

*Harpers' man in Bordeaux, Gavin Quinney of Château Bauduc, weighs up the 2022 vintage – and finds it could be one of the greats, though uneven*



↑ THE RED CARPET AT FIGEAC;  
PIERRE-OLIVIER CLOUET AT CHEVAL BLANC

*“The impact of a year of high temperatures and low rainfall naturally resulted in wines with high alcohol and low acidity”*

# SOME LIKE IT HOT

2022 was a remarkable year in Bordeaux, and the en primeur tastings in April for the trade and the press confirmed that. The jury may be out on just how brilliant the wines are, but if 2022 is indeed a great vintage then it would be the first ‘vintage of the century’ marked by such extreme heat and drought, fairly uneven quality and low yields in all the top red appellations, with the exception of Saint-Émilion.

Some châteaux have produced wines that may rival or even surpass their efforts from the superstar years of 2009, 2010, 2016 and, say, 2019. They also share some of the characteristics of the successful, sunny triumvirate of ‘18, ‘19 and ‘20. Yet all those were more consistent years for quality, in my opinion.

2022 was an extraordinary year because the growing season was so hot and dry. Taking the data from six weather stations based around the region, we had the warmest versions of May, June, July and August in at least the past 15 years. September was also warmer than average, while April was in line after a frosty start. At times it was also crazily hot, with a series of summer heatwaves on and off from mid-June through to mid-September. Thankfully for the vines, and for us, the August nights remained relatively fresh.

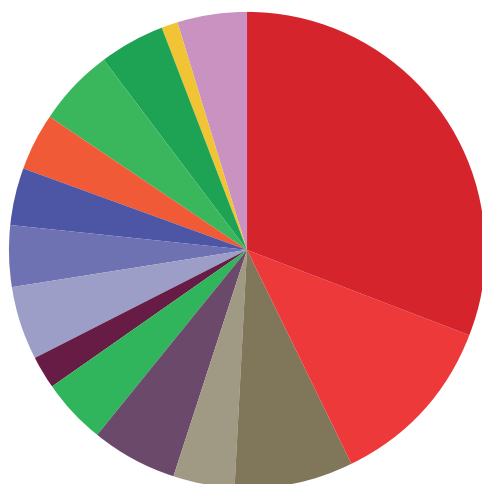
Mercifully we had a wet December in 2021 because every month from January 2022 onwards saw less rain than the average, and much less in the ripening months of July, August and September – except June, when a 40+°C heatwave mid-month gave way to storms on the 20th. Typical of the unfair nature of viticulture is that, while the majority of vineyards were refreshed with much-needed rain, others were struck by hail with randomly devastating results.

The impact of a year of high temperatures and low rainfall naturally resulted in wines with high alcohol and low acidity – highs and lows all round. And yet the vineyards, especially the better-placed ones, held up incredibly well despite the ongoing drought and heat. So many of the better vineyards looked perfectly healthy well into early autumn. Had the vines adjusted to the drought conditions at an early stage, as many vineyard managers pointed out? (For us, that late June rain helped enormously.)

Almost all the red grapes were picked in September – though there are always exceptions: Cheval Blanc, for starters, began harvesting its Merlot in late August and if the wine’s anything to go by, it was a smart move. Some Cabernets elsewhere came in as late as October.

So what we see are wines that are indeed layered with ripe fruit, fairly high in alcohol on the whole, yet the best are still refreshing and balanced – often

## BORDEAUX 2022 PRODUCTION SPLIT BY APPELLATION



- 31% Bordeaux rouge (127.5 million litres)
- 11.8% Bordeaux Supérieur (48.4ml)
- 8.1% Blaye & Bourg (33.4ml)
- 4.3% Other Côtes de Bordeaux (17.8ml)
- 5.7% Saint-Emilion (23.4ml)
- 4.5% St-Emilion satellites (18.6ml)
- 2.3% Pomerol, Lalande de Pomerol, Fronsac (9.5ml)
- 5% Médoc (20.7ml)
- 4% Haut Médoc, Moulis, Listrac (16.6ml)
- 3.8% Margaux, Pauillac, St-Julien, St-Estephe (15.8ml)
- 4% Graves and Pessac-Léognan red (16.3ml)
- 5.4% Bordeaux blanc sec (22.2ml)
- 4.3% other dry whites: EDM, Graves, Pessac (17.6ml)
- 1.1% Sweet white (4.4ml)
- 4.6% Bordeaux rosé & clairat (18.8ml)

