

“2016 is a far better vintage for Bordeaux than the subsequent one”

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# Bordeaux 2016 en primeur

Our resident Bordeaux correspondent and producer **Gavin Quinney** gives the low-down on the highs of a fine year

If you have an interest in the wines of Bordeaux, you will probably have read up on the 2016 vintage by now. So, for a slightly different angle, I'll begin this report on the primeurs with the observation that 2016 is a far better vintage for Bordeaux than the subsequent one.

2016 will go down as the last, and more

than likely the best, in a triumvirate of very good to outstanding vintages for Bordeaux in ascending order of quality - 2014, 2015 and 2016. Either side, the 2013 and 2017 vintages fall into the “challenging” category.

2017 has kicked off in Bordeaux with widespread, late April frosts over two nights, with numerous vineyards across Bordeaux losing much of their crop at an early stage. That doesn't mean it'll necessarily be a poor vintage (some top estates were unaffected), just a much smaller and very difficult one for a great many growers.

Anyway, back to 2016...

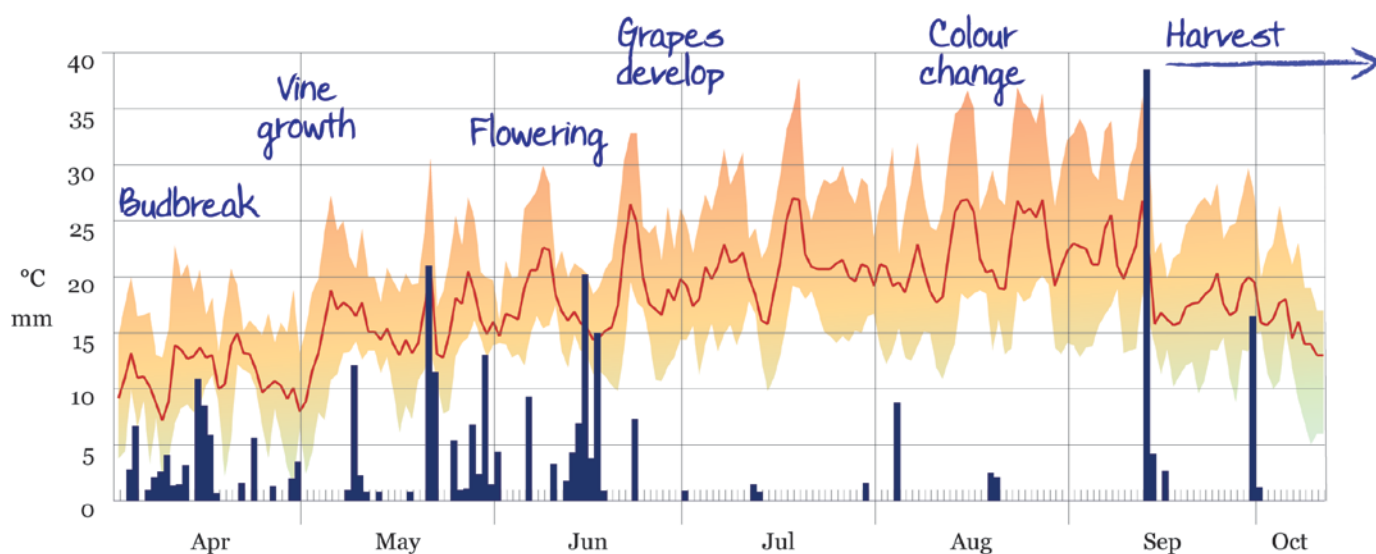


In a nutshell – the story of Bordeaux 2016: damp spring, dry summer and refreshing rain just before a cool harvest.





## Bordeaux daily rainfall & temperature - Growing season 2016



### ■ Daily rainfall (mm)

Average from 6 regions: Graves, St-Emilion, Margaux, Northern Médoc, Entre-Deux-Mers and Blaye.

### ■ Min-max daily temp (°C) — Average daily temp (°C)

From station near Bauduc, 15 miles SE of Bordeaux city.

