

CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

10 years tasting

The 2019 vintage saw Côtes de Bordeaux celebrating ten years since its creation back in 2008, and its first official appearance on labels with the 2009 wines.

It means 10 years since the AOC Côtes de Bordeaux has brought together the winemakers of Blaye, Cadillac, Castillon, Francs and now St Foy, making sense of their common approach to producing deliciously fruity, unfussy, affordable wines that almost invariably have real families behind them, winemakers that live onsite in their estates and work outside in their own vineyards or in their cellars every day. One in every 10 bottles of Bordeaux is from the Côtes, and the last 10 years have seen names like Châteaux Biac, Réaut, Joanin-Bécot, Clos Puy Arnaud and Puycureaud establish just what incredible quality that can be achieved here year after year.

The five sub-appellations that make up the Côtes are largely red wine producers – around 97% of bottles are made up of various mixes of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot – each with their

own specificities and signatures, from the limestone and clay soils of Francs, St Foy and Castillon to the more gravel-rich stretches of Blaye and Cadillac. And there are also some excellent dry white wines that you can find, made up usually of Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon, some with touches of Sauvignon Gris or Muscadelle, and even a few stickies (Francs is unusual in Bordeaux for being able to produce reds, dry whites and sweet wines all in the same AOC).

And there are always some brilliant anomalies to look out for – so 100% Cabernet Sauvignon over at Château Pilet's Alt 120 Metres bottling from Jean Queyrens in Cadillac, for one, or the fascinating new project that is being undertaken at Ad Francos in Francs, where wine has been made since the 11th century and where today Guillaume Brochard is working with Michel Rolland to set new quality standards. The property was in the Rolland family for several hundred years, with Michel Rolland's father being born on the site, making this a particularly personal consultancy for him. The Côtes is full of these stories, and richly rewards a visit

either in person or through its bottles back at home.

And fittingly for the 10th year tasting, there were plenty of excellent wines on offer, made it very difficult to take the wines down from over 210 tasted to just 120 selected here. I was looking at examples from three years, with 2016, 2017 and some freshly bottled 2018s all of offer. Because of the overall strength of the entries, there were plenty of wines that would make very enjoyable early drinking bottles that were not able to be included, so do think about trying the Côtes in these vintages when you see them, even ones that are not named here.

I would particularly recommend these wines in 2016, as it was an exceptional vintage and it was extremely impressive how many good wines were available at accessible prices. The oak was perhaps a little more evident in 2017 than in 2016, because the fruit is less intense and concentrated, but as many of these wines are made to drink young, that is less of an issue than in wines you might want to put away for a few years. What is certain is that so many of these Côtes styles are perfect for food, and are made for sharing.

Wines to try

WHITES

BLAYE CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Domaine des Graves d'Ardonneau Prestige 2017 90

€10

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Good focus and lift to the flavours. Citrus, apricot, white pear, touches of gunsmoke. Still appealingly soft and easy to drink, but with good character. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 12.5%

Château La Bretonnière Tradition 2017 89

€6

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Sémillon, 20% Sauvignon Gris. Attractive and carefully placed white flowers and pear on the nose, a little less impact through the palate but this is appealing and juicy, with a candy floss sweet twist on the finish. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13%

Château La Raz Caman 2018 89

€4.70

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Clear Sauvignon Blanc grassy edges on the nose, this has appealing focus, particularly for the price. A sweetness underneath the freshness brings balance, and a good texture. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 12.5%

Château Le Grand Moulin 2018 89

€5

87% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Sémillon, 3% Muscadelle. Fairly high aromatics, apricot blossom and white peach. Silky texture, this has grip and a sense of focus, acidity a touch tart on the finish but overall one of the best in the lineup, especially for the price. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 12%

FRANCS CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Puycureaud 2017 92

£17.50 **Seckford**

85% Sauvignon Blanc, 15% Sauvignon Gris. Pale crisp colour, very attractive, well placed fruits and clear minerality, white peaches, fleshy pear, good grip and persistently. Very good. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13%



SAINTE-FOY CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Claribès 2018 91

£15 **Claribes Ltd**

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Sauvignon Blanc seems to have succeeded well in 2018. This is good, has a lovely bright feel, some stone fruits and minerality, and a good lift. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 14.5%

