



The World's Richest Vintage: Bordeaux to Buy

Hundreds of Bordeaux estates made exciting wines in 2005. Here are 50 that deserve special attention

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In Bordeaux's 2005 vintage, you can count on finding wines of very good to outstanding quality in every category from simple, wine merchants' blends to prestigious château bottlings. This is largely due to exceptional weather during the growing season in France's premier wine region; the grapes picked in September 2005 were of fantastic quality and produced excellent wines.

However, 2005 also benefited from technical resources and human effort. Like many wine regions in the world, Bordeaux is in a great period of its history. Resources and know-how are at an all-time high, and this enabled many estates to make some of their best wines ever in 2005.

"With what we know and what we have available to us today in winemaking, there is really no excuse for not make great wine in 2005," says consulting enologist Stéphane Derenoncourt, who oversees vineyards and winemaking for small estates as well as big names. "It's a great moment in Bordeaux."

Below is a list of wines that I believe are worth knowing about in the 2005 vintage but that for various reasons may not be on your radar screen. Some are from well-known estates that may have been underperforming until recently. Others are from new producers or lesser-known properties in obscure appellations. Though their prices vary, all deserve your attention if you love great Bordeaux.

DOMAINE DE L'A CÔTES DE CASTILLON 2005

92 points | \$39 | **CASES MADE** 1,665

BLEND 60% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon

Stéphane Derenoncourt, one of Bordeaux's leading consultant enologists, describes Domaine de l'A, the nearly 15-acre estate he purchased in 1999, as a "laboratory of experience." Here he can test out techniques, including biodynamic practices, he may need to employ for top-shelf clients such as Canon-La Gaffelière, Clos Fourtet, Larcis Ducasse and Prieuré-Lichine. Derenoncourt owns the small property with a large group of friends and shareholders. The 2005 vintage of the estate's red saw the introduction of fruit from newly acquired vineyards with high levels of clay in the soil. It has given a softer texture and a more exuberant character to the wine.

CHÂTEAU D'AIGUILHE CÔTES DE CASTILLON 2005

92 points | \$30 | **CASES MADE** 8,330

BLEND 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc

Stephan von Neipperg, owner of a number of top châteaux in St.-Emilion, including Canon-La Gaffelière and La Mondotte, bought this estate in 1999 and has brought to it the same dedication to producing excellent reds that he has shown at his big-name properties. He spared no expense in renovating the château and its vineyards, making it the flag-bearer for this satellite appellation on

Bordeaux's Right Bank. Consulting enologist Stéphane Derenoncourt helps von Neipperg produce the dense, luscious wines that are the estate's hallmark; they are consistently among the best wines for the money in Bordeaux.

CHÂTEAU BELGRAVE HAUT-MÉDOC 2005

91 points | \$28 | **CASES MADE** 16,665

BLEND 53% Merlot, 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Petit Verdot

Wines from this 148-acre estate have shown consistent quality for the past decade, and everything was perfectly positioned for a great vintage in 2005. Fifteen years of ongoing improvements in the vineyards and a brand new cellar, finished in 2004, were factors that helped this château produce its finest wine ever—consulting enologist Michel Rolland also helped. Belgrave is one of a number of estates owned by Dourthe, also a négociant company.

CHÂTEAU BOUSCAUT PESSAC-LÉOGNAN 2005

92 points | \$30 | **CASES MADE** 6,580

BLEND 58% Merlot, 37% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec

Sophie Lurton-Cogombles and her winemaking husband, Laurent, live on this property just outside the city of Bordeaux in Pessac-Léognan, and they are dedicated wine producers. Sophie received the estate in 1992 from her father, Lucien Lurton (her siblings in this important wine family received other top châteaux, including Climens in Barsac and Brane-Cantenac in Margaux). The 2005 is the best Bouscaut red since 1989, offering a little more refinement and depth of fruit than prior vintages.

