

Château Branaire Ducru 2015

CSPC# 785890

750mlx12

13.49% alc./vol.

Grape Variety 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc
Appellation St Julien
Classification Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.
Website <http://www.branair.com/>

General Info 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.

Winemaker Jean-Dominique Videau

Vintage The 2015 vintage is undoubtedly among the great successes of the last decades. This wine impresses by its aromatic complexity and the purity of a very expressive fruity nose. The very savoury palate shows a nice acidity, and a real richness of refined tannins. In conclusion, we are very confident with the future of this 2015. It conforms to our expectations in the Branaire-Ducru style, which we always work on with devotion and enthusiasm.

The vines flourished without pressure and in time with a regular surprise-free year. The dry summer contributed to the formation of tannin-packed skins and beneficial development of the pips. Showers appeared at the end of July. Harvesting took place in good conditions despite a shower during picking, which will change nothing except the growers' mood.

The 2015 wines have benefited from a combination of favourable factors:

- the winter temperatures were in the average but March was cold,
- good temperatures without precipitations during the flowering at the beginning of June allowed a perfect development of flowers,
- at the end of June, summer started in very warm and dry conditions. This situation lasted for a long period. The water stress for the vines was very significant. All those conditions enabled the skins to gain tannins, the seeds to develop and the vegetal aromas to disappear,
- from the end of July, rain allowed a homogeneous and fast veraison. From then, the temperature conditions remained more standard.

We had a few days of rain in August and September.

Vineyards 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 *Gironde*, and Château Saint-Pierre. The vineyards run west-east in several plots close to the *château*, 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.

Harvest The harvest took place mostly in good conditions from September 18th to October 8th. The harvest was well advanced when significant rain hit the vineyard on 4th October. This however did not affect the sanitary state of the grapes. We continued picking the grapes in good conditions. With a little less than 47 hl/ha, the volume is satisfying and corresponds to our expectations.



Maturation	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
Tasting Notes	Everyone agrees that Branaire-Ducru 2015 is one of the best-grown and -made vintages in the last thirty years with precise, subtle tannins that are a benchmark. It has impressive aromatic complexity and purity on its very expressive, fruity nose. On the palate, it is packed with flavour supported by lovely acidity. An attractive bouquet of red and black fruit, lovely and fresh, clear-cut and complex. Dense and round on the palate, it is powerful yet elegant.
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. 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	15,000 cases made.
Cellaring	Drink 2019-2031
Scores/Awards	<p>94 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - January 2018</p> <p>90-93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2017</p> <p>#33 - Wine Spectator Top 100 of 2018</p> <p>90 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Interim Issue - February 2018</p> <p>90-92 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #224 - April 2016</p> <p>93 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - November 2022</p> <p>93 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2018</p> <p>93-94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2016</p> <p>95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - November 2017</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - February 2019</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2018</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - November 2017</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2016</p> <p>93 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - November 2017</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - November 2022</p> <p>95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - July 2020</p> <p>95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2018</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2018</p> <p>93 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - July 2017</p> <p>92-94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2016</p> <p>91 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - January 2016</p> <p>90-92 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2016</p> <p>95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2018</p> <p>17.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2016</p> <p>95 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - January 2018</p> <p>93 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com (score only) - May 2016</p> <p>93 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - March 2019</p> <p>18 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2019</p> <p>17.5 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - April 2017</p> <p>18 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2018</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"This pumps lush fig, boysenberry, and blackberry confiture notes along, pushed by a rather polished but ample structure. Lots of anise and violet details cascade in on the finish, giving this extra aromatic dimension. Best from 2020 through 2038. 15,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Pretty and aromatic, with flavors of kirsch and cherry preserves mixed with tobacco and bay notes. Stays energetic through the relatively sleek finish. Wins on purity."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Medium to deep garnet-purple in color, the 2015 Branaire-Ducru has an earthy nose over a core of red and black currants with hints of tapenade, pencil shavings and sage. The medium-bodied palate is firm and chewy, with just enough fruit and a lively finish."</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p>

Reviews

"The 2015 Branaire-Ducru is a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc that was picked between 18 September until 8 October, with two or three intervals in between. Matured in around 60% new oak (although as usual my barrel sample was from a new oak barrel), it has a high-toned, black cherry and cassis scented nose that perhaps feels a little constricted by the new wood in this sample, though not necessarily once in bottle. The palate is medium-bodied with a lightly spiced entry, white pepper and a touch of sage, gritty tannin, foursquare and a little conservative. There is commendable weight on the finish, if not quite the precision compared to its peers. I noticed this gaining more cohesion in the glass, which bodes well for once the Branaire-Ducru is in bottle. I expect this to rest at the top of my banded score."

- NM, Wine Advocate

"Medium to deep garnet colored, the 2015 Branaire-Ducru reveals notes of blackcurrant cordial, plum preserves, and fruitcake, with touches of Indian spices and fragrant soil. The medium-bodied palate is packed with juicy black fruits, supported by ripe, grainy tannins, finishing long, and layered."

