine structure, still such a baby there is a yeasty note here still. Moderate depth, and a finish that builds in flavour, boding well for its future in the cellar. Very good, and this easily reminds me of classic examples of 'Laville Haut-Brion' of vintages past.

## 2023 Château Haut-Brion Blanc (Pessac-Léognan)

**91-93+**

58.1% Sauvignon Blanc, 41.9% Semillon

At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

Pale green gold; a fresh, lively nose, but the aromas are more discreet than usual for Haut-Brion Blanc, it feel backward this year on the nose; a nice fruit attack on the palate, but it turns sullen and reserved and a bit reductive toward the finish. This is simply showing too awkwardly today as a primeur sample. For sure, no structural problems – it doesn't feel excessive, but the singularity of Haut-Brion Blanc is hard to detect today. Good, but on today's barrel sample tasting La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc seems to have more dimension this year. I'm hopeful I've underestimated what this will do with further élevage and after bottling.

## 2023 Château Latour Martillac Blanc (Graves)

**90-91**

At the UGC Graves tasting, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24

Bright pale; a fresh, low key leesy nose, quite shy, and 'samplly'; moderate concentration, there is some depth to this, some intensity of fruit, and fine acidity. Good, solid white from Latour Martillac.

## 2023 Château Pape Clement Blanc (Pessac-Léognan)

**92-94**

At Château Pape Clement, 24/04/24

Light gold; a more subtle and low key aroma after tasting Magrez's La Tour Carnet Blanc. This is creamy, detailed, with notes of citrus, spice, cream, musk, and stony minerality; the palate shows great tension between a creamy unctuousness and fine citrus acidity, well-knit, the taste is complex, with citrus, including a bittersweet grapefruit note, a touch of fresh mint, mineral notes, and a fine gentle phenolic grip and focus. Very good length. This shows a moderate level of concentration for this cuvée, but what appeals here is the sense of balance, relative understatement and freshness. An attractive Pape Clement Blanc.

## 2023 Les Hauts de Smith Blanc

(Second white wine of Château Smith Haut Lafitte, Pessac-Léognan)

90-91

100% Sauvignon Blanc

At Château Smith Haut Lafitte, 24/04/24

Bright straw, pale; fresh, musky, gently creamy on the nose, a touch of yellow banana, melon; gently fleshy, fine, banana, musk, cream, and a nice gentle acidity. This is a stylish wine, easy to enjoy, and there is some depth. Nice hint of grass at the end. Musky notes in the aftertaste. An impressive second wine.

## 2023 Château Smith Haut Lafitte (Pessac-Léognan)

93-95

At Château Smith Haut Lafitte, 24/04/24

Bright pale gold; a really creamy aroma, some from wood, plus melon, white peach, citrus, a little touch of passionfruit and a hint of mint – it is fresh ripe and opulent; good palate-coating richness, roundness, a bright core of fresh ripe acidity, all tartaric no malic (in feel) – this is ripe, yet zingy, creamy. A touch of just-ripe banana also. A complex, ample wine, well-balanced. No heat detectable on the finish. Impeccable, really. Perhaps the white to beat in 2023?

## 2023 Château La Tour Carnet Blanc (Haut-Médoc)

88-90

At Château Pape Clement, 24/04/24

Bright pale gold; fresh, quite grassy in tone, with musk melon and some creamy notes in the background in support; juicy-creamy, with melon, passionfruit, and the grassy notes here reversing position, to offer support. This is tangy, with an almost yoghurt acidity, it finishes crisp and dry. Good wine for early enjoyment.

# POMEROL

Note – Guinaudeau family wines, including Château Lafleur tasted but reported separately, as The Fine Wine Experience is an ambassador for the estate.

## 2023 Château Beauregard

**92-94**

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Bright clear ruby; an open floral aroma, attractive freshness; supple, fruity, well-centred and balanced, fine tannins. A really fine Beauregard here in 2023. Long, delicious.

## 2023 Château Le Bon Pasteur

**87-91**

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Clear mid-ruby; freshness on the nose, also a certain exoticism, musk and floral notes, spices; plenty of fruit in the attack, this has a distinctly highly-extraction mouthfeel, all ripe, but a bit dry, indeed an almost husk-like impression, where it lacks a buoyant sappy middle. There is plenty of intensity in this wine, and the fruit is clean and ripe, but it is pushed quite hard here. Is there sufficient fruit for the drying frame? If so this will turn out better than my modest score suggests today.

## 2023 Château Clinet

**92-94+**

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

A full clear ruby; sweet dark berry and dark chocolate, a fresh aroma; a lovely transparent texture to this, quite luminous even, with a mouth-filling, mouthcoating scented berry expression, fine-grained tannins, supple texture and fine length. Very good.

## 2023 Château La Conseillante

**95-96**

88% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc. 43hl/ha.

At Ch. La Conseillante, 23rd April 2024

Full semi-opaque ruby; lovely fresh berry fruit and violet notes, a little hint of leaf, and a fine savoury base note like wet bark, a little hint of mocha, this has a pure and expressive aroma – and led by the berry and violet aromas, inviting, enticing; fleshy, supple, mid-weight, juicy on the palate, with bright fruit, bittersweet freshness and a natural supple feel. This is a Conseillante of freshness and elegance. Some minerality in the very slightly dry tannins - there is not the richness, or sappy build at the finish to fully hide them. This has lighter density than some of the grander vintages of late. But it is undoubtedly a year of elegance, purity, violet floral expression, and clearly well judged by the team. Promising.