CHÂTEAU BROWN PESSAC-LÉOGNAN 2005

Red: 90 points | \$26 | **CASES MADE** 5,550

BLEND 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot

White: 92 points | \$30 | **CASES MADE** 1,800

BLEND 65% Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Sémillon

The Mau family, wine traders in Bordeaux for more than a century, bought this nearly 70 acre estate (58 acres red varieties; 4.5 white) in December 2004 and installed fifth-generation Jean-Christophe Mau as director. Mau's main objective is to close the gap between the quality of the estate's hitherto underachieving red wine and its superior white. He called on consulting enologist Stéphane Derenoncourt to take over supervision of the red wine, while keeping Philippe Dulong on board to handle the white. With the 2005 vintage, both the red and the white are outstanding.

CHÂTEAU CANON ST.-EMILION 2005

94 points | \$100 | **Cases made** 4,165

BLEND 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc

This is an estate with a pedigree for great wines. Bottles from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s are still sublime, but in later vintages Canon had been slightly underachieving. John Kolasa, who manages both Château Canon and Château Rauzan-Ségla in Margaux (both under the ownership of the Wertheimer family who own the fashion house of Chanel), has overseen substantial investment in the vineyards and cellars of both estates in recent years, and it's starting to pay off. Only about two-thirds of Canon's vineyards are used at the moment, due to replanting that will end in 2010, but what was harvested and selected for Canon's 2005 grand vin produced one of the estates' richest and most structured reds in a long time.

CHÂTEAU CANTENAC ST.-EMILION CLIMAT 2005

93 points | \$55 | **CASES MADE** 200

BLEND 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon

The Roskam family is currently celebrating 70 years of ownership of this 32-acre estate, which is located on the western border of the St.-Emilion appellation. Winemaker Frans Roskam, 29, introduced

the estate's flagship bottling, Climat, in 2002. The wine is made from a selection of grapes from the best vineyard plots on the estate and aged for 20 months in oak barrels, about 60 percent of which are new.

CHÂTEAU CARIGNAN PREMIÈRES CÔTES DE BORDEAUX PRIMA 2005

90 points | \$37 | **CASES MADE** 6,665

BLEND 95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc

Englishman Andy Lench, president and CEO of U.S. wine importer Bordeaux Wine Locators, Inc., fulfilled his dream of acquiring a Bordeaux estate in 2007 with his purchase of the 370-acre Carignan estate just across the river from the city of Bordeaux. It includes about 155 acres of vineyards. Lench is fortunate in that that his purchase also included a cellar full of one of the finest vintages ever for the estate. Carignan's flagship wine, Prima, a selection from nearly 30 acres of vineyards containing 40-year-old vines, is a generous and fruity young red.

CHÂTEAU CERTAN DE MAY POMEROL 2005

94 points | \$135 | **CASES MADE** 2,000

BLEND 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon

This small estate is located a stone's throw from Pétrus, Lafleur and a number of other top Pomerol estates. It made some fabulous wines in the 1980s, but then suffered a decline in quality until recently. Renovations in the cellar and the help of consulting enologist Michel Rolland appear to be putting Certan de May back in its rightful position with the top names of the appellation. The 2005 shows a wonderfully rich and velvety texture, with great length.

CLOS FOURTET ST.-EMILION 2005

95 points | \$93 | **CASES MADE** 4,580

BLEND 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon

Philippe Cuvelier's first move, after purchasing Clos Fourtet in 2001, was to appoint Stéphane Derenoncourt as consultant, and together they have worked to restore the quality of the estate's wine to the level that reflects its Premier Grand Cru Classé (B) status. The estate's 44 acres of vineyards are located on the famous limestone plateau and extend almost into downtown St.-Emilion. 2005 was the first year that the blend of the first wine contained 20 percent Cabernet (Franc and Sauvignon) rather than the usual 15 percent, adding a tad more body and structure to the wine.

CHÂTEAU COUHINS-LURTON PESSAC-LÉOGNAN 2005

White: 91 points | \$40 | **CASES MADE** 1,750

BLEND 100% Sauvignon Blanc

Red: 91 points | \$38 | **CASES MADE** 1,500

BLEND 77% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon

One of the Bordeaux estates in the André Lurton stable, Couhins-Lurton has been producing an excellent pure Sauvignon Blanc (now under screw cap) for years. It comes from a nearly 15-acre vineyard with gravel over limestone soils that has always been planted to this variety. The first vintage was 1967, when Lurton was leasing the site prior to purchasing it in 1970. He has gradually been extending the vineyard to produce a red, which first came out in 2002. The 2005 vintage produced excellent wines, both white and red.

