

CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

2014 & 2015

Report by Jane Anson, *Decanter's* Bordeaux correspondent

Fruit-forward, unfussy, hugely drinkable wines are what the Côtes de Bordeaux specialise in. This is Bordeaux at its most authentic and good value. The Côtes draws together wines made from five separate areas of Blaye, Cadillac, Castillon, Francs and Sainte-Foy that lie on the Right Bank of Bordeaux along the Dordogne and Garonne rivers. They count around 950 winegrowers between them, making around 10% of Bordeaux's total output per year. And they are largely family-run properties that prioritise not only making delicious wines, but welcoming visitors to discover what are some of the most beautiful parts of Bordeaux.

The Côtes, like most of the Bordeaux region, is a largely red wine area (around 97% of the total production) from the Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes – sometimes with small additions of more unusual varieties such as Malbec. There are also some excellent white wines, made primarily from the Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon grapes and sometimes Sauvignon Gris or Muscadelle.

These are richly textured and interesting wines that have a story to tell, so it's always worth looking at the back label, visiting the website, or heading out to Bordeaux to visit. There are excellent Maisons des Vins in the Côtes that offer regular tastings and stock the vast majority of the wines selected here.

The Bordeaux region as a whole is experiencing a renaissance in wine tourism, with around five million visitors per year, and the Côtes offer some of its most enriching and exhilarating experiences. They contain some of the oldest châteaux



Photograph: Corinne Couette

in Bordeaux, some dating back to the 12th century and earlier. There are Roman remains to be found around the city of Blaye, along with a UNESCO World Heritage Citadelle overlooking the Gironde Estuary. Cadillac (where Musée de la Vigne et du Vin was awarded International Best of Wine Tourism) and Francs are full of historic châteaux and ancient churches that date back to the Middle Ages. Castillon (where the Hundred Years War ended), and Sainte-Foy are full of rolling countryside as they head towards the Dordogne, with towering limestone hills that offer perfect bedrock for vines, and plenty of spots for canoeing along the Dordogne river. The Côtes de Bordeaux areas offer wine festivals that are held all year-round. There are marathons, hikes and various events where winemakers share their passion and know-how with visitors.

The 2014 and 2015 vintages that we are tasting here are part of a trilogy of good quality years in Bordeaux – with 2016 bringing

up the rear and proving the third good year in a row, of which we have just one or two white wines listed, as the reds need just a few more months before bottling.

But the two vintages chosen here give you plenty of choice for quality wine. In style, 2014 is a little more structured and classic, and 2015 luscious and sexy. For the Right Bank in particular, where the Côtes de Bordeaux are based, 2015 was particularly excellent, and a lot of great drinking wines didn't make it into the final selection simply because I tasted well over 200 wines, and there was only room for around half of that number here.

Also worth noting that for the first time the appellation of Sainte-Foy Bordeaux is included in the tasting. The area is not officially part of the Côtes de Bordeaux family until the 2016 vintage, but we are including them here as from now on they are part of the same group – and share the same spirit of making great value wines for sharing with friends.

Whites

BLAYE CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château La Rose Bellevue 2016 90

£10 for red 2014 <https://wine.gauntleys.com>
85% Sauvignon Blanc, 15% Muscadelle. This is always a wine that works the varietal characteristics well. We have the gooseberry, citrus of the Sauvignon with the floral lift of the Muscadelle, both distinct but well blended together. Opens up even further in the glass, full of personality. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2023

Château Cailleteau Bergeron 2016 89

£10.65 for 2014 www.fieldandfawcett.co.uk
Soft straw colour, and this is a lovely, crisp and well flavoured wine, mouthwatering and well held together. 12.5%abv **Drink** now-2023

Petit Secret 2015 89

jean@lissague.fr
Interesting property. This has some lovely subtle juicing of the fruit, very pretty, good tightening on the finish, fleshy without being too much. 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Muscadelle. The second wine range of Château Grand Secret. 12.5%abv **Drink** now-2023