## 2023 Château La Croix de Gay

**88-90**

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Bright clear mid ruby; a sweet, open, candied red fruit nose, spicy; sweet, plush attack, it turns a little candied in expression mid-palate, with a hint of mint or eucalyptus toward the finish. Supple, ripe, with some interest and charm. Moderate to light weight.



Château Le Gay... Porsche power!

## 2023 Château Le Gay

92-94

95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 14% abv, 100% micro-vinified in new barrels  
At Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Clear mid ruby; a sweet and fresh aroma, fine fruit; sweet fresh fruit, lively, a distinct lactic-barrel note coats the palate with creaminess – this is the “micro-vinif” expression on display. More new oak vanilla here than the Montviel, a little more concentration also. Very supple. Good length. The oak presence will likely remain distinct in the style. Finesse here nonetheless.

## 2023 Château Gazin

91-93

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Fine clear ruby; sweet fruit, nice freshness, a touch of oak char, dark spices, touch of leaf; fleshy, sweet, dark cherry, there’s an attractive plumpness to this, with good generosity of fruit, nothing forced, the slight glossy tone of the oak is well hidden, ripe tannins. A fruity-fresh and attractive Gazin.

## 2023 Château Montviel

89-91

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 14% abv, 35hl/ha, 100% new barrels  
At Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Clear mid ruby; fresh, floral, bright plummy fruit; juicy, bright and transparent, lighter weight, red fruited, supple, with nice energy, a lighter level of concentration, this is lithe and lively. This is an attractive, lighter Montviel that will offer pleasure in the shorter term.



Château Nenin, booklets for the Delon family properties

## 2023 Château Nenin

90-91

67% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13.39% abv,  
At Château Nenin, 23/04/24

Full crimson ruby; a fresh plummy nose; fresh, fleshy, plummy fruit, a nice round middle, a spherical wine, with nice balance and persistence. Returning to the sample at the end of the tasting, a touch of spices emerging now, with the florals. A good Nenin.

## 2023 Château Petit Village

88-90

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Clear ruby; fresh berry aroma, fine; nice fruit, a little dry and chewy in mouthfeel today, lacking a bit in the mid-palate, and a touch of bitterness on the finish, which is nonetheless clean and fairly supple. This is ok, mid-weight Pomerol, a bit below recent Petit Village performance.

## 2023 Château La Pointe

86-88

At UGC Pomerol, Château Le Gay, 23/04/24

Fine clear ruby; some volatile acidity lifting the aroma awkwardly; palate has ripe fruit, it's a bit sullen, and then marked by mocha oak. Lacking the fat. Short and chewy.

## 2023 Château La Violette

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**92-94**

*100% Merlot, berries individually hand-destemmed, 100% micro-vinif, 14% abv*

*At Château Le Gay, 23/04/24*

Fine hued ruby; sweet, very ripe berries, spices, a touch lactic, with fine oak notes, distinctively La Violette; melting, fine red and dark fruit, a lactic-oak feel and taste, very supple, thick, but flowing, with very supple sweet tannins framing the finish. A luxuriant taste and feel.

## 2023 Vieux Château Certan

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**95-96**

*At VCC, 23/04/24*

Full ruby; fresh, low key aroma, detailed and fine; supple, concentrated, but balanced and moderate, layers of fruit and delicate spice notes, this is a more discreet VCC, classic, superbly well-balanced, and with a long finish laden with super-supple silky tannins that build and then release with great finesse and scent. Beautiful.

## 2023 Château Vray Croix de Gay

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**91-92**

*98% merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc*

*At Château Calon Segur, 25/04/24*

Clear ruby; a sweet bruléed spicy nose; sweet, fleshy, spicy, somewhat candied fruit, supple, a bit of a fruit bomb. Yummy. Such a long spicy warming finish.

## ST.-EMILION

### 2023 Carillon d'Angelus

**92-94**

(Second wine of Château Angelus, from its own dedicated 22ha of parcels)

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80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc

At Château Angelus, 23/04/24

Fine clear ruby; an open and exuberant and generous sort of aroma, fresh, but with sweetness and spices, and a little touch of milk chocolate; supple, sweet fruit, fresh, elegant weight, nice sucrosity, sapid, a little mineral salty note, this is sweet but vivacious, appetizing wine. Very good.

### 2023 Château Angelus

**95-96+**

60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet – 50% new barrique, and 50% used 3000l foudres (Taransaud)

At Château Angelus, 23/04/24

Full deep clear ruby; fine fruit, perfume and very fine spice details; fleshy, fresh, finely defined, with super delicate elegant but well-defined structure, immaculate, but not at all sterile, this feels animated. There's also a little touch of ginger which feels quite noble. Long fine finish. A beautiful expression of Angelus in 2023.

### 2023 Chapelle d'Ausone

**91-93**

(Second wine of Château Ausone)

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At Château Ausone, 23/04/24

Fairly opaque full ruby; a deep, fairly reserved nose, showing plenty of fine new oak; intense, good fruit concentration, supple yet fairly solid in feel, with plenty of new oak in evidence. There is stuffing here, though not 'big vintage' depth to it. Good length. Needs time. There's a good Chapelle here.

### 2023 Château Ausone

**93-95**

At Château Ausone, 23/04/24

Deep, semi-clear ruby; a rich, fresh, deep complex nose, mineral, nuanced, brooding, with some perfume on swirling; fine, deep, concentrated, some layering, it is sweet, oaky, with some evident minerality, spice, it is built, structured, with plenty of mocha, but there is quite some extract here, and just enough tenderness. A typical Ausone that will need some time, but there is quality here.

