

Photograph: Luc Plissonneau



White, Rosé, Clairet de Bordeaux

Report by Jane Anson, *Decanter's* Bordeaux correspondent

While 2012 was a difficult year for some of the red wines, white Bordeaux has been a success, enjoying beautiful weather during picking, after an extremely hot and dry August and rainfall early in the season to ensure they didn't suffer too much water stress. All of this makes it the perfect time to get to know this invigorating style of Bordeaux wine, made most typically from a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon grapes. Alongside the whites, the rosés and clairets are also worth seeking out in their own right as perfect summer thirst quenchers.

Blancs

Château Maison Noble, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

17/20pts (90/100pts)

Highly recommended

www.chateau-maisonnoble.com

Excellent wine from the Moreau family (originally coopers from Cognac). Today run by Jean-Bertrand Marque, who joined just two years ago from his previous career in accountancy. He's certainly showing a flair for it – this 100% sauvignon blanc has a touch of reduction on the nose that brings a whoosh of minerality and gooseberry. Intense and succulent, with some oak complexity that comes from four months in new barrels.

Château Minvielle, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended

vignobles.gadras@wanadoo.fr

Yellow gold colour, good persistency, clean citrus and peach flavours, ripe fruit evident but still fresh. 70% sauvignon blanc, 30% semillon. Cool-temperature vinification between 14 and

16°C to keep fresh fruit aromas. Ageing on the fine lees, with regular lees stirring.

Vinum Natura, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended

www.boissonneau.fr/ (or can buy online from

<http://vignobles-boissonneau.delicenet.com/> €7)

Pale oyster shell in colour, this has good clean flavours, fruity and unforced. Made from a blend of 60% sauvignon blanc, 40% semillon, the estate has been certified organic since 2011 – and they now use recyclable packaging materials wherever possible. A smart choice, from the owners of Château de la Vielle Tour.

Château Briot, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended.

www.ducourt.com

Crisp, fresh, green-zesty style of sauvignon. Still manages a round mouth-feel, this is very successful, good example of the style (it's a classic Bordeaux blend of 85% sauvignon blanc, 15% semillon, aged in stainless steel with lees stirring).

Château de Bonhoste, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended

£8.99, Provenance Wines, Edinburgh

www.provenancewines.com/

Clean and expressive on the nose. Good pale colour, translucent with green hints. Precise green fruit flavours with some mouth-watering freshness. Enjoyable wine, a blend of semillon, sauvignon and muscadelle, from Vignobles Fournier.

Château Bel Air Perponcher Reserve, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended

£8.50, The Wine Society, www.thewinesociety.com

www.despagne.fr

Pale yellow-green colour, and crisp nose, touch

of reduction that clears quickly. On palate also, a zingy crisp green freshness. Low-temperature winemaking at 18° maximum, then ageing for three months on fine lees, with twice weekly lees stirring (which encourages this reductive aspect). 55% sauvignon blanc 35% semillon 10% muscadelle, from the Despagne family.

Domaine du Clouset, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended

www.vignobles-siozard.com

Yellow gold green hints, good crisp sauvignon nose, fairly expressive, good depth of flavour, nice liling finish. 60% sauvignon, blanc and gris, 40% semillon, treated to a five-day cold soak before cool temperature fermentation.

Château Pierrail, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended

www.chateau-pierrail.fr

A blend of sauvignon blanc and sauvignon gris, with green pepper-gooseberry flavours dominant. Good definition on the palate, with no bitterness on the finish. Good uplift.

Sirius, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.sichel.fr

From merchant house Maison Sichel, this is an even blend of semillon and sauvignon, with a sweet oak nose. Overall, the effect is to make this a gourmet-style white wine.

Château La Freynelle, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.vbarthe.com

Bright fresh pale yellow colour with a zingy, freshly-squeezed grapefruit and citrus nose. A touch of sweet sherberr on the palate brings some roundness. Generally good aromatics. Blend of sauvignon, semillon and muscadelle.

Ginestet, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

£7.35, www.allaboutwine.co.uk (currently the 2011)

Slight reduction on the first nose, with good lean fruit flavours coming through. Very clean, good typicity – a 'safe pair of hands' choice.

Château Toutigeac, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.toutigeac.com

Lovely clean pale yellow here. Some clean aromatics, more hay than cut grass. A subdued sauvignon (it is blended with 40% semillon and 10% muscadelle), but one with clean lines, stretching its limbs. Aged on fine lees, with very light filtration.