Château de Grangeneuve 2018 90

€12

65% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Sémillon, 5% Muscadelle. Definite appeal, a gourmet edge, peach flesh is very apparent along with an attractive lift through the finish. Good wine, enjoyable, from an excellent producer. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

REDS

BLAYE CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château le Virou Sublimus 2016 92

£39.95

70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc. You feel the ambition both in the colour and the texture, deep stately purple, and a rich well reflected body. It's good, it works, this has a lovely raspberry back cherry fruit, not overly sweet, well extracted and the tannins are fine and present but not drying. Good quality. **Drink** 2020-2028 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Vieux Planty 2016 92

£13 **Bibendum Wine**

100% Merlot. This is dark ruby red in colour, with clear damson fruit on the nose. Good value for a wine with plenty of personality - the fruit is upfront but not overly sweet, there has clearly been some oak finessing and touches of patisserie flavours, but also a lovely silky texture. A lovely 36ha estate that does some fun food and wine tourism programmes. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Puynard Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 92

£28 **Bottle Apostle**

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Owned by the Bottle Apostle British owners, happy to see this here and interesting to see the blend (or lack of). very much like the nose, Well defined sexy black fruits, easily one of my favourites here, gourmet but still keeping. A savoury egg, good Cabernet Sauvignon finesse, Lovely lift through the palate. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Clos de Bonnange 2016 91-92

€36

85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. Get some peanut on the nose here, perhaps just reductive. It does clear, and I checked a 2nd bottle also. Darker spice and fruit register than most in the appellation and vintage - more black cherry, bilberry, cassis, with clearly silky texture that corresponds to a slightly higher alcohol content (or feeling). It's good quality, takes its time to unfurl through the glass. The glass bottle is heavy they are clearly signalling their intent. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5% ➤



Château Le Lion d'Or 2016 91

£13.99 **Averys Wine Merchant**
100% Merlot. Raspberry and blueberry fruits, good structure and body, clear ripeness to the fruits but with an attractive savoury edge that suggests it hasn't been pushed too hard during ageing. Good quality with some classicism, and good value. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 12.5%

Domaine des Graves d'Ardonneau Prestige 2016 91

€10
80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Malbec. Again, the one-two punch of ripe dark fruits and vanilla. This has a lovely texture to the body, and good depth and spice to the blackberry fruit, well handed, great signature of the vintage, like this very much. My issue with the Côtes is that they can become a little too similar, even in the best years, they are obviously thinking about the consumer, which of course should not be a negative thing. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Bonnange 2016 90-91

€17
90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Touch of reduction on the first nose, needs a good swirl and a minute or so in the glass. It clears, and this is enjoyable, smoky tar edges to the black fruits, good quality and nicely balanced, powerful and intense without being overdone. **Drink** 2020-2028 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Mayne Mazerolles 2016 90-91

€7.50 **Hallgarten Wines**
80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Malbec. Redcurrant and raspberry fruit on the nose, nicely balanced, there is a good balance of freshness, fruit and tannin here, with a ripeness that doesn't feel overdone or sought out through additions in the cellar. Unfussy, uncomplicated, good quality. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

La Confiance de Château Bois-Vert 2016 90-91

€15.80
70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. Gourmet patisserie feeling on the aromatics, going for international impact. I can see the ambition, and they just about carry it off - certainly at this price bracket, you are showcasing that the Côtes have some slicks, well tired out wines, with a lick of stone and slate. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Cap Saint Martin 2017 90

£12.50 **Averys Wine Merchant**
80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. 2017 at this point and onwards. Intense aromatics straight off the first nose, damson sweetness, good weight to the palate, keeps things powering forward with a sense of freshness through the core, good quality, approachable but with a sense of restraint and deftness. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Chamaille 2016 90

£25 **Freixenet Copestick**
100% Merlot. Ruby red body, with a gentle cedar and smoked hickory edge to the nose. Gentle tannins, red fruits, clear sweetness with some vanilla bean, this is ready to drink and easy to approach. On clay-limestone slopes, owned by Vignobles Glemet. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Haut Grelot Coteaux de Methez 2017 90