### 2023 Château Berliquet

**93-94**

59% Merlot, 41% Cabernet Franc, M – 13-27/09; CF – 4-5/10; 45hl/ha, 40% new oak and some in amphoras. 14% abv.

At Château Canon, 23/04/24

Bright clear ruby; fresh, bright, high register, very fragrant and enticing aroma; sweet red and dark cherries, fine spices, very fruity, fresh and bright with beautiful expressive inner mouth aroma of very fine fruit, silky fine tannins with an extended fresh finish. There is no dip in this wine as it caresses the palate – it's moderate concentration flows confidently, brightly from start to the long finish. A lovely Berliquet.



## 2023 Château Canon

**95-97**

71% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Franc, M – 6/09~4/10; CF – 20/9~3/10; 45hl/ha, 14% abv

16-18 months in 50% new oak.

At Château Canon, 23/04/24

Deep ruby, clear; a lovely nose, fine forest berry fruit with real floral perfume, perfect maturity and clarity in the fruit expression, fine spices, a complex aroma; fine silky concentration and raciness, sleek, sweet saturated fruit expression, lovely acid balance and harmony. Spices and fine oak. Limestone minerality and saline edge to the finish. Immaculate and expressive Canon. Lovely wine.

## 2023 Château Canon-la-Gaffelière

**88-90**

At UGC St Emilion, Château Soutard, 23/04/24

Clear bright ruby; fresh red fruit and lift, there is a distinct cool minty and rhubarb like note in the mix; ripe succulent red fruit, a bittersweet element that reminds me (remarkably!) of IPA beer, and that gives it a bittersweet refreshing expression (no doubt some of this is simply something leesy picked up in the sample). Mid-weight, open and fresh, the finish has a little bitter pinched quality, but short term this should prove an attractive CIG. Longer term I feel the touch of unripeness may show more. Let's see how this one turns out in bottle.

## 2023 Château Clos Fourtet

**93-95**

At UGC St Emilion, Château Soutard, 23/04/24

Clear full ruby; a ripe berry and nuanced aroma, with perfume, mineral and subtly earthy notes; good fleshy fruit, real natural concentration here which is impressive, it flows well, with dark fruit, a hint of dark chocolate, and fine ripe tannins. This is well shaped, mid+ weight, with pleasing depth, it feels promising for cellaring, but also feels open enough that it may not in fact shut down. A nice balance between ripe exoticism and fresh approachability, which feels right in the Clos Fourtet zone.

## 2023 Château Figeac

**92-94**

41% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Franc, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon. Picked 6/09~5/10.

13.5%. 45hl/ha. Will make 70/30 first and second wine.

At Château Figeac, 23/04/24

Fine mid-full ruby; freshness and lift on the nose, berry fruit and a certain savouriness, touch leather, some confit notes; palate coating, mid-weight, dark fruit, fresh acidity, not a lot of density here, this is lighter, fresh, lacks a little fat, some fresh-green elements. This is pleasant, but not at the profound level we see in great years here. Nice terroir expression from the gravels – a certain mineral savour. (The discussion at our table was of 'graphite'). Fine supple tannins, and well-knit fruit. This feels relatively open, a relaxed mid-weight Figeac, for the mid-term. Well-judged, mid-weight, nothing angular or pointy here.



*Château Cheval Blanc, now sporting woolly socks*

## 2023 Cheval Blanc

94-96

52% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Franc, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon

At Château Cheval Blanc, 23/04/24

Fine, clear ruby; a very fine nose, more fruit richness than the Petit Cheval, but remaining entirely in the fresh spectrum, it's riper, there is none of the pyrozone element that's in the Petit Cheval either, and fine spices and details emerge with aeration; sweet, fresh, supple, lovely extract, depth and layering, the oak component is visible now but well-integrated, this has richness with freshness, a moderate sense of weight, immaculate quality, fine structure – there is the depth here for longevity, and the balance. It will always express as a more moderate expression of the terroir I predict, but it is clearly there. Not thrill-level Cheval Blanc, but I find it very attractive.

## 2023 Petit Cheval Blanc

91-94

50% Cabernet Franc, 50% Merlot

True 'second wine' – 10% of the production in 2023

At Château Cheval Blanc, 23/04/24

Fresh, cool, quite aromatic, the spice and the herbal-floral side of Cabernet Franc really comes to the fore aromatically; an elegant, mid-weight expression, lovely fresh fruit, some juiciness, a gentle creaminess, lots of Cabernet Franc spices and florals and gently herbal notes, this is sleek, energetic and harmonious. Beautifully judged and balanced. Lovely wine that will be good early, and a very true expression of the Cheval Blanc style.

## 2023 Château La Clotte

**92-94**

*At Château Ausone, 23/04/24*

Fine fresh ruby, semi-opaque; fine cherry fruit, some graphite/fine oak that dovetails beautifully; supple, fine, elegant, silky, with a touch of minerality, there is substance here, but it is so finely balanced and flowing that it feels easy. A fine St Emilion.

## 2023 Château du Fonbel

**89-91**

*At Château Ausone, 23/04/24*

Full semi-clear ruby; ripe, fairly rich nose, dark fruit, aromatic; fleshy, some concentration, this flows well, its juicy, and with a dark, finish, some oak-char. Mid+ weight, deep plummy fruit. Feels like it will be open and pleasurable early.

