

DECANTER REVIEW -DOMAINE DU SEUIL



Finding Value in the Côtes de Bordeaux. Report by Jane Anson,
Decanter's Bordeaux correspondent



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The Côtes de Bordeaux appellation was created five years ago, back in 2009, when the appellations of Blaye, Cadillac, Castillon and Francs (then Premières Côtes de Bordeaux) chose to group together to market their wine under one common identity. The five years since have seen exports doubling up to 22%, and an increasingly strong identity formed around the family-owned, terroir-driven, usually Merlot-led wines of the Côtes. Today there are nearly 1,000 producers bottling under these appellations, farming an area of 11,000 hectares across the Right Bank of the region and producing around 10% of Bordeaux's overall output per year – 97% of which is red wine.

For this selection, we tasted through almost 200 producers from the four sub-appellations, plus the generic AOC Côtes de Bordeaux, to select around 100 wines, concentrating on the 2012 vintage in red and a selection of the 2013 vintage in white.

The Côtes produce small but high quality amounts of whites wine, concentrated in the Blaye and Francs appellations and made typically from a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Muscadelle. 2013 proved of very good quality for this style of wine, more so for the whites than for the reds, as they escaped the negative effects of late September rains. The best of them have bright, clean fruit flavours and will be perfect for drinking over the next few years

– and offer exceptionally good value. The 2012 vintage for the reds was also a good to very good one, particularly on the Right Bank and perhaps a little underestimated at the time. The acidities are lower than in 2011, and the fruit a little more fleshed out. Now a few years down the line, with all wines in bottle and with tannins softening up, there are plenty of easy drinking, supple and summery bottles that should be enjoyed in the short to medium term.

All of the wines tasted should be available on the market today, either in the UK or direct from the estate. And if you are heading out to Bordeaux to visit, these are châteaux that are worth getting to know in person. Most are family-run and open for visitors, and many are located in the most beautiful spots of the region (côtes means slopes, and several estates are set into valleys or high on escarpments that slope gently down towards the Dordogne or Garonne rivers). Wine tourism is a big deal in the Côtes also, there are local wine festivals held year-round, (Printemps des vins de Blaye, open days in Cadillac and Castillon), and throughout the year the appellations increase the number of events held to show their passion and their know-how with visitors. Vines have been planted in these regions since Roman times, and you will find the landscape dotted with historic châteaux, manor houses, fortesses and UNESCO World Heritage sites such as the Citadelle de Blaye, a military fortress overlooking the Gironde Estuary.

Domaine du Seuil, 2012

16 (86) Recommended

Approx £10 Fine Wines Direct,

www.finewinesdirectuk.com: Virgin Wines,

www.virginwines.co.uk

Nicola and Sean Allison own this estate that clocks in at just under 5ha, 50/50. Tight, good lift, fresh dark fruit structure, vinified in stainless steel then aged 12 months in oak. Very enjoyable, benefits from an hour opening before drinking. 13%abv. **Drink** 2015-2019.