DOMAINE DE COURTEILLAC BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR 2005

90 points | \$16 | **CASES MADE** 10,830

BLEND 70% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc

Owner and wine merchant Dominique Meneret, acting on the advice of consultant Michel Rolland, decided not to make a second wine in 2005, as the quality of the entire crop of grapes from the 66.7 acres of vineyards on the estate was suitable for use in the grand vin. Meneret bought the estate, located

in the village of Ruch, on the highest plateau of Entre-Deux-Mers, in 1998, from Stephan d'Asseo, with whom he is a partner at L'Aventure, a well-regarded winery in Paso Robles, Calif.

DIVINUS DE CHÂTEAU BONNET BORDEAUX 2005

90 points | \$37 | **CASES MADE** 2,500

BLEND 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon

André Lurton inherited Château Bonnet, which then contained 75 acres of old white vines, in 1953, and produced the first vintage of its flagship red, Divinus, in 2000. The wine is made from nearly 10 acres of selected vineyard parcels on the estate in Entre-Deux-Mers and is aged in French oak barrels for 18 months. Lurton owns a number of other estates in Bordeaux, including Château La Louvière in Pessac-Léognan.

CHÂTEAU DUHART-MILON ROTHSCHILD PAUILLAC 2005

93 points | \$54 | **CASES MADE** 20,000

BLEND 71% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot

This is the best wine ever from this estate, which shares the same owners as Lafite, L'Evangile and Rieussec in Bordeaux—the French branch of the Rothschild family. The wine is under the management of Charles Chevallier, who is one of the best winemakers in the region and who also makes Lafite. The vineyards have been replanted and now are coming into their own, and the winery was renovated not too long ago. The 2005 is opulent, structured and beautiful.

CHÂTEAU DURFORT-VIVENS MARGAUX 2005

92 points | \$39 | **CASES MADE** 8,330

BLEND 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc

This is a family-run estate that makes truly handmade wine. It's more like a property in Burgundy than one in Bordeaux, particularly in the sometimes-corporate world of the Médoc. It's all due to the hard work of Gonzague Lurton, husband of Haut-Bages-Libéral's Claire Villars. He traditionally makes more elegant wines with a refinement and character true to the *terroir* of his appellation, instead of the darker, more concentrated reds that have become the fashion in Margaux. But 2005 has an opulence that is rarely seen in wines from this estate.

CHÂTEAU FAUGÈRES ST.-EMILION 2005

93 points | \$41 | **CASES MADE** 4,330

BLEND 85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon

This estate, which sits in the far eastern corner of the St.-Emilion appellation, actually extending over the border into Côtes de Castillon, made its best wine ever in '05. Silvio Denz, a Swiss luxury-goods entrepreneur and wine collector, bought the 197.5-acre estate in 2005 and planned from the outset to take Faugères as far up the quality ladder as possible. Enologist Michel Rolland consults for the estate, and Denz recently entrusted world-famous architect Mario Botta with the design and realization of a new winery on the property. Look also for the estate's small-production super cru, Péby-Faugères (2005: 94 points).

LA FLEUR DE BOÛARD LALANDE-DE-POMEROL 2005

90 points | \$39 | **CASES MADE** 6,415

BLEND 85% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon

Ever since this estate first appeared, in 1998, it has made a good-value red with lots of immediate appeal. It comes from the hand of Hubert de Boüard de Laforest, who manages Château Angéus on behalf of his family. At the 49-acre La Fleur estate, a personal purchase in 1998, he enjoys more freedom of expression in his winemaking and produces wines that are rich in fruit and lush in texture. He also makes a special cuvée called Le Plus—even denser and thicker. It's sold exclusively in the United States.