## 2023 Château Larmande

**90-92**

*At UGC St Emilion, Château Soutard, 23/04/24*

Clear ruby; fresh berries and vanilla cream aroma; fresh and fruity, velvet and sumptuous with moderate weight, nice length. Tannins are fairly polished, and there is a juicy freshness that drives the whole thing to an attractive finish.

## 2023 Château Moulin St Georges

**92-94**

*At Château Ausone, 23/04/24*

Mid fine hued ruby; fine ripe cherry, some minerality on the nose, expressive, some depth; fine, mineral structure shape, with impressive delicacy, fine fruit, there is some lift, and something very refined expressed here. Some elegance, with good intensity and good flow. A long mineral-laden finish. High grade St Emilion here, no doubt.

## 2023 Château Le Prieuré

**90-91**

*85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. 14.5% abv.*

*At Château Calon Segur, 25/04/24*

Fresh clear ruby; a little VA lift on the ripe candied fruit aroma; sweet, plump, ripe, fleshy, gently chewy, bold and sweet.

## 2023 Château Quinault L'Enclos

**92-94**

*67% Merlot, 16% Cabernet Franc, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon*

*At Château Cheval Blanc, 23/04/24*

Clear full ruby; a fresh, fruity, ripe aroma, with floral notes; fine, fleshy, fruity, plump, with ripe fine tannins, a nice harmony, the sense of freshness and fruitiness flows right through the palate. A touch of licorice lingers in the background. This is really very fine, poised, well judged. The 2023 is an impressive Quinault L'Enclos because of its fresh fruit, aromatic detail, and very moderate feel. Classic in the best sense.

## 2023 Château Simard

91-93

At Château Ausone, 23/04/24

Clear hued ruby; lovely fresh bittersweet berry fruit, fresh-ripe and expressive, some minerality; supple, fleshy, lovely sweet bright forest berry and touch of cherry fruit, succulent, nice sucrosity, energy and length. Very nice, moderate weight, elegant wine.



oh, alright then

## 2023 Château Soutard

89-91

At UGC St Emilion, Château Soutard, 23/04/24

Clear mid ruby; fresh forest berries with an inviting succulence on the nose; bright red fruit, bright spine of acidity, a little minerality, and fine grip in the tannins, this is elegant in weight with good persistence. There is a chalky-dry quality to the tannins – they are not melting, but a bit dry, perhaps just a touch green-edged. Nonetheless overall a good expression of fresh red and dark berry fruit. Appetising too in style.

## 2023 Mondot

(Second wine of Château Troplong Mondot)

90-91

90% merlot, and 10% Cabernets (more -Franc than -Sauvignon). This wine is on 100% limestone soil. 50% 1 year old wood, 50% stainless steel. Since 2018 it is a single veyard wine.

Château Troplong Mondot, 23/04/24

Clear ruby; fresh-sweet, perfumed, attractive aroma; supple, high energy, silky-melting, lovely fruit, fine mineral and perfume elements, freshness, palate-coating, quite pretty, not lacking anywhere, long. Delicious (Little touch of CO2 in the wine to have to taste 'through'). Lovely wine – real twist of limestone on the finish.

## 2023 Château Troplong Mondot

**95-97**

84% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Cabernet Franc. (the Cabernet Sauvignon is on the clay – Troplong-Mondot is a mix of limestone and clay).

Château Troplong Mondot, 23/04/24

Full ruby, semi-clear; a really beautifully floral nose, impressive depth and freshness; fine, sweet, velvet, some depth, transparent, complex, svelte, really glowing with aromatic expression wrapped up in sap, fine mineral-toned finish, touch lokhum (Turkish Delight) on the finish. Such a beautiful luminous seamless wine. One to watch in 2023.

## 2023 Château Valandraud

**92-94**

At UGC St Emilion, Château Soutard, 23/04/24

A deep glossy fairly opaque ruby; sweet ripe fresh fruit, a touch of the exotic about it; fleshy, lush, concentrated, present, but polished tannins, dark fruit, plummy, it feels mouth-staining, a little stolid right now. It will need time to stretch back out.

## 2023 Château Villemaurine

**90-92**

At UGC St Emilion, Château Soutard, 23/04/24

Clear ruby; bright sweet juicy plummy fruit aroma lifts from the glass; supple, fruity, dripping with fruit, succulent, straight in taste, good length. A wine of pleasure.

# GRAVES

## 2023 Château Carbonnieux

**91-92**

At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24

Mid clear ruby; fresh forest berry aromas, a touch of toastiness; fresh forest berry, with an attractive twist, some complexity, moderate depth, supple tannins. There is a morishness here, it's very tasty.

## 2023 'C' de Carmes Haut-Brion

**91-93**

(Second wine of Château Carmes Haut-Brion, 100% from its own vineyards.)

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot, 20/09~5/10, 13% abv, 20% in new barrels, 70% in vats of 3000l, 10% in amphoras.

At Château Carmes Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

Solid ruby; bright fresh, with some concentration of aroma, and also a cool expression, a little herbal; elegant weight, nice fleshiness, super bright, but nothing angular, that zinginess sits over a pleasing plushness of macerated berry fruit, particularly black currant. The fruit is admirably pure. The little green note doesn't translate into bitterness or dryness, but gives a verdant freshness to the wine. From the year, or from the 25% whole bunch component? In any case it works. Medium weight, very digestible wine, a little saltiness on the finish. This is appetizing wine.

## 2023 Château Carmes Haut-Brion

94-95

50% Cabernet Franc, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 11/09~25/09, 13.5% abv, 70% new barrels, 20% vats of 1800l, 10% amphoras.

