

# Decanter

## Bordeaux 2014: one to watch

### Right Bank

By James Lawther MW

IT'S AN UNEVEN vintage on the Right Bank in 2014, the key factors for success being soil type, work in the vineyard and a percentage of Cabernet Franc in the blend.

As with the rest of Bordeaux, the Right Bank experienced a reasonably successful flowering, cool, wet July and August, and the saving grace of an Indian summer. But there was more rain than on the Left Bank (particularly in the months of July, August and September) – although it varied by sector – and the earlier-ripening Merlot not only swelled but benefited less from the fortuitous late-season weather.

Hence success in the vintage is closely linked to vineyards on well-drained soils that were able to regulate the water supply – mainly limestone – and good vineyard management. The vine continued to grow through the ripening cycle so there was a constant need for maintenance. Vigilance was also needed for downy mildew.

If it's more of a Cabernet year, it's also a Cabernet Franc year, the grape ripening magnificently in the late-season ➤ sunshine and harvested the second week in October. So expect more Cabernet Franc and even Cabernet Sauvignon in blends.

This doesn't mean to say the Merlot was a write-off. It was largely harvested at will without threat of rot and, within the above-mentioned parameters, there are some very attractive wines. These have an ageing potential of 10 years for the 'petits châteaux' and 20 years or more for those with a more serious aura. Potential buyers should look at Fronsac/Canon-Fronsac and Castillon-Côtes de Bordeaux for early drinking and St-Emilion for wines to cellar.

Stylistically, the wines have attractive fruit, tender tannins, alcohols of 13% to 14.5% and a freshness linked to high acidity and low pH. In other words these are good, classic Bordeaux. They are not as rich and intense as 2009 or 2010, but are better than 2011, 2012 and 2013. Equal to a superior 2012 or a 2008 for the best.

### St-Emilion

LOOK TO THE limestone-based soils for the finest wines this year. The soils coped better with the humidity and the Merlot was able to benefit more from the September heat and sunshine. There's consistency among the premiers grands crus classes (1GCCs) and many grands crus classés (GCCs) produced attractive wines. A few châteaux mistakenly over-extracted but most handled the vintage gently, first sorting the grapes for quality then concentrating by bleeding a percentage of the juice. Producers with more silt and sand in their vineyards tended to have their hand forced regarding harvest and there's a greater chance of dilution, dry tannins and a green edge. The other key element was the quality of Cabernet Franc (and Cabernet Sauvignon) throughout St-Emilion. Those with a good percentage have used a maximum in blends producing wines with greater aromatic complexity, length and finesse of tannin.

#### LAWTHER'S CHOICE: 5 most improved\*

■ Ch Quintus, St-Emilion GC 17.25 (90+) (right) see p39

■ Ch La Marzelle, St-Emilion GCC 16.75 (89) see p39

■ Ch Quinault, l'Enclos, St-Emilion GC 16.5 (88) see p39

■ Ch Siaurac, Lalande-de-Pomerol 16.5 (88) see p42

■ Ch Chauvin, St-Emilion GCC 16.25 (87) see p39

\* These wines may not necessarily be better than in 2013



### Recommended

■ Ch Berliquet GCC 16.75 (89) ■ Ch Grand-Corbin-Despagne GCC 16.75 (89) ■ Ch La Fleur Morange GCC 16.75 (89) ■ Ch La Marzelle GCC 16.75 (89) ■ Ch Le Prieuré GCC 16.75 (89) ■ Ch Villemaurine GCC 16.75 (89) ■ L'If GC 16.75 (89) ■ Petit-Figeac, Ch Figeac 2L 16.75 (89) ■ Carillon de l'Angélus, Ch Angélus 2L 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Balestard-La-Tonnelle GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Barde-Haut GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch de Pressac GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Destieux GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Grand-Pontet GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch La Serre GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Monbousquet GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Monbousquet, Blanc 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Moulin-St-Georges GC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Quinault l'Enclos GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Roi Valentin GC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Soutard GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Clos Badon-Thunevin GC 16.5 (88) ■ Clos des Jacobins GCC 16.5 (88) ■ Clos Dubreuil GC 16.5 (88) ■ Ch Cadet-Bon GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Cap-de-Mourlin GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Chauvin GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch de Ferrand GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Faugères GCC 16.25 (87) ➤ ■ Ch Faurie-de-Souchard GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Fombrage GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Fonroque GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Grand-Corbin GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Grand-Corbin-Manuel GC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Haut-Simard GC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch La Clotte GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch La Tour Figeac GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Laroque GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Laroze GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Lusseau GC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Peby-Faugères GCC 16.25 (87) ■ Ch Teyssier GC 16.25 (87) ■ Clos Cantenac GC 16.25 (87) ■ Clos La Madeleine GCC 16.25 (87) ■ 3 de Valandraud, Ch Valandraud 2L 16 (86) ■ Ch Bellefont-Belcier GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch Carteau Côtes Daugay GC 16 (86) ■ Ch Corbin GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch Côte de Baleau GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch Dassault GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch de Fonbel GC 16 (86) ■ Ch Franc-Mayne GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch Grand Barail Lamarzelle Figeac GC 16 (86) ■ Ch La Couspaude GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch Larmande GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch Moulin-du-Cadet GCC 16 (86) ■ Ch St-Georges-Côte-Pavie GCC 16 (86) ■ Clos de l'Oratoire GCC 16 (86) ■ Saintayme GC 16 (86) ■ Virginie de Valandraud, Blanc, Ch Valandraud 16 (86) ■ Ch Fonplégade GCC 15.75 (85+) ■ Ch Petit-Faurie-de-Soutard GCC 15.75 (85+) ■ Ch Yon-Figeac GCC 15.75 (85+) ■ Clos des Bales GC 15.75 (85+) ■ Le Dragon de Quintus 2L 15.75 (85+) ■ Ch Boutisse GC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Croix de Labrie GC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Daugay GC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Fleur-Cardinale GCC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Haut-Sarpe GCC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch la Commanderie GCC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch La Fleur d'Arthus GC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Laniote GCC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Simard GC 15.5 (85) ■ Ch Trimoulet GC 15.5 (85) ■ Couvent des Jacobins GCC 15.5 (85) ■ La Vieille Dame de Trotte Vieille, Ch Trotte Vieille 2L 15.5 (85) ■ Ch La Fleur GC 15.5 (84) ■ Ch du Parc GC 15 (83) ■ Ch Godeau GC 15 (83) ■ Ch Puy-Blanquet GC 15 (83)