Source: Gavin Quinney



## RELATIVE VALUE

- Léoville Barton
- Léoville Poyferré
- Grand Puy Lacoste
- Talbot
- Montrose
- La Dame de Montrose
- Phelan Ségur
- Brane Cantenac
- Nenin
- Canon la Gaffelière

**Inset: All smiles for Bordeaux 2016**

**Left: Picking Cabernet France at Château L'Evangile in Pomerol**

## Bordeaux 2016 – 10 things to know

1. A wet first half of the year, a bone-dry summer, topped off by a cool, dry harvest refreshed by timely rain.
2. An outstanding vintage for the best red wines, rivalling 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2015.
3. Delicious, balanced reds marked by gorgeous fruit, dense structure, ripe tannins and – what sets the vintage apart – a core of refreshing acidity.
4. Alcohol levels are happily in line with “classic” vintages: 13%-13.5% for Cabernet dominated blends and 13.5%-14.5% for Merlot-based wines.
5. 2016 is the last in a sequence of three very good Bordeaux vintages.
6. Hugely successful in St-Julien, Pauillac and St-Estèphe – more so than 2015 despite the hype last year – home to many of the biggest and best known châteaux.
7. The biggest crop overall since 2006, and the largest yield per hectare since 2004. Some top châteaux cropped at more modest levels.
8. The top wines will no doubt be expensive,

especially for sterling buyers, but there is strength in depth.

9. Terrific values to be had on both banks at modest price points – from St-Estèphe, Haut-Médoc, Médoc, Fronsac, the Côtes de Bordeaux and so on.

10. A good year for dry whites and good to very good for sweet whites.

## The growing season

A thoroughly wet first quarter helped to replenish the water deficit from the parched final three months of 2015. After bud burst in the vineyards at the start of April, the next 12 weeks were wet too – but not dramatically more than the 30-year average. There was a timely break in the weather in early June for the flowering, which went incredibly well. It was the best flowering I'd seen across the region since 2004, especially on the Merlot.

The summer was then dry and warm. We had 12 weeks of sunshine and near-drought from (the infamous) June 23 to September 13, with many areas seeing just a 10th of the normal rainfall. July was warm and sunny, August hotter but, helpfully, with coolish nights.

But there's more to the 2016 vintage than simply “wet spring, dry summer”. There was a distinct change in the weather in the run-up to the red harvest. The night of September 13 delivered between 32mm and 52mm of refreshing rain (with another useful shower on September 30) and the temperatures dropped significantly. These

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**Insights & Data**  
Industry and trade data  
is available online at  
[Harpers.co.uk/insights](http://Harpers.co.uk/insights)

vital few weeks as the grapes finally ripened – the reds were mostly picked in the first half of October – left a huge stamp on the wines. It's one of the main sources, along with coolish summer nights, of all that “freshness” that we all babble on about regarding 2016.

## Biggest harvest for 10 years

2016 was the biggest Bordeaux harvest in more than a decade. The production of 577 million litres – the equivalent of a staggering 770 million bottles – was the largest since 2006 when there was 10% more vineyard area. A big harvest in Bordeaux was in stark contrast to many less fortunate French regions in 2016.

At an average of 52hl per hectare, 2016 saw the highest yield per hectare since 2004 (54hl/ha). Red wine accounted for 85% of production, plus 4% rosé, 10% dry white and 1% sweet white.

## The top appellations

The press and the trade would have enjoyed the en primeur tastings in Bordeaux at the start of April. The red wines were relatively easy to taste given the ripeness of the fruit and tannins, balanced by the lovely, fresh acidity. This was the 17th consecutive vintage I've tasted and I tried well over 500 barrel samples this time, including all the top wines, except Tertre Roteboeuf and Le Gay (to date). For pleasure, 2016 was on a par with 2005, 2009 and 2010, yet easier to taste than the 2010s thanks to a lightness of touch in 2016.

For me, the most successful appellations in 2016 were St-Julien, Pauillac and St-Estèphe on the left bank, and Pomerol on the right. On the whole, the wines from the top appellations in the northern Médoc showed much more promise than their 2015 counterparts did from barrel (I also liked, to a lesser extent, the less fashionable and cheaper 2014s).

The success of the en primeur campaign is likely to depend on how the many great châteaux there can drive the market with some well-judged pricing.

2015 was a tough act to follow for the best wines of Margaux and Pessac-Léognan and it has the slight edge over 2016 in the main. Likewise I have a preference for 2015 Saint Emilion over 2016, although that's not the case for every wine there by any means. For Pomerol, it depends on the château but I have a slight leaning towards 2016.

