



B O R D E A U X V I N S S E L E C T I O N

# 2021: A WINEMAKER'S VINTAGE



Viticulture is a school of hard knocks. This vintage wouldn't let us forget it, with successive waves of challenges: frost, mildew, botrytis. Many fears, doubts, even tears. Lost or frustratingly diminished harvests. Many April nights were as intense as the days, as constantly mobilized winegrowers had to be vigilant, patient and obstinate. However, with careful observation and ever-more precise interventions, they have been able to overcome this troublesome vintage that caused so much suffering. The 2021 vintage is undoubtedly one marked by resilience, thanks to the skills employed and to the beautiful weather at the end of the season that completed the ripening of the grapes. We feared the worst, and the best happened... On both sides of the Garonne, there are successes to be found.

## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## A RAINY START AND A COLD SPRING

As in the previous year, 2021 started off with a very wet winter, with a historically mild February (+2.49°C compared to the ten-year average). Water reserves were replenished by the abundant winter rainfall. Consequently, an early and rapid budbreak occurred in mid-March, after which dry and mild weather set in. The 31st was the warmest day ever recorded in March since 1900. In the vineyards, the buds began to come out. Everyone wondered: could it be summer already? Then, a change of scene as dramatic as on an opera stage: winter suddenly returned on April 5th. The weather forecast announced a cold snap that would last several nights. Some properties choose to rush their work on the soil, to weed the rows to help dry out the most fragile plots. Others equipped themselves with candles, braziers, heaters, windmills, even helicopters to stir the air and maintain a little heat between the rows. The nights of April 6 and 7 stressed the whole region, as exceptionally cold temperatures mobilized everyone to the vineyards. All the Bordeaux appellations were affected. The winegrowers were exhausted, as they waited for the results of their efforts.

The next stage of the vine lifecycle was slowed by a cold spring (- 1.6°C on average compared to previous years). The first flowers appeared around May 24. Another source of concern arose: the combination of low temperatures and frequent rain impacted fruit set, causing coulure to be a concern for some, along with the first attacks of mildew. Mid-May to mid-July were two months of intense rainfall, with thunderstorms in June. The difficult singularity of the 2021 vintage: record rainfall that reached levels rarely observed in Gironde: 380 mm recorded from May 1st to July 15th, vs. 170 mm on average. This climate increased the disease pressure in the vineyards, not just from mildew but also from black rot. For many winegrowers, these were the worst sanitary conditions they faced in the last 20 years. In order to facilitate the ripening of the grapes and to reduce disease, targeted leaf thinning was practiced until late in the season.

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### AN UNCERTAIN SUMMER

Finally, the sun came back in mid-July. Finally, the mercury rose. Veraison started slowly, as until mid-August the vine lacked heat and light. Pruning efforts were redoubled. Alarmingly, even at the end of August, the grapes still tasted bland and watery.

### A MIRACULOUS AUTUMN

In the first two weeks of September, the summer weather lingered, bringing joy to the winegrowers. The Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon grapes completed their ripening under ideal conditions; their skins took on a pretty amber hue and citrus notes. Picking began at the beginning of September. Fifteen days later, the Semillon was harvested and presented a pleasant texture and richness. For the red grapes, there were more concerns: the high temperatures combined with ten days of ominous weather forecasts threatened the integrity of the grapes. Some chose to harvest, others preferred to wait in spite of the threat of storms. It must be said that the work accomplished throughout the year, both in the preparation of the soil and the vine, considerably reduced the effects of excess rainfall and a lack of light. Almost the entire month of September was hot, with high temperatures not observed since 1911. Daytime (+1.6°C) and night-time (+2.5°C) temperatures were well above the average of the last thirty years.

### HARVESTING AT THE RIGHT TIME

For many, the focus was to push the gustatory and phenolic maturities as much as possible, to tone down the high acidity and vegetal notes. However, the decision to wait to pick was not an easy one, as at the same time the threat of botrytis was rapidly increasing, which risks decreasing yields. Thanks to the extreme vigilance and dedication of the personnel, very little damage occurred. The teams passed through the vineyards multiple times, working weekdays and weekends alike. For the great majority of the properties on both sides of the river, the first Merlot grapes were harvested at the end of September.



## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



October was a beneficial month: the alternation of warm days (over 20°C) and cool nights (under 10°C) allowed for greater concentration and aromatic qualities. The skins became more refined and the seeds lost their bitterness. Generally, the remaining Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon were picked starting on October 4th.

## MINIMALIST INTERVENTIONS IN THE CELLAR

Another nice surprise: the raw material that went into the vats was of usually high quality, as a drastic selection of the grapes was vital. In the cellar, gentle extractions were used at the beginning of fermentation, followed by a few infusions during post-fermentation maceration to structure the mid-palate. Others used only light pump-overs and punch downs. The common goal was to preserve the delicacy of the fruit and tannins. Careful, thoughtful blending did the rest.

## A HAPPY ENDING

The grapes that make up the wines before us had to escape many chances for destruction. They survived in spite of frost, coulure and disease. Furthermore, the tastings so far have proved that despite these successive challenges, the results are lovely. The Merlots are sweet, fruity and rich, while the Cabernet Sauvignon has an appealing freshness and intensity, with moderate alcohol levels. Certainly, there is not the flesh and density of the 2019s and 2020s, but the vintage, with its classic aesthetic, is charming, pretty, and full of promise.

The 2021 vintage is above all a victory of man against nature.

## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

### Jean-Sébastien Philippe, International Director Châteaux at Domaines Barons de Rothschild

“Everything about this vintage was about resilience and agility, essentially in monitoring the health of the vines following the maturation process. No room for error. I would say that 2021 is a vintage without a filter, without make-up. Unquestionably, it is a winemaker's vintage that happily surprised us during the tastings: fresh, with a beautiful acidity, with excellence balance, and a grace and depth typical of the 1990s. A classic but charming aesthetic. In the vats, we find the magic of the great terroirs, especially the early ripening terroirs. It is a vintage that is also distinguished by more moderate degrees of alcohol, unlike the 2018, 2019, 2020 vintages.

A vintage of decisions, in the date of the harvest, the length of vatting and maturation, and the choice of the blend: it was necessary to discard less qualitative lots to preserve the excellence of the Grand Vin, which will lead to lower volumes. On the left bank, contrary to other neighbouring properties, we have chosen to harvest early to preserve the health of the vineyard and the aromatic freshness.

At Lafite, it is clearly a vintage for Cabernet Sauvignon; the Merlot, more delicate, suffered from the rain. At Évangile, the great terroirs of the Pomerol plateau (clay and gravel) stood out. For the first time, the proportion of Cabernet Franc reached 30% in the final blend. It is a floral, elegant wine, with a ‘Burgundian’ spirit, which seduces with its crispness, its tannins of a crazy precision, and its absolutely exceptional raciness.

2021 reminds us of the 1996 vintage both in the phases of the vintage (an early budburst, a late and complicated flowering, a summer that took a long time to come, a maturation in August) and the tasting profile: balance, tannic structure, elegance.”



## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...



### Jean Garandeau, sales director of Château Latour

"[2021 is] a vintage in adversity, with many ups and downs in the vegetative progress and a difficult pressure of mildew we had to fight. In organic and biodynamic viticulture, we don't have the same weapons as in conventional viticulture. Consequently, our teams had to show reactivity and sacrifice. Their interventions were not easy. The rain came for a long time, with a very wet May, an intensely rainy June (140 mm of precipitation) and, even worse, showers in September during the harvest. In order to eradicate botrytis, we were forced to make a drastic selection of the berries, as the raw material had to be impeccable. Harvesting under Covid made the organization even more complex and cut into this beautiful conviviality.



In conclusion, it was a very trying vintage for our teams, whose nerves were put to the test. On the other hand, the work in the vat room was done as close as possible to the identity of each vat. The consolation of a not very generous harvest can be found in the glass. The wines are fine, slender, and complete, with a good balance between alcohol and acidity. The subtle and inimitable grace of a great terroir is still at work."

## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

### François Despagne, owner of Château Grand Corbin-Despagne

"What a comfort to taste this 2021 vintage after so many scares! Certainly, one of the most difficult vintages due to a succession of climatic hazards. First of all, the threat of frost during the first two weeks of April. The 7th and 8th of April will be remembered for the mercury, which was roughly  $-1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the lower part of the vineyard. Our teams were solicited in the dead of night, most often from two o'clock in the morning, to fight against the bite of the frost. Windmills, hot air generators... In the end, we were only slightly