

**En primeur 2014**

## Decanter: Bordeaux 2014 - En primeur in the balance

The Bordeaux 2014 vintage is a key opportunity for chateaux and negociants to re-build the region's weakened reputation with merchants and consumers by proving that the en primeur system can still offer value, argues John Stimpfig.

In 2014, **Bordeaux** could not quite believe its luck. At the end of August, its winemakers faced the prospect of another lacklustre vintage that was looking worryingly similar to 2013. Fortunately, the weather turned. September and October provided the perfect Indian summer and its latest 'miracle' vintage was born.

[As Decanter's scores and tasting notes for Bordeaux 2014 wines show](#), our team of experts was encouraged and impressed by much of what it tasted. However, this is no 2009 or 2010. Nor is it an investment vintage, if such a thing still exists. Instead, it is an extremely good, medium-term drinking vintage which should excite collectors and imbibers alike.

Yet many consumers remain deeply sceptical as to whether to buy the wines now, as futures, or later, when they are safely in bottle. Some are wondering whether to buy them at all.

Of course, much depends on what prices the wines are released at. If Bordeaux's supermodel chateaux collectively price 2014 at the same level or higher than 2013, several UK merchants have already predicted that we will see another moribund campaign. And that in turn could ultimately lead to the system's final disintegration and destruction.

Why is the future of en primeur in the balance? Primarily, because for the past five years – and some would say longer – en primeur simply hasn't worked for all its interested parties. Most obviously, it hasn't worked for the end consumers who bought the wines and subsequently lost money. With a few exceptions, you can buy all of the 2009s to 2013s now at less than their release prices. Moreover, for the past three campaigns, it hasn't worked for the merchants or the negociants. Especially those who are sitting on expensive, unsold stock.

And what about the chateaux? Last year's dismal, over-priced campaign was easily the worst on record. And because of that it damaged not just the en primeur mechanism but the chateaux themselves and, more broadly, the wider reputation of Bordeaux.

Today, Bordeaux's approval rating is at a record low. In spite of the fact that it continues to make wonderful wines, it is now perceived (often wrongly) as too expensive, out of touch and no longer relevant to a growing number of wine lovers. One well-known wine merchant told me that Bordeaux's share of his turnover has crashed from 80% in 2012 to less than 40% today.

It is *Decanter's* view that this existential threat to Bordeaux's hitherto pre-eminent popularity is wrong, misguided and must stop. Rapprochement is urgently required. But Bordeaux has to make the first move, by pricing the 2014s to sell – and sell well. Then the merchants must get behind the vintage and 'brand Bordeaux' to rekindle much needed consumer excitement.

The writing is on the wall. Bordeaux needs to act now before it is too late – not just for en primeur and the 2014s, but for the image and future of the entire region and its magnificent wines.

[See more Bordeaux 2014 coverage:](#)



### **Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande 2014, Pauillac**

#### **Second Growth**

17.5/20pts ( 91/100pts )

Lovely fragrant cassis fruit – quite feminine compared to Pichon-Baron. Though it lacks the depth of some, it is beautifully balanced and a very classy wine. Drink: 2019-2030

Taster: Steven Spurrier

Jancis Robinson OBE MW: 17/20pts



### **Réserve de la Comtesse, Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande 2014, Pauillac**

#### **Second Label**

16.75/20pts ( 89/100pts )

Good supple wine – an open and feminine Pauillac showing lovely juicy fruit that will firm up well. Drink: 2018-2024

Taster: Steven Spurrier

Jancis Robinson OBE MW: 16.5/20pts



### **Château Pétrus 2014, Pomerol**

18.5/20pts ( 95/100pts )

Former winemaker, Jean-Claude Berrouet, likens the growing season to 1978. But 60hl/ha then; 30hl/ha today. Classical and fine with the Merlot providing a Cabernet-like presentation of tannin. Very natural and unforced. Lovely texture and fruit. Long, persistent finish.

Drink: 2022-2045

Taster: James Lawther MW

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### **Château Haut-Beauséjour 2014, St-Estèphe**

16.5/20pts ( 88/100pts )

Good depth and clarity of fruit. An elegant St-Estèphe with finesse.

Drink: 2018-2026

Taster: Steven Spurrier

Jancis Robinson OBE MW: 16/20pts



### **Château de Pez, St-Estèphe**

17/20pts ( 90/100pts )

Very well-expressed St-Estèphe fruit with natural vigour and elegant structure; very good in 2014. Drink: 2019-2029

Taster: Steven Spurrier

Featured in Steven Spurrier's Top Ten St-Estèphe

Jancis Robinson OBE MW: 16/20pts



### **Château Loudenne 2014, Médoc**

**Cru Bourgeois**

16/20pts ( 86/100pts )

Good florality and supple fruit; quite classy as usual.

Drink: 2018-2024

Taster: Steven Spurrier

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