Château Lamothe Vincent 'Intense', AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.lamothe-vincent.com

Well-defined, sauvignon blanc nose, with some clear varietal markers. Touch of passion fruit, some green pepper. A citrus tang to this 100% sauvignon blanc fruit. Mouth-watering finish.

Château Lauduc Classic, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended

£7.50, Oddbins.com (have the red)

Bright and fresh-looking, green tints. Not quite as vibrant on the palate, but this is attractive, rich lemon and pear fruits, good fleshiness. 75% sauvignon, 25% semillon. The winemaking sees a 12 hour cold soak, and cold temperature fermentation at 15-16°C.

Château Timberlay, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended

www.robertgiraud.com/

A near-equal blend of sauvignon and semillon, with crisp flavours, well balanced with clear citrus and lemon grass flavours. A Prestige Blanc from the same winemakers, aged in new barrels, is a richer alternative.

Château du Cros, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16 (86) Recommended

www.chateauducros.com

100% sauvignon blanc, with lees stirring after fermentation. Good aromatics on the nose, some citrus but also straw. On the palate, clear lemon zest citrus, touch green in finish, and dips a little on the final furlong.

Château Recougne, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16 (86) Recommended

www.chateau-recougne.fr

Pale yellow, not hugely expressive on the nose but things pick up on the palate. Fruit clearly picked at good ripeness, although perhaps a touch too low in acidity – we have toasted almonds and ripe apricots, not cut grass and gooseberries, even though it's 100% sauvignon blanc. Gourmet in style.

Château La France, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2012

16 (86) Recommended

www.chateaulafrance.com

You might have heard of about this château being featured in Chinese film *Jiang Ai* in 2011, or perhaps its huge steel cockerel sculpture by



La Noctambule de Château Saincrit, AOC Bordeaux Rosé 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.chateau-saincrit.com

Savoury rather than overly fruity in style, with very attractive floral aromas setting off the raspberry overtones. 100% merlot.

Château Bellevue, AOC Bordeaux Rosé 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.famille-damecourt.com

Charmingly fresh pink, not highly aromatic, but fruity and fresh on the palate, with some floral overtones of violet and redcurrant leaf 80% cabernet franc, 20% merlot.

Plaisir de Cablang, AOC Bordeaux Rosé 2012

16.25 (87) Recommended

www.chateaucablanc.com

A dark rich red colour, again could be clairet. Sour cherry aroma, a good savoury example of a rosé. 100% cabernet sauvignon.

Clarendelle, AOC Bordeaux Rosé 2012

16 (86) Recommended

www.clarendillonwines.com (or www.averys.com for £10.00 – but 2007 vintage in stock)

This is a fairly deep red colour, heading towards clairet. On the palate, some crisp red cherry fruits, pleasingly fresh. Not complex, but very enjoyable. From Domaines Clarence Dillon. 40% merlot, 60% cabernet sauvignon.

Clairets

Château Penin, AOC Bordeaux Clairet 2012

17 (90) Highly recommended

www.chateupenin.com

Really stands out among the clairets for its fresh, clean flavours, and also its character. This is a wine that would work great with food, or on its own. 100% merlot, with only around 25% of the juice undergoing the secondary malolactic fermentation (which lowers acidity in red wines).

Château Lestrille Capmartin, AOC Bordeaux Clairet 2012

16.75 (89) Recommended

www.lestrille.com (can buy online)

Winemaker Estelle Roumage deftly manages the tannins in this clairet, to produce a wine with enough structure for food, but still the firm ripe raspberry and red cherry fruits that you want from a summer easy-drinker. 100% merlot grapes.

L'Esprit Couvent Clairet, AOC Bordeaux Clairet 2012

16 (86) Recommended.

www.lespritscouvent.com

Dramatic, blood-orange colour. On the palate also you can feel the mood change from the rosés, this has more structure, good acidity, good persistency, fruity rather than floral. 70% merlot, 30% cabernet sauvignon.

Rosés

Château de Piote, AOC Bordeaux Rosé 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.chateudepiote.com

Fresh salmon colour, smells gently floral, rose petals and honeysuckle. Perhaps a touch faded on the palate, but very pretty.

Château Grand Jean, AOC Bordeaux Rosé 2012

16.5 (88) Recommended

www.vignobles-dulon.com

Sweet elderflower and redcurrant, tasty and fairly gourmet in style. 80% cabernet sauvignon 20% cabernet franc, with 24 hours skin contact to extract the colour without any bitter phenolics from the grape skins.

**BORDEAUX
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