At Château Carmes Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

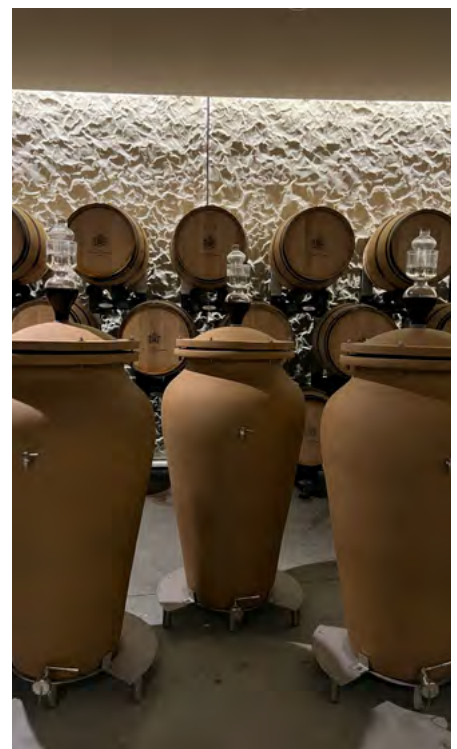
Fine full fairly solid ruby; pure, deep, rather brooding yet fruity aroma, dark and curranty aroma, plus a cool verdant tone running over the top of that base, a little hint of cocoa emerges with air, as well as violet; fine, fleshy, with very fine-grained structure hidden by fruit and sap, the finish is long and persistent with dark berry fruit, a touch of spice, and a brightness and energy that is impressive. This has the density of fruit and the fine structure to age well, but at the same time, a perfect sort of freshness and balance – there is nothing extreme in the wine.



Château Carmes Haut-Brion...  
the hand of nature



Château Carmes Haut-Brion...  
Graves x hipster



Château Carmes Haut-Brion...  
elevage 2023 style

## 2023 L'Esperit de Chevalier

(Second red wine of Domaine de Chevalier)

86-88

At Domaine de Chevalier, 24/04/24

Fine clear mid ruby; a low key aroma, quite ripe; plush, fairly rich and plummy, straightforward, tasty.

## 2023 Domaine de Chevalier

Not Rated

At Domaine de Chevalier, 24/04/24

Semi-clear full ruby; a little VA-lift on the nose, red and dark berry and some earthy beetroot notes; bright fine plush fruit, mouthfilling, with caressing fine tannins, and fine length. On the palate everything seems well balanced and in check, but there does seem like an excess of VA on the nose in this barrel sample, and it will be interesting to see if this is the case in bottle.

## 2023 Château Haut Bailly II

90-93

(Second wine of Château Haut Bailly)

64% Merlot, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Cabernet Franc

At Château Haut Bailly, 24/04/24

Fine mid ruby; fresh bright nose of red and black fruit, touch creamy; nice fleshy fruit, plush up front, juicy finish, touch boysenberry and cream. This is fresh and wonderfully fruity, with soft tannins, but good focus, and a long finish.

## 2023 Château Haut Bailly

94-96

58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot

At Château Haut Bailly, 24/04/24

Fine fairly clear full ruby; lovely nose, ripe fresh fruit, some perfume, pure, fresh, a touch of minerality; fine, well-laden with fine fruit, fresh-ripeness, impressive depth, a fine refined structure that releases the pure dark Cabernet-led fruit that seems to smother the palate at once, and then linger. I feel this is coming both from the level of fruit and extract, and the super suave texture of the tannins, as well as the freshness. This is classic, moderate weight Haut Bailly, stylish and refined, with the legs to age, but most probably a wide drinking window.

## 2023 Le Clarence de Haut-Brion

90-92

(Second red wine of Château Haut-Brion)

55.5% Merlot, 40.9% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3.6% Cabernet France

At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

Clear full ruby; fresh, open, cool, curranty with a fresh leafy note; fresh, fleshy, sapid currant and plum fruit, a touch of leaf, a cool fresh tone, a touch of minerality and a little salinity in the finish. Nice length. This is fresh, elegant, charming Graves.

## 2023 Château Haut-Brion

94-96

52.3% Merlot, 38.6% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9.1% Cabernet Franc

At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24

Fine fairly opaque deep ruby; a very fine fresh aroma, lovely fruit and perfume, this is detailed and complex; very fine, poised, precise, with immaculate fruit, plenty of nuance and detail, a well-integrated creaminess from the oak, this has classic Haut-Brion elegance, and the vintage seems to suit the Château expression well. Nothing outsized here. With more time in the glass, the nose is really the compelling element this year – almost a sense of roses in the scent, it is pretty; and real elegance on the palate. This is Haut Brion in the guise that represents the château in its typicality – not with an extra dimension that lifts it especially, but true to the refinement and elegance of Haut-Brion.

## 2023 Château Larrivet Haut-Brion

**88-90**

*At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24*

Clear ruby; cool, fresh, quite leafy on the nose; attractive lighter weight red fruit, a little creamy oak, lighter weight in this AOC, and with a cool green note that doesn't translate into anything unappealing on the finish. A pleasant, elegant Graves red.

## 2023 Château Latour Martillac

**90-92**

*At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24*

Full ruby; a fresh quite crunchy red and back fruit nose, lovely freshness; attractive red and dark fruit, a little creamy note in the mid-palate with an attractive hint of spices, this is fairly suave, with fairly fine tannins, and good length.