SOURCES: @GAVINQUINNEY/GAVINQUINNEY.COM, DOUANE/CIVB

## BORDEAUX APPELLATIONS YIELDS BY GROUP 2003-2022

	Hctrs 2022	2003	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Avg 03-12	Avg 13-22
Bordeaux rouge	32,113	51.2	52.9	53.0	53.5	50.3	34.4	51.7	51.1	56.6	32.4	48.6	45.5	42.6	37.0	39.7	51.8	44.0
Bdx Supérieur	13,884	47.0	48.8	48.7	49.0	44.8	30.2	45.1	45.1	50.4	27.4	42.0	41.1	36.9	32.8	35.0	47.2	38.6
Côtes de Bdx	13,304	44.9	46.0	48.3	47.9	44.2	30.6	46.7	46.5	48.9	31.8	38.8	43.0	40.2	36.1	38.5	47.3	40.1
Médoc & Graves	20,137	42.8	48.0	47.0	45.6	44.5	34.2	43.1	47.4	48.9	37.1	42.9	43.7	36.9	33.6	34.5	46.3	40.2
St Ém/Pom/Fron	12,196	37.9	44.2	44.5	48.1	44.6	32.4	45.5	46.0	50.1	20.8	42.6	44.4	38.0	30.5	42.2	44.6	39.3
Bordeaux Blancs	9,420	53.3	52.7	56.3	56.4	51.2	44.4	49.3	49.2	58.2	32.9	53.7	49.5	48.0	41.0	42.3	53.5	46.9
Bordeaux Rosé	4,041	42.3	52.5	52.3	53.3	51.2	36.6	53.7	51.2	55.8	36.2	51.3	50.3	48.3	39.4	49.0	49.8	47.2
Sweet whites	2,653	24.9	26.9	28.0	22.9	23.1	20.6	18.3	22.2	26.6	16.6	21.8	19.2	17.0	8.0	16.6	24.9	18.7

Total vineyard area 2022 - 107,748

Hectolitres/100 litres per Hectare (hl/ha)

Good+

Low

## TOP BORDEAUX APPELLATIONS YIELDS 2003-2022

	Hctrs 2022	2003	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Avg 03-12	Avg 13-22
Margaux	1,521	36.9	42.9	42.4	37.0	42.1	31.9	43.2	47.1	49.4	32.3	37.4	49.2	36.3	38.6	31.3	43.5	39.7
St-Julien	905	37.2	45.8	43.5	38.9	39.0	32.1	38.5	47.9	46.0	44.3	42.6	45.5	34.3	35.2	34.3	44.8	40.1
Pauillac	1,220	38.0	46.6	44.6	43.6	38.3	29.8	38.2	44.5	44.9	46.2	38.5	46.7	37.4	35.1	34.8	44.6	39.6
St-Estèphe	1,177	42.1	49.3	43.9	46.3	43.0	32.9	42.9	49.4	50.5	49.7	44.6	49.7	41.2	40.7	31.5	47.1	43.3
Pessac-Léognan	1,619	37.0	43.2	41.9	39.4	41.7	32.4	46.8	42.6	45.4	30.6	36.9	47.2	34.6	33.2	35.7	41.3	38.5
St-Emilion GCru	4,339	34.4	37.4	40.5	43.5	41.0	29.9	41.4	44.2	46.2	21.7	39.7	43.0	36.7	27.5	41.2	40.3	37.2
Pomerol	784	29.8	41.1	37.5	43.1	36.4	28.0	41.6	42.6	44.4	23.9	36.2	43.0	39.8	28.9	32.3	40.0	36.1
Sautns + Barsac	1,791	20.3	22.4	23.4	17.4	17.0	16.4	13.6	18.3	21.8	12.0	15.7	13.6	12.3	3.5	14.5	19.4	14.2
Pessac-Lgn blanc	259	47.1	45.0	44.4	40.5	39.0	37.0	37.7	37.7	46.2	26.9	40.1	46.3	38.6	30.7	31.6	42.4	37.3

