

## 2021 Bordeaux: An introduction

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This April saw the return of the En Primeur week somewhat back to normal with many visitors arriving from all over the world to taste the new vintage. The initial feeling prior to the tastings was that after the trio of outstanding vintages 2018, 2019 & 2020 and the problematic growing season in 2021 the wines would not be up to the quality of the previous three vintages. However, there are many pleasant surprises.

This is my 37th Campaign and what stands out above the past 36 vintages is three main aspects: terroir; diligent work in the vineyard; and effective work in the cellar.

To fully understand the growing season see below an excerpt of the report from two renowned Professors of Vine and Wine Sciences for the University of Bordeaux Oenological Research Unit (available in full [here](#)):

*It is naturally tempting to become accustomed to excellence and to consider what is exceptional to be the norm. Already successful, the decade from 2010 to 2020 majestically drew to a close with a series of 2018, 2019 and 2020 vintages that boast distinctive styles yet are all equally astonishing. While this success is a cause for celebration and will go down in the history of great Bordeaux red wines, we need to bear in mind its unique character and not view it as a benchmark for future vintages, starting with the 2021.*

*After a wet winter with alternating cool and mild spells, April started out pleasant, triggering early bud break. Unfortunately, this fine weather turned out to be detrimental. The nights of the 7th and 8th of April witnessed severe frost of historic proportions, which affected the entire Bordeaux region. This led to varying yield losses, which were drastic in certain areas, setting the stage for uneven ripening. Localised frost was also recorded in early May with gloomy, wet and cool conditions overall, which slowed down vine growth. Summer weather finally set in from early June, and flowering unfolded in favourable conditions, a week later than the twentyyear average. Storms in the Gironde during the second half of June were accompanied by abundant rainfall in places and even hail, causing localised damage. Vine growth continued, although frequent rainfall prevented water stress during fruit set, which impacted the size of the berries. Rain showers continued in July, which was grey and cool overall, increasing the spread of mildew attacks which first appeared in June. After frost and sometimes hail, the development of brown rot was a third concern, drastically reducing yields for the 2021 harvest and affecting the mood of winegrowers. Véraison (colour change) occurred in mid-August while the vines were still growing. Fortunately, the weather in late summer was 2 much more “Excellent wines that will deliver immense pleasure. Exhibiting the balance and style of a vintage of the 1990s, but benefiting*

*from all the agronomic progress and technical savoir faire of the present, the best 2021 reds are better than anyone could have dared to hope. Thanks to rather cool conditions in 2021, Bordeaux's white grapes preserved acidity and vibrant aromatics, delivering the finest set of dry whites since 2017. Chiseled and intense, they exhibit considerable potential. 2021 also had the makings of a profound vintage in the Sauternais." - William Kelley, Wine Advocate 2 conducive to ripening, with long-awaited dry, sunny spells and significant variations between day and night-time temperatures. The red wine harvest started much later than previous vintages, and was underway in most estates in late September, under ominous skies. The berries were large, with a high malic acid content and the lowest sugar levels observed in a long time. The Indian summer proved providential in this late-ripening vintage. Sunny skies in October prompted the ripening of the Cabernets, which were harvested in very favourable conditions.*

*The dry white wine grapes were picked during the first twenty days of September. The cool summer preserved good acidity and the aromatic potential of the grapes, which were harvested in good condition.*

*Unfortunately, the Sauternes region was severely affected by frost and hail in 2021. In plots partially spared from damage, the spread of Botrytis cinerea was delayed by cool summer temperatures. Mid-September rainfall accelerated the development of noble rot in perfectly ripe grapes which had higher acidity compared to previous vintages. Satisfying the need for alternating weather conditions to produce great botrytised sweet white wines, the fine weather in October helped to concentrate the grapes, which were harvested in two to three passes.*

***This vintage helps to measure the viticultural progress made by Bordeaux winegrowers.***

*As a result of frost, hail, and vine diseases, yields varied significantly from one area to the next, and sometimes within the same estate. They are, on average, much lower compared to 2020. This is what distinguishes the 2021 vintage from a vintage such as the 2014, which was marked by similar weather conditions but produced much higher volumes. While the red wines do not display the same intensity and concentration as the three previous vintages at the start of ageing, there are some great successes on both banks. 2021 will be remembered as a particularly challenging vintage for winegrowers, whose hard work and efforts were fortunately rewarded by a providential Indian summer. - Professor Laurence Geny and Professor Axel Marchal*

*Having reviewed the weather pattern you can see the tremendous challenges the vigneron was faced with throughout the growing season. The 2021 vintage is a testament to what will finally be in the bottle. Usually there a certain commune or two that is universally agreed to be the commune of the vintage, but in 2021*

there are excellent wines from all of the communes. The white wines are especially good this year. Due to the varied weather patterns we have a return to wines with great freshness and balance with average alcohol levels 1-1.5% lower than the past three vintages. Most of the top properties have made very good to excellent wines, however quantities at many properties are drastically reduced. This is a vintage in which you should do your research thoroughly, and, as ever, our sales team is available to aid you in this process.

## WINES OF THE VINTAGE

- Cheval Blanc
- Figeac
- Haut Brion Blanc
- La Mission Haut Brion Blanc
- La Conseillante
- Lafleur
- Lafite Rothschild
- Latour
- Leoville Barton
- Leoville Poyferre
- Leoville las Cases
- Le Pin
- Les Carmes Haut Brion
- L'Evangile
- Mouton Rothschild
- Palmer
- Pichon Lalande
- Vieux Château Certan

## STANDOUT MID-RANGE WINES

- Alter Ego de Palmer
- d'Armailhac
- Canon
- Clerc Milon
- Clinet
- Grand Puy Lacoste
- Gruaud Larose
- Guillot Clauzel
- Leoville Barton
- Leoville Poyferre
- Pontet Canet
- Pavie Macquin
- Rauzan Segla

## OVER-ACHIEVERS

- Alter Ego de Palmer
- d'Armailhac
- Blanc De Lynch Bages
- Capbern
- Calon Segur
- Charmes Godard Blanc
- Cote de Baleau
- Duhart Milon Rothschild
- Grand Puy Lacoste
- Laroque
- Moulin de Duhart
- Pichon Lalande
- Pavie Macquin
- Tour St Christophe

## VALUE DRINKERS

- d'Armailhac
- Capbern
- Charmes Godard Blanc
- Cote De Baleau
- Lacoste Borie
- Laroque
- Moulin de Duhart
- Pastourelle De Clerc Milon
- Puygueraud
- Tour St Christophe