## 2023 Château La Louviere

**89-91**

*At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24*

A full, near opaque ruby; fresh plum and currants, touch of leaf on the nose; attractive creamy fresh red and black fruits, fine-grained tannins – a little grip, but this is elegant Bordeaux red, accessible, attractive, if just a tiny bit rustic in the texture. Delicious, and appealing.

## 2023 Château Malartic-Lagraviere

**91-92**

*At UGC Graves, Château Carbonnieux, 24/04/24*

Bright deep ruby; a shy cool aroma; a plush, palate-coating amalgam of forest berries, juicy and moderately concentrated. There is a cool edge to the tannins, but overall this is pure, gently creamy, fresh in expression and attractive, with good length.

## 2023 La Chapelle de La Mission Haut-Brion

**91-93**

(Second wine of Château La Mission Haut-Brion)

*48.3% Merlot, 39.4% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12.3% Cabernet Franc*

*At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24*

Fine clear full ruby; fresh ripe dark fruit, a little perfume, there's a sense of a little more ripeness and exuberance after the Clarence; fine fruit, lush, well-shaped by fine-grained tannin, juicy acidity, and a hint of cream, fine oak. This is a little fuller than the Clarence, open, moderate, with some complexity. Very good.

## 2023 Château La Mission Haut-Brion

**94-96**

*52.7% Merlot, 29.6% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17.7% Cabernet Franc*

*At Château La Mission Haut-Brion, 24/04/24*

Deep semi-opaque ruby; ripe dark fruit, a more deep-set bass-note expression after the Haut-Brion, this has a touch of earth beneath the fruit, the aroma is complex, with a touch of leaf; a good intensity of dark fruit, super suave melting tannins, a little touch of very fine dark chocolate, this feels luxurious, with good intensity, immaculate fruit and ripeness, good freshness. Good length. A very fine, low key La Mission Haut-Brion, classic.



## 2023 Château Pape Clement

**92-93**

*At Château Pape Clement, 24/04/24*

Full ruby; ripe fruit, some perfume, some oak, well melded together; fine, fleshy, fairly concentrated, with good balance, some complexity on the palate, the extraction and glossiness are noticeable in the style, but the wine does not feel pushed, the tannins are sweet, and the fruity fragrance, that also carries a little mineral touch, rushes back to envelop the palate after the well-judged squeeze of tannins at the end. This is an elegant, mid-weight Pape Clement.

## 2023 Château Smith Haut Lafitte

**94-96**

*At Château Smith Haut Lafitte, 24/04/24*

Full clear ruby; really lovely fresh nuanced fruit and perfume on the nose, a little touch of minerality; lovely on the palate, good concentration of fine fruit, a touch of salt, fine spices, a gently unctuous creaminess, refined wine, supple velvet tannins, long finish. This is superb.

## 2023 Château de Thil

**91-92**

*At Château Smith Haut Lafitte, 24/04/24*

Full clear ruby; fresh sweet berry fruit, pure and expressive; fleshy, sweet lush berry fruit, supple tannin, good sap, purity and length. A little twist of cinnamon on the finish.

# MÉDOC

## 2021 Château Potensac

**89-91**

*48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 17% Cabernet Franc, 13.4% abv*

*At Château Nenin, 23/04/24*

Full deep ruby; a fine fresh expression of Cabernet leads the aroma; fine fruit, a svelte texture, bright, mid-weight. Good. There is substance here. Some grip, and just a touch of green bitterness, but not an excess of it. Classic Medocain wine.

# HAUT-MÉDOC

## 2023 Château La Tour Carnet

**89-91**

*At Château Pape Clement, 24/04/24*

Clear mid ruby; sweet, slightly candied fruit, a dusty note (the glass?); fleshy, plush, red and dark fruit, moderate length, fairly soft tannins. Fleshy, juicy, appealing wine, mid-weight. Quite classic really.

# MARGAUX

## 2023 Château Angludet

**88-90**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Full semi-opaque ruby crimson; a rich dark fruit thick sort of aroma; fleshy, good extract of dark fruit, but the extraction here is judicious, yes, thick with fruit and tannin, but supple, and there is just enough animation in this brooding wine.

## 2023 Château Cantenac Brown

**91-92**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-clear deep ruby; a sweet curranty nose, with a little smoky edge; lush and fruity, lovely open aromatic berry fruit, blackcurrant and plum, fine tannin, nice freshness and balance. Good.

## 2023 Château Giscours

**90-91**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Fairly opaque crimson ruby; some dark fruit on prompting, this is a very reticent wine on the nose, some reduction; sweet fleshy fruit, good concentration, a certain furry thickness to the texture, tannins are ripe, fairly polished, it feels a little pushed, square.

## 2023 Blason d'Issan (Second wine of Château d'Issan)

**86-89**

*49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 48% Merlot, 3% Malbec. 35% new barrels, 50% of the production.*

*At Château d'Issan, 25/04/24*

Clear fine ruby; bright fresh cherry fruit; fleshy, lush, mid-weight fruit, a dark chewy element, a touch of spice. A little feeling of dilution in the mid-palate, but easy, fleshy, nice.

## 2023 Château d'Issan

**90-92**

*70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 2.5% Cabernet Franc, 2.5% Petit Verdot. 50% new barrels, 50% of the production.*

*At Château d'Issan, 25/04/24*

Fine full ruby; fresh-ripe, perfumed, a charming aroma; fresh, juicy, fairly tight, with a natural feeling of grip, moderate concentration, lacks a bit of fat in the mid-palate. But elegant, this is very clean, with fine aroma, but there is a little lack of mid-palate intensity – despite 30hl/ha yields here, and the tannins are a little on the dry side. Still, there is charm, and the perfume lingers.

