

VINTAGE NOTES

The following chart is a compilation (or cuvee if you will!) of notes from the major Bordeaux critics – [Jancis Robinson](#) (JR), [Decanter](#) (DC), [Wine Spectator](#) (WS), [Robert Parker](#) (RP), [James Suckling](#) (JS), [Wine Enthusiast](#) (WE) as well as the lesser known, but thorough, website – [Wine Cellar Insider](#) (WCI). If there is anything that was solidified while compiling all the information, is that each critic can have widely different opinions regarding each appellation and each vintage, which can result in conflicting information with regards to the quality. The best advice is to find a critic whose palate and assessments you respect and align with your own palate.

This is by no means meant to be taken as gospel, but rather hopefully a way to view & compare several opinions about each vintage in a succinct way, rather than flipping through various tabs and websites. Although there was some editing done on our part on the verbiage used by each publication, we did our best to remain true to their words. Not every vintage has notes from each critic for a few reasons – their publication didn't offer anything specific enough, or any information at all in some cases, or just a blanket assessment was offered. If there are specific appellations mentioned in each column, it's referring to the lauded overall quality of the appellation for that vintage.

One of the top 3 questions any wine professional or Sommelier is often asked 'when can I drink this (insert wine name here)? The answer is rarely an easy one but there is this basic guideline you can follow: if you like your wines to have big fruit flavours and assertive structure, drink the wine soon (and don't forget to decant it), if you prefer to drink wines that are starting to show tertiary or savoury characteristics (more earthy and leather notes, maybe some smokiness and mushroom), tuck the bottle to the back corner of your cellar or wine fridge and try to forget about it for a few years. It's always a gamble to choose the 'right time', which is part of the fun of wine! When you can, try to purchase wines in at least groups of 3 and open them at different intervals. And remember, you don't have to buy extremely expensive wines for cellaring. \$20 well made wines, especially from a great vintage, will age gracefully in proper conditions.

Also, if you require information that is more specific than what is listed, it's encouraged to visit our Bordeaux portfolio for technical sheets on individual wines that are or have been imported by LEW in the past.

Vintage	Left Bank (LB) St Estephe, Pauillac, St. Julien, Margaux, Pessac Leognan, Graves, Haut Medoc/Medoc/Listrac/Moullis	Right Bank (RB) Pomerol, Saint Emillion, Fronsac, Cotes de Bordeaux (Cotes de Blaye, Cotes du Castillon, Cotes de Franc, Bordeaux Superior)
General Vintage Overview	In comparison to the opulence, firmness, structure, and complexity shared by Bordeaux vintages from 2018 through 2020, the year 2021 proved challenging. The most heterogeneous vintage in a generation; the crop was the second smallest of the century following a severe spring frost and heavy midsummer rains. July and August were cooler than normal, while warm September weather saved the day. Modest in scale, with austere personalities, the wines will mature on the earlier side. The 2021 vintage favored light and delicate wines rather than bottles flush with full bodies and power. The dry white wines of 2021 had a much easier growing season, with the cool summer producing desirable amounts of acidity as well as excellent aromatic potential in the grapes and the harvest taking place without issue in the first two weeks of September. The regions of Sauternes and Barsac were not as fortunate as they were badly affected by both the frost and the hail, resulting in incredibly small final yields for many.	
2021	On the left bank, the north of the Medoc avoided the worst of the rainy weather with Montrose and Cos d'Estournel vying for top seed in St. Estèphe, while in Pauillac and St. Julien, the Mouton stable was on fine display as well as that of Leoville Las Cases, with Clos du Marquis earning a special mention.	There's a lot to like in St. Emillion, where once again the stars of the AOC like Chateau Canon, Chateau Cheval Blanc and Chateau Figeac reminded us how unfailingly consistent they have become.