CHÂTEAU FLEUR-CARDINALE ST.-EMILION 2005

93 points | \$53 | **CASES MADE** 5,700

BLEND 75% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon

In 2005, a number of lesser-ranked St.-Emilion estates bettered more famous names, and this is an excellent example. Owners Dominique and Florence Decoster have been meticulous in fine-tuning their vineyards and winery since they began living at the property in 2001. They cultivate and pick parcel by parcel in their vineyards, and each vineyard plot is vinified separately to ensure the best selection for the final wines. They say their goal is to make a great wine at an affordable price, and they have achieved that in 2005.

LES FORTS DE LATOUR PAUILLAC 2005

94 points | \$150 | **CASES MADE** 13,330

BLEND 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot

Frédéric Engerer, president of first-growth Château Latour, suggests that the success of Latour's second wine in 2005 may be due to the inclusion, for the first time, of grapes from recently acquired vineyard plots in the north and south of the appellation. These added complexity to the traditional nucleus of the wine, sourced from a vineyard of just more than 27 acres, planted in 1964 and located between the vineyards of nearby Châteaux Pichon-Lalande and Batailley. Engerer goes on to point out that just as a second wine is important for the selection process of grapes for the grand vin, so too is Latour's third wine, Pauillac de Latour (2005: 90 points), important for the selection of Les Forts.

CHÂTEAU LE GAY POMEROL 2005

93 points | \$144 | **CASES MADE** 1,575

BLEND 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

The excellent 2005 vintage was the happy culmination of three years' work by owner Catherine Péré-Vergé and her team, identifying and logging the various soil compositions on this 26-acre estate. This research, together with the perfect weather conditions in 2005 and the guidance of enologist Michel Rolland, allowed the estate, located just down the road from Lafleur and Pétrus, to produce the best Le Gay in years. Le Gay appears to be back on track to producing the world-class wines it did in the 1980s and earlier.

CHÂTEAU GAZIN POMEROL 2005

94 points | \$71 | **CASES MADE** 5,300

BLEND 85% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc

After a rather unspectacular period in the 1980s and 1990s, quality from this estate has been steadily rising. This improvement is due to the diligence of owner Nicolas de Bailliencourt, whose family has owned the nearly 65-acre estate since 1917. Bailliencourt believes that each vintage is a new adventure, yet claims that in 2005 all that was needed to hit the mark was a traditional vinification that respected the style of Pomerol.

CHÂTEAU GIGAUT PREMIÈRES CÔTES DE BLAYE CUVÉE VIVA 2005

91 points | \$21 | **CASES MADE** 3,750

BLEND 90% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc

This property continues to make some of the best value reds in Bordeaux. The Merlot-based blend comes from the 35-acres of vineyards at Château Gigault, in one of Bordeaux's forgotten appellations. Bordeaux wine merchant Christophe Reboul-Salze bought the estate in 1998, and consulting enologist Stéphane Deroncourt has been there since the beginning. The 2005 may not be quite at the level of the opulent 2003, but it is delicious and represents excellent value.

CHÂTEAU GLORIA ST.-JULIEN 2005

92 points | \$37 | **CASES MADE** 18,000

BLEND 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot

This cru bourgeois estate is an old favorite among wine lovers in the United States, but had been coasting for years before beginning to improve since 2000. The 2005, perhaps its best wine ever, may mark a new beginning for the 108-acre vineyard. The late Henri Martin created the property, buying parcels of vineyards over 30 years. He would be proud to see what his daughter Françoise, and her husband, Jean-Louis Triaud, are now doing here.

CHÂTEAU HAUT-BAILLY PESSAC-LÉOGNAN 2005

95 points | \$93 | **CASES MADE** 6,665

BLEND 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc

Haut-Bailly became American-owned in 1998 when Robert Wilmers, chairman of M & T Bank Corporation, from Buffalo, N.Y., and his French wife, Elisabeth, bought the 79-acre estate from the Sanders family, who had owned and run it for the preceding 50 years. Véronique Sanders, daughter of the previous owners, stayed on to manage the estate, together with technical director Gabriel Vialhard and consultant Denis Dubourdieu. Recently, Jean Delmas, retired technical director of Haut-Brion and La Mission-Haut-Brion, was recruited to help with the blending. This is a Bordeaux estate on the move.