## 2023 Château Kirwan

**87-91?**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-clear full ruby; nice fruit and a leathery note on the nose; fresh, cool and curranty, there has good mid-palate energy, and then toward the finish, with finely extracted tannin there is a little bittersweet twist – a touch of green here that will emerge more in the future, or is it simply well-balanced freshness? I think it sits on a knife's-edge, but there is ample lovely fruit to carry any little streak that is there. I predict a very pleasant Kirwan, but let's see where that green note takes us.

## 2023 Château Labégorce

**91-92**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Fine ruby; fresh, fruity, touches of spice on the nose; fine, good fruit, moderate weight, nice fruit intensity, it turns quite glossy at the finish, with mocha notes in the oak component. The flow is not arrested however – there is good flow, freshness, and fine ripe tannins in support. Good.

## 2023 Château Lascombes

**90-92**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-clear ruby; a really bright and lifted aroma of red and black forest berries, a hint of vanilla; bright, aromatic, there is a slight candied edge to the tone of the fruit, fine ripe tannins – fairly tannic, but this feels balanced.

## 2023 Château Marquis d'Alesme Becker

**91-93**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-clear deep ruby; a sweet nose of summer pudding – macerated berries and cream; juicy, fresh, a more slender and bright in style, pleasantly elegant Margaux, not super concentrated, but refreshing, pure, with some nice perfume, and good length.

## 2023 Château Marquis de Terme

**90-91+**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-opaque ruby; fresh, but the sample showing fairly reduced today; some nice perfume in the attack, the wine squeezes tight in the mid-palate but releases sap and perfume as it re-expands in the mouth. Awkward infancy, but there is good fruit, depth, and promise. Just a hint of bitterness right at the end, but it is well-covered.

## 2023 Château Rauzan Gassies

**Not Rated**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-opaque ruby; fresh, fruity, leafy nose, touch of brush, touch of leather; fleshy, with an almost soapy sort of scent, a raisin note, some alcohol, a really awkward taste at this stage, a sullen bruléed sort of finish. Goodness. This will have to be judged from bottle, and for my money, not before based on this sample. It's hard to imagine this is reflective of 2023 Rauzan Gassies. Hmmm.

## 2023 Château du Tertre

**85-90?**

*At UGC Margaux, Château La Lagune, 25/04/24*

Semi-opaque deep ruby crimson; reticent nose with a little VA lift; quite thick, extracted, quite sullen right now, thick, but lacking energy, it feels flat today. There's plenty of concentration, but it lacks life, lacks buoyancy, it feels a bit scratchy too. Will it all unpack itself into something more 3-dimensional with time in barrel? Hard to judge today.

## ST.-JULIEN

### 2023 Clos du Marquis

**91-93**

*56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Franc, 13.5% abv  
At Château Nenin, 23/04/24*

Semi-clear quite deep ruby; a really lovely nose, fresh fruit, quite floral, with some mineral notes; fleshy, concentrated, this has a good natural sense of concentration, flow, juiciness, and length. Fine velvet tannins. The aftertaste lingers with a sense of restrained energy. This is a very good Clos du Marquis.

### 2023 Château Léoville Las Cases

**94-96**

*13.1% alcohol by volume. 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 4% Merlot  
At Château Nenin, 23/04/24*

A fine dense ruby-crimson; very beautiful fruit on the nose, freshness and floral notes, detail, complexity and friendly in aroma; mid-plus weight, juicy, elegant on the palate, with layers and persistency, and supple fine velvet tannins. This is a finely cut suit Las Cases – purity, precision, understatement, and no excess. Such class here. This vintage steps out from the formidable style vins de gardes that have been a feature of late, and offers in 2023 this very elegant and fine example, while not lacking anywhere. It will also be a Las Cases with an earlier start to its drinking window, while having the fruit, balance and structure to age effortlessly.

## PAUILLAC

### 2023 Château d'Armailhac

**91-93**

*70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot  
At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24*

Clear bright ruby; a sweet fruity aroma, fresh berry fruit with a dusting of icing sugar; supple, fruity, friendly style of Pauillac on the palate, a supple texture, and a nice detail of bittersweet herb. The dark melting fruit coats the palate well.

### 2023 Pastourelle de Clerc Milon

**87-89**

(Second wine of Château Clerc Milon)

*63% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc, 2% Carmenère, 1% Petit Verdot  
At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24*

Clea full ruby; quite a bright fresh berry fruit aroma; sweet berry fruit, supple, svelte, melting, delicious, ripe, easy finish with soft tannins. A nice attractive wine.

## 2023 Château Clerc Milon

**93-95**

72% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Merlot, 6.5% Cabernet Franc, 1.5% Carmenère, 1% Petit Verdot  
At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24

Clear full deep ruby; sweet slightly candied forest berries on the nose, with a little dark chocolate; fine, focused, melting fruit on the palate, very fresh and succulent, super powdery-fine yielding tannins, this is a charming Clerc Milon, palate coating and long. A little opulence on the finish. A particularly good showing for Clerc Milon in 2023.