- LPB, Wine Independent

"Quite ripe with aromas of currants, violets, rich dark plums, dark chocolate, graphite and toasty cedary oak. Really complex. The palate has impressive polish and depth. Very supple and smooth tannins, carrying long, bright flavors of plums and dark cherries. Superb. Best from 2022."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This is very structured and tight with chewy polished tannins and blueberry, blackberry. Full and savory. Should develop beautifully."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This family-owned estate has produced a structured and dark wine with great concentration balanced by acidity and pure, creamy fruit. It is a wine with a good future. The aftertaste leaves juicy acidity and firm tannins. Drink from 2025."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Tasted blind. Dark garnet. Correct but not glamorous or intense. Quite a sweet start then the tannins – not the ripest – come to the fore. A bit insipid on the end. Drink 2023-2035."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Deep ruby/crimson. Correct without being stunning. A little more attenuated than one might have expected given the vintage. Just slightly stringy on the end. Drink 2024-2042."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Bright crimson. Slightly occluded nose. Could do with a little more precision and freshness but it's certainly absolutely typical. Hint of mint on the end. Drink 2024-2036"

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Dark ruby. Sweetly gamey on the nose. A little light compared with some but very correct. Quite advanced. But just slightly austere in style. No one could object but I can't imagine many falling madly in love. Stones on the finish. Drink 2024-2038."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Stepping up in terms of grip and acidity, this really does pull you along through the palate, while bristling tannins hold things together. This majors on control and well-drawn cassis and bilberry fruits. It needs to soften but should really go the distance. A fine and classic St-Julien. Drinking Window 2025 – 2040."

- JA, Decanter.com

"Vibrant, lush, refined, elegant, and almost at the start of its prime-time, drinking window, the wine is packed with mocha, tobacco, dark red fruits, earth, and spice on the nose, and on the long, vibrant palate. Drink from 2023-2045."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

Reviews

"Clearly on the right track. The wine is elegant, refined, fresh, pure, classy, and classic. The tannins are soft with the right amount of polish, The juicy, sweet, red fruits offer lift, purity, and persistence to this medium-bodied wine. As this ages, it is only going to get better and better. This bottle was opened in the name of science, to know where the wine is going. It is going to be a beauty of you can wait another 7-9 years to reach maturity."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Blackberries, cassis, thyme, tobacco, and cedar notes help define the nose. There is a sweetness and purity to the ripe red fruits that shine through. On the palate as the wine lingers, elements of juicy, blackberries poke through, giving you a mélange of silky textured fruits in the finish. This is so soft, you can drink it now, but if you can wait 6-10 years, the wine will offer a much more interesting experience."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"The wine expresses its elegant, refined character with ease. There is a sweetness and purity to the deep red fruits. The added cedar, tobacco and floral elements are coupled with soft, silky tannins and a finish, that focuses on the fresh character of the fruit."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Elegant and refined, with purity and freshness, the wine keeps getting better and should age quite nicely."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Tobacco, cedar and plump red and black fruits start off the nose. Ripe, soft tannins, purity of fruit and perfect balance are the hallmarks of this wine. Clarity and sweetness of the fruit, the freshness and elegance with the ability to age make this a strong vintage for Branaire Ducru. Produced from a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc, this wine reached 13.3% alcohol with a pH of 3.64. The harvest took place from September 18 to October 4."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"This was comparatively backward and closed when I tasted it, still showing a slight angularity that should soften in barrel. The components are there: sturdy Cabernet-based fruit, fresh acidity, and good depth. Drink: 2022-32"
- TA, timatkin.com

"Bright quite light the bilberry and bramble on the nose is fresh and the start of the palate firm. There is mid richness good depth of flavour the cassis and black cherry is backed by dark chocolate. Brighter at the back the finish has freshness and length."
- Derek Smedley MW

"The 2015 Branaire Ducru is a gorgeous, totally sexy wine. Rose petal, lavender, mint, sweet red berry, and gently spiced notes give the wine much of its gracious, lilting personality. Precise and nuanced to the core, the 2015 Branaire is all class. It's easy to overlook Branaire in the context of Saint-Julien, where most of the other important wines are much more powerful. Branaire always speaks with a hushed, discreet voice. Readers who appreciate finesse will find much to admire here. The 2015 is a wine of pure and total sensual pleasure. In 2015, the blend is 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot and 4% Cabernet Franc, aged for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. Don't miss it. Tasted two times."
- AG, Vinous

"With trademark Branaire élan and lush swathes of black and red fruit, this is a lovely, open wine on the nose and yet the palate is leaner and more focused, and it sharpens up and lengthens in an impressive manner. It is rather cool and refreshing on the finish which provides a dramatic counterpoint to the exotic scent."
- MJ, matthewjukes.com

"Dark ruby garnet, violet reflections, subtle lightening of the edges, delicate precious wood spice, ripe cherry fruit, delicate orange zest, tobacco nuances, multi-faceted bouquet. Juicy, fresh cherries, elegant, freshly structured, integrated tannins, balanced and persistent, subtle extract sweetness in the finish, good aging potential with a medium length."
- PM, Falstaff