£16 **Bancroft Wines Ltd**
100% Merlot, takes a heartbeat before getting going, and is all the better for it; not trying too hard, convinces you with a murmur not a shout, clean and ripe black fruits, nicely placed tannins are already yielding but giving a sense of being held together; Enjoyable wine. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château La Carelle 2016 90

£13.50 **L'ami Jac**
60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 10% Malbec. Rich colour with some attractive spice notes. A good balance here between tannic structure and smooth black cherry fruits. A touch tight on the finish but plenty to enjoy along the way. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

**Château Haut Prieur 2017** 90

£10 **Direct Wines Ltd**
90% Merlot, 10% Malbec. The dark spice of Malbec apparent in the colour and from the first nose. Soft tannins despite that, which makes this highly appealing and a good balance of fruit and freshness. It has a kick of sanity also on the finish, good quality for the price. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château La Raz Caman 2016 90

€8.50
55% Merlot, 20% Malbec, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot. Clear potential here. Dark ruby red in colour with violet reflections. Some oak swirls on the nose, not too overpowering but clear finessing and ambition. Same thing on the palate - finesse, silky texture, touches of spice. Feels confident and approachable. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Le Virou Vieilles Vignes 2017 90

£12.95
70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc. Another good quality wine. This has liquorice, black chocolate, damson, all the ticks for a wine that delivers a slick overall package. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Mélignan 2016 90

€13.50
50% Merlot, 40% Malbec, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Like the nose here again, easy to say that these are as a whole good quality and speak well of the quality of the vintage; soft, silky, nicely integrated tannins, fruit and acidity. Cassis and brambles fruits, some smoked edging. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Montfollet le Valentin 2017 90

€10
70% Merlot, 30% Malbec. Good depth to the fruit, black cherry, and swirling with rosemary and black pepper spice. Good value, potential. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Tutiac Lion and the Lily Réserve 2016 90

€18
Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. The use of oak is a little clumsy on the nose, although it does soften after a moment, and there is an attractively restrained balance of blackberry, cassis and patisserie cream. Ambitious, not in fact overblown once you give it a minute to relax, perhaps this is one that could do with another year in bottle. **Drink** 2020-2028 **Alc** 12.5%

**Château Bourdieu N°1 2016** 89-90

€15
Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec. The nose here has ripe cherry fruits, touches of black chocolate and dark spice, vanilla on the finish with liquorice overtones. A little overdone, but has ambition and potential. Should have another 5 to 8 years ahead of it. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 15%

Château Barbé 2016 89

£13.50 **L'ami Jac**
75% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. This has an enjoyable balance of spice, fruit and freshness, and holds itself back on the attack, taking a minute to breathe before unfurling. Tannins are well integrated, and the wine is ready to drink, although clearly has another five or six years ahead. The oak impact becomes clearer after a few minutes in the glass, but you are getting good quality and a window into 2016 potential. Good stuff from owner Xavier Carreau. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Bellevue Amphorae 2016 89

€20
100% Merlot. Aged in amphoras, with a wax seal and heavy glass. Again touches of reduction on the nose, this has a nice weight to the fruit, and clear juiciness, feels less slick than some and all the better for it, but does take a minute to get used to, get touches of stinky. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 15%

Château du Grand Barrail Prestige 2017 89

£15.15 **Oxford & Cambridge Wine Club**
80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. A little stewed on the nose, the fruit is clearly ripe, black cherry, blackberry, all about the brambles and the hedgerow, which I very much like, but not as crisply defined as some. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château La Petite Roque 2017 89

£11.15 **Daniel Lambert Wines Ltd**
Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. A little bit squeezed through the mid palate, could find better for the price I would say, but it does settle into itself through the glass, and again shows that at this price in this category in 2016 threes an awful lot to enjoy. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13%

Château Les Chaumes Vieilles Vignes 2016 89

€10
70% Merlot, 30% Malbec. Gourmet vanilla bean on the nose, followed up with damson fruits on the palate. It puts the brakes on before it becomes too much, and there is a sweetness from the ripe fruit that steals up on you. Good. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.8%

Château Monconseil-Gazin 2017 89

£9.50 **The Wine Society**
Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec. A kick of gourmet creme patisserie, black cherry and liquorice, sweet almonds, this is good in fact, has a silky texture and is modern but not overdone. Enjoyable, approachable, no need to think too hard. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13%

