

CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

2012 & 2013

Finding Value in the Côtes de Bordeaux. Report by Jane Anson, *Decanter's* Bordeaux correspondent

The Côtes de Bordeaux appellation was created five years ago, back in 2009, when the appellations of Blaye, Cadillac, Castillon and Francs (then Premières Côtes de Bordeaux) chose to group together to market their wine under one common identity. The five years since have seen exports doubling up to 22%, and an increasingly strong identity formed around the family-owned, terroir-driven, usually Merlot-led wines of the Côtes. Today there are nearly 1,000 producers bottling under these appellations, farming an area of 11,000 hectares across the Right Bank of the region and producing around 10% of Bordeaux's overall output per year – 97% of which is red wine.

For this selection, we tasted through almost 200 producers from the four sub-appellations, plus the generic AOC Côtes de Bordeaux, to select around 100 wines, concentrating on the 2012 vintage in red and a selection of the 2013 vintage in white.

The Côtes produce small but high quality amounts of whites wine, concentrated in the Blaye and Francs appellations and made typically from a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Muscadelle. 2013 proved of very good quality for this style of wine, more so for the whites than for the reds, as they escaped the negative effects of late September rains. The best of them have bright, clean fruit flavours and will be perfect for drinking over the next few years

– and offer exceptionally good value. The 2012 vintage for the reds was also a good to very good one, particularly on the Right Bank and perhaps a little underestimated at the time. The acidities are lower than in 2011, and the fruit a little more fleshed out. Now a few years down the line, with all wines in bottle and with tannins softening up, there are plenty of easy drinking, supple and summery bottles that should be enjoyed in the short to medium term.

All of the wines tasted should be available on the market today, either in the UK or direct from the estate. And if you are heading out to Bordeaux to visit, these are châteaux that are worth getting to know in person. Most are family-run and open for visitors, and many are located in the most beautiful spots of the region (côtes means slopes, and several estates are set into valleys or high on escarpments that slope gently down towards the Dordogne or Garonne rivers). Wine tourism is a big deal in the Côtes also, there are local wine festivals held year-round, (Printemps des vins de Blaye, open days in Cadillac and Castillon), and throughout the year the appellations increase the number of events held to show their passion and their know-how with visitors. Vines have been planted in these regions since Roman times, and you will find the landscape dotted with historic châteaux, manor houses, fortresses and UNESCO World Heritage sites such as the Citadelle de Blaye, a military fortress overlooking the Gironde Estuary.

Wines to try

Whites

BLAYE CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Grand Vin de Château Haut Bertinerie, 2013

17 (90) Highly recommended

£16 Myliko Wines, www.myliko.co.uk

100% Sauvignon Blanc, here shows what can be done, aged on lees for 10 months, gives roundness and depth of flavour to the suitably fresh and liling citrus notes, some hay, box tree. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château des Tourtes, Cuvée Prestige, 2013

16.75 (89) Recommended

£9.50 The French Wine Project,

www.thefrenchwineproject.com (classic cuvée)

100% Sauvignon Blanc, 7 months in french oak, this is a big estate from Vignobles Raguénot and produces mainly red grapes, but this white comes from a flinty limestone soil and has real definition. An attractively fresh mouthfeel, good precision and citric minerality. 12%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château la Rose Bellevue, Cuvée Prestige, 2013

16.75 (89) Recommended

www.chateau-larosebellevue.com

Apricot, apple blossom, touches of spiced almonds, rich and round, 85% Sauvignon Blanc, 15% muscadelle, new oak barrel fermented, this is exotic, fun, would be lovely on own or with food. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Monconseil Gazin, 2013

16.5 (88) Recommended

£11 3D wines, www.3dwineexperience.com

80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Semillon, aged on fine lees with 7 months in oak, this is delicate, floral take on the vintage, box tree and hay, touches of citrus. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Tutiac, Selection Excellence, 2013

16.5 (88) Recommended

£8.50, www.tutiac.com

100% Sauvignon Blanc, good clean hay and grass flavours, good typicity, even with 100% new oak. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Haut Grelot, 2013

16.25 (87) Recommended

Approx £8 Bancroft Wines,

www.bancroftwines.com

100% Sauvignon Blanc, six months barrel, this one is a bit better, rounder and with pretty aromatics. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Bel Air la Royère, 2013

16 (86) Recommended

£12 Cadman Fine Wines,

www.cadmanfinewines.co.uk

100% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% oak. Citrus with grilled vanilla pods, some clear mouthwatering qualities. 12%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Cailleteau Bergeron, 2013