Château Haut Bertinerie 2015 88

(Red, approx £76 for case of 12)
www.bbr.com, www.amazon.co.uk
Sunflower yellow in colour, a clear brushing of toasted almonds from the new oak barrels that this is made in. Good impact, it holds itself together well, and the fresh burst of citrus on the attack is compelling. 100% Sauvignon Blanc. 13%abv **Drink** now-2023

Château La Bretonnière 2016 88

<https://vignoblesheurlier.com>
Bright and cheerful, juicy fruit, citrus, with an attractive roundness through the mid palate. A blend of Sauvignon Gris, Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon. 13%abv **Drink** now-2023

FRANCS CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château les Charmes Godard 2015 90

Both sold out www.thewinesociety.com, www.tanners-wines.co.uk
Owned by the Thienpont family since 1988 and run by Nicolas Thienpont, this is a lovely property worth following. Rich and round with a fairly even blend of Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris/Blanc. Bright, succulent apricot and fresh citrus flavours abound. Touches of saline minerality on the finish give this polish and interest. 13%abv **Drink** now-2023

SAINTE-FOY CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château la Tour de Chollet 2015 87

£12.49 www.latourdechollet.com
A high 75% Sémillon, 25% Sauvignon Blanc gives this a rich round feel, with fleshy apricot fruits and good persistency with mineral notes. Organic, certified with Ecocert. 13%abv **Drink** now-2023

Château Sainte Germaine 2015 87

contact.lamontfi@gmail.com
Plenty of fresh fruit on the nose here, appealing mix of citrus and soft apricot, from a blend of 70% Sémillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc. 13%abv **Drink** now-2023



Reds

BLAYE CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Cailleteau Bergeron 2015 90

£14.90 (2013 vintage) friarwood.com
Cedar, blackcurrant, classic claret, this is really an excellent wine with a mouthwatering finish. Run by brother and sister team Marie-Pierre and Pierre-Charles Dartier. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château du Vieux Puit 2014 89

£9.90 <http://vignoblesbouillac.com>
Sweet, luscious, well extracted fruit, this is enjoyable, with impact. Drink now if decanted or over next five years. Plum, black cherry. Unoaked. Blend of 80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Malbec, 2% Petit Verdot. 14%abv **Drink** now-2022

Château Vieux Planty, Prélude 2015 89

www.chateauvieuxplanty.com
This is luxurious and silky, deep fruit, good quality. 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Oaked for 18 months. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Clairac 2015 89

Approx £100 for case of 12 (2014)
www.wineandco.co.uk
Good quality, easy drinking and enjoyable. Majors on ripe red fruits and soft tannins, this is a classic, well-balanced Blaye. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Haut-Grelot 2015 89

www.chateau-haut-grelot.com
A rich, sweet depth to the fruit here, this is enjoyable easy drinking, 100% Merlot aged in 50% new oak for 12 months. 13%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château la Rose Bellevue Grappe Diem 2015 89

£14-£15 wine.gauntleys.com
Soft, dark fruited, well worked, this is very pretty with attractive floral rose notes giving lift. 75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon from old vines of 35 years. Aged in 30% new oak. Good showing from owners Jérôme and Valérie Eymas. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Cap Saint Martin 2015
88

£11.99 for 2013 vintage www.averys.com
Enjoyable savoury edge to the fruit, good quality, nice balance with classic Bordeaux touches in terms of soft cedar oak. 95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in 30% new barrels. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

La Révélation du Château du Grand Barrail 2015
88

www.denislafon.com
This majors on plush fruit and smooth tannins, with an austerity to the mid palate that suggests it has further to soften over the next few years. Enjoyable stuff from winemaker Jean Lafon. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Haut Bourcier 2014
88

www.chateau-haut-bourcier.com
Again there is a lot to like here, with well-placed black fruits, firm tannins. Classic Bordeaux, good value. Aged in oak for 12 months, blend of 85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château la Bretonnière 2015
88