Château Pardailan 2016 89

£13.50 **L'ami Jac**
90% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. Attractively vibrant ruby colour, and a nose that is fruity and approachable without being confected. Tightens a little too much though the mid palate, but the juiciness to the fruit comes in to bring it home. Enjoyable. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Terre Blanche Noémie 2016 89

€17
80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. Firm raspberry and cherry fruits, structure without evident tannins. Nicely balanced with silky texture, again the vanilla edging a little too much but caught by the ripe fruit. This is pretty much ready to go but feels like it has enough life and sustenance in it to last for another five or six years. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Tour Saint Germain Élégance 2017 89

€9
65% Merlot, 25% Malbec, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. The more interesting of the two cuvées on display for me - this has spice and depth, enjoyable. Black fruits, firm tannins, a little austere but good. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13%

Délice de Château Dubraud 2016 89

€14
90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Classic damson and vanilla nose, but with a sense of restraint, well handled aromatically. Just a little too sweet on the attack, the vanilla clamps around the fruit, although things ease off again and there is a good juice and integrity to the fruit Promising. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13%

CADILLAC
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX

Château Biac 2016 93

£40 **Brompton Wine**
42% Merlot, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc, 11% Petit Verdot. Smoked cedar traces on the nose, then a subtle but clear delivery of black fruits and spice. There is plenty of impact here, the wine takes its time to open, forces you to slow down and take note of the different layers of flavour. An excellent wine to look out for, one of the true quality names among the Côtes. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5% ➤



Château la Rame 2017 91
£10 **Majestic**

60% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. Impressively structured without being overblown, I like the push and pull through the palate of silky Merlot fruits, with some grip and backbone. Enjoyable. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Le Doyenne 2016 91
£20 **Berry Bros, Adnams**

75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. Nudges open in the glass, taking its time then showing a richly sweet edge to the fruit. Lovely dark ruby colour, well balanced, nicely judged, firm but ripe black cassis and blackberry fruits, hedgerow traces without being underripe. Enjoyable. Michel Rolland consultant. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Réaut Carat 2017 91
£24 **Laithwaite's Wines**

70% Cabernet Franc, 15% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. A stir of grilled cedar and damson, going for gloss and pretty much pulling it off. A little overly sweet but with an appetising sense of welcome and balanced by a core of freshness. Good job in the vintage, as is true for their main bottling Château Réaut (that I gave 90 points to, but didn't include here so as to free up room for other producers). **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Reynon 2016 91
£12

75% Merlot, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Petit Verdot. High percentage of Petit Verdot for the appellation, and it lends a beautifully aromatic spice to the wine. Denis Dubourdieu's home estate, and fitting to have such a lovely result in what was his last vintage. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Suau L'Artolie 2016 90-91
£32

100% Merlot. Some brushed damson tar and vanilla bean, has good impact, Good value, a little sweet but plenty of enjoy, good grip and good Cotes typicity. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

B de Château Biac 2016 90
£40 **Brompton Wine**

94% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon. Touch of reduction on the first nose, needs a good minute or so in the glass. Heavy glass bottle not the most environmentally-friendly, but signals its intent to be taken seriously, and to be it honest it pulls it off once you give it a minute or so. A little smoky, with some bite, some lift, good definition to the fruit, a clear success for this 2nd wine. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Clos Chaumont 2016 90
£17

75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. Intense colour, from a Dutch-owned estate that I always enjoy, particularly as it has good consistency across vintages. The ambition is clear here, as is the lovely bounce to those tannins than some. Firm fruits and well structured, give it another year in bottle or a good hour in a decanter before drinking. Hubert de Bouard consultant. **Drink** 2020-2030 **Alc** 14%

Château de Potiron Excellence 2016 90
€12.50

70% Merlot, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Cabernet Franc. As is so often the case in this vintage, it's texture that impresses. The weight of the fruit presses down through the body of the wine, and it is cradled but not strangled by the tannins. Plenty to get your hands round in this glass. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château du Cros Coteaux de Lou 2016 90
€16.90