My top wines from these appellations above are listed over the page. There are some values to be found. Less expensive yet delicious wines can be found in volume in the Haut-Médoc, the Médoc, St-Estèphe, Moulis and Listrac on the Left Bank, as well as in the Graves and other estates in



**Top; Sorting table in the vineyard at Vieux Château Certan**

**Above: Château Léoville Barton. A uniformly great vintage for St-Julien**



Pessac-Léognan. On the Right Bank, 2016 was successful in Fronsac and Canon Fronsac, for Lalande de Pomerol, and for Saint Emilion and its satellites. Plenty of excellent wines on the Côtes de Bordeaux as well, and at Bordeaux Supérieur level.

Tasting the Crus Bourgeois of the Left Bank and the petits châteaux of the Right, I felt that several had made their best wine to date.

Still further down the pecking order, it's instructive to taste generic wines that are for sale “en vrac” or “in bulk” – and the quality is there too. There's value to be had at all levels. Coming off the back of two promising years, and with good volumes, that's good news for Bordeaux.

For dry whites, 2016 is a good vintage and good to very good for the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac.

## LEFT BANK ON A BUDGET

- Pibran
- Lacoste Borie
- Meyney
- Lilian Ladouys
- Petit Bocq
- Le Crock
- La Tour Carnet
- Beaumont
- Charmail
- Tour de By

## RIGHT BANK VALUE

- Aiguilhe
- Siaurac
- Dalem
- La Rivière
- Reynon
- Sansonnet
- Corbin
- Laroze
- Pressac
- Grand Mayne



# GAVIN QUINNEY'S 100 TOP BORDEAUX 2016 REDS:

WINE	APPELLATION	GO SCORE	BEST TO DRINK	£ CASE 2015
Latour	Pauillac	97-100	2028-50	NA
Mouton Rothschild	Pauillac	97-99	2027-50	£4,600
Lafite Rothschild	Pauillac	97-99	2026-45	£4,800
Pichon Baron	Pauillac	96-98	2027-50	£1,100
Pichon Lalande	Pauillac	96-98	2025-45	£1,100
Lynch Bages	Pauillac	96-98	2024-43	£900
Pontet Canet	Pauillac	95-97	2023-42	£850
Les Forts de Latour	Pauillac	95-96	2025-44	NA
Grand Puy Lacoste	Pauillac	94-96	2025-42	£550
Le Petit Mouton	Pauillac	93-95	2026-40	£1,550
Duhart Milon	Pauillac	93-95	2024-43	£490
Clerc Milon	Pauillac	92-94	2025-43	£540
d'Armailhac	Pauillac	92-93	2026-42	£300
Carruades de Lafite	Pauillac	92-93	2024-37	£1,800
Batailley	Pauillac	91-93+	2024-42	£370
Haut Bages Libéral	Pauillac	91-93	2026-42	£300
Pédesclaux	Pauillac	91-93	2023-38	£300
Léoville Las Cases	Saint Julien	96-98	2028-50	£1,500
Ducru Beaucaillou	Saint Julien	96-97	2027-47	£1,250
Léoville Poyferré	Saint Julien	95-97	2025-45	£600
Léoville Barton	Saint Julien	95-97	2028-50	£580
Talbot	Saint Julien	94-95	2024-42	£400
Saint Pierre	Saint Julien	94-95	2026-42	£420
Clos du Marquis	Saint Julien	93-95	2025-44	£400
Langoa Barton	Saint Julien	93-95	2025-43	£350
Beychevelle	Saint Julien	93-95	2025-42	£600
Gruaud Larose	Saint Julien	93-94	2025-42	£500
Brancaire Ducru	Saint Julien	92-95	2026-43	£390
Lagrange	Saint Julien	92-94	2025-42	£300
Croix de Beaucaillou	Saint Julien	92-93	2026-42	£320
Gloria	Saint Julien	91-92	2026-42	£300
Montrose	Saint Estephe	97-100	2025-50	£1,100
Cos d'Estoumel	Saint Estephe	96-98	2025-45	£1,400
Calon Ségur	Saint Estephe	94-96	2025-45	£600
La Dame de Montrose	Saint Estephe	93-94	2023-40	£295
Lafon Rochet	Saint Estephe	91-93?	2025-38	£290
Pagodes de Cos	Saint Estephe	91-93	2022-37	£375
Phélan Segur	Saint Estephe	91-93	2026-43	£300
Meyney	Saint Estephe	90-92	2023-40	£190
Cos Labory	Saint Estephe	90-92	2025-40	£250
Palmer	Margaux	96-98	2027-47	£2,400
Margaux	Margaux	95-97	2027-48	£6,000
Rauzan Segla	Margaux	94-96	2025-45	£800
d'Issan	Margaux	93-95	2025-42	£420
Malescot St Exupery	Margaux	93-95	2026-42	£450
Brane Cantenac	Margaux	93-94	2024-42	£470
Lascombes	Margaux	93-94	2026-40	£580
Pavillon Rouge	Margaux	92-94	2026-43	£1,300
Alter Ego de Palmer	Margaux	92-94	2023-40	£475
Giscours	Margaux	92-93	2025-40	£480
Cantenac Brown	Margaux	92-93	2025-42	£350
Prieuré Lichine	Margaux	92-93	2024-42	£330
Kirwan	Margaux	91-93	2024-40	£330
Labégorce	Margaux	91-92	2025-40	£200
du Tertre	Margaux	91-92	2023-43	£330

