

## Château Branaire Ducru 2018

CSPC# 784890	750mlx12	14.3% alc./vol.
CSPC# 814405	750mlx6	14.3% alc./vol.
CSPC# 848121	750mlx6	14.3% alc./vol.

**Grape Variety** 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% 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** 2018 Saint Julien should win an award for the most consistent appellation of the 2018 Bordeaux vintage. From top to bottom, every wine was very good. The 2018 vintage was perfect for St. Julien, once the rains ceased by late June. The winter and spring drenched the region. But picture-perfect weather, warm sunny and dry hit the region in July and with a few minor showers, which helped promote maturity to the vines, beautiful conditions continued through to the harvest, allowing growers to pick, when they found their desired level of maturity. Being a small appellation, at only 910 hectares, much of the gravel terroir was able to work its magic, alleviating the excess water while retaining the right amount of moisture to nourish the vines when needed during the dry summer months. The warm, sunny, days, dry conditions and cool nights were perfect for the region, allowing much of the harvest to reach the desired level of maturity that each estate wanted to achieve.

**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.

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**Harvest** The 2018 Branaire-Ducru was picked from September 19 until October 10 at 53hl/ha



<b>Maturation</b>	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
<b>Tasting Notes</b>	The nose, which is already very expressive, shows a nice complexity of ripe fruit, well balanced by fresher notes. The intensity of the bouquet develops with aeration and the oak is already well integrated. The first impression on the palate is one of silky roundness with impressive volume, overlaying extremely fine tannins. The wine develops slowly and gradually on the palate, following its logical path to a voluptuous mid-palate with beautiful density: always refined – never overpowering. The aromatic complexity, and delicious acidity are omni-present with a lovely long-lasting fruit finish ensuring freshness and lift. The house style of Branaire-Ducru is very evident in the 2018 vintage: expressive fruit, great finesse and balance, wonderful freshness, but always with exceptional depth, density, and refinement.
<b>Serve with</b>	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.
<b>Production</b>	18,000 cases made.
<b>Cellaring</b>	Drink 2022-2037
<b>Scores/Awards</b>	<p><b>94 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2021</p> <p><b>94-97 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2019</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019</p> <p><b>97 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021</p> <p><b>95-96 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>95 points/Cellar Selection</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 2021</p> <p><b>94-96 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2019</p> <p><b>17 points</b> - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - May 2019</p> <p><b>16.5 points</b> - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - March 2019</p> <p><b>16.5 points</b> - Tom Parker, JancisRobinson.com - October 2020</p> <p><b>92 points</b> - Decanter.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>93 points</b> - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>93-95 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>93 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2021</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019</p> <p><b>93-96 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2019</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021</p> <p><b>18+ points</b> - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019</p> <p><b>18-18.5 points</b> - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - April 2019</p>
<b>Reviews</b>	<p><i>"Pure and driven, with expressive cassis and plum puree aromas and flavors carried by a graphite edge and backed with applewood, licorice root and tobacco notes. Lovely energy throughout. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2022 through 2037. 18,000 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"This is well-packed, with blueberry, açai and blackberry fruit flavors and licorice snap and fruitcake notes. Long and refined despite the copious fruit, showing polish and poise through the finish."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The deep garnet-purple colored 2018 Branaire-Ducru begins just a tad reduced with broody tar, rubber and fried herbs scents giving way to a fragrant core of warm cassis, blackberry pie and blueberry coulis with touches of smoked meats and tobacco. Full-bodied, firm, and rugged in the mouth with brawny, muscular fruit and a sturdy frame of grainy tannins, it finishes long and savory. Barrel Sample: 92-94."</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p>