## 2023 Moulin de Duhart

**89-91**

(Second wine of Château Duhart-Milon)

55% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon  
At Château Duhart-Milon, 25/04/24

Full semi clear ruby; a sweet fresh cassis nose, attractive and fresh; fleshy, fresh and attractive fruit on the palate also, a little grip from the tannins at the end, but all nicely covered by sappy fruit. Nice

## 2023 Château Duhart Milon

**91-93**

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot  
At Château Duhart-Milon, 25/04/24

Semi-clear full ruby; a fine nose, fresh and deep; fine fruits on the palate, fine fragrant herb notes, fine melting tannins, this is straight, pure and long – the high proportion of Cabernet Sauvignon evident. Very good Duhart.

## 2023 Carruades Lafite

**91-93**

(Second wine of Château Lafite-Rothschild)

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot  
At Château Duhart-Milon, 25/04/24

Bright deep full ruby; an open, fragrant aroma, earthy, and fresh; there's nice flesh on the palate, this is a fairly open-knit Carruades, with a cool fresh taste, good fruit, a tiny edge to the tannins, but this is delicious, fragrant, fresh wine. Nice. A very good Carruades.

## 2023 Château Lafite-Rothschild

**95-97+**

At Château Duhart-Milon, 25/04/24

Clear deep ruby; a lovely freshness and floral aroma, quiet, fine aroma; very fine on the palate, this is fresh, with almost crunchy-fresh fruits – 'croquante' – with plenty of depth, fine acidity, supple, refined tannins, and very good length, the mocha note from the oak appearing right at the end. The wine puckers the palate gently with fine structure and focus. Nice energy running through this seamless wine. This epitomizes Lafite's understated elegance, and in vintage 2023 might be the one to beat.

## 2023 Pauillac

**89-90**

(Third wine of Château Latour – won't be offered en primeur)

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*At Château Latour, 25/04/24*

Full semi-clear ruby; fresh dark fruit and a touch of graphite; fleshy, supple, rounded, delicious, there is a little ripe fine tannin in support. Although this should drink well young, it feels like it might surprise positively in the cellar also. Elongated and fresh.

## 2023 Les Forts de Latour

**93-95**

(Second wine of Château Latour, from its own terroirs, won't be offered en primeur)

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*At Château Latour, 25/04/24*

Fine semi-clear deep ruby; fresh pure fruit, with some fine florals on the nose; lovely fruit, a very fine structure with well-rounded fine tannins, good substance, energy, and a refined feel. A promising Les forts. Fine, clear, earthy and satisfying – very terroir wine.

## 2023 Château Latour

**94-96**

(Won't be offered en primeur)

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*At Château Latour, 25/04/24*

Fairly opaque full ruby; fine deep-set aroma, dark fruit, fine perfume, freshness and detail; fine, full depth of fruit, there's a lovely moderate feel, a freshness, a succulence to the fruit and fresh acidity, fine structure, a touch of wet earth, this is a terrestrial, grounded, classic Latour. Fine – not super super fine as in some recent years, but fine for sure, and expressing something very direct from the soil, it is layered and concentrated, but it is grounded in taste, no excess and the vintage – or lets say the sun or heat – not really marking the wine. (Jean Garandeau says it reminds him of the 2001).

## 2023 Le Petit Mouton

**87-89**

(Second wine of Château Mouton-Rothschild)

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*At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24*

Clear full crimson ruby; dark fruit, a reserved nose, bass notes lead the expression; dark fruit on the palate with an up front attack, and with some forward-palate tannic grip, it coats the sides of the palate, bit there is a dip in the impression mid-palate – the high proportion (79%) of CS is evident here. Still, nice enough, but not nearly as complete or balanced as d'Armailhac or Clerc Milon.

## 2023 Château Mouton-Rothschild

**94-96**

*93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot*

*At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24*

Full semi-clear ruby crimson; an expansive nose, dark cassis fruit, some Xmas spices, and dark chocolate notes; dark fruit wrapped in spices frames the palate, super powdery-fine tannins, it has a dark impression – fruit, and spice, and a seductive texture. Very fine, and well-balanced, this is a darker, very Pauillac impression of the 2023 vintage, indeed, very 'Mouton'. The tannins are completely melting, like fine very dark chocolate on the palate, the wine – from barrel – leaves a similar lingering dark, exotic fruity impression.

## 2023 Château Pontet Canet

94-95

13~13.5% alcohol by volume expected in the final wine, 3.75PH, a blend of 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petit Verdot.

At Château Pontet Canet, 25th April 2024

A deep full ruby-crimson; the 2023 Pontet-Canet shows clearly the personality of the property, beginning with an intriguing aroma, real wild fruit expression, a touch of spice, highly individual, and with a little VA lift; the palate is fleshy, with a really lovely texture that is both supple and stretchy, with good harmony and energy, good freshness of fruit, and very fine sweet tannins that melt at the end. Pontet Canet followers will find their wine here, with fine equilibrium, purity, and clarity of expression.



Château Pontet Canet

## SAUTERNES

### 2023 Château Clos Haut Peyraguey

92-94

At Château Pape Clement, 24/04/24

Fine spun gold; rich creamy nose with vanilla, coconut, dried apricot, melon, nougat and spices and a touch of beeswax on the nose; mid-weight, unctuous and melting with cream and wax giving way to a core of dried apricot, dried papaya, spices and a touch of grip from the wood. The ample feel of Sauternes here feels classic. Just a touch of VA-lift feeling here, it is well made.

### 2023 Château Coutet

93-95

At Château Clerc Milon, 25/04/24

Barrel haze, as to be expected, in the appearance; freshness on the nose, baked apples, citrus, cream and spices, some waxiness; unctuous, creamy, spicy, melting, lovely fruit. A long finish that turns from fruit and nougat to something a touch more caramelized, with sufficient acidity. Nice.



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