	<p>Moving south to Margaux, it became more of a mixed bag. Chateau Margaux soundly proved that producing superb Merlot was entirely possible in 2021, while Brane-Cantenac will win hearts with their exuberance and silkiness.</p> <p>Finally, in Pessac-Leognan, Haut-Bailly was the standout.</p>	
General Vintage Overview	<p>You can expect to find either racy, elegant tannins that power forward and give a sense of energy and direction, or tannins that are a little dry and sometimes underripe, particularly if the drought led to blockages. Alcohols in 2020 are almost invariably lower compared to both 2018 and 2019. That's partly because August was dry but not unusually hot, and partly because the drought meant slow ripening, with the vines slowing down their growth cycle and so not building up huge sugar levels in the grapes. (DC)</p>	
2020	<p>Pessac-Léognan is the most successful appellation as a whole, most likely because the timing and amount of summer rains worked very well with where vineyards were in their ripening cycles. (VN)</p> <p>First Growth, Chateau Haut Brion and neighbouring La Mission Haut Brion wines are "simply amazing". This was attributed to terroir, better luck with rainfall and more flexibility for blending for the grand vins. (LPB)</p>	<p>It seems to be a merlot vintage to me, if I take into consideration the superb quality of wines made in appellations on the Right Bank such as Pomerol and St.-Emilion as well as more merlot-focused districts such as Margaux in the Medoc. I have done about 20 Tasting Interviews with wine producers and winemakers, and I am impressed with how good their merlots are. This can certainly be understood if you look at the weather reports for 2020 – most of the merlot was harvested before intermittent rain fell in Bordeaux from about mid-September and continued until the end of the harvest. (JS)</p>
General Vintage Overview	<p>Overall, 2019 was a hot vintage with all the potential successes and pitfalls that this style of year brings with it; rich fruits, concentration, high alcohols, plenty of tannins. (DC)</p> <p>The consensus of the world's wine press, and others, is that the wines of 2019 Bordeaux are of an exceptional quality. Right and Left Bank are all just really good quality wines, and some are fantastic. (JS)</p>	
2019	<p>The top wines on the Left Bank seem less lush but more structured than in 2018, so closer to 2016 in style. But, I have so far found there is less consistency as you move down the rankings than in 2016.</p> <p>There is great persistency and typicity in the Médoc. (DC)</p> <p>The vintage is best when there's a good proportion of either Cabernet Sauvignon or Cabernet Franc in the blend. These are found in bottlings from Médoc, Pessac-Léognan or Saint-Émilion. (WE)</p>	<p>The top Right Bank wines seem closer to 2018 in style. They are rich and lush in many cases, although with slightly higher acidity levels than in 2018. (DC)</p> <p>Pomerol seems to have delivered another excellent vintage, with plentiful black fruits and the chocolate edging that makes this such a desirable appellation. (DC)</p>
General Vintage Overview	<p>Bordeaux 2018 will be remembered as an exceptional year, with no shortage of outstanding wines from this extraordinary vintage. The weather too has been exceptional, with a glorious summer extending long into the September and early-October harvest, but the vintage had begun with a bizarrely challenging first half of the growing season. It has ended up, not for the first time, as a year of mixed fortunes. (JR)</p> <p>One of the most fascinating aspects of the 2018s is that, with a few exceptions, the wines do not taste at all like what the analyses look like on paper. The numbers show wines with high alcohol, off the chart's tannin and, in most cases, low acidities. It may seem hard to believe, but the wines don't taste like that all. The best 2018s are aromatically intense, deep, dark wines that beautifully marry fruit intensity with structure. Of course, there are some disappointments, but that is to be expected in a vintage that presented so many challenges. (VN)</p>	
2018	<p>Some of the left bank wines of the Médoc, Margaux, St Estèphe, Pauillac, St Julien and Pessac-Léognan appellations were extraordinarily good. Pauillac wines were found to be the most consistently excellent.</p>	<p>Much has already been said about the right bank wines already. Pomerol is very strong, and St Emilion is a little more variable. These Merlot-dominant wines have really benefited from</p>