- Reviews** *“Very attractive aromas of currants, tile and sandalwood with black and red currants. It’s full-bodied with a tight, dense center-palate that remains closed in and tight. Yet there is underlying seriousness and length to this. Perhaps the greatest Branaire-Ducru ever made. Try after 2026.”*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- “This is a fantastic Branaire with deep and dark fruit, such as blackberries and blackcurrants. Lots of raspberries, too. Full-bodied with firm and creamy tannins and a super long finish. We will see if it’s better than 2016, but on its way.”*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- “A deceptively smooth texture and black fruits hide a wine that has great density and richness. Firm tannins lie beneath the ripeness. They will allow this wine to age, giving future concentration and depth. Drink the wine from 2027. \*Cellar Selection\* (RV)”*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast
- “This is a dense wine that is built by firm tannins, bright acidity and great fruitiness. Its structure is fully integrated into the blackberry fruits that give a rich wine that has a fine future.”*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast
- “Concentrated purplish crimson. Intensity and a real St-Julien edge and balance to this wine on the nose. Juicy and polished. Lively and transparent. Great texture and future.”*  
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- “58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc. Cask sample. Dark purplish crimson. Sweet and concentrated – very flattering nose. Quite racy and polished. A charmer though the tannins are pretty well disguised. Just a little angular on the end.”*  
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- “58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc. Deep ruby. Quite fresh and showcasing red fruit more than blackcurrant on the nose. The impression is lifted and bright for this vintage, with lively acidity and crunchy tannins. Compact and fine, with excellent balance throughout. (TP)”*  
- TP, JancisRobinson.com
- “58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc; 60% new oak. Barrel sample. Black-cherry rim with opaque core. Scented with cassis and ripe damson fruit, quite open on the nose. Lively on the palate too, really fruity, balanced by fine layers of dry but not drying tannins. Oaky, chewy, rich, but smooth on the finish with aromatic fruit through to the finish.”*  
- JH, JancisRobinson.com
- “A little subdued, this has firm tannic hold, clear raspberry, blackberry and cassis fruits, along with hawthorn, brambles and touches of black pepper. Young and will go the distance, though lacks a little magic. Drinking Window 2026 – 2040”*  
- Decanter
- “Branaire-Ducru has managed to produce an exceptionally balanced and refined St-Julien in a year when that was not the easiest task. Depth and complexity are clear, although it's just a little held back right now. The architecture is such that there are walls to scale and depths to plumb, but with less generosity overall. (JA)”*  
- JA, Decanter.com

## Reviews

*“Like a cushion cut ruby with its facets reflecting violet around the rim, the wine opens with a perfume of flowers and black raspberries and mocha, spice and tobacco leaf appear effortlessly. On the palate the wine is bright, fresh, silky and even creamy. The fruit shows a strong floral spirit that gracefully marries into the crème de cassis. The wine remains balanced and fresh with no touch of heat in the high degree of ripeness. This will be among the best vintages of Branaire ever produced. The wine is a blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot and 4% Cabernet Franc, reaching 14.3% alcohol with a pH of 3.6. The Grand Vin was produced from 60% of the harvest and the picking took place from September 19 to October 10.”*

- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*“The 2018 Branaire-Ducru was picked from September 19 until October 10 at 53hl/ha and is currently being aged in 60% new oak. It has retained the sophisticated bouquet that I found last year, featuring beautifully defined blackberry and cedar and hints of iris flower and rose petals. The palate is well defined with good density and backbone, something that you could argue was missing from Branaire-Ducru in the 1990s and early 2000s. It gently fans out on the finish but never wants to create too much of a commotion – that’s not its style. This indicates a property that is finding a new lease on life. Excellent. 2023 - 2045.”*

- NM, Vinous

*“The 2018 Branaire-Ducru was picked from 19 September until 10 October at 53hl/ha and it is currently being aged in 60% new oak. Now this has a really fine bouquet, classic in style but with more fruit intensity than the 2017: blackberry, bilberry, cedar and a touch of singed leather. It is very Saint-Julien. The palate is medium bodied with fine grain tannin. Notes of blackcurrant, raspberry, black pepper and cedar with fine acidity and more substance on the finish compared directly with the preceding vintage. Having visited this property for 20 years, I can safely say that this is the most impressive Branaire-Ducru that I have encountered at this stage.”*

- NM, Vinous

*“The 2018 Branaire-Ducru is fabulous. Bright, lifted and impeccably precise, the 2018 is one of the best recent Branaire’s I can remember tasting. The 2018 is distinguished by its vertical lift, striking aromatic intensity and exceptional balance. Lavender, rose petal, gravel, mint, and sweet red/purplish berry fruit are all given an extra kick of textural richness. More than anything else, I was blown away by the wine's density and precision. The 2018 is dazzling. There's not much else to say. Well, except the obvious question, which is why is Branaire not at this level every year? (AG)”*

- AG, Vinous

*“A beautiful Saint-Julien, the 2018 Château Branaire-Ducru reveals a deep purple color as well as ample, earthy cassis and blackberry fruits intermixed with sous bois, earth, lead pencil, and cedar. With that classic Saint-Julien pure fruit, sumptuous aromas, and flavors, sweet yet present tannins, and a solid spine of acidity, it's going to need 5-7 years to hit maturity yet should keep for 20-25 years or more. I don't think it's going to match the blockbuster 2009 (it's more in the pretty, elegant style of the 2016), but it's a gorgeous, elegant wine you will love to have in the cellar.”*

- Jeb Dunnuck

*“(58 Cabernet Sauvignon, 33 Merlot, 5 Petit Verdot, 4 Cabernet Franc) | 60% new oak | 14.3% alc This is a delicious and silky-smooth Branaire with fondant-y fruit notes and a deep, dark core. At no stage does the oak or alcohol interrupt the flow of fruit and the overall impression is of a wine with serious class and definition. Great balance and nice weight make this a very rewarding drop if not quite one of the stellar Châteaux in this vintage. I think it will last for a long time, too, given the quality of tannins on display.”*

- MJ, [matthewjukes.com](http://matthewjukes.com)

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