

PREMIUM

Value claret: Top 30 under £20

Decanter's largest ever tasting of this broad category impressed in all aspects, delivering a host of drinkable, ageable, yet affordable red gems from Bordeaux.



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Credit: Angie Photos / Getty Images



Exclusive Highlights Magazine: November 2022 Issue
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30 top-value clarets

Bordeaux remains the leader in French exports of AP wines to the UK, representing 20% of the volume and 37% of the value in 2021 (CIVB). In short, Bordeaux is important and very many of us seem to enjoy drinking it. But faced with such an array of bottles on supermarket and merchant shelves, how does one choose?

Appellation and stylistic preferences are important, clearly, vintage quality and renown also; but price remains a key motivating factor in consumer purchasing decisions.

Given the breadth of this category, the interest from *Decanter* readers, and the current economic climate, for this tasting we set the criteria as follows: i) any bottle of the most recent, or widely available vintage; ii) one bottle per producer; iii) must be priced at £20 retail or below.

Scores in total from 163 wines

93pts 5

92pts 17

91pts 30

90pts 32

89pts 29

88pts 28

87pts 15

86pts 7

Plenty to enjoy

Wines were blind tasted in *Decanter's* tasting suite in west London. The turnout was astonishing: not only was there a representative spread of regions, but also vintages and price points, with the cheapest wine entered at £6.99.

The final list counted 23 appellations, including Blaye, Castillon, Lalande de Pomerol, **St-Emilion** (including grand cru), Fronsac, **Graves**, Pessac Léognan and **St-Estèphe**, as well as the generic Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur categories, which saw 50 wines entered between the two. The Médoc and Haut-Médoc were well represented, and between them these four broad appellations (including a number classified as cru bourgeois) accounted for 26 of the top-scoring wines. If anyone was in doubt of the quality coming from these areas, this tasting proved otherwise.



Château Ramafort, Médoc

With the exception of 2012 and 2013, every vintage from 2010 to 2021 was represented, showing both the value and ageability that these wines offer – we have one 2010 among the top five.

This top 30 selection, perhaps unsurprisingly, consists largely of wines from the most critically acclaimed of the recent vintages: 2019 (7 wines), 2018 (12), 2016 (7) and 2015 (3). All are slightly different in their style and drinkability, with 2015 considered a great **Right Bank** Merlot vintage and 2016 an exceptional one for **Left Bank** Cabernet Sauvignon; 2018 yielded rich, powerful and sumptuous wines, while 2019 offers elegance and character with sweetness, concentration and freshness. Indeed, the trio of 2018, '19 and '20 is considered a safe bet for many Bordeaux wines, though the 2020s in this tasting were showing too youthful in general to be fully enjoyed right now.

Prices ranged from £6.99 up to £20, with 66 wines priced at £10–£14.99, 86 at £15–£20, which seemed to be a sweet spot for this category, the top five wines ranging from £11.95–£18.95. Twelve wines were entered below the £10 mark, of which five scored 90pts and above. So there really is something for every budget among the value red Bordeaux selection to be found on shelves today.

See the notes and scores for all 163 wines

Bordeaux in numbers: 2021

- **Export markets for Bordeaux wines** China 54 million bottles, USA 33m, Belgium 25m, Japan 22m, UK 20m
- **UK-specific imports by volume** 50% Bordeaux, 20% Médoc & Graves, 11% St-Emilion, Pomerol & Fronsac, 3% Côtes, 13% dry whites, 1% sweet whites
- **Distribution** 55% domestic, 45% export (of which Asia represents 34% of shipments, EU 28%, North America 17%, and other destinations 21%)
- **Production: percentage of volume** Bordeaux & Bordeaux Supérieur 44%, Médoc & Graves 18%, Côtes 13%, St-Emilion,

Pomerol & Fronsac 10%, other styles 15%

- **Production** Red wine 85%, white 9%, rosé 5%, sparkling 1.5%, sweet 0.5% [figures rounded up]
- **Annual production** Variable, but average approximately 4.7m hl, equivalent to some 649m bottles
- **18 bottles every second** Bordeaux wine sold

Best-buy Bordeaux: Hindle's pick of 30 top-value clarets



Château Grand Français,
Origines, Bordeaux
Supérieur, France 2018

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Just the most gorgeous nose of dark bitter chocolate with ripe blackcurrants. Round and playful, this is bright and upfront in

Points

93



Château Ramafort, Médoc
Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux,
France 2010

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Gorgeous aromatic and expressive nose, full of rich ripe fruits, scented flowers and herbal touches. Smooth, supple and

Points

93

Jean-Baptiste Audy, Haut-Médoc, Bordeaux,

France, 2018

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Dense and concentrated, this has a gorgeous aromatic expression and lovely clear fruit profile on the palate. Chewy and



Points

93

Jeroboams, Red, Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France, 2016

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Smells wild and potent, concentrated and full, a touch of cassis and violets to the nose. Concentrated and persistent with



Points

93

Ronan by Clinet, Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France, 2016

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Incredibly aromatic and expressive nose full of ripe red fruits and floral scents. Smooth and sappy with bounds of energy and vibrancy. The red berry fruit feels really well worked, smooth and

Points

93



Château Argadens, Bordeaux Supérieur, Bordeaux, France, 2018

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Gorgeous nose, ripe and scented full of dark chocolate and blackcurrants. Smooth and charming, round and balanced with a

Points 92

Château Beaumont, Haut-Médoc, Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux, France 2015

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Fruity, round, smooth and direct, this has a lovely frame, well structured with enough dark fruit richness, acidity and freshness to be complete and compelling. Still with lots of power but well