	The whites could have been a disaster, but it was not the case – the whites are very good.	having a fresh whack of Cabernet Franc in the blends.
General Vintage Overview	Despite destructive frosts in April and some rain in September, many winemakers managed to produce outstanding wines from their vineyards, showcasing great technique and precision in their viticulture and enology. (JS) 2017 Bordeaux is a stylistic choice, you are going to like the character, which can be bright, focusing on red fruits or not. Generally, the wines are medium bodied, fresh, aromatic and lighter in alcohol than sunnier vintages. The tannins are soft. The fruits are sweet, and the majority of the wines will be enjoyable early in life. (WCI).	
2017	Dry whites are superb, and the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac are outstanding (WS). Pauillac is the most successful appellation of the vintage (WCI). The Haut Medoc along with Listrac and Moulis had a difficult time this year (WCI). 2017 Saint Estèphe can be referred to as a mixed bag. There are some very good wines from the top estates, especially those located closest to the Gironde (WCI).	Pomerol, like St Emilion, was devastated by the April frost. However, most of the finest terroirs on top of the plateau escaped with only minor cuts and bruises. The less-celebrated appellations of the Right Bank, including Lalande de Pomerol, Fronsac and the St. Emilion satellites, took quite a battering in the frost. Several estates were not able to produce any wine! (WCI)
General Vintage Overview	Despite destructive frosts in April and some rain in September, many winemakers managed to produce outstanding wines from their vineyards, showcasing great technique and precision in their viticulture and enology (JS). Generalities are not of much use. But with 2017 Bordeaux, it is not a vintage of specific appellations. Instead, it is of localized terroirs. The gravel slopes in the northern Medoc, especially in Pauillac produced extremely strong wines. The Left Bank is generally more consistent than the Right Bank. The best wines follow an almost straight line from north to south. The further south you travel, as you will see, the more difficult and less homogenous it becomes (WCI).	
2016	Upper Medoc superb with Margaux and Pessac Leognan excellent (WS). Excellent value in Graves.	So far it looks like the RB will be slightly favoured over LB, with St Emilion pulling ahead of Pomerol. Clay rich soils were able to handle the heat.
General Vintage Overview	Start of the season was wet and cool, but by mid June, it became hot with drought conditions for mid summer. Late season brought rain at the right times for harvest. Solid vintage with decent quantity and aromatics (JR)	
2015	Margaux, St Julien, Pessac Leognan were the standouts. (WS)	Slightly favoured over the Left Bank with a lot of value in Castillon and Fronsac. (WS)
General Vintage Overview	Hot & dry summer, however August had record rainfall which saved the vintage. September & October was optimal weather & temperatures (cool nights) which likely saved the vintage. Extraordinary vintage (RP) perfect tannin structure and optimum fruit ripeness (DC)	
2014	Upper Medoc with the edge going to Cab Sauv & Franc, as well as Petit Verdot. Margaux & Pessac Leognan less so. Hold (WS)	Cab Franc managed the rain better. Drink or hold (WS)
General Vintage Overview	The first 2/3 of the season was cool and wet but it finally quit raining in August and warmed up slightly. Late & long fall helped ripening substantially. Good vintage after a string of weak vintages. Outstanding. Hold. Sauternes accessible early. (RP)	
2013	Low quantity. Reds will be lighter in body with fresh fruit. Early drinkers. Pessac Leognan whites (WCI) St Estephe (DC) St Estephe, St Julien (JR) Sauternes (RP)	Low quantity. More consistent in quality over LB. Soft and approachable wines. Early drinkers. Pomerol (JR) Pomerol & St Estephe (RP)
General Vintage Overview	Difficult vintage that resulted in low quantities. Many producers had to perform green harvesting at the beginning to save young fruit from mold & disease. Vineyard management was crucial to any degree of success.	
2012	Drink. Margaux & Pessac Leognan slightly favoured. (WS)	Pomerol is consistent. Hold. (WS) RB Overall better quality (DC)
General Vintage Overview	Difficult vintage with low yields, which are most often described as a 'winemakers/vineyard manager's vintage'. Started off very cold and wet, but ended the season being hot and dry. Both LB and RB=drink now (RP)	