CHÂTEAU HOSANNA POMEROL 2005

96 points | \$163 | **CASES MADE** 1,500

BLEND 75% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc

In 1999, Libourne-based négociant Jean-Pierre Moueix added Hosanna to its roster of top Pomerol estates, which includes Pétrus and Trotanoy. The more than 11 acres of vines, averaging 40 years old, are located at what used to be the core of Château Certan-Guiraud. The 2005 vintage produced the best ever Hosanna, a classic wine with a winning combination of power and finesse that places it at the level of the top wines of Pomerol.

CHÂTEAU LARCIS-DUCASSE ST.-EMILION 2005

95 points | \$210 | **CASES MADE** 3,080

BLEND 78% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon

The 2002 vintage was the turning point for this 26.7-acre estate, when newly appointed estate manager Nicolas Thienpont enlisted the services of Stéphane Derenoncourt as consulting enologist. The same team makes the wine at Pavie-Macquin, another estate at the top level in this large appellation. The results were immediate, and the estate has produced outstanding wines every year since, culminating in this classic 2005. Old vintages of Larcis-Ducasse from the 1940s and 1950s can be fantastic, but newer ones may surpass them in quality.

CHÂTEAU LASCOMBES MARGAUX 2005

93 points | \$85 | **CASES MADE** 25,000

BLEND 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot

When the international private investment firm of Colony Capital bought this second-growth in 2001, there were a lot of expectations for improvement in the wines. And it's finally coming through. Lascombes has undergone major reorganization, including the introduction of smaller fermentation vats to respect the parcel map of the estate's 207.5 acres of vineyards and the introduction of a cold, prefermentation maceration (with injection of dry ice) lasting around 10 days. Heading the technical team is Dominique Befve, formerly of Lafite, who is supported by consultant Michel Rolland.

CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE MÉDOC 2005

90 points | \$20 (est.) | **CASES MADE** 16,665

BLEND 55% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Malbec

Owner Jean-Paul Lafragette specializes in Cognac-based products such as the popular Alizé brand. In 2001, he entrusted his daughter, Florence, with the running of the family estates—Château Rouillac in

Pessac-Léognan, Château de L'Hospital in Graves and Château Loudenne in Médoc. Florence draws on her previous experience working at Joseph Phelps Vineyards in Napa Valley, as well as the advice of consulting enologist Michel Rolland. The 326-acre Loudenne estate, with its attractive pink château, is located right on the banks of the Gironde estuary, north of St.-Estèphe.

CHÂTEAU MALESCOT-ST.-EXUPÉRY MARGAUX 2005

97 points | \$100 | **CASES MADE** 6,615

BLEND 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot

Jean-Luc Zuger, whose family has owned this 59-acre, third-growth Margaux estate since 1955, believes that the 2005 Malescot is the best since the 1961. His team consists of Gilles Pouget, cellar master, with Michel Rolland as consultant. Zuger is a down-to-earth, hands-on owner with a passion for making refined, well-structured reds in a classic style. His 2005 is one of the best wines for the money in the vintage.

CHÂTEAU MALMAISON MOULIS 2005

91 points | \$25 | **CASES MADE** 8,330

BLEND 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon

Though the château has been totally renovated since the late Baron Edmond de Rothschild purchased the estate in 1973, the quality of the wine only started to spiral upward in 1998 with the arrival of Michel Rolland as consulting enologist. He initiated major improvements in both the vineyard and winery. In top vintages such as 2000 and 2005, Malmaison produces wines that are startlingly good for this appellation, in a pretty yet structured style.

Marojallia Margaux 2005

93 points | \$146 | **CASES MADE** 500

BLEND 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot

When owner Philippe Porcheron decided, in 1998, to create a garage wine in the Margaux appellation from his just fewer than 10 acres of vineyards, it was natural that he should turn to Jean-Luc and Muriel Thunévin for help and inspiration. The Thunévins started the garagiste movement with their Château Valandraud back in 1991. In the end, it was Muriel that guided him through the project. The first vintage appeared in 1999 and the wine has received outstanding ratings every year since. Always an opulent wine, it is aged for 18 months in 100 percent new oak barrels before release. Marojallia is the old Roman name for Margaux.