<https://vignoblesheurlier.com>
A reliable name to follow in Blaye, this is from Stéphane Heurlier and offers ripe fleshy autumnal fruits from a blend of 95% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Malbec. 13.5%abv **Drink** 2018-2030

Château Mayne Guyon 2015
88

mayne-guyon@wanadoo.fr
Good, rich, tannic hold, some freshness through the body, an excellent food wine. Tight finish but will loosen up nicely with a few hours in a carafe. 13.5%abv **Drink** 2018-2030

Château Haut Bertinerie 2015
88

£45 for case of three (2010 vintage)
www.amazon.co.uk
Always a safe bet, so particularly worth looking out for in an exceptional vintage like 2015. We have the attractive combination of tannins, fruit, acidity, all pretty tight right now, so either carafe for a few hours before drinking or even better give it another three years to soften in bottle. 14%abv **Drink** 2018-2030

Château Monconseil Gazin 2015
88

£9.50 (2013 vintage) www.thewinesociety.com
Clear smoked almond oak on the nose, this is ambitious, one for ageing although would also be enjoyable today with some carafing. A blend of 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec, this has rich seams of autumnal fruits and an enjoyable lift on the finish. Aged in 20% new oak, a reliable name. 13%abv **Drink** now-2032

Château Bourdieu 2015
88

www.chateau-bourdieu.com
One of the oldest vineyards in the Blaye region, and yet this is a notably contemporary take on the vintage, touches of vanilla, patisserie, sweet damson fruits. Tight tannins on finish. Classic blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château le Chêne de Margot 2015
88

www.chateaubertrands.com
Tight dark fruits, this takes its time to get going but opens up to display black fruits and well-controlled tannins. Great value claret. 13%abv **Drink** 2018-2030

La BoHa de Château Magdeleine Bouhou 2014
88

www.magdeleine-bouhou.com
This is tight, a whoosh of tannins from a château that delivers on a regular basis. Deep dark spice, from a blend of 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Still extremely young, but with balance and potential. 13.5%abv **Drink** 2018-2030

Château la Carelle 2014
88

Approx £12 www.lamijac.com
Silky, rich flavours, roasted coffee beans, grilled rosemary and blackberry flavours, sense of drama and spice. 80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Clos du Loup 2014
88

£14.90 <http://vignoblesbouillac.com>
This is good, smooth, rich, enjoyable, astringent tannins that should soften. Deep deep black cherry in colour. The Bouillac family who own this estate also own a vine nursery, giving them access to high quality vine stocks. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2025

Château Tour Saint-Germain, Cuvée du Moulin 2015
87

www.tour-saint-germain.com
This is enjoyable, with plush fruits on display, 100% Merlot. Easy drinking over next five to eight years. 14%abv **Drink** now to 2025

Château Lacaussade St Martin Trois Moulins 2015
87

www.lacaussade-saintmartin.com
Soft, well-managed and balanced tannins, showcasing the signature of Blaye with its balance and restraint that gives it more of a Left Bank feel than the other Côtes. Some dark spice on display here. Blend 80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Pinet la Roquette, l'Esprit 2015
87

www.pinetlaroquette.fr
Run by Valerie and Stéphane Nativel, this one has lovely plummy fruits, good firm tannins, quality wine, for drinking in next three to eight years. 95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2025

Château Frédignac, Cuvée La Favorite 2014
87

www.chateau-fredignac.fr
This has freshness and movement through the palate with good dark fruits, and a sense of personality. 80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. Organic. Natural yeasts, 12 months in oak barrels. 13.5%abv **Drink** now to 2025

Château La Raz Caman 2014
87

www.larazcaman.com
Highly extracted, high drama, good depth of fruit, clear ambition. A whisper of spice here from a good dose of both Malbec and Petit Verdot against the more usual Merlot and the two Cabernets. 14%abv **Drink** now to 2025