Sub total 13,615

Total surface  
Bordeaux 107,748

10 Appellations as  
% of total area 12.6%

Hectolitres/100 litres per Hectare (hl/ha)

Good+

Low

40+hl/ha

< 35hl/ha  
(Exc Sautns  
& Barsac)

SOURCES: @GAVINQUINNEY/GAVINQUINNEY.COM, DOUANE/CIVB

"We see wines that are indeed layered with ripe fruit, fairly high in alcohol on the whole, yet the best are still refreshing and balanced"





## FEATURE Bordeaux report

thanks to beautifully mature tannins. Balance, as we call it, is key, though I'd still suggest alcohol levels are included in any tasting notes for potential buyers.



### YIELDS, SUPPLY, DEMAND AND PRICES

With the tastings over, attention turns to release prices for the top wines. What we're talking about here are the leading 250-500 wines from the region, not the engine room of generic Bordeaux and so-called lesser appellations. The comparative volumes can be seen in the pie chart, and the yields for Bordeaux overall in the first table.

For the top appellations table, I've compared the yields of 2022 with the 10-year averages from 2003-2012 and 2013-2022, on the right. Also shown are the yields going back to the excellent years of 2009 and 2010. These yields are all expressed in hectolitres per hectare. I've also added 2003 as many observers are comparing the summer heatwaves in 2022 with 2003.

You can see that the top Left Bank appellations of Margaux, St-Julien, Pauillac and Saint-Estèphe had considerably lower yields in 2022, mainly due to smaller grapes. Many top estates mentioned yields in the 20s and low 30s hl/ha – and in Pomerol too.

With high scores from critics before prices are announced, and demand being high, it seems extremely unlikely that the wines are going to be given away lightly. (That really would make it an extraordinary vintage if I'm wrong.) The main area that saw pretty successful yields was in Saint-Émilion, with some of the leading wines on the clay over limestone there seeing yields in the mid-high 40s.



### THE WINES

2022 was a really enjoyable vintage to taste, and not just because of the ripe, dark fruits and well-knit tannins. Having lived and worked through such a hot and dry season, the freshness shown in so many of the wines was a happy surprise, and I found most reds were well made, with few being – for example – overly extracted. There is a lightness of touch being demonstrated in Bordeaux these days and it's most welcome.

But having witnessed some of the early hype, I was conscious of Matt Kramer quoting Pasteur quoting Bossuet in his book *Matt Kramer on Wine*: "The greatest disorder of the mind is to believe that things



are so because we wish them to be so."

I participated in group tastings, such as those organised by the Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux for the press, and at negociant tastings, and at umpteen châteaux directly.

My biggest issue for the wines of 2022 is the consistency. It makes life so much easier if we can hang our hats on certain appellations or areas, and to say which groups of wines showed consistently well.

The quality I felt was more down to the individual châteaux – the terroir, the vineyard management, the team, the kit, the capacity to adapt, the decision-making at every stage and that lightness of touch. It's a hard year to generalise, even within the boundaries of a high-end appellation.

My other concern was that I wasn't really 'moved' by that many wines, like when the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. (With the honourable exceptions of Cheval Blanc, Pichon Baron, Cos d'Estournel, Haut Bailly, Clos Fourtet, l'Eglise Clinet...)

I also had a sense of wine being made from small berries in many cases, with the result being that I wasn't sure how pleasant some of the (less noteworthy) wines would be to actually drink in the future. Perhaps I'm being unduly harsh and I would like to be proved wrong and reassess them once the wines are bottled.

I have listed here what I felt were the best wines from each of the most sought-after appellations, plus the excellent ones therein, and a few that will turn out to be relatively good value, hopefully. I am absolutely confident that these will all provide a great deal of pleasure, albeit at vastly different price points. However, trust in the critics who deserve your trust. I will be buying – as I normally do – a mix of the 'values' and the 'excellent' wines, if prices permit. If...





