

Château Branaire Ducru 2014

CSPC# 785890

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

CSPC# 814405

750mlx6

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety	65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc
Appellation	St Julien
Classification	Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.
Website	http://www.branair.com/
General Info	<p>Château Branaire-Ducru is situated on the opposite side of the road from Château Beychevelle in the south of the St-Julien appellation. The Château has its origins in the 17th century when it formed part of the estate of Château Beychevelle. After the latter's owner died in debt, the land was parceled up and sold off, with Jean-Baptiste Braneyre acquiring the Branaire hectares in 1680 (the name has metamorphosed across the centuries). Braneyre's daughter married Pierre de Luc and the estate passed down through the De Luc family and later the related Ducru family for over 140 years. The last family members to own it were three noble nephews who are represented by the crowns on today's Branaire label. In 1919, Branaire-Ducru was sold to the Tapie family, but its modern renaissance had to wait until 1988 and the influences of the Maroteaux family, under whose direction the wine's quality has surged. Patrick Maroteaux has invested heavily in new plantings as well as installing a spanking new cuvier and an ultra-modern chai.</p>
Winemaker	Jean-Dominique Videau
Vintage	<p>After an exceptionally mild winter, the bud burst came 15 days ahead of the 10-year average. Spring was wet and rather cool while the flowering in early June had good thermal conditions. The mild month of June and spring rainfall stimulated the growth of the vines and the development of beautiful foliage. Wet conditions required special attention at this time. Apart from a very warm second half of July, we had moderate temperatures with average precipitation. In early September, the water measurements showed interesting constraints. From the end of August, the weather changed completely with above average temperatures and 30% more sunshine than normal. Drought rapidly expanded water stress, adding to the concentration of grape tannins and refining and maturing the seeds.</p>
Vineyards	<p>Château Branaire-Ducru is tucked away in the south-eastern most part of the St Julien appellation, close neighbours being Beychevelle, which lies between Branaire-Ducru and the <i>Gironde</i>, and Château Saint-Pierre. The vineyards run west-east in several plots close to the <i>château</i>, over typical Médoc terroir of Quaternary alluvial gravels. There are 52 hectares in all, planted with 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot and just 5% Cabernet franc and 3% Petit Verdot, with an average age approaching 40 years, although there are many vines approaching a century.</p>
Harvest	<p>We started harvesting the Merlot on September 24th and found the berries had a greater diameter than average with high sugar and polyphenols. At maturity, the grapes tasted particularly rich with bright fruit. The harvest of Cabernet Sauvignon started October 3rd and ended on the 11th in beautiful conditions. We were able to pick without urgency with each parcel having achieved ideal maturity. Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot took advantage of the beautiful late autumn. They are aromatic, concentrated, and powerful, their tannic finesse is impressive. The average yield is below 40 hl / ha. The lower number of bunches and the warm, dry, and sunny weather in September (which contributed to the maturity acceleration, and the berries concentration by losing water) reduced the yield.</p>
Maturation	<p>Aging in oak barrels for 16 to 20 months with 60 to 65% of new oak. Woods selected in various French forests according to their flavours and tannins quality. Light toasting respecting the wine's fruit and aromatic purity</p>



Tasting Notes	Today, Branaire-Ducru 2014 joined the home style by showing an expressive and rich nose with ripe fruit but keeping the freshness. The mouth is fleshy at the attack developing along a dense body. The final is complex, the good acidity level gives a beautiful balance.
Serve with	Chateau Branaire Ducru is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Young vintages can be decanted for 2-3 hours. This allows the wine to soften and open its perfume. Older vintages might need very little decanting, just enough to remove the sediment. Chateau Branaire Ducru is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, stewed, and grilled dishes. Branaire Ducru is also good when served with Asian dishes, hearty seafood or fish like tuna, mushrooms, pasta, and cheese.
Production	13,335 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2019-2038
Scores/Awards	<p>93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2017</p> <p>91-94 points - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2015</p> <p>89 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate Interim Issue - April 2017</p> <p>90-92 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #218 - April 22, 2003</p> <p>93 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2017</p> <p>92-93 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2015</p> <p>94 points/Cellar Selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2017</p> <p>16.5+ points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - February 2018</p> <p>17 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2016</p> <p>16+ points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2015</p> <p>90 points - Decanter.com - April 2015</p> <p>92 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - February 2017</p> <p>92-93 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2015</p> <p>15.5 points - Farr Vintner - March 2015</p> <p>87-91 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2015</p> <p>89 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p>93 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2017</p> <p>91-94 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2017</p> <p>90 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - November 2017</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Very pure and expressive, featuring lovely violet and cassis aromas and flavors that stream forth, backed by light anise and graphite hints. Maintains a fresh feel through the finish, with light minerality engaging with the fruit. Best from 2019 through 2028. 13,335 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Focused and a touch austere for now, with a charcoal edge to the core of black currant and steeped fig fruit. Tobacco and bramble notes check in on the finish, and there's solid acidity in reserve. Well-built and should evolve nicely. Score range: 91-94"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2014 Branaire-Ducru offers a mixture of red and black fruit on the nose, suffused with tobacco and pleasant undergrowth aromas, perhaps just missing the precision of the Beychevelle at the moment. The palate is supple on the entry with a slightly grainy texture, the acidity well judged, a little edginess towards the finish that just needs to must more depth, more drive. Not bad for the vintage, although I would like to see some improvement in bottle. Tasted twice with consistent notes. Drink 2019-2038"</i></p> <p>- NM, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The Château Branaire-Ducru is a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc picked between 24 September with the early-ripening Merlot and finishing on 11 October. The yields came in at 40 hectoliters per hectare and Patrick Maratoux explained the importance of waiting for the correct maturity of each parcel. It has a tightly wound bouquet with black cherries and orange-peel aromas, focused if not quite as complex as say, Château Beychevelle. The palate is medium-bodied, sinewy in the mouth with tensile tannins. This is a wine that seems to be making a huge effort in this vintage, but I would like to see more finesse manifested on the finish by the time it is in bottle. You know, I think that will develop. That 12 to 13% vin de presse lends this Branaire Ducru impressive sustain on the finish and I suspect that it will coalesce</i></p>