Château Frédignac, Cuvée Terroir 2014
87

www.chateau-fredignac.fr
Light, fresh, well-balanced. This is a charming early drinker, delicate, floral notes, very appealing. 13.5%abv **Drink** now to 2025



Photograph: Mathieu Anglada



Photograph: Corinne Couette



CADILLAC CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Clos Chaumont, Une Passion de Chaumont 2015
91

www.closchaumont.com
An extremely consistent estate, displaying good depth of fruit. This really does excel in its category, even though I know it is priced ambitiously for a Côtes wine. It has flesh and good hold throughout, coffee edging, firm tannins, brambly fruits, fine acidity. 18 months in barrel, 40% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Carat de Château Reaut 2015
90

www.chateau-reaut.com
A special bottling of the Réaut estate, taken from the oldest vines of the property (80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot) and aged in 50% new oak, this is rich, bold, silky, black fruits, evident oak with fruit to back it up. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Biac 2014
90

£300 IB for case of 12 (2012 vintage)
www.uncorked.co.uk
Firm dark fruits that have held their integrity, this is well placed, carefully extracted, slight spiciness on the palate, good grip without being overdone, quality winemaking, stands out among the 2014s. 85% Merlot, 10% Petit Verdot, 5% Cabernet Franc. Patrick Léon is consultant winemaker at this lovely property on steep hillsides overlooking the Garonne river. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château de Potiron, Cuvée Exceptionnelle 2014
90

www.chateau-de-potiron.com
Juicy attack and on the mid palate they have judged this well, good extraction, juicy red fruits, oak is smoky and gripping not overpowering, provides good structure for the dark fruits. My only query is over the heavy bottle, which feels a little old fashioned. The same producers also make a Potiron cuvée Excellence which is very good although with same bottle issue. 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. Vinified and aged in oak barrels. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Reynon 2015
90

£45 for six bottles IB www.justerinis.com
This has clear grip, captures the sexy, fleshy fruit of the vintage without sacrificing acidity, 70% Merlot, 15% Petit Verdot and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. 12 months in oak, one third new. Really opens up in the mouth, this is excellent value and gives real freshness and succulent fruit. From one of the most reliable estates in the Côtes de Bordeaux. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Domaine du Seuil 2015
89

£10.99 www.finewinesdirectuk.co.uk
Summery red fruits, a charming wine that really unfolds in the glass, showing wild strawberries, soft tannins, medium acidity, fresh and succulent, perfect for drinking now and over next five to ten years. Certified organic. 12.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Réaut 2015
89

£11.99 www.laithwaites.co.uk (sold out of 2010), £14.95 for 2012 www.vinatis.co.uk
Deep, rich, ambitious, well judged oak and attractive cigar box against the black fruits. A blend of 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. This is going to develop well as the tannins integrate further, but is already showing some lovely dark fruit definition. Good showing from winemaker Yannick Evenou. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Le Doyenné 2015
89

£135 for case of 12 of 2009
<http://adnams.co.uk/tag/chateau-le-doyenne>
Soft dark chocolate notes, silky tannins, nicely held back even though the fruit is mouthwatering and ripe. Very good wine, great value on offer from winemaker Dominique Watrin. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Laroche 2015
89

www.jean-merlaut.com
Deep plush damson, definite potential here. This is rich, liquorice and black chocolate, delivers on finesse and tannic hold, touch of acidity on finish, you are getting real personality in your glass with this. Producer Jean Merlaut can be relied upon to deliver finesse to his wines, and he has succeeded again here. A blend of 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc. Extremely good value. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château du Grand Moueys 2015
89

<https://grandmoueys.com>
Evident oak structure, but the tannins are astringent and well worked. Fleshy loganberry fruits, clear tension through the palate, this is a nicely made wine, fruit-forward and a sign of the success of 2015 across the smaller appellations as well as the big names. 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. 14.3%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château de Cros 2015
89