↑ CHÂTEAU PICHON  
BARON; TASTING  
SAUTERNES AND  
BARSAC

"There is a  
lightness of  
touch being  
demonstrated  
in Bordeaux  
these days  
and it's most  
welcome"

# Bordeaux 2022 – the wines

## SAINT-ÉMILION THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Cheval Blanc
- ✦ Ausone
- ✦ Clos Fourtet
- ✦ Figeac
- ✦ Pavie
- ✦ Angelus

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Canon
- ✦ Belair Monange
- ✦ Canon La Gaffelière
- ✦ Pavie Macquin
- ✦ Larcis Ducasse
- ✦ Valandraud
- ✦ La Dominique
- ✦ La Gaffelière

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ La Clotte
- ✦ La Tour Figeac
- ✦ Fleur Cardinale
- ✦ Grand Mayne
- ✦ Pressac
- ✦ Corbin

## POMEROL THE BEST WINES

- ✦ L'Église Clinet
- ✦ Trotanoy
- ✦ Vieux Château Certan
- ✦ Lafleur
- ✦ Le Pin

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ L'Evangile
- ✦ La Fleur Petrus
- ✦ Hosanna
- ✦ La Conseillante
- ✦ Clinet
- ✦ Le Gay

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ Feytit Clinet
- ✦ Rouget
- ✦ La Croix de Gay
- ✦ Les Cruzelles (Lalande)

## PESSAC-LÉOGNAN RED

### THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Haut Brion
- ✦ La Mission Haut Brion
- ✦ Haut Bailly
- ✦ Smith Haut Lafitte

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Domaine de Chevalier
- ✦ Pape Clement

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ Haut Bailly II
- ✦ Latour Martillac

## MARGAUX THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Château Margaux
- ✦ Palmer
- ✦ Rauzan-Ségla

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Brane-Cantenac
- ✦ Cantenac Brown
- ✦ Malescot St Exupery

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ Kirwan
- ✦ Angludet
- ✦ Labegorce Margaux
- ✦ Baron de Brane
- ✦ Mongravey

## SAINT-JULIEN THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Léoville Las Cases
- ✦ Léoville Poyferré
- ✦ Ducru Beaucaillou
- ✦ Léoville Barton

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Langoa Barton
- ✦ Saint-Pierre
- ✦ Talbot

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ Moulin Riche

## PAUILLAC THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Pichon Baron
- ✦ Mouton Rothschild
- ✦ Latour
- ✦ Lafite Rothschild
- ✦ Pichon Lalande

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Pontet Canet
- ✦ Lynch Bages
- ✦ Clerc Milon
- ✦ Les Forts de Latour

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ Pibran

## SAINT-ESTÈPHE THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Cos d'Estournel
- ✦ Montrose

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Calon-Ségur
- ✦ Phélan-Ségur

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ La Dame de Montrose
- ✦ Meyney
- ✦ Capbern
- ✦ Le Crock
- ✦ Lillian Ladouys

## SAUTERNES & BARSAC

### THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Suduiraut
- ✦ Lafaurie-Peyraguey

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Climens
- ✦ Coutet
- ✦ Doisy Daëne
- ✦ de Fargues
- ✦ Sigalas Rabaud
- ✦ Rayne Vigneau
- ✦ La Tour Blanche
- ✦ Clos Haut Peyraguey

## BANG FOR BUCK

- ✦ Bastor Lamontagne
- ✦ Doisy-Védrines
- ✦ d'Arche

## DRY WHITES THE BEST WINES

- ✦ Haut Brion
- ✦ La Mission Haut Brion
- ✦ Smith Haut Lafitte
- ✦ Domaine de Chevalier
- ✦ Cos d'Estournel Blanc
- ✦ Pavillon Blanc de Margaux

## EXCELLENT

- ✦ Latour Martillac
- ✦ Malartic La Gravière
- ✦ La Louvière
- ✦ Olivier

## NOT TASTED (YET):

- ✦ Yquem, Petrus, Le Dôme, Troplong Mondot