95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Good quality, unforced, well balanced, clear dark fruit flavours. An enjoyable wine from Catherine d'Halluin, whose family own the always excellent Château du Cros. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Manos 2016 90
€10

60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. Touches of vanilla patisserie here, giving a gourmet twist to the cassis and bilberry fruits. Côtes wines always works best when they don't feel like they are trying too hard, and they are doing a great job with that here, even while adding some touches of oak finesse. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Lamothe de Haux 2017 90
£14 **RDW**

60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. Good aromatics if a little subdued, opens up to reveal dark chocolate and cocoa dusting. Clear spices, and an estate that has good consistency, a name to look out for. Also enjoyed their Première Cuvée from the same vintage (same score also). **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Suau 2016 90
€14

70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, Good aromatics, then the fruit takes a heartbeat before kicking in on the palate. Subtle at first, but opens very prettily to show brambled blackcurrant and berry fruits. Organic since 2008. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Ricaud Grand Vin 2016 89-90
€19.50

78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot. Subtle, takes a heartbeat before kicking in. This is subdued, but once open shows dark fruits, blackcurrant, blackberry, slate and liquorice. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Clos Chaumont Une Passion 2016 89
€22

75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. Good quality wine, but tight right now and needs a little longer in bottle. Lovely silky quality to the texture, enjoyable. **Drink** 2020-2028 **Alc** 15%

Château de Marsan 2016 89
€6.90

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Clear oak edging, cedar and a highly smoked hickory feel. I like the fruit placement, it is firm and juicy, a little contemporary sure but good côtes signature, which goes for the slick modern feel often, mainly in Castillon but can work in Cadillac also! **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château des MilleANGES 2016 89
€13 **Goedhuis**

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Lovely vibrant reflections on the colour here, violet and ruby. The tannins are a little chewy but the wine feels beautifully unfussy with focus on natural juicy fruits. Enjoyable stuff from owner Heather van Ekris. 33% new oak, Hubert de Bouard consultant. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Le Giron 2016 89
€10

60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. Vibrant brambly fruits, well pace through the palate, nicely extracted, juicy and not overly pushed. Highly drinkable. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Les Guyonnets Héritage 2016 89
€9.50

100% Merlot. Firm black fruits, a kick of salinity on the finish, good quality unforced. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Pilet Alt 120 mètres 2016 89
€12

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Firm redcurrant and raspberry fruits, just slightly wisps of rusticity as it travels through the palate. Good texture and weight, there is plenty of enjoyment to be had here. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

**CASTILLON
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX**

Château La Clarière Laithwaite 2016 93
€25.90 **Laithwaite's Wines**

75% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec. Deep and rich, this really is a very nice bottle of wine. Well handled, complex and concentrated but not overblown. Easily one of the best in the line up in terms of quality and approachability - a good advert for what Castillon can do. Back chocolate, liquorice, slate, firm tannins, young but not totally closed up, and with clear ageing potential. Good stuff from Laithwaites. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Alcée 2016 92
£20 **BI Wine**

92% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc. Like this, feels like it has been carefully laid out, fruit first, with layers carefully laid over of tannin, liquorice, oak, slate. Good quality, good persistency. From the Nicolas Thiepont stable, so you are also getting excellent winemaking knowledge here, suggesting you can be pretty confident in its ability to age for a good few years. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Joanin Bécot 2016 92
£14.50 **Berry Bros & Rudd**

75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc. Attractive and focused, redcurrant, raspberry, tons of liquorice root. Fresh and vibrant, with tannins that are pulsating. Thomas Duclos is consultant here, and you can feel the careful placement of the fruit, lovely precision on offer but also the simple pleasure of mouthwatering juicy fruit. Good quality. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château La Comédie Fleur de Scène 2016 92
€29

100% Merlot. Classic Castillon signature of damson and fresh, slate-like minerality that reflect the impact of the limestone soils. Lovely mouth-watering finish. Their main château bottling is also good in this vintage, but this one pips it for me. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château La Croix Lartigou 2016 92
€28.50

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc. Good quality, clear persistency, complexity, some dancing minerality, slate, liquorice, redcurrant and raspberry notes. Like very much. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Clos Puy Arnaud Grand Vin 2016 92
€45 **Carte Blanche**

