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Promotional feature

Assessing Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur

Château Moulin de Lagut, AOC Bordeaux Rouge 2016 87

£10 Contact Planete Bordeaux

A pleasing aromatic profile of red fruit.
Tasty and has tannic character and a short
to medium finish marked by some iodine
like freshness. **Alc** 13%

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Assessing Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur

Good to excellent 2016 reds
and very good dry whites from 2017

In tasting nearly 300 wines in April this year at Planète Bordeaux in France to prepare this article, it was striking to see how much less wine was made in 2017, a vintage sadly known for a late April frost of epic proportions.

Some 3.2 million hectolitres of wine were made in 2016 – the highest amount over the last five years – but only 2.15 million hectolitres were produced last year: the frost damaged many vines used to make Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur wines. Much loss was assessed in Entre-Deux-Mers and inland areas near Saint-Émilion and its satellites. Cooler white grape vine terroirs were struck hard.

Despite lower yields, the better dry whites of 2017 combine freshness and density, because they benefited from a dry, but not too hot summer, as well as cool evenings. Many observers note that the best dry whites were made from grapes picked before a short heat wave struck at the end of August, to preserve freshness. In any case, many 2017 dry white Bordeaux AOC wines merit your attention for offering excellent price/quality ratios.

The 2016 vintage is known justifiably as a great year for reds. Savvy consumers can find Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur that punch above their appellation weight. The long dry summer concentrated grape juices and thickened skins for structure-lending tannin. Early September rain brought relief and colder clay soils – common to these levels of vines – maintained freshness. Cabernet Sauvignons enjoyed a longer hang time, achieving ripeness from a lengthy Indian summer.

An increasing number of properties from these appellations are converting to organic viticulture. Several wines in that process displayed particular purity.

Over half of all Bordeaux wine comes in bottles from the three appellations of

Bordeaux AOC, Bordeaux Supérieur AOC and Bordeaux Blanc AOC, amounting to over 260 million bottles of wine in 2017, according to Planète Bordeaux, an association that includes 5,400 member châteaux from these appellations, and which organized the tasting for Decanter.

Not all of the wines can be acquired for, say, £5 per bottle, but many can. Other producers have achieved recognition already in key markets, so price tags may reach as high as £20, which means that while you can find wines ideal for summer barbecues, excellent wines for discerning gastronomic palates can be found, too.

Many wines selected for this article are available in the UK, but others have not been discovered by UK buyers. I strongly urge you to contact Planète Bordeaux (at +33 5 57 97 19 20) to try some of the higher scoring wines unavailable directly in the UK, and have them delivered from France to your door.

All wines tasted are in bottle and ready to purchase, including the white 2017s. Decanter has published the notes of wines I scored highest.

Wines to try Whites 2017

**Château de La Rivière,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 91**
www.chateau-de-lariviere.com
Made from hand-picked grapes, but only about 20% of the normal yield this vintage, because frost struck plots situated down the slope where the soil is mostly made from gravel and sand. It is a pity because it is one of the very best whites assessed for this article. About 90% of the production ages four months in stainless steel tanks on their lees and the other 10% ages in barrels with regular lees stirring to add more body to the wine. Robust flavors and

fine length. This wine has gastronomic character. Opulent yet also vibrant. Various fruit profiles, but mainly white stone fruit and some oak-derived spice, as perfect seasoning. **Delicious! Alcohol** 13.5%

**Château Argadens,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
£10-£13 The Wine Society, Dwyer's, Tanners
One of the better wines of this tasting – and the 45 hectare clay-limestone soil vineyard is well situated on one of the highest hills of the rolling Entre-Deux-Mers wine region. During aging in barrel, weekly lees stirring adds richness and complexity and new oak is well integrated. The aromatics are at first a bit reductive, but the palate exudes lively white stone fruit; this has character and medium body. **Very fine! Alc** 12.5%

**Château Briot,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
£10-12 www.duouart.com
Very Sauvignon Blanc but smooth and not annoyingly yeasty. Lime and grapefruit, fine energy and depth combine to make this a most lip-smackingly delicious white Bordeaux! **Alc** 12.5%

**Château de la Vieille Tour Blanc,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
£10 Contact Planète Bordeaux
What a lively palate! It is a once floral and fruit driven on the nose. The palate has more citrus but also white stone fruit. Excellent balance and elegance, and do not hesitate to order online. A good deal for an overperforming white wine. **Alc** 12.5%

**Château Vermont Prestige,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
www.chateau-vermont.fr
Someone in the UK should get this wine in their shop: one of the top whites tasted for



this article because it resembles biting into a fresh and juicy white peach along with some lively lime and lemon aspects. **Just lovely! Alc** 13%

**Château Virsouaun,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
£6.99 **Avarys**
Made from vines from a rather smaller (for Bordeaux) seven hectare vineyard, with soils of chalky clay facing south and southwest, this wine exudes lovely floral aspects. It is vibrant yet also soft and smooth in texture. Medium finish. One of the better wines tasted and a very good price point, so seek this one out! **Alc** 12%

**Domaine du Seuil,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
£12 **Ries Wines Direct**
Approximately 70% of the crop is fermented in temperature controlled stainless steel casks and 30% in new oak barrels. The nose is rather sophisticated. A creamy texture and a certain class here on the palate. Not just crisp and bright, but also textured. In the gastronomic category! Some of the whites I tasted "tried to hard" to arrive at this category, with too evident oak-derived tannins making the fruit. Not so here. Nice job, well worth your money! **Alc** 13%

**Expert De Malromé,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**
www.malrome.com
Bottles from this estate often feature labels from art by the famous 19th century

French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, whose mother had once owned the château. The artist often visited the estate, and indeed died there in 1901. The wine in the bottle is well worth drinking, too. This blend of the three white grapes of Bordeaux counts among the better whites tasted for this article, with a deeper nose than most. Flavors of juicy peach, quince and pear pleasantly expressed in a medium-bodied palate leading to a fine fresh finish. **Alc** 12.3%

**Château du Clousset,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 89**
www.vignobles-leclou.com
Lovely floral aromatics. Fine, nuanced palate with both lemon and a bit of pineapple. It

has zip but also agreeable softness. This could be a stand alone starter for a garden party. The finish is of medium length. **Worth seeking out online! Alc** 12%

**Château La Verrière,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 89**
£12 **Jaquet**
A well-deserved winner in various French wine competitions last year, this white undergoes a short cold maceration before fermentation to add more body and fruit. I love the finesse and refined nature to this wine, which has soft expressions of white stone fruit along with citrus. A good choice for white with grilled fish this summer. **Alc** 13%

**Château Portingues, Cuvée Prielet,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 89**
£10-15 **Red Restaurant**
Floral and then a zip-driven mid-palate. A bit tart on the finish, but I like the concentration on the mid-palate. This is a fairly serious white, that could stand up to fennel salads for example. Fine mid-palate zip, juicy white peach as well as lemon confit! **Alc** 11.5%

**Michel Lynch,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 89**
www.jmcases.com
Juicy and measured in scope. White peach and citrus. Very well made white. This is smooth and even a bit creamy as compared to many others. It has fine palate texture yet also exudes energy. **Alc** 12.5%

