

## Graves and Pessac-Léognan

These two appellations make up the southern end of the left bank vineyards. The vineyards of the northern part of Pessac-Léognan have, in large part, been swallowed up by the growth of the city of Bordeaux – a few historic, highly valued estates such as Haut-Brion have resisted urbanisation but are now surrounded by housing. As in the Médoc, the land is distinguished by layers of gravels (hence the “Graves” name).

### 2010 Château Beauregard Ducasse, Graves, Cuvée Albert Duran, 13.5%

**Bottle £14.95 Case £170.43 Code BDU610**

Jacques Perromat’s sixth generation family estate lies at Mazères near Langon at the southern end of the Graves, with about 50 hectares of gravelly vineyards on limestone sub-soils hacked out of the surrounding forest from 1850. This is his top red, named after the ancestor who first planted the vineyards in 1850, based on parcels of his oldest vines of 50% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. Perhaps a touch more restrained and classic than the 2009 vintage, this has a velvet texture and such smooth dark cherry and cassis fruit that one hardly notices the well integrated structure. Already inviting yet clearly there is more to come. Now-2019



## Sweet wines

Sauternes and Barsac, the great sweet wines of Bordeaux, used to be a bargain, but prices have risen sharply over recent years. One looks to outlying appellations such as Sainte-Croix du Mont, which lies just across the Garonne from Sauternes, and Monbazillac, far to the east, for value.

### 2009 Château Mestrepuyrot, Sainte-Croix du Mont, 12%

**Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code MSP109**

Thierry Chasagnol makes this 100% Semillon at Mourlane not far from the Garonne. Pale gold. Scents of seville oranges and marzipan. Honeyed - showing the widespread botrytis characteristic of the 2009 vintage - rather than fully sweet, with a fresh palate showing orange blossom, fresh apricot and toffee. Perhaps not a true dessert wine, but lovely with cheese or perfect with foie gras. Now-2015

### 2010 La Haute Borie, Monbazillac, 13.5%

**Bottle £12.50 Case £142.50 Code HBO110**

This would be double the price if it had Sauternes on the label! A blend of 60% Semillon, 30% Muscadelle and 10% Sauvignon Blanc, all from old vines, and 1/3 in barrel. Mid gold. A lovely nose of rich liqueur oranges and apricots, indicating botrytis. Generous marmalade heart, and really fat and viscous. A winner. Now-2016

### 2010 Mascaron, Sauternes, 13% [50cl.]

**Bottle [50cl.] £13.75 Case [12 x 50cl.] £156.75 Code MPG210**

90% Sémillon, 6% Sauvignon Blanc, 4% Muscadelle skillfully sourced from a well known Cru Classé property by the negociant house of Ginestet. Attractive pale gold. Aromas of honey and peaches with a more tropical hint. Well balanced sweetness and ripe stone fruit with gingerbread and honey. Good value pudding wine. Now-2020

### 2009 Les Carmes de Rieussec, Sauternes, 13.5%

**Bottle £24.95 Case £284.43 Code CMR109**

The second wine of Château Rieussec, named after the Carmes de Langon monks who owned the estate in the 18th century. This is the second vintage we have bought of this blend of 85% Semillon, 10% Sauvignon Blanc 10% and a little Muscadelle: we like its moderate oak, splendid richness and general approachability. Scent of preserved lemons and barley sugar. Very sweet, very concentrated, all oranges and caramel. Very luscious, smooth and fat. Limited stock. Now-2018

## The Médoc

We are looking now at the thin strip of vineyards, some 70 kms long and 8 kms wide, stretching from near the Atlantic mouth of the Gironde, southwards along the left, west, bank via the Haut Médoc and the grand communes of St-Estèphe, Pauillac, St Julien and Margaux, to the northern suburbs of the city of Bordeaux itself. This is an unusual landscape, basically flat, with gentle rises signifying a greater depth of the gravel deposits which lie between the encroaching sands of Les Landes and the estuary. Our less expensive wines come from the north of the region, where the wines have true character but lack the finesse and breed of the Haut Médoc. Barring a few tiny spots of Burgundy, the central sector, very near the river, includes the grandest and most expensive vineyard land on the planet. Trying to find value here (which is what, after all, we do) is not always easy, but there are, for the moment at least, little family-owned enclaves like Deyrem-Valentin and Grand Tayac in Margaux which offer authenticity without the need to take out a second mortgage: buy their wines and celebrate their independence or their vineyards will simply be subsumed into the land of some more famous neighbour.