£11 (2016 white) www.hhandc.co.uk
Attractive right from the first nose, this estate offers consistent value in the Côtes. Rich in flavour, good firm almost chewy tannins, not shouting, but quietly confident. From a blend of 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in oak. 13%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château de Ricaud 2014
89

£14 (2012 vintage) www.oddbins.com
The nose has soft smoky notes that add drama and complexity to the brambly fruits. From a blend of 90% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot, aged in new oak for 12 months. This is a Dourthe wine, and well made for easy drinking. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Clos Sainte Anne 2014
88

www.bibendum-wine.co.uk
Well balanced, rich red fruits, fresh and welcoming. Unfussy, pleasurable, not trying too hard and all the better for it. From the Courselle family of Château Thieuley, this is a name to remember in the Côtes. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Lamothe de Haux, Cuvée Tradition 2015
88

www.chateau-lamothe.com
This is plumped up with definite impact, ripe basket of red summer fruits. Plenty to enjoy here, good grip and juiciness, 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. 12.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Grand Moueys Excellence 2015
88

<https://grandmoueys.com>
A wine to share with friends, fully fleshed out, some dramatic touches of vanilla and damson plums. All balanced by firm tannic hold, a sense of freshness to the frame. Coffee notes on the finish. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château de Cranne, 7ème Generation 2015
87

£9.49 for 2016 white
www.mumblesfinewines.co.uk
Enjoyable, gentle sense of soft coffee bean and vanilla edged spice against a gentle sense of redcurrant and blackberry fruitfulness. Charming. 50/50 Merlot/ Cabernet Sauvignon. Winemaker is Vincent Lacoste and the estate is certified organic. 13%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Brethous, Prestige 2014
87

www.brethous.com
A 100% Merlot wine grown on clay-limestone slopes. This needs time and improves in the glass, showing softly fragranced red fruit, charming. Certified organic, with increasingly biodynamic farming. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Lamothe de Haux, Valentine par Valentine 2014
87

£14.89 for the white www.amazon.co.uk
Soft tannins, silky texture, firm black fruits, fresh, a little short but with a clear sense of structure. 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in new oak for 16 months. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Tanesse 2014
87

www.vignobles-gonfrier.fr
Unfussy and charming, brambly red fruits, early to medium term drinker. Almost equal parts of Merlot and the two Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc. 12 months in oak. Certified Haute Valeur Environnementale for its work in recycling and sustainability. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Suau 2015
87

www.chateausuau.com
Deep plum colour, good balance, has impact, pencil lead flavours, bristling dark fruits, just a little short on the finish. 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon aged in concrete vats. Organic, Michel Rolland consultant. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Peneau, Cuvée Tradition 2014
87

www.chateaupeneau.com
Rich and round, well placed, ripe fruit, oak is just a touch drying on the finish but there is some lovely structure and this would be a good food wine. Lovely position for this estate, high on hills overlooking the Garonne river. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Bel-Air Quinsac Roland Coiffe 2014
87

15€ www.rcassocies.com
Smoky, grilled coffee bean notes, rich dark fruit, high alcohol balanced by the sleek buffing and finishing of the tannins, this is not in perfect balance but it has impact and power and will make for enjoyable drinking over the next five to 10 years. Converting to organics. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030



Photograph: Chambre d'Agriculture de la Gironde - Alban Gilbert

**Château la Rame 2014**
87

www.chateaularame.com
A little light through the mid palate, but there is dark fruit here and it has charm, personality, understated and attractive medium term drinker. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Clos Bourbon 2014
87