2011	Small berries=small yields. Fresh wines overall. (WS)Dry whites (Pessac Leognan) & Sauternes/Barsac retained quality. (DC)	Pomerol fresh and ripe. St Emilion's Cab Franc excelled and will age well. (WS)Cab Franc generally more successful. (DC)Pomerol & old vines produced quality fruit.
General Vintage Overview	Difficult vintage after a rock star one. Early & dry spring that became the opposite in July. Overall, the wines are fresher, brighter acidity and better suited to early drinking.	
2010	More structure driven than '09, for longer lived wines. (WS)St Julien, Pauillac, St Estephe, Graves, Pessac Leognan – all extraordinary. (RP)	Powerful wines with great values coming from Fronsac & Castillon. (WS)
General Vintage Overview	It was a slow, damp start to the season, but by mid June, everything fell into place – sun, temperatures, and rain – and stayed there until harvest. JR considers this vintage a more classical style than '09. Overall, these wines will cellar for decades.	
2009	Medoc & Pessac Leognan over the others, but overall great. (WS) Dramatic & voluptuous. (JR)	Drink or hold. Loads of fruit, especially Pomerol. (WS)Luscious wines with higher ABV. (DC)
General Vintage Overview	An average spring with some hail in Pessac Leognan and parts of the RB. It was a warm, sunny vintage with minor rainfall, which was a nice long harvest. Fruit is fresher and riper as it was a generally warmer year. Overall, wines are easily accessible and drinking well. (RP)	
2008	Pauillac & St Julien (DC)LB mostly inconsistent. (RP)	Pomerol in general. Wines from RB more muscular. (RP)Wines fleshier and more approachable young. (WS)
General Vintage Overview	Small yields due to uneven and late flowering in early spring. Season was cooler than normal until harvest, which was extended. This vintage is an example that careful research of producers within each appellation will garner some winners.	
2007	St Julien & Margaux good/homogenous. Pauillac & St Estephe varied quality. (Know your producers) (DC)	St Emilion – stick to the producers with vineyards on the plateaus & slopes. (DC)
General Vintage Overview	Moderate to poor season with a lot of cool, wet weather. Luckily a long fall for harvest. Most of the wines ended up being soft, pleasant, and early drinkers. Most dry whites – regardless of appellation – will show well.	
2006	Pauillac is the most consistent & Pessac Leognan's dry whites outstanding. (WC)St Julien quintessential; Medoc the unsung hero; Haut Medoc is reliable. (DC)Big & Tannic wines – Drink or Hold. (WS)Pauillac (JR)	Choose Pomerol over St Emilion. (DC)Top producers your best bet – Drink or Hold. (WS) Pomerol (JR)
General Vintage Overview	Cold, wet winter, but an early spring led to a hot June & July. The fall harvest was cool and wet. If the grapes made it to the winery before the rains (such as Pomerol), the wines were outstanding. Most of the top producers will have big, long lived, tannic wines.	
2005	Medoc, Pauillac and Pessac Leognan	Both Pomerol and St Emilion equally lauded
General Vintage Overview	One of the legendary vintages. Hot, dry growing season with moisture happening at all the right times. Wines show depth, finesse, and structure. (WS)Consensus from these critics is to HOLD these bottles (for decades). Congratulations if you were born or had a child in 2005!	
2004	Overlooked – drink or hold. (WS)St. Julien/Pauillac/St Estephe – drink or hold. (RP)St. Julien/Pauillac (DC)	Cabernet Franc dominant blends the winners – Drink or hold. (WS)Drink (RP)
General Vintage Overview	One of the largest yields due to even flowering. Many wineries had to perform significant thinning in early spring. Mid summer was cool and/or wet, but, once again, late summer/early fall saved the vintage.	
2003	Big tannins – drink/hold (WS)St. Julien/Pauillac/St Estephe – drink (RP)	Big, ripe, and slightly jammy. Drink (WS)Pomerol – drink (RP)
General Vintage Overview	Inconsistent vintage, but northern Medoc has pulled ahead. There are some great wines to be had, but research needed.	
2002	Any appellation – Drink (RP)Stick to top producers – Drink (WS)	Pomerol – Drink (RP)Fruity with balance – Drink (WS)

General Vintage Overview	Pretty classic vintage.	
2001	Pauillac/St Estephe/Sauternes. 'Sleeper vintage' (meaning it's aged well with some good surprises) (WS)	Both Pomerol and St Emilion. Drink (JR) (RP) (WS)
General Vintage Overview	Large crops with varied quality (JR)	
2000	Medoc/Graves favoured but Margaux/St Julien/Pauillac also strong. (DC)Drink or Hold. Wines starting to hit their stride. (WS)Outstanding vintage. Hold a bit longer. Sauternes exceptional. (RP)Drink petit chateaux now (2nd labels from the major producers. Best wines should last into 2 or 3 decades. (JR)	Drink or Hold. Wines are starting to open up. (WS)Outstanding vintage. Hold a bit longer. (RP) Drink petit chateaux now. Best wines should last into 2 or 3 decades. (JR)
General Vintage Overview	One of the banner vintages. Although the weather was up and down, it wasn't on the extreme side. Rain was well timed before harvest.	
1998	Graves has some winners (RP). Drink now (JR) (DC) (RP) (WS)	Both Pomerol & St Emilion are outstanding. Muscular wines. Drink or hold (WS)
General Vintage Overview	Beginning Spring to mid summer pretty moody but the weather turned around mid summer to harvest. Pomerol had a severe hailstorm, which resulted in a green harvest, which made way for some concentrated wines.	
1996	Drink now. Medoc (JR). St Julien/Pauillac/St Estephe could hold on to a bit longer (RP)	Hardly anyone mentions RB. Drink now.
General Vintage Overview	A great vintage for Cabernet Sauvignon, weather effect was nice, firm tannins.	
1995	Drink or hold (WS)Pauillac (JR)	Drink or hold (WS). Pomerol (JR)
General Vintage Overview	Moderate winter with a mild spring. Summer was dry and hot with some mid September rain.	
1990	Drink Haut Medoc, Pauillac, Pessac Leognan, St Estephe, St Julien	Drink St Emilion
General Vintage Overview	One of the top vintages of the 20th century. Weather throughout the growing season was hot and sunny, with rains at the right time in September. Wines overall are ripe and opulent.	

Sources

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