16 (86) Recommended

£12 Friarwood Wines, www.friarwood.com

The blend is a mix of Sauvignon Blanc and Gris, with light skin contact and lees stirring, it has slight blush of deeper yellow/apricot in colour, even though unoaked. Good kick and lift on the finish. Grown on sandy soils. 13%. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château les Bertrands, Cuvée Prestige, 2013

16 (86) Recommended

£8 at chateau www.chateaulesbertrands.com

100% sauvignon, oaked and lees, nice and juicy, the oak is evident but it is nicely balanced. 12.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Petit Secret, 2013

15.5 (85) Recommended

Approx €7 at chateau

(Facebook Vins Jean Lissague)

Jean Lissague, former director of the wine syndicate of Blaye, has here produced a 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Semillon, unoaked, from two hectares of vines. Juicy, clear citrus, light. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Lacaussade Saint Martin, Trois Moulins, 2013

15.5 (85) Recommended

Approx €8 at chateau,

www.lacaussade-saintmartin.com

Soft Semillon and Sauvignon Gris/Blanc, aged in large 400 litre barrels. This is good, clean, fresh, high acidities. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Barbé, 2013

15.25 (84) Recommended

€6 at chateau, www.bayle-carreau.com

Vignobles Bayle Carreau, 80% Sauvignon, 20% Semillon and a full waft of Sauvignon on the nose. Unoaked, nice and juicy, not too acidic but a real lift. 12.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château La Bretonnière, 2013

15.25 (84) Recommended

€5.50 at chateau, www.vignoblesheurlier.com

Winemaker Stéphane Heurlier goes for 50% Sauvignon Gris, 20% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Semillon, unoaked, six months in stainless steel. Get that apricot swirl rounding out the citrus flavours and good levels of acidity, it's good but not massive impact. 12%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Petit Boyer, 2013

15 (83) Recommended

€7.50 at chateau, www.petit-boyer.com

A little too oaked for me, this is full round, 60% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Sauvignon Gris, 10% muscadelle from just 1.8 hectares of vines. A good gourmet option. 12.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

FRANCS CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château les Charmes Godard, 2013

17 (90) Highly recommended

www.nicolas-thienpont.com

From an interesting blend of 50% Semillon, 35% Sauvignon Gris, just 15% Sauvignon Blanc. Pretty rich on the nose, with creamy citrus and nectarine on the palate this wine has spent just under eight months in barrel. The vineyard has been enlarged by massal selection plantings and they have recently introduced a second wine. A gourmet food

wine, with minerality, can see this is a good terroir for whites. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Puyanché, 2013

16.75 (89) Recommended

€8 www.godardbellevue.com

Owners Joseph and Bernadette produce this wine from two hectares of clay limestone soils, with a blend of 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Semillon, given eight months in barrel (30% new oak). Lees stirring adds to the rich, gourmet feel, definitely feel the exuberance of the oak and the Semillon, but also lovely rich fat candied lemon, and a crisp minerality. Bring on the roast chicken. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Puyguéraud, 2013

16.25 (87) Recommended

This is their first vintage of white wine, and they've gone for a blend of 50% Sauvignon Gris, 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 9 months in stainless steel and cement, unoaked. Soft, floral, citrus. more apricot blossom than apricot, although certainly get the influence of the Sauvignon Gris. Very pretty, and a welcome addition to the range of wines from this reliable producer. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Tifayne, 2013

15.25 (84) Recommended

Approx €8 at chateau, www.tifayne.com

100% muscadelle, making this an unusual wine for Bordeaux. Vinified in large size 500 litre barrels, this is floral, peach blossom, gentle, comes with a warning on typicity evidently, but then I guess that's the point. 12.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Reds

BLAYE CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Cailleteau Bergeron, 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended

£8 Friarwood Wines, www.friarwood.com

From a blend of 80% Merlot (aged in stainless steel), 20% Malbec (aged in oak), this has a smoky rich deep nose, with cinnamon and black pepper spice on the palate. Good lift, firm tannins, this is an excellent wine that will improve over the next few years. 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Bel Air la Royère, 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended

£22 Cadman Fine Wines, www.cadmanfinewines.co.uk;

Corney and Barrow, www.corneyandbarrow.com ➤

Sweet black cherry on nose. Good length, builds in power, clearly has way to go and should be carafed. A rich mid palate with chewy tannins, one of the most firm on display, perhaps helped by an unusually long 22 months in oak, from a blend of 35% Malbec and 65% Merlot. 14% abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Ricaud, 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended
£11 Adnams, www.adnams.co.uk
Love the damson on the nose, and generously rich colour. Spices, liquorice, oak cloves, the 10% Malbec makes its presence felt alongside 70% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. Just nine months in oak, this is a very attractive Blaye. Terra Vitis. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Monconseil Gazin, 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended
£11 The Wine Society, www.thewinesociety.com
Again showing that this vintage can be very good in the right hands. Lift, tannins, intense black fruits, from Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and a 10% shot of Malbec with 12 months in oak. These guys know what they're doing. Just lovely close of play, get black fruits dominating without hint of dryness. Terra Vitis. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Grans Vin de Château Haut Bertinerie, 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended
£16 Myliko Wines, www.myliko.co.uk
A property that I often select out of a lineup, confident winemaking, where they are happy to extract fruit and tannins but know when to stop. This is perhaps a little tight on the finish, needs a good hour carafing before drinking. 60% Merlot 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 90% new oak. 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Saint Cap Martin Cuvée Prestige, 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended
Approx £10 Calais Vin, www.wine-calais.co.uk
Polished oak nose, patisserie brioche flavours. Cassis and black coffee. 100% Merlot, one year in barrel, of which 30% is new oak. Modern, big, plush. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Frédignac, Cuvée Terroir, 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended
£12 La Cave a Fromage, www.la-cave.co.uk
Firm tannins, this is tasting very young and fruity still and interestingly is unoaked,

spending 18 months in stainless steel vats. The Vincent l'Amouller family has farmed organically since 2010, 3% Malbec, 7% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Merlot on 20 hectares of clay limestone soils, 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château les Jonqueyres, 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended
£16 The Winery, www.thewineryuk.com
Deep purple intense extraction on colour alone, with a violet rim, on the palate this has black pepper spice, dark cherry coulis. Oaked, clearly, this is a powerful meaty wine, needs carafing. Malbec represents only 5% but is putting its foot down firmly, alongside 90% Merlot and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Mondésir Gazin, 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended
£14 www.mondesirgazin.com
65% Merlot, 35% Malbec, 22 months in oak, 1/3 new, 14.4ha, 14%abv. Lovely bright violet and ruby in colour. Good firm and rich flavours, get some toasty oak without being overpowering. Like this wine, feels just rustic enough to be a Côtes family-run estate but still smooth and elegant enough to be a quality Bordeaux. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château La Bretonnière, Cuvée Excellence, 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended
£9 at the chateau, www.vignoblesheurlier.com
Good clean dark fruits, even get some menthol on the after taste, really attractive, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Malbec and the rest Merlot. 15ha. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Gigault, Cuvée Viva, 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended
£14.50 Direct Wines, www.laithwaites.co.uk
Bright violet reflections, good fruit integrity, still primary red fruits. The wine has spent 12 months in oak, and is 100% Merlot. This is attractive, lots of vibrancy to the fruit, lovely lift on the finish, enjoyable. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Terre Blanque, Cuvée Noémie, 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended
£6.50 at the chateau
Deep purple. Firm black cherry fruits, Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon blend, no oak, so majors on clean, simple fresh fruit, in organic conversion right now. Simple and enjoyable. Just 4 hectares. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Vieux Planty, Cuvée Prélude, 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended
A little sweet, this is damson coulis, touches of vanilla cream but certainly one with ambition. The fruit undergoes a cold soak before vinification to extract fruit aromatics, before 15-18 months in oak, with lees stirring, 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château des Tourtes, Cuvée Classique, 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended
Approx £10 www.vignoblesraguenot.fr
Unoaked, 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12 months oak vats, 13%abv. Vibrant and sweet fruit, fresh, from a large estate of 100 hectares. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Les Peyredouille, 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended
£10.99 Ocado, www.ocado.com
Lovely, modern wine. 75% Merlot, 10% Malbec, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot, so three varieties that bring an array of fragrance and spice. This is attractive, good lift, dark cassis and bilberry fruits, really get an enjoyable slice of dark fruits. Unoaked, the finish is clean. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château La Rose Bellevue, Cuvée Prestige, 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended
£8.30 at chateau, www.chateau-larosebellevue.com
Jerome and Valerie Eymas make this blend of 75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, with 12 months in oak (30% new). The oak is perhaps a touch sweet, but love the fresh acidity to balance it on the finish, does real have lift and a sense of wholeness, good extraction. Carafe it or give it another few years, this is still young and has clear potential. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château la Petite Roque, 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended
£10 Daniel Lambert Wines, www.daniellambertwines.co.uk
Tight fruit, streaks of violet, still very primary aromas. This is good, has real lift in the mid palate, 70/30 Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon, unoaked. Interesting, early drinking but with good fruit structure. **Drink** 2015-2019.

L'esprit de Bel Air, là Royère, 2012

16 (86) Recommended
www.bel-air-la-royere.com
Very pretty reddish purple, full of life. Only 5% Malbec but it really comes

through strongly against the 90% Merlot. All quite tight, needs carafing or another few years, not softened up yet from its 12 months in oak, 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2016-2019.

Grand Vin de Château La Baronnerie, 2012

16 (86) Recommended
www.la-baronnerie.com
Soft sweet cherry coulis, a gentle but inviting nose. Not so enjoyable on the palate, this is 90% new oak and 14%abv, a little super-charged. **Drink** 2016-2019.

Château Frédignac, Cuvée la Favorite, 2012

16 (86) Recommended
£15 La Cave a Fromage, www.la-cave.co.uk
Pretty violet and dark ruby reflections, still very young, fairly chewy tannins, pretty intense, but good quality. 12 months in oak, 13-5%abv, organic since 2010. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château du Grand Barrail, 2012

15.5 (85) Recommended
Good deep cherry medium intensity. Tannins are soft and clean, some lift, red cherry and late summer fruits. One degree below optimal ripeness. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Frédignac, Cuvée F de Frédignac, 2012

15.33 (84+) Recommended
£9 La Cave a Fromage, www.la-cave.co.uk
Another unoaked red, delivery fresh (just ripe) gooseberry and redcurrant flavours. Malbec stands at 3% here, with majority

Merlot, plus the two cabs. Light, floral, refreshing. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Manon La Lagune, 2012

15.25 (84) Recommended
£12 Myliko Wines, www.myliko.co.uk
A touch lean, oak dominates - not sure 90% new oak for 12 months is fully balanced by the savoury fruit. 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 70ha. 14%Abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Les Grands Maréchaux, 2012

15.25 (84) Recommended
Direct Wines, www.laithwaites.co.uk
Depth of fruit is on display, tannins firm, can age a few more years, but dark and brooding, a touch squeezed 88% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9 months in oak, 14.5-%abv, also own Château Gigault. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Haut Canteloup, Cuvée Prestige, 2012

15.25 (84) Recommended
£12.90 The French Wine Project, www.thefrenchwineproject.com
Touch of reduction, suggests ageing on lees - certainly still young. Like the persistency on this, 13.5%, 12 months oak. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château La Roche Bazin, 2012

15.25 (84) Recommended
£6.50
A 15 hectare on clay-limestone soils. Again unoaked, rich round plum flavours,

nice emphasis on the fruit although here it does fall away in the mid palate a little. Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon, 13.5%. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Belle Coline, 2012

15 (83) Recommended
£14.50 Direct Wines, www.laithwaites.co.uk
Violet reflections, still really in its en primeur phase, tight and not giving much away, a little brittle. 90% Merlot, 10% Malbec. 13.5% abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.



Clos Saint Anne, 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended
The Courselle family are the winemakers here, carefully working this small five-hectare patch of well placed vines on clay-gravel soils. Blend is 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, with 13 months in oak, 40% new. Good persistency, this is sophisticated, delicious. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Clos Chaumont, 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended
£17 in France
Nicely restrained but firm fruit nose, biodynamic winemaking. Good plum and blueberry, feel integrity of the fruit. 18 months in oak, 30% new. The blend is 53% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Cabernet Franc, get that lovely lift and florality coming through, manual punching down. 14.5%abv but balanced. **Drink** 2015-2020. ➤



Photograph: Mathieu Anglada/Maison des Vins de Cadillac

Château Biac, 2012**17 (90) Highly recommended**

Excellent fruit integrity, and a dark spicy edge to this, evident even with just 3% Petit Verdot in the blend together with a restrained but useful one third new oak, giving cradling but not overpowering tannic hold. This estate benefits from a great location on slopes overlooking the river, and the potential of its terroir attracted Patrick Leon (ex Mouton) as wine consultant. Enjoyable second wine B de Biac in this vintage also. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Reynon, 2012**17 (90) Highly recommended**£12.50 **The Wine Society,****www.thewinesociety.com**

This is an expectedly good wine from Denis Dubourdieu, lovely fruit, brilliant balance, really showing what this vintage can achieve in the smaller appellations. Majoring on Merlot, with touches of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. Aged 12 months in oak, one third new. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Clos Bourbon, Cuvée la Rose Bourbon, 2012**16.75 (89) Recommended**£9 **Haynes Hanson and Clark, www.hhandc.co.uk**

This has a good rich texture, black fruits from 85% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon that have spent 12 months in barrel but no new oak. 13%abv. Vignobles Bayot. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Mont Pérat, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended**

The Despagne family have turned out here a modern but not brash wine from a big estate of 100 hectares. Good measured use of oak, supporting a blend of 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. Charming and pleasurable. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Valentine par Valentine, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended**

€16.50 at château

These are good modern style wines, this offers ground coffee beans without becoming a caricature. From the Neel Chambert family at Château Lamothe. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, manual punching down, 16 months in new oak. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Pic, 2012**www.chateaudepic.com**

Touch under-ripe on the first nose, this has clear coffee, torrefied aromas. Contemporary,

this has poise and really a nice lift with clever points of brambled spice from the 3% of Malbec. Good quality from this Chinese owned estate. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château La Cheze, 2012**16.25 (87) Recommended****www.chateau-lacheze.com**

Cleaner, inviting nose. Floral touches on the nose and palate, with dark fruits and a fresh lift, comes from the blend of Merlot with the two cabernets, really get the Cabernet Franc coming out. Like this, great potential for early enjoyment. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Brethous, Cuvée Prestige, 2012**16.25 (87) Recommended**€9.50 at château, **www.brethous.com**

Although oak impact is high, for me this special cuvée is their most successful wine in this vintage, with interest, depth and complexity to the fruit, 14%abv, £25 **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Haut Coulon, 2012**16.25 (87) Recommended**£11 **Daniel Lambert Wines,****www.daniellambertwines.co.uk**

Touches of liquorice, the attack is fairly heavy but it softens up. With 12 months in one-third new oak barrels, winemaker Verena Raoux has spun a lovely spicy edge out of the touch of Petit Verdot. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Bellegarde, 2012**16.25 (87) Recommended**

Quite a different taste here, more meaty, sexy, nicely extracted, clear oak influence. 50/50 Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Like this, good firm fruits, well balanced, nice lift. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Réaut, 2012**16 (86) Recommended****www.chateau-reaut.com**

Chocolate, cinnamon, dip me in a cappuccino and wrap me up for Christmas. This château has an interesting commercial structure with many wine lovers owning shares (plus half Bordeaux and half Burgundy investors at the main ownership level) and can see they are playing to the crowd here. Very much a modern interpretation of the Côtes, really enjoyable drinking here from winemaker Yannick Evenou. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château le Doyenne, 2012**16 (86) Recommended**

Lovely dark purple in colour, firm fruits, evident tannins, clearly ambition for ageing. 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc aged in barrels with 25% new oak. A high 14%abv and you can feel it. Interesting though, real potential. Carafe well before drinking. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Domaine du Seuil, 2012**16 (86) Recommended**Approx £10 **Fine Wines Direct,****www.finewinesdirectuk.com; Virgin Wines,****www.virginwines.co.uk**

Nicola and Sean Allison own this estate that clocks in at just under 5ha, 50/50. Tight, good lift, fresh dark fruit structure, vinified in stainless steel then aged 12 months in oak. Very enjoyable, benefits from an hour opening before drinking. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Latour Camblandes, 2012**16 (86) Recommended****www.chateaux-castel.com; Spirited Wines,****www.spiritedwines.co.uk**

Smoky tar and liquorice, and a bit pinched on finish, needs time to open. Classic

Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon blend, with 12 months in barrel. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Nenine, 2012**15.5 (85) Recommended****mail@bureau-fouquet.fr**

Deep red in colour, robust ripe fruit on the palate also, good firm redcurrant, hovering on the brink of ripeness, they have clearly held on though and just got over the hump. Tapers to soft finish also, the tannins are light, would be easy early drinking. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Lamothe de Haux, Première Cuvée, 2012**15.5 (85) Recommended****www.chateau-lamothe.com**

Again, this is attractive, good clean fruit, a little short, doesn't build over the palate so again this is an early drinking, grab a few friends and a pizza, but nice light tannins and sweet cherry. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Sainte Marie, Cuvée Alios, 2012**15.5 (85) Recommended****www.chateau-sainte-marie.com**

Extraction fairly high, this has attractive nose and good attack, but oak is heavily dominant. Ambitious. 13.5%abv with an attractive lift. From a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, touch of Petit Verdot. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Maubert, 2012**15.5 (85) Recommended****www.chateausuau.com**

Toasty aromas, but this is unoaked, so assume they do lees stirring to fatten up. 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Clear plum and cherry, very Right Bank, good typicity, enjoyable, 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Fayau, Cuvée Jean Médeville, 2012**15.5 (85) Recommended**

€7.80 at château, or their sweet wine at

South Down Cellars, www.southdowncellars.co.uk

Quite toasty, some liquorice and gourmet patisserie aromas. 60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18 months in barrel after vinification. The family has owned this estate since 1826. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Fontenille, 2012**15.5 (85) Recommended****www.chateau-fontenille.com**

Good quality, dark fruits, really good lift, this is a quality wine from a reliable name, tannins are soft but present. **Drink** 2015-2019.

**CASTILLON
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX****Clos Puy Arnaud, 2012****17.5 (91) Highly recommended**£35, **Vintage Roots, www.vintageroots.co.uk****(2009 currently)**

Creamy, well textured fruits, good ripeness. From a blend of 70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc. As in most vintages of this wine, there is a subtle, elegant lift on the finish, it takes you up without barely noticing you are being held. Ecocert organic and biodynamic certified. 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Montlandrie, 2012**17.5 (91) Highly recommended**£23.95 **Lea & Sandeman,****www.leaandsandeman.co.uk**

Plum, tobacco leaf on the attack, Merlot dominated at 70%, this château is owned by Denis Durantou of L'Église Clinet and should be on every wine lovers list. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château d'Aiguilhe, 2012**17 (90) Highly recommended**£17.50 **Millesima, www.millesima.co.uk**

Cheery, black oozing kirsch, soft tannins, well integrated, some fierce hold at the same time that comes in on the aftertaste, good grip. A wine that can age well, if high in alcohol, plenty of confidence. 14.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Claud Bellevue, 2012**17 (90) Highly recommended****www.chateauclaudbellevue.com**

Lovely fruit on the nose, confident and enticing, just the right amount of oak. This captures much of what you go to Castillon for - a polish and sexiness that -is more international than many parts of Bordeaux, great value on offer in this appellation. 75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, aged in French oak barrels. A Stephane Derenoncourt wine - and a Decanter gold winner in the 2014 World Wine Awards (tasted blind here). 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château d'Aiguilhe Querre, Cuvée Victoria, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended****www.aiguilhe-querre.com**

Again oak is evident, Castillon loves to glam it up, but this is a good wine, nicely textured, full fruit expression, should age well, good lift. 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Moya, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended**£21 **Wine Story, www.winestory.co.uk** (2010 currently)

Smoky and spicy, strays towards a little extreme perhaps, but this is a good wine, modern and full of confidence, and very much in the mould of its sister wine Château Gaby in Fronsac. Ageing potential, chocolate flesh. 14.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château des Demoiselles, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended****www.ducourt.com**

Quite brambly, autumnal, exotic fruits, spicy and swirling. A confident wine from the Ducourt family. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château la Gasparde, Cuvée Prestige, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended**£14.99 **Marks & Spencer, www.marksandspencer.com** (2010 vintage currently)

This majors on well fleshed out fruit. Oak strays to vanilla but there is a very attractive lift and clear sense of ripe fruit without being too much. Plenty to enjoy, from a blend of 85% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon from winemaker Jean Pierre Janoueix. This cuvée comes from the oldest vines on the estate, aged on new oak. 13.5%abv.

Château La Nauze, Cuvée Premium, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended****www.chateau-lanauze.fr**

Tight, dark knitted fruits, a little brooding, ambition, charcoal, smoked embers, liquorice, can certainly see the ambition, and the Castillon gloss. 14.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Laussac, Cuvée Sacha, 2012**16.5 (88) Recommended**€11.80 **Nicolas France, www.nicolas.com**

Majors very much on smoky chargrilled cherries and cedary oak, some cinnamon touches, very Castillon, that sweet Right Bank ripeness, alcohol high but balanced, quite flashy, fun, 75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, vines located 5km from St-Emilion, owned by the Robin family. 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Première Vin de Château de Pitray, 2012**16.25 (87) Recommended****Berry Bros, www.bbr.com; www.pitray.com**

Dark chocolate and cappuccino, but manages to stay light and perky, this is a good wine, lots to enjoy. The owner is ➤



Alix de Pitray, the latest in 600 years of winemaking in the same family, and the property is rightly seen as one of the most reliable names in Castillon. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Moulin de Clotte, 2012
16.25 (87) Recommended
www.vignobles-lannoye.com

The reliable Vignobles Lannoye. Good plum rich perky high in alcohol but good balance, nice percolating coffee flavours. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Peyrou, 2012
16 (86) Recommended

catherine.peyrou@wanadoo.fr
Firm tannins, rich black fruits, soft and rich mid palate, lots to enjoy here 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Lamartine, Cuvée Hommage Selon Jérôme Gourrand, 2012
www.chateaulamartine.siteweb.com

16 (86) Recommended
Smoky, sexy nose, real goudron tar notes, quite intense, slightly short on the finish but this is highly seductive and should open up nicely after a carafing. The wine spends 12 months in Burgundy oak. 13.5%abv.

Château Moulin de Clotte, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes, 2012
16 (86) Recommended
www.vignobles-lannoye.com

Blackcurrant, dark autumnal fruits, a little full and big in alcohol, but this has plenty of appeal, finish a little abrupt, but there is coffee and charcoal, some liquorice. Françoise and Philippe Lannoye, 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château de Chainchon, Cuvée Prestige, 2012
16 (86) Recommended

€9.50 at château, chainchon@wanadoo.fr
Patrick Eresue owns this 22 hectare estate in Castillon la Bataille, and has teased firm dark fruits and well integrated tannins from this wine. A little short but with potential, one to carafe and enjoy over the next few years. 100% Merlot, aged for one year in barrels of 4, 5 and 6 years, so imparting no oak flavour but allowing the wine to breathe and open. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Aster de Beaulieu, 2012
16 (86) Recommended

€7 at château 00 33 557 55 19 60
From the 8 hectare Château La Roche Beaulieu, this has a fresh bramble and peaty nose, with poise and focus and is

nicely held together, good lift. Not huge fruit but thoroughly enjoyable. The oldest plots at this property were planted before the First World War. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Pillebois, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes, 2012
www.vignobles-petit.com
16 (86) Recommended

Plush smooth dark fruits on the nose, Right Bank typicity. Nice lift on the finish, quite restrained overall, lacks some final push, but this is a well made wine. Heavy glass bottle. 90% Merlot, 10% cabernet. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

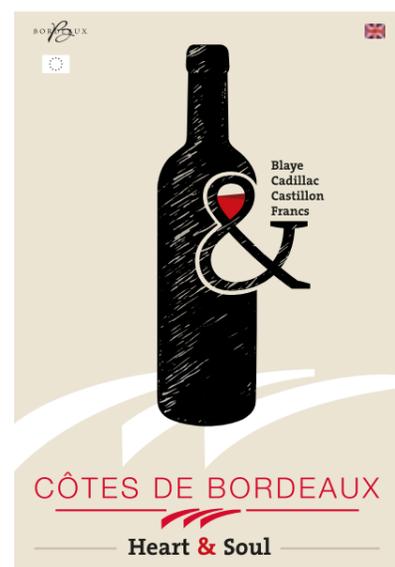
Château Grand Tuillac, 2012
16 (86) Recommended
www.scealavigne.com

Bilberry, red cherry, brambles, some grilled herbal notes in the mid-palate that bring focus to the fruit, this is pretty charming. From a blend of 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, grown on the highest plateau of the Castillon appellation. Aged for 18 months in cement vats. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Lagrave-Aubert, 2012
16 (86) Recommended
www.aubert-vignobles.com

Velvet shots of blueberry, tight, touch of reduction, bright and zippy after opening up, lovely juicy fruit. From the Aubert family of La Couspaude in Saint Emilion, this has 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. 13.3%abv.

Château Roquevieille, 2012
15.75 (85+) Recommended
00 33 557 24 89 75



Touch dusty on nose, but this is charming, nice brambly fruits, good texture, nicely played out. Blend is 70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. Vinified by Thomas Guibert, cellar master at Château de Ferrance in Saint Emilion. 15% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Château Fontbaude, Sélection Vieilles Vignes, 2012
15.75 (85+) Recommended
www.chateau-fontbaude.fr

Dark cherry, some damson, nicely textured, oak a little obvious, but more tar and clove than vanilla so not too sweet, touch of reduction on my bottle but clears quickly. From a blend of 55% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Franc. 13.5%abv.

Mon Ange, 2012
15.75 (85+) Recommended

Polished, a little too extracted, on the attack the oak that is highly intrusive, but it fattens up and softens through the mid palate, and this turns into an impactful enjoyable wine. 100% Merlot, 14.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Faret Desgranges, 2012
15.5 (85) Recommended
Vignerons de Puisseguin Lussac,
www.puisseguin-lussac.com

Reddish plum colour, this is better, fresh, not smothered by oak but with firm tannins, classic, a little traditional. Blend here is 60% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2018.

Château Jouanin, 2012
15.5 (85) Recommended
Bon Coeur Fine Wines, www.bcfw.co.uk
(awaiting new vintages)

A touch of heat on the attack, this has some bright chirpy fruit and good typicity. The vineyards are located on the border with Puisseguin Saint Emilion, woned by Pierre Taix. Blend 78% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc. Aged 60% in oak, split between new and one year old barrels. 13.5%abv.

Château Canon Montségur, Cuvée Gaspard, 2012
15.5 (85) Recommended

Approx €7 at the château,
chateaulajarre@hotmail.com
Owned since 2011 by Grégory Lovato, owned of Château Lajarre, this is a good, simple and enjoyable bottle, fruit a shade under-ripe but well extracted gentle and smartly fleshed out, this has plenty to enjoy. 50% Merlot, 50% Cabernet Franc. 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2018.



FRANCS
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Puyguéraud, 2012
17.5 (91) Highly recommended
£148 for case of 12, Goedhuis & Co,
www.goedhuis.com

Chewy tannins, some firm structure, this can go a few more years before fully softening, or benefit from a good double decant right now. Touches of liquorice, lovely tapering finish. The 30 hectare property was bought by Georges Thienpont in 1946, now run by Nicolas Thienpont with Stephane Derenocourt as consultant. Recent years have seen new plots added, new cellars, cement tanks and increasingly soft extraction via manual punching down. 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec, 14 months in oak, 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Marsau, 2012
17 (90) Highly recommended

£15 Farr Vintners, www.farrvintners.com
Home estate of Mathieu Chardronnier, this has firm tannins that manage to hold the fruit while being almost entirely non-perceptible. Elegant, with generous but fresh typicity of Francs Côtes de Bordeaux. 12 months in oak, 30% new, 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2020.

Château Clos Fontaine, 2012
16.75 (89) Recommended

Approx £10 Majestic Wines, www.majestic.co.uk
Softly textured strained fruit coulis, real sense of forward motion and vibrancy. Another member of the talented Thienpont family, Florian this time. Vinification takes place between stainless steel vats and barrels, 100% Merlot, a real classic, treads lightly. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Puyfromage, 2012
16.25 (87) Recommended
€6.40 www.puyfromage.com

A light touch is evidently at work here, one for enjoyable early drinking. The 68% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc, grown on a clay-limestone plateau, is fully destemmed, vinified in stainless steel then spends 18 months in cement tanks, so totally unoaked. Sustainable agriculture. 12.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2018.

Lalande de Château Tifayne, 2012
16 (86) Recommended
www.tifayne.com

Quite rustic but pleasantly crispy cherry fruits, feels like a French country wine, unoaked, nice for early drinking, terroir led, 16ha, 12.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Laulan, 2012
15.5 (85) Recommended

€6 at château, www.chateau-laulan.fr
Crispy, vibrant, tart perhaps, not one that everyone will like, unoaked again, interesting how many in the Côtes are choosing to do this. Confident winemaking from Bruno Citerne. 13%abv, 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Godard Bellevue, 2012
15.5 (85) Recommended
www.godardbellvue.com

Bright cherry red, redcurrant and floral on the nose. This has appealing tension, some soft tannins, but treads a little too much on the underripe side, 30% new oak from Vignobles Arbo, 60% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. 20ha. 13.5%. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château la Croix Blanche, 2012
15.5 (85) Recommended

£7 Matthew Clark, www.matthewclark.co.uk
This starts soft but has a kicker on the finish, more cherry than raspberry, just ripe enough - this walks the line, and is very pretty. 13.5%abv, 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château la Prade, 2012
15.33 (84+) Recommended

A Nicolas Thienpont property on a beautiful limestone plateau, here feel things are a little turbocharged but still a well-made contemporary-style wine 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 12 months barrel ageing, 14%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

Château Franc Cardinal, 2012
15.25 (84) Recommended
€9 at château

Clean pretty nose, fruit and flowers, Merlot Cabernet Franc and a tin touch of 4% Malbec, not always sure that the Cabernet Franc and Malbec combination works for me, seems like two very different aroma sets but here they have teased out some pretty brambly fruits. 8 months oak, 13.5%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

CÔTES DE BORDEAUX