£10.25 for 2012 vintage
www.farehamwinecellar.co.uk
A lovely wine from the producers of Château du Cros, this majors on soft mirabelle and damson plums, with raspberry leaf on the finish. A touch short, but very attractively early to medium term drinking on offer. 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in barrel. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Sainte Catherine 2015
87

www.chateau-sainte-catherine.fr
Some luscious blueberry and redcurrant fruit character, there is ambition here, and it is well put together, but a little brooding which brings the finish to an abrupt close. 20% new oak, blend of 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château les Guyonnets, Héritage 2015
87

www.chateau-les-guyonnets.fr
Sophie and Didier Tordeur are the producers of this charming wine. A little tight on the finish as the acidity kicks in, but overall there is plenty of soft red fruit and personality. 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Domaine Les Carmels, Les Vendanges 2014
87

www.lescarmels.com
This has clear personality from the off, soft and fresh red fruits and gentle white pepper spice from 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, vinified in stainless steel but aged in natural oak. Certified organic winemaking. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Farizeau 2015
86

www.chateau-farizeau.fr
Tight on the attack with dark fruit character, rich chocolate, black cherries, this is juicy, a little hot in places due to the alcohol, but has charm and structure. 100% Merlot. Unoaked. Organic. 15%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Sissan, Grande Réserve 2015
86

www.kressmann.com
Round, supple fruits, a punch of oak through the mid palate that opens to showcase pretty floral notes, and will unfold further over the next few years. A good food wine, pair it with something simple but richly flavoured. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château du Juge 2014
86

£11.99 for the sweet 2011 www.haywines.co.uk
A touch sweet on the attack but attractive cassis and grilled almond notes that give a counterbalance to the summery red fruits. Lots to enjoy here for early drinking, unoaked. 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château de Marsan 2014
86

www.vignobles-gonfrier.fr
Charming, early drinking wine, from 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, given a cold soak before fermentation to put focus firmly on these soft summery fruits. Good value. Aged 12 months in oak. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Rozier-Morillons 2015
86

jc.crachereau@free.fr
Smoky, cigar box on the nose, attractive bright cherry fruits, a little subdued but this is a good value pick. Has an authenticity to it that is attractive and nicely balance. A lovely history. Two neighbouring properties that merged following a marriage between the two owners. It is now run by the resulting son, Jean-Christophe. 12.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

CASTILLON CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Domaine de l'A 2014
92

www.bbr.com
Stéphane Derenoncourt's Castillon estate is always worth following. It shows a clear sense of vivacity to the redcurrant fruit, although still tight and young right now, at the start of its life. The good ones always stand out and this has a sense of freshness and brightness that jump out of the lineup. 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. 40% new oak. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2035

Clos Puy Arnaud 2014
92

£35 clospuyarnaud.com
Dark damson in colour, clear ambition on show, steady, measured extraction, dark chocolate, some bitter strands but there is a sense of pliability and flexibility to the tannins, and the wine takes a lift through the finish. One that will age well, and will open up beautifully. Biodynamic. Good stuff from winemaker Thierry Valette. 14%abv **Drink** now-2035

Château Ampélia 2015
91

£80 for 12 bottles IB
www.thewinesociety.com
Tight tannins, deep purple in colour, this is fragrant, sculptured fruit and has ageing potential. Owned by Francois Despagne of Grand Corbin Despagne in Saint Emilion, an excellent value pick. Organic. 14%abv **Drink** now-2033

Château d'Anvichar 2015
90

Approx £10 www.laithwaites.co.uk
(waiting for 2015 delivery)
This is still young and tight, love the potential, there is grip and pleasure, just the right amount of flash to remind you that it's a Castillon and that this is a great vintage over on the Right Bank. 100% Merlot aged in oak for 12 months. Good stuff from Anne-Marie and Vincent Galineau. 15%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château d'Aiguilhe 2014
90

£20 <https://uk.cruworldwine.com>
This is a slow burner from Stéphane de Neipperg, the tannins are burly but silky, well worked, not huge impact up front. It grows on you softly, would be a delicious wine to drink in front of the fire with a good book. Plush well worked layers of fruit, rich chocolate. 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Côte Montpezat 2014
89