70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. The colour stands out straight away, a glass staining, vibrant purple. Feels extremely young, and a little savage, wild even, on the nose. But it maintains a wonderfully pure, juicy and focused black fruit character. Brambly fruits, austerity is clear, this is still extremely young, not quite jumping out as much as this estate did in 2015, but full of complexity and with a purity and grace to the fruit expression. The austerity will be tamed with a few years in bottle. The 2nd wine Les Ormeaux is also really worth looking for, with many of the same characteristics but a little softer and well priced. **Drink** 2020-2032 **Alc** 14%

Château Castegens 2017 91
€19

75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Again this is enjoyable, well defined, cassis fruits with flexible tannins, well put together. Again that kick of acidity on the finish, gives an attractive lift. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14% ➤



Château Le Peyrat 2017 91**Justerini & Brooks**

85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. Plum and damson fruits on the attack, nice silky texture through the mid palate although acidity a little fierce on close of play. But this settles into itself in the glass, and after five minutes has good precision. **Drink** 2019-2026

Château de Pitray Premier Vin 2017 90
€14 **Majestic**

75% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec. Dark chocolate edging, this is subtle but has very nicely worked fruits and the tannins are tamed but present. Good value, well assembled wine that has a lot to offer. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Joanin Bécot 2017 91**£14 Berry Bros & Rudd**

75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc. A well finessed nose that concentrates on appealing aromatics of brambly fruits and subtle black chocolate. Good in both vintages tasted in the lineup, which is always impressive. A lovely vibrant edge to the colour, real violet reflections. Clear appellation typicity. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Lafaurie Monbadon 2016 91
£35 **Freixenet Copestick**

70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc. Great aromatics here, liquorice, black cherries, rosemary. Good focus through the palate also, with the core pulling upwards, bright blackcurrant fruits, tannins that are chewy but with life in them. Should age well, could be drunk now with a carafe or given another few years. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Claud Bellevue 2016 90
€22.80

85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. A little more subdued than some but the quality is there, just have to sit be patient, give it time in the glass. Tight cassis notes. New Turkish owners (and already winemakers with sizeable holdings back in Turkey) since July 2018, Maison Kavaklidere, who also own La Croix Lartigue, and it promises to be an interesting name to watch. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 15%

**Château La Grande Maye 2017** 90**Justerini & Brooks**

85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. Dark ruby red body, chocolate and liquorice aromatics, a darker register than some in terms of its fruit character. Rounded and silky through the palate, everything is in its place, and it has balance. **Drink** 2019-2026

Château Roque Le Mayne 2016 90
€30

80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. Good job here, great balance. Like this very much, sweet, bright fruit, good depth of flavour but still with a mineral, tight, austere lick on the finish. Get limestone very clearly here, but still with enough of a gourmet lick to soften its sides. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Roquevieille Excellence 2016 90**€17 MC Pherson**

80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Well handled aromatics here, with touch of cloves and tar complementing spicy dark fruits. Nice mouthwatering finish with a lift. The main château bottling in this vintage is good also, with damson and patisserie flavours and good value. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Ampelia 2016 89**€15 The Wine Society**

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. Soft tannins, some attractive well brushed fruits, still a little fierce on the acidity on the finish but this is an attractive wine that would work well with food. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

Château Bellevue Vieilles Vignes 2016 89
€8.50

65% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc. Deep ruby colour with violet edging, good quality for the money. This has punch, bite, and personality without being overblown. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Château Beynat 2017 89**Winetrail**

Merlot, Cabernet Franc. Things are a little lighter in the 2017 vintage as a whole, although this has some lovely precise fruits, zip and verve. A little on the austere side. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 13.5%

Château La Brande 2016 89**£15 Department 33**

70% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon. Sweep of slick damson on the attack, perhaps a little overly sweet but with good grip and clear, enjoyably floral and spiced aromatics. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 13.5%

Château la Pierrière Cuvée du Fondateur 2016 89**£10 Wine Bourse**

80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Perky, with plenty of Castillon character. A little tight and short right now as the tannins continue to grip on, but there is lots to enjoy and it is unfussy. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

Château Côte Montpezat Compostelle 2016 89**€13.90**

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. Has lift and lick of salt taffy. Mouth watering and good consistency. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14%

Héritage de Château la Couspaude 2016 89
€8.50

95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc. You are getting grip and character at a good value price. Clove and tar notes suggest oak, but alongside plenty of red fruits. Acidity a touch high, certainly there is some austerity here, but wonderfully chalky tannins and a core of freshness. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 13.5%

Domaine Gonzague Maurice Victor 2016 89
€8.50

100% Merlot. For the price this is really great quality - some mouthwatering flavours and clear redcurrant and raspberry. A little short perhaps, but there is character here. You feel the lift through the glass, and it shows why Castillon has such an excellent sense of character, often showcasing plump fruits but finishing with a saline twist. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

FRANCS
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX**Château Ad Francos 2016** 93
€78 **Bloomsbury Wine**

100% Merlot. One of the few in the lineup that clearly needs a few more years in bottle (true of both Ad Francos wines tasted). This is concentrated, still extremely young right now, with a dark fruit register overall, subtle grilled almonds. This has ambition and matches it with restraint. You could be in St Emilion here, this is a well structured and well made wine. The Ad Aeternam 100% Merlot bottling is another great wine from this estate in the same vintage, and worth looking out for, but this one stood out for me. As it should at the price asked. **Drink** 2022-2030 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Puygueraud 2016 92**£19 Lea and Sandeman**

80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec. The extraction is firm, clear, perhaps a little overly so, but a nice saline lick on the finish, definite muscular tannins and mineralogy on display. Black chocolate again, sleek, with impact, lift on finish. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château de Francs 2016 91**£13.99 Averys Wine Merchant**

80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. Softer than some in this appellation and this vintage, this is approachable and enjoyable. No need to wait too long to open, just enjoy the grilled woodsmoke edging, blackberry brambles and touches of hedgerow. **Drink** 2019-2027 **Alc** 14%

Château Franc Cardinal 2016 91**£18 Roberson Wine**

70% Merlot, 26% Cabernet Franc, 4% Malbec. Some gourmet patisserie aromatics, this has an appealing start. Opens gently and slowly, not trying to impress but to gently convince. Redcurrant and raspberry dominates, with fresh acidities, an attractive softness overall with finesse and carefully laid out for easy drinking. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château La Prade 2016 91**£21.50 Tanners Wines**

88% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc. A good name, delivering consistently slick, powerful bottles. There are plenty of things to enjoy - namely the structured black fruits, the silky texture and the tannins that are chewy, present but well finessed. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Puyfromage 2017 91**£9.50 The Wine Society**

70% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc. This is charming, approachable with gentle berries fruits and well integrated tannins. Owner Frederic Marque makes fruit-forward, supple wines that are great with food. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

Château Clos Fontaine Premier Vin 2016 89**£16.80 Savage Selection Ltd**

100% Merlot. Still young, there are clear layers and ambition. Takes its time but softens in the glass, revealing black fruits and bitter chocolate. Plenty of Francs minerality. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

SAINTE-FOY
CÔTES DE BORDEAUX**Château L'Enclos Triple A 2016** 90
€11.10

80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. This is good. It shows silky tannins, and while the fruit is not hugely intense it is vibrant and appealing, with strawberry and raspberry highlights. The Réserve bottling is also a success in this vintage. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Martet Réserve de famille 2016 90

100% Merlot. High impact, silky texture and with a fruity damson and red cherry feel. Easy to imagine sinking into a glass of this. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 15%

Château de Grangeneuve 2016 89
€12

65% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc. This one has some attractive blackberry favours and good balance, with clear acidities picking up the fruit and carrying it through the palate. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14.5%

Château Pré La Lande Diane 2017 89
€14.90

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc. Spiced damson jam on the nose, soft tannins, one of the best in the St Foy lineup, with structure that frames the fruit but doesn't take away from its soft appeal. Approachable and mouthwatering. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

Château Claribès Marpeau 2017 89
£15 **Claribes Ltd**

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot. Subtle but attractive smoked grilled black cherry fruits on the attack, a little soft towards the finish. Not hugely intense, but this has plenty of appeal and is an attractive wine. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

CÔTES DE BORDEAUX