- Reviews** *throughout the barrel ageing in two-thirds new oak (though the sample shown at the chateau was 100% new oak).*
- NM, Wine Advocate
- "This is a slightly shy mid-weight wine that is anything but a flashy one. If you have some patience though it has plenty of subtlety and sophistication. Drink in 2021."*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- "This really builds on the palate with round and velvety tannins and a juicy, savory finish. Layered and complex. Shows real potential."*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- "*Cellar Selection* Spicy, rich and full of ripe fruit, this wine has great potential. It is structured and dense while bringing out a stylish elegance. Blackberry fruit dominates the tannins to create a wine that has both concentration and fine fruit. Drink from 2022. (RV)"*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast
- "Tasted blind. Great balance and integration on the nose. Sweet and fresh but not massively concentrated. Slightly scrawny finish."*
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- "Mid crimson. A touch less ripe than the Beychevelle but more graphite than leafy. Excellent balance between profound, dark fruit, smooth, compact tannins, and fresh acidity. Medium weight and elegant already. (JH)"*
- JH, JancisRobinson.com
- "Dark crimson. Energetic nose. Fairly light palate without that much concentration. Round, with less tannic charge than most. Serviceable. A little scrawny on the finish. "*
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- "Very well-expressed ripe Cabernet fruit with elegant structure and good length. Never showy at the start of its life, this is a classic Branaire that needs to age."*
- Decanter.com
- "Elegant, refined, fresh and with purity of fruit and ripe tannins, the fruit here is crisp, sweet, ripe and vibrant."*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- "With the blossoms of a black raspberry bramble with a quick sift of white pepper, mocha and earth in the perfume, this wine is all about its elegant tannins, the finesse, freshness, and purity of the sweet black and crisp, spicy red fruits. Produced from a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc. The wine reached 13.5% alcohol with a pH of 3.63."*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- "A classic Saint Julien Chateau that has pushed the quality level up considerably in recent vintages under owner Patrick Maroteaux and winemaker Jean-Dominique Videau. It produces wines of real St Julien class and structure. Deep purple colour. A perfumed nose of cherry and sweet vanilla. Very spicy fruit on the palate, with soft and rounded tannins and lively acidity. Creamy tannins with a smack of toasty new wood. Added freshness as the acidity builds on the finish, leaving a clean blackcurrant note."*
- Farr Vintners
- "The nose has a mix of flavours quite fragrant and fresh. The start of the palate is bright the mid palate sweeter supple with well handles tannins and although lighter and fresher towards the back the finish has some rich fruit. 2025-37"*
- Derek Smedley MW

Reviews

“The 2014 Branaire Ducru has a slightly uncouth bouquet compared to its peers: blackberry, blueberry, oyster shell and just a splash of cedar. It does not quite deliver the complexity of Beychevelle or Gruaud Larose. The palate is medium bodied with a smooth velvety texture, moderate acidity, pure black cherry, and raspberry fruit. It is a seductive Saint Julien but at the moment it articulates more the winemaking than the terroir, consequently it does not provide the same engagement as its peers. Not showy, but certainly well crafted. There is more to come with bottle maturation. Tasted blind at the annual Southwold tasting. 2020 – 2032”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2014 Branaire Ducru is soft, polished and super-inviting. Succulent red cherry, plum, lavender, spice and mint give the wine its attractive, open-knit personality, while silky tannins add to an overall impression of sensuality. The 2014 should drink well with minimal cellaring. Today, it is among the most accessible of the Saint-Julien.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2014 Branaire Ducru is beautifully textured in the glass. Lavender, plum, mint and spice open up nicely in the glass. Initially quite dense and powerful, the 2014 turns more floral and lifted over time. Sweet red cherry, graphite, violet and licorice add further shades of dimension on the finish. Creamy, silky tannins add to an overall impression of sophistication. The style is round, supple, and quite giving, even at this early stage. Tasted three times.”

- AG, Vinous

“I was disappointed not be able to taste the 2015 from this estate, but the 2014 Branaire-Ducru showed well from a bottle purchased locally. Revealing a deep ruby/plum color and forward, sexy notes of black cherries, plums, leather, dried tobacco leaves and cedarwood, it offers impressive depth and density in the vintage, beautiful balance, and a rich, layered textured that has it already drinking nicely. It can be drunk anytime over the coming 20 years. 2018 – 2038”

- Jeb Dunnuck