Points 92



Château Charmail, Les Tours de Charmail, Haut-Médoc, Bordeaux, France 2016

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Round, full, opulent and shining out the glass. The fruit is at the fore with blackcurrant, black cherry, plum, liquorice

Points 92



Château du Périer, Médoc Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux, France 2015

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Potent and alluring on the nose. This has lovely control and balance, ripe and sumptuous blackcurrant and strawberry fruit with delicious crunchy mouthwatering acidity and a seriously

Points 92



Château La Chenade, Lalande-de-Pomerol, Bordeaux, 2019

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Gorgeous perfumed nose, so floral and inviting. Smooth texture straight away, just so satisfying, creamy and chalky

Points 92



Château La Fagnouse, St-Émilion, Grand Cru, Bordeaux, France 2016

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Round and creamy, well balanced and so approachable - it's at a great time to drink, still clearly powerful and concentrated but with layers and waves of flavour and texture. Smooth and velvety

Points 92



Château Lafite Monteil, Grande Reserve, Bordeaux Supérieur, France 2018

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Perfumed and richly fruited on the nose, this smells wonderful. Creamy, smooth and sensual, such a lovely expression of

Points 92



Château Lalande d'Auvion, Médoc, Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux, France 2019

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Rich and concentrated, smooth and sensuous, really delivering the Médoc character in terms of fresh fruit, herbal scents, soft spicing and gorgeous acidity. Joyful, lifted, balanced. Not massively

Points 92



Château Plaisance,
Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France,
2015

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Coffee beans, tobacco and smoked blackcurrant aromas on the nose. This is characterful and just so full of flavour and

Points 92



Château Roques Mauriac, Damnation,
Bordeaux, France 2018

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Smells wonderfully evocative, richly scented and darkly fruited. Full and round from the start, this has presence in the mouth, very concentrated with lashings of sweet, sticky liquorice that really

Points 92



Château Saint Ahon, Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux, France 2019

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Smooth and satisfying, this is bold and characterful with rich, deep and ripe black fruit flavours alongside liquorice and milk



Points 92

Duboscq, Claret, Bordeaux, France, 2018

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Such a gorgeous nose; cinnamon, sweet spices, pink flowers, raspberries, red cherries and blackcurrants. Smooth and silky, the texture here is excellent, so mouthfilling but refined at the same

Points 92



Jean-Pierre Moueix, Bordeaux, France, 2016

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Lifted and lively, this is smooth and supple. Generous but in a delicate and graceful way not trying too hard or

Points 92



Baron Philippe de Rothschild, Mouton Cadet Classic Rouge, Bordeaux, France 2019

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A really lifted and joyous expression with rich but creamy red fruits - strawberry and red cherry mingling with cinnamon and sweet exotic spices giving a touch of heat and oak piquance to the

Points 91



Château Bonnet, Réserve
Rouge, Bordeaux, France
2018

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Bold, deep and concentrated on the nose.
Ripe, fresh and so succulent with
mouthwatering acidity and fleshy texture.



Points 91

Château Cissac, Haut-Médoc Cru Bourgeois
Supérieur, Bordeaux, France 2018

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Big and bold, this is concentrated and powerful with opulence and plushness. Tannins are ripe and chewy and mouthfilling, you feel the heat of the vintage here, the wood and the alcohol just present, full

Points 91



Château d'Haurlets, Bordeaux, France, 2016

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Round and creamy, this is gentle and delicate. Lovely purity of flavour with a directness and tension still that drives the



Points 91

Château Daviaud, Bordeaux, France, 2019

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Chewy and plump, this is lovely, round and full offering plenty of ripe red and black fruit flavours and a gentle florality alongside massy tannins and balanced acidity. Nice energy and styling here,

Points 91



Château du Moulin Rouge,
L'Ecuyer du Moulin Rouge,
Haut-Médoc, Bordeaux,
France 2018

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Gorgeous milk chocolate blackcurrant aromas on the nose, so beguiling and expressive, really makes you want to take a

Points

91

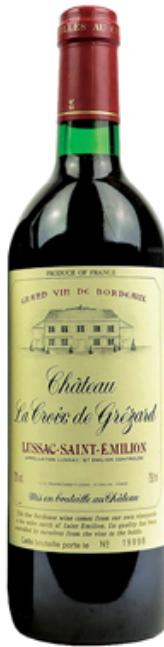
Château La Croix de Grézard, St-Émilion,
Lussac St-Émilion, Bordeaux, France 2018

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Dense and concentrated, this has a gorgeous aromatic expression and lovely clear fruit profile on the palate. Chewy and ripe, tannins are so present and filling but they have a lovely finesse to them. It's

Points

91



Château La Grave, Médoc, Bordeaux, France, 2019

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Vibrant and lively, but rich and concentrated too with such an iron/mineral tang that is very evident and



Points 91

Château La Tessonnière, Médoc Cru Artisan, Bordeaux, France 2016

[+ Add to My Wines](#)

Dark and brooding nose, full of rich black fruits. Deep and concentrated, this is a wine with power and propulsion. Highly charged with ripe fruit but slightly austere tannins still that

Points 91



Château Larose-Trintaudon, Haut-Médoc, Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux, 2018

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Fresh and so fruity on the nose, a lively and bright expression full of zingy blackcurrant, strawberry and red cherry.



Points 91

Château Maine-Pascaud, Côtes de Bordeaux, France 2019

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Ample and bouncy, this has a marked creamy edge to the fruit with a crushed velvet texture to the tannins that is so appealing and enjoyable and really serves to plump up the blackcurrant and black

Points 91



Château Penin, Cabernet Franc, Bordeaux, France 2018

It's always interesting to taste single-varietal Bordeaux wines and this massale selection Cabernet Franc (propogated



Points 91

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