WINE	APPELLATION	GO SCORE	BEST TO DRINK	£ CASE 2015
La Lagune	Haut Medoc	93-94	2025-43	£375
Sociando Mallet	Haut Medoc	91-93	2026-43	£240
Haut Bailly	Pessac Leognan	95-96	2026-46	£1,000
Haut Brion	Pessac Leognan	94-96	2026-43	£4,500
Pape Clément	Pessac Leognan	94-96	2025-40	£720
La Mission Haut Brion	Pessac Leognan	93-95	2025-43	£3,400
Smith Haut Lafitte	Pessac Leognan	93-95	2024-40	£780
Domaine de Chevalier	Pessac Leognan	93-94	2022-37	£470
Malartic Lagravière	Pessac Leognan	92-95	2023-40	£370
de Fieuzal	Pessac Leognan	92-94	2022-37	£265
Carmes Haut Brion	Pessac Leognan	92-94	2023-35	£650
Petrus	Pomerol	97-100	2026-45	£30,000
Lafleur	Pomerol	97-99	2027-45	£8,400
Vieux Château Certan	Pomerol	97-99	2026-45	£2,300
Le Pin	Pomerol	97-99	2025-43	£28,000
L'Évangile	Pomerol	94-96	2024-45	£1,750
La Fleur Petrus	Pomerol	94-96	2023-43	£1,700
L'Église Clinet	Pomerol	94-96	2026-50	£2,000
Trotanoy	Pomerol	94-96	2026-43	£2,400
La Conseillante	Pomerol	94-95	2024-43	£1,250
Clinet	Pomerol	93-95	2024-40	£860
Hosanna	Pomerol	93-95	2024-40	£1,600
Nenin	Pomerol	93-95	2024-40	£480
Vray Croix De Gay	Pomerol	93-94	2024-42	£520
Feytit Clinet	Pomerol	92-94	2022-37	£470
Petit Village	Pomerol	92-93	2023-38	£550
Gazin	Pomerol	91-93	2024-42	£530
Cheval Blanc	Saint Emilion	96-98+	2026-45	£5,900
Pavie	Saint Emilion	96-98	2027-47	£2,800
Angélus	Saint Emilion	96-98	2026-46	£2,800
Ausone	Saint Emilion	96-98	2027-50	£7,000
Figeac	Saint Emilion	96-97	2024-45	£1,450
Troplong Mondot	Saint Emilion	95-97	2026-45	£950
Canon la Gaffelière	Saint Emilion	95-96	2025-42	£580
La Mondotte	Saint Emilion	95-96	2028-48	£1,500
Chapelle d'Ausone	Saint Emilion	94-95	2025-40	£1,500
Beauséjour Duffau	Saint Emilion	94-96	2027-45	£850
Le Dôme	Saint Emilion	94-96	2026-43	£990
Clos Fourtet	Saint Emilion	94-96	2026-43	£800
Pavie Macquin	Saint Emilion	94-96	2027-45	£600
Larcis Ducasse	Saint Emilion	94-95	2026-43	£575
Belair Monange	Saint Emilion	93-95	2025-43	£1,100
Canon	Saint Emilion	93-94	2024-40	£1,700
Grand Mayne	Saint Emilion	92-94	2026-42	£290
Beau-Séjour Becot	Saint Emilion	92-94	2024-42	£450

NB: There are many more St-Emilions with 90+ scores. Not yet tasted: Tertre Roteboeuf.

For more on Bordeaux 2016, visit [gavinquinney.com](http://gavinquinney.com).  
Gavin's harvest reports were also published on Liv-ex and [jancis.robinson.com](http://jancis.robinson.com)

With 2016 prices to be released, we have shown the current case price, in bond, for the 2015 as a guide. 2016s are likely to cost more.