### 2010 Château Pierre de Montignac, Médoc, 14%

**Bottle £14.75 Case £168.15 Code PDM110**

This is a classic left bank blend of 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, and 2% Petit Verdot. At the moment it’s showing generous coffee oak and black fruit on the nose; and then delivers a rich, attractively dense but smooth mouthful of blackcurrants and blackberries, really ripe, and spiced with vanilla and cinnamon. You could happily enjoy this now but it will certainly keep for another 5-7 years. The wine earned a silver medal in the 2012 Paris Concours, was deemed worthy of the Cru Bourgeois classification in August, and was rated 16+/20 on [www.jancisrobinson.com](http://www.jancisrobinson.com) in October. Robert Parker’s English reviewer, Neil Martin, scored it 90/100 in his Wine Journal on [www.erobertparker.com](http://www.erobertparker.com) and described it thus: “*The Pierre de Montignac has a nice healthy deep garnet colour. The nose is open and generous with plenty of dark plum and blackberry fruit with hints of brine emerging with time in the glass. The palate is medium-bodied with juicy ripe black fruit with cedar and graphite. This has good structure, plenty of fresh acidity and a crisp lively finish. This is the kind of wine that gives the Cru Bourgeois a good name. Tasted November 2012*”. Now-2017

### 2006 Château Fourcas Hosten, Listrac-Médoc, 13%

**Bottle £19.95 Case £227.43 Code FOH106**

This large (47 hectare) property, generally considered the finest in Listrac, was bought in 2006 by Renaud Mommeja of the Hermès fashion family. Recently released direct from the Château, here is a fully mature bottle from an ageworthy vintage. Expressive, developed aromas of black fruit with warm leather and seasoned wood. Mellow tannins and well defined fruit maintain a lively balance in the mouth. Old school, elegant and persistent. Now-2016

### 2009 Château Charmail, Haut-Médoc, 14%

**Bottle £20.95 Case £238.83 Code CHM109**

Charmail has very well-sited vines next to Saint Estèphe. This is Merlot dominated; and aged in barrels renewed every three years. All fine oak, ripe black fruit and coffee, but Mr Parker puts it so much better. “*This is another over-achieving estate that tends to produce wines with lots of intensity and structure. This wine certainly has the formidable intensity one expects from Charmail, but the tannins are silky smooth and the result is the sexiest Charmail to date. An opulent, even voluptuously textured wine, full-bodied and dense purple in color, it is a seductive blend of 47% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. It was bottled unfined and unfiltered and came in with natural alcohols of 14%. The low acidity, plush fruit and silky tannins all suggest drinking this over the next decade. Drink: 2012 – 2022. 90/100*”, Robert Parker, **Wine Advocate**, February 2012. Now-2020

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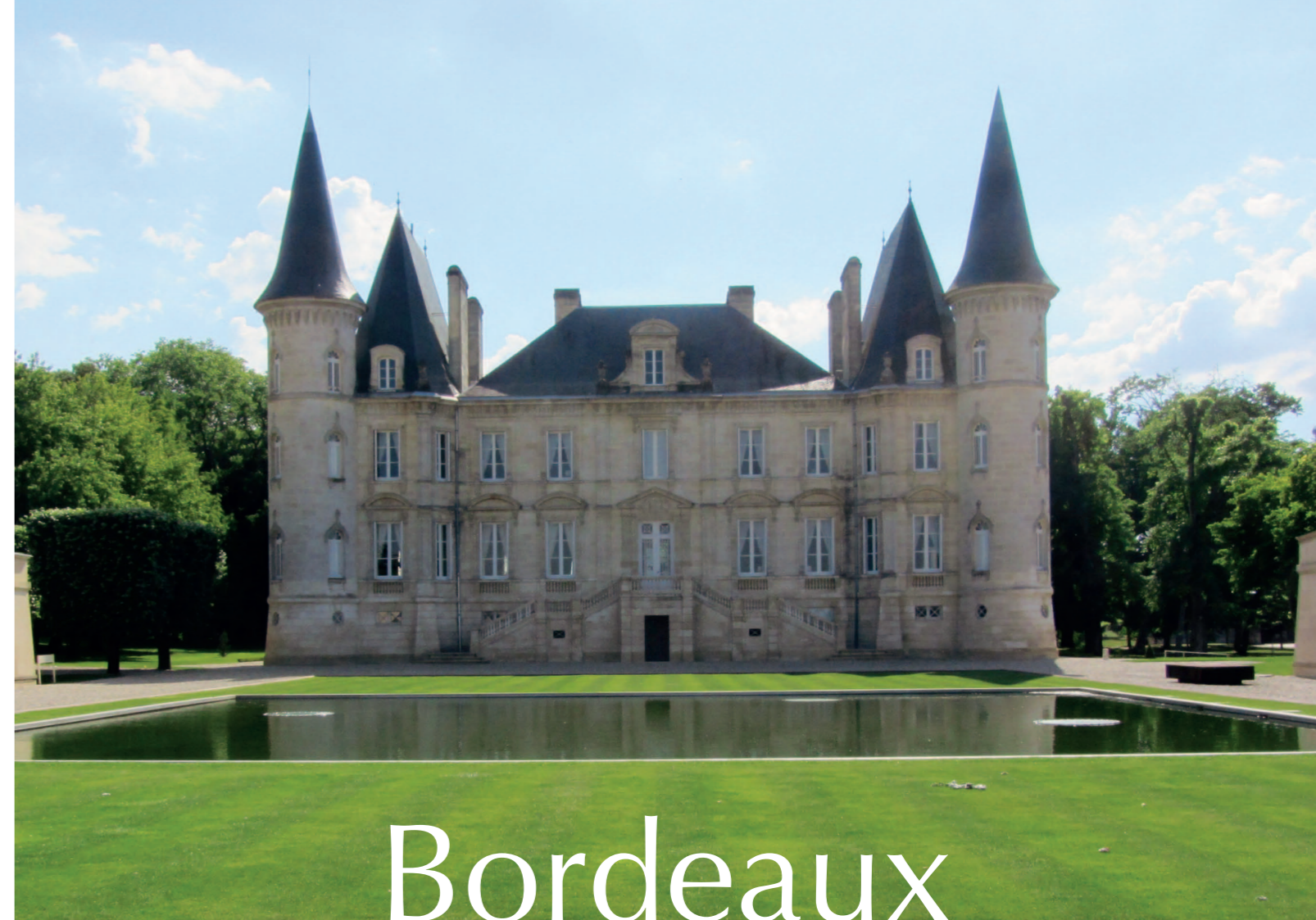
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# Bordeaux

## Recent Vintages for Reds

- 2006 A good rather than great year, but often excellent on the left bank. Most wines drinking well now.
- 2007 Oh dear. Heavily rain-affected year. Don’t believe merchants who tell you the 2007s are “supple”, “plump”, “forward” or “charming”: these are wine trade euphemisms for flabby, spineless, and lacking any sort of real heart. Avoid (like 1977, 1987, and 1997 – a weird cycle!).
- 2008 Again a good year – but the wines tend to be classic, stern and well-structured, so don’t appear in this offer, though we may well feature them in the future.
- 2009 A really great year again; and as the wines have wonderfully open and lush fruit they can be enjoyed young (though - a warning - some wines appear to be closing up). The only possible downside is the level of alcohol, as the perfect weather pushed up ripeness.
- 2010 There will be arguments for decades as to whether the 2009 or 2010 is a greater vintage. The 2010s tend to be more classically structured for the long haul than the previous year, but it was another hot summer so they are equally ripe and powerful, and some are also amazingly approachable now.
- 2011 A complicated growing season with drought followed by deluge did not bode well. An Indian summer meant that quality was rather better than had been anticipated. The resultant wines are fresh and classically structured.
- 2012 Many wines are still embryonic, but another year of erratic weather means that wines based on Merlot are generally a better bet than those based on the later ripening Cabernet Sauvignon.