£17 for 2013 white: www.hedonism.co.uk,
£144 for case of 12 of 2010
www.geoffreyvalebordeauxwines.co.uk
Tannins are tight but pliable, there is clear potential here, get nice grip on the finish, and good acidity against the inky black fruits. Should age well. Unfiltered, unfinned, from vines located on the limestone plateau of Castillon. 75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2033

Château Roque le Mayne 2015
89

£9 Lidl, www.laithwaites.co.uk
(when delivered)
Good quality, deep rich plush fruit, damson, silky tannins, impactful and almost sweet without being cloying. Drama yes, but that makes it very Castillon. Perhaps a little touch of heat on the finish, but this will be great with food. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Réserve de Famille, Château des Demoiselles 2015
89

www.ducourt.com
Lovely wine from the Ducourt family. Firm tannins up front, fine black fruits, clear ambition, there is plenty to enjoy in this wine, softened and deepened with smoky oak. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château La Clarière Laithwaite 2015
89

£24 for 2014 www.laithwaites.co.uk
Inky black colour, showcasing the confident, sexy signature of Castillon. This is tight in structure, deep black fruit flavour, should age well over next ten years. 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in 30% new oak. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2032

Château Picoron 2015
89www.chateaupicoron.fr

Good quality, deep rich fruit, some delicious damson and chocolate notes. The high alcohol comes through in terms of its silky and slightly heavy texture but this is well balanced, has plenty of punch. 100% Merlot. Glenda and Frank Kalyk have been owners here since 2015, making this their first vintage. 15.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château de Laussac, Cuvée Sacha 2014
89www.vignoblesrobin.com

Rich black fruits, liquorice, heavy on the toasty oak but attractive and modern, good for drinking over next five to ten years. 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc, aged in 60% new oak. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Côte Montpezat, Cuvée Compostelle 2014
89www.cote-montpezat.com

Clear Castillon gloss on show, which works because it has real appellation character, and stays in balance. This is good, the fruit here is savoury as it moves through the mid palate and in balance with the oak. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Rocher Bellevue 2015
88www.bordeaux-vineam.fr

Plush, nicely worked raspberry and red cherry fruit, some good grip and lift on the finish, this is thoroughly enjoyable. 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Beynat, Cuvée Léonard 2015
88www.vinetrail.co.uk

Dripping in oak and plum purée, this has a sweet nose but balances out in the mid palate and would be a great by-the-glass wine with a plate of olives and some fresh crusty bread. 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Pillebois Vieilles Vignes 2015
88www.vignobles-petit.com

Plump fruit, excellent expression, this is really very enjoyable. Can feel the seam of acidity, it's refreshing. 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Organic. 12.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Domaine de l'Aurage 2014
88www.corneyandbarrow.com

£30 for 2012 This is an enjoyable drinking wine and is a property that shows impressive consistency across vintages. Suggest opening over the next five or six years to make the most of these dark damson fruits. Winemaker here is the talented Louis Mitjavile. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Le Peyrat 2015
88

£50 for case of 12 (2014 vintage)

www.justerinis.com

Good, firm, deep fruit, this is a classic old school Castillon, lashings of ripe fruit, dark in colour, attractive spice. Great value for money from owner Paul Valade. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château la Pierrière 2015
88www.kressmann.com

Fresh raspberry and redcurrant on the attack, good grip from the tannins. Well balanced. The blend here is 80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Worth a visit if you are in the area; the oldest part of this château dates back to the 13th century. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Moya 2014
88£19 for 2011 www.winestory.co.uk

That Castillon kick of oak on the nose, this is welcoming, soft ripe fruits, highly appealing. Expect peak drinking over the next five to eight years, good drinking wine. Organic farming. 93% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Le Soutien-Gorge Rouge 2014
8713€ www.chateau-chainchon.fr

A basket of summery fruit, this is ambitious for what is an easy drinking wine, a little tight right now but is going to make a lovely bistro wine in a year or two. 14%abv **Drink** 2018-2030