CHÂTEAU PATACHE D'AUX MÉDOC CUVÉE FLORA 2005

91 points | \$50 (est.) | **CASES MADE** 2,000

BLEND 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petit Verdot

Jean-Michel Lapalu, owner and winemaker here since 1964, has for many years kept back a small quantity of the château's production from the oldest vines on the 106-acre estate for the use of his family. But with the 2004 vintage, Lapalu decided to release the réserve de famille as a special cuvée, aged for 18 months in all new oak barrels and named after his youngest daughter, Flora. The 2005 vintage of Cuvée Flora is the best wine ever from the estate.

CHÂTEAU PAVIE-MACQUIN ST.-EMILION 2005

96 points | \$200 | **CASES MADE** 4,165

BLEND 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc

In recent years, this 37-acre property has become one of the most exciting estates on the Right Bank. It's no wonder that it was promoted to Premier Grand Cru Classé (B) status in the 2006 reclassification of St.-Emilion estates. Pavie-Macquin's success is largely due to the efforts of current manager Nicolas Thienpont. With enologist Stéphane Derenoncourt, Thienpont has elevated the estate's wines to a higher quality level. This is the richest, juiciest Pavie-Macquin ever.

CHÂTEAU PETIT-VILLAGE POMEROL 2005

92 points | \$56 | **CASES MADE** 2,500

BLEND 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc

French insurance giant AXA acquired Petit-Village in 1989, adding it to a stable of Bordeaux châteaux that includes Pichon-Baron in Pauillac and Suduiraut in Sauternes. Nonetheless, the wine here has nearly always been a disappointment considering the estate's fantastic location near the best names of Pomerol. But the 2005 represents significant improvement, and in 2006 the buildings on the 26-acre estate received a facelift, with a completely renovated barrel cellar and a brand new vinification unit. Consulting enologist Stéphane Derenoncourt has been brought on board this year to improve the wines. A lot of high expectations out there for this property.

CHÂTEAU PIPEAU ST.-EMILION 2005

92 points | \$30 | **CASES MADE** 15,830

BLEND 90% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc

The Mestreguilhem family has been living and working at this St.-Emilion Grand Cru Classé estate since 1929, but it's only since the 2000 vintage that it began to make consistently outstanding wines. The wine is now one of the best values in Bordeaux (the 2004 was No. 83 in *Wine Spectator's* 2007 Top 100). Most of the production is still sold directly to consumers in France, but the large estate is making headway in the U.S. market. Richard Mestreguilhem is the winemaker and says he will continue to follow a path of making better reds at Pipeau. The 2005 and 2000 are the best yet, but stay tuned.

CHÂTEAU POMEAUX POMEROL 2005

92 points | \$88 | **CASES MADE** 845

BLEND 100% Merlot

The American-owned Pomeaux only came into being in 1998 and continues to improve in quality each year. It's owned by Albert Powers, a Hong Kong-based investment banker. The property consists of 9.3 acres of 35-year-old Merlot vines on the southeastern slope of the Pomerol plateau. Michel Rolland supervises the making of the wine, which in 2005 saw a huge leap in quality, due not only to the perfect weather conditions that year, but also to more rigorous vineyard management and a stricter selection at harvesttime.

CHÂTEAU PONTET-CANET PAUILLAC 2005

96 points | \$100 | **CASES MADE** 20,830

BLEND 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot

The reputation of fifth-growth Pontet-Canet has been improving in recent years. Owner Alfred Tesseron has worked tirelessly to better every aspect of grapegrowing and winemaking on the estate, from an entirely revamped drainage system throughout the nearly 200 acres of vineyards to unique, gravity-fed concrete vats in the cellar. His efforts particularly paid off with the 2005, the best-ever wine from the estate, giving substance to the claim that "Pontet-Canet is a fifth-growth château producing super-second-growth quality at half the price."

