



Above: Château du Seuil, among Graves' top white names

a high percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2008 (my favourite red at a tasting of 60 wines in February this year, see tasting panel, right), boasting 75% in the blend.

Another Cabernet Sauvignon enthusiast is Arnaud de Butler at Château Crabitey in Portets. His father ran and replanted the 30ha vineyard for the previous owners, a religious order, from 1985 until 1999, when Arnaud took over the management. He acquired the property in 2008. At present the vineyard has a higher percentage of Merlot but he is steadily increasing the Cabernet Sauvignon which, in the top selection, Grand Vin de Château Crabitey, represents 70% of the blend. There are 80,000 bottles of this wine produced annually and de Butler feels that this could be doubled if the market was willing to follow.

Good dry white wines can be found throughout the Graves, and given the present demand there's room for an increase in production. Styles vary from the richer, more complex barrel-fermented offerings to crisper, unoaked bottlings. There's also the question of blend, a dominance of Sauvignon Blanc giving a more upfront, aromatic style; and a greater percentage of Semillon a subtle, citrusy character which gains in complexity with bottle age.

Clos Floridène and Chateau de Chantegrive lead the way when it comes to white Graves. Others of interest include Châteaux La Fleur Jonquet, Magneau and Seuil, as well as a motivated group of producers in the south near Langon comprising Châteaux Brondelle, Léhou, Pont de Brion, Respide and Toumilon.

Progress may have been modestly paced, but it is constant. Lovers of classic claret would do well to keep pace with the revival. **D**

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Photograph: Nigel Ibbett/Cephas

Lawther's top Graves

A dozen bottles, both white and red, that show off the region at its best

White

Château de Chantegrive, Caroline

2009 ★★★★★ 16.5pts/20

£13.50 (2007) **Excel**

Pale gold hue. Expressive, aromatic nose. Mandarin, citrus and vanilla-oak notes. Palate rich, punchy and perfumed. Plenty of extract. Clean, dry finish. **Drink:** 2011–2014. **Alc:** 13%

Château Pont de Brion 2009

★★★★ 16.5

£12.75 **Jascots**

Good depth and intensity on the nose. Pure citrus aromas. Fine texture and taste on the palate. Layered fruit, well-integrated oak. Nice complexity and balance. **Drink:** 2011–2014. **Alc:** 13%



Clos Floridène 2009

★★★★ 16.5

£24 (2008) **OW Loeb**

Pale hue. Tight and reserved at present. Floral aromas. Very pure. Fresh, long and linear on the palate. Minerally nuance. Harmonious. **Drink:** 2012–2018. **Alc:** 13.5%

Château du Seuil 2009 ★★★ 16

£13.40 (2005) **Matthew Clark**

Finely crafted. Pear and citrus aromas and flavour. Good acidity for the vintage. Fresh and long.

Drink: 2011–2014. **Alc:** 12.5%

Château Toumilon 2009 ★★★ 15

£10 **Alex Riley Wines**

Pale, almost translucent colour. Gentle pear and floral aromas and flavour. Moderate complexity but clean, fresh and minerally on the finish.

Drink: 2011–2014. **Alc:** 12.5%

Red

Château Haura 2008

★★★★ 17

£19.75 (2006) **Vinoteca**

Modern Graves. Deep, bright colour. Elegant berry fruit nose with a touch of well-integrated oak. Beautiful fruit and balance on the palate. Fresh and clean with fine, ripe tannins on the finish.

Drink: 2011–2018. **Alc:** 13.5%



Château des Fougères

Clos Montesquieu, La Folie

2008 ★★★★★ 16.5

N/A UK contact@chateaudesfougères.fr

chateaudesfougères.fr

Deep colour. Lovely fruit expression. Blackcurrant notes. Attractive, medium-bodied wine with fine tannins. Long, fresh finish.

Drink: 2012–2018. **Alc:** 13.5%

Vieux Château Gaubert 2008

★★★★ 16.5

£15 **Montrachet Fine Wines**

Ripe, dark fruit aromas with chocolate, coffee notes. Palate elegant, savoury with a fine, fresh tannic frame.

Balanced. **Drink:** 2012–2018. **Alc:** 13%

Château Ferrande 2008 ★★★ 16

£16.99 **Nicolas**

Deep, dense colour. Expressive nose of ripe fruit and integrated toasted oak. Supple and rich on attack.

Balanced by fresh, crunchy tannins.

Drink: 2012–2018. **Alc:** 13.5%

Grand Enclos du Château de

Cérons 2008 ★★★ 16

N/A UK www.le-grand-enclos.com

Good colour. Zesty, blackcurrant aroma and flavour. Round, warm and succulent on attack. Firm but fine tannins on the finish. **Drink:** 2012–2018.

Alc: 13%



Château Villa Bel-Air 2008

★★★ 15.5

£15.83 (2006)

Lay & Wheeler

Good deep colour. Nose fresh and aromatic with red and dark fruit notes. Palate firm and savoury with smoky, mineral character.

Grippy tannins. **Drink:**

2011–2018. **Alc:** 13%

Grand Vin de Château Crabitey 2007

★★★ 15.5

£15.83 (2004) **Uncorked**

Deep colour. Savoury, dark fruit nose with a touch of complexity. Palate light and round but with fresh, minerally tannins. Lots of blackcurrant. Very Graves. **Drink:** 2011–2014. **Alc:** 13%

For full list of UK stockists, turn to p136.