Château Lagrave-Aubert 2015
87www.aubert-vignobles.com

Glossy redcurrant and cherry fruits on the nose, a clear sexy toasting from the oak (most vintages this spends 18 months in barrel), succulent and easy drinking. 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. 13%abv **Drink** now-2030

FRANCS
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX**Château Bréhat 2014**
87www.haut-rocher.com

Unfussy, fruit-forward, unchallenging, good pizza wine, majoring on raspberries and redcurrant with soft integrated tannins. 70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Mauperey 2015
87£11 www.sovex-grandschateaux.com

Slightly rustic tannins on display but this has charming savoury fruit and will make lovely easy drinking over the next five years. 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, unoaked. Owned by the Lauret family since 2012. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2025

Château Roqueville Excellence 2015
87£14.50 (for normal cuvée) www.lebonvin.co.uk

The chocolate is clear, dark and almost bitter, and the overall feel is a little dramatic, but there is plenty of juicy black fruit to balance things out. 85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in 50% new oak. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Robin 2014
86www.bcfw.co.uk (out of stock)

Sweet fruit on the attack, with a blackberry push through the mid palate. Easy drinking, rich and round, early drinking pleasure. 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Puyanché 2015
89www.vignobles-arbo.com

Lovely liquorice, grippy tannins, you can feel the walls of the wine, and its silky texture is highly appealing. Overall it balances showing restraint with still delivering a punch of flavour. 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Puygueraud 2014
89www.leaandsandeman.co.uk (waiting for new vintage); £19.99 (2011) <https://haywines.co.uk>

Nicolas Thienpont has crafted a fruit-dominant wine, with the oak playing its supporting role. This is damson, bilberry, vanilla bean, restraint evident. Get violet notes through the mid palate, very pretty medium term drinker. Merlot with a touch of Malbec. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château Ad Francos 2014
87www.chateau-adfrancos.com

Restored by Viviane and André Vossen. This place also comes with some Bordeaux history - Michel Rolland's ancestors lived here for almost two centuries. Lovely deep ruby color, and the significant slice of oak on the nose is well measured and balanced by fruit. Perhaps a little overpowering on the palate, but great impact, black cherries, polished. 14%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Le Priolat 2014
87www.chateau-adfrancos.com

This is a lovely 6ha estate of mainly Merlot, with some Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. The wine that shows restraint and well placed black fruits. Very good. 13.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château la Prade 2014
86

£14.99 per bottle (2007 vintage)

www.bcfw.co.uk/wine-producer/items/chateau-la-prade

Sweet cherry fruit on this one, this is highly charged, sleek stuff from Nicolas Thienpont, touch drying on finish. 50% new oak. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

SAINTE-FOY
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX**Château Pré La Lande, Cuvée Diane 2015**
90www.prelande.com

A lovely blend of fruits, touch rustic but in all the right ways, some mouthwatering juiciness on the finish. Unfussy and delivers exactly what it should do at this price point. Clay limestone soils on slopes, 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, great stuff from winemaker Michel Baucé. Organic/biodynamic. 14%abv **Drink** now-2030

Château les Mangons, Cuvée Saxo 2014
88www.chateaulesmangons.com

50% Merlot and the rest an even split between the two Cabernets, this is big and tight with good fruit delivery. Dark fruits, well held in, a little austere perhaps but this opens up very attractively in the glass, and is an excellent drinking wine. Biodynamic since 2000, certified by Demeter. 13%abv **Drink** now-2028

Château Baby-Dame 2014
87contact.lamontfi@gmail.com

A touch lean through the mid palate, but this is charming. The tannins are soft and there is good black fruit on display. 55% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. 14% **Drink** now-2030

Château L'enclos, Triple A 2014
86contact.lamontfi@gmail.com

Ruby red, touch of rusticity to the tannins, this is 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc, high in oak influence, good impact but the ending is a little abrupt. 14.5%abv **Drink** now-2028

CÔTES DE BORDEAUX