CHÂTEAU PROVIDENCE POMEROL 2005

95 points | \$93 | **CASES MADE** 1,250

BLEND 95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc

J.P. Moueix purchased the 9.9-acre Providence estate at the beginning of 2005. Jean-Claude Berrouet, recently retired in-house winemaker for the Libourne-based négociant firm, correctly predicted that strict control of grape yields would enable the estate to produce a classic wine by the end of the same year. The Moueixs are completely renovating the château and cellars of Providence, determined to make the estate a rising star of Pomerol. Expect more great wines in the future.

CHÂTEAU PUYGUERAUD CÔTES DE FRANCS 2005

92 points | \$18 | **CASES MADE** 10,830

BLEND 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec

This is typically one of the best values in Bordeaux, and especially in 2005. The large property matched the quality of many of the top estates in more prestigious Right Bank appellations. The wine is made by the team of Nicolas Thienpont and Stéphane Deroncourt, who together also produce the wines of Château Pavie-Macquin and Larcis-Ducasse, both of classic quality in 2005. The Thienpont family (also of Pomerol's Vieux-Château-Certan and Le Pin) first bought into the Côtes de Francs appellation with its purchase of Puygueraud in 1946 and has been making serious reds there since the early 1980s.

CHÂTEAU RAUZAN-SÉGLA MARGAUX 2005

97 points | \$100 | **CASES MADE** 10,000

BLEND 54.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 1.5% Cabernet Franc

This château could potentially make first-growth quality wines on a regular basis, considering the pedigree and superlative quality of its best vineyards. The Wertheimer family, owners of the fashion house Chanel, bought the 128.5-acre estate in 1994, and they have slowly and methodically made improvements in the vineyard and cellars. These are now paying off. Manager John Kolasa and winemaker Henry de Ruffray and his team believe that the 2005 vintage gave a true and pure expression of Rauzan's *terroir*.

CHÂTEAU DE REIGNAC BORDEAUX SUPÉRIEUR BALTHUS 2005

91 points | \$60 | **CASES MADE** 500

BLEND 100% Merlot

Balthus comes from a 7.4-acre vineyard containing 40-year-old Merlot vines that Yves and Stéphanie Vatelot, owners of the neighboring 333-acre de Reignac estate, purchased in 2002. The soil in the Balthus vineyard is clay and chalk, like the best soils of the Pomerol appellation, where Merlot excels. They started production of the barrel-fermented Merlot Balthus that same year, with the help of consulting enologist Michel Rolland. Yves Vatelot named the estate and the wine after his son, Balthazar, and also after his favorite painter, Balthus.

DOMAINE ROSES CAMILLE POMEROL 2005

91 points | \$NA | **CASES MADE** 75

BLEND 98% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc

Christophe Bardeau learned the ropes at one of Pomerol's top châteaux, L'Église Clinet, before going on to found this tiny domaine in 2005. It's part of his family's estate, which straddles two appellations, with 12.3 acres in Lalande-de-Pomerol and 7.4 acres in Pomerol itself. Bardeau used grapes from only 2.5-acres of the Pomerol vines for this kosher Pomerol; hence the mere 75 cases made. But for future vintages, he has decided to extend the domaine over the entire Pomerol vineyards and will produce around 250 cases.

CHÂTEAU ROUGET POMEROL 2005

92 points | \$42 | **CASES MADE** 2,915

BLEND 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc

Jean-Pierre Labruyère, who comes from a family of Beaujolais vinegrowers, bought Rouget in 1994, but 2005 marks a new take-off point for the château. Subsequent purchases have made Rouget one of the largest estates in Pomerol, and have also moved the focal point of the property, with the majority of its vineyards now located on the Pomerol plateau. Grapes from the best parcels are present in the grand vin in 2005, and have added to the wine's complexity and structure.

CHÂTEAU SANSONNET ST.-EMILION 2005

92 points | \$43 | **CASES MADE** 1,850

BLEND 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

Since his purchase of Sansonnet in 1999, Patrick d'Aulan, whose family are former owners of Piper-Heidsieck Champagne, has spared nothing in the vineyard and the winery to enhance the reputation of this 17.2-acre estate. In 2005, d'Aulan called on the services of local enologist Stéphane Derenoncourt to improve the wine, though the optimal climate that vintage meant very little help was required to produce a full and soft red with lots of juicy fruit. It's almost New World in style.

CHÂTEAU SÉNÉJAC HAUT-MÉDOC 2005

90 points | \$27 | **CASES MADE** 10,000

BLEND 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot

Owner and winemaker Thierry Rustmann decided to cease the production of the estate's super cru, Karolus, in 2005 in order to improve the quality of the first wine. As a result, the 2005 is the best Sénéjac ever, with loads of fruit and a soft, caressing texture. Rustmann and his wife, Lorraine, bought the 96.3-acre estate in 1999. She is owner of Château Talbot in St.-Julien and he of Beau Soleil in Pomerol.

CHÂTEAU SMITH-HAUT-LAFITTE PESSAC-LÉOGNAN 2005

Red: 93 points | \$77 | **CASES MADE** 8,000

BLEND 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot

White: 96 points | \$83 | **CASES MADE** 3,000

BLEND 90% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Gris, 5% Sémillon

According to Fabien Teitgen, in-house enologist at Smith, the 38-year-old vines at the estate, which sink their roots several meters into the gravelly soil, were well able to cope with the drought during the summer of 2005. Daniel and Florence Cathiard, owners of Smith since 1990, believe that they are now making the best red and white wines ever from the 165.5-acre estate (138.3 acres red; 27.2 acres white). These wines are the proof.

CHÂTEAU LA TOUR-HAUT-BRION PESSAC-LÉOGNAN 2005

93 points | \$73 | **CASES MADE** 2,230

BLEND 41% Cabernet Franc, 32% Merlot, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon

New wines and châteaux appear all the time in Bordeaux, but here's an old friend making its exit. The 2005 vintage will be the last from this ancient estate, which the American Dillon family, owners of first-growth Château Haut-Brion, bought in 1983, together with the La Mission-Haut-Brion estate. In 2006, the crop from La Tour's 12.4 acres of vines was included in the production of the wines from La Mission-Haut-Brion. LTHB is going out on a good note, though, with a balanced, elegant and sexy 2005.

CHÂTEAU LES TROIS CROIX FRONSAC 2005

90 points | \$25 | **CASES MADE** 5,415

BLEND 84% Merlot, 16% Cabernet Franc

Since 1995, the 37-acre Les Trois Croix estate has been home to the family of Patrick Léon, who retired from his 18-year stint as head winemaker of first-growth Château Mouton-Rothschild in 2003. Les Trois Croix is very much a family affair, with Léon's son, Bertrand, making the wine under the watchful eye of his father. The estate is one of the oldest in the Fronsac area, dating back to the early 18th century, and sits on one of the highest plains of the appellation. Wines from here always show a refinement and polish for the region.

CHÂTEAU VALROSE ST.-ESTÈPHE CUVÉE ALIENOR 2005

92 points | \$33 | **CASES MADE** 2,400

BLEND 50% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc

With only 12.3 acres, 50 percent planted to Merlot, Valrose might feel a little dwarfed by its famous neighbors, who include Cos-d'Estournel and Montrose. Yet, according to Gérard Néraudau, who has codirected the estate with Patrick d'Aulan (also of Sansonnet in St.-Emilion) since 1999, the distinctive character of Valrose comes through due to the significant proportion of Merlot, which helps to mitigate the natural austerity of St.-Estèphe *terroir*. The wine is named after Néraudau's daughter.

CHÂTEAU VERDIGNAN HAUT-MÉDOC 2005

90 points | \$20 (est.) | **CASES MADE** 21,665

BLEND 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc

Eric Boissenot, one of Bordeaux's best-known enologists, consults for the Mialhe family at all three of their Haut-Médoc estates—Verdignan, Coufran and Soudars. He has been working particularly hard at Verdignan since 2003, reorganizing the whole production of this historic 148-acre estate together with family winemaker Eric Mialhe. As a consequence, the quality of the wine here has taken a turn for the better. Verdignan's 90-point rating in 2005 is one point higher than that of either of its sister estates in the vintage, and the wine's quality to price ratio is unbeatable.

—James Suckling, with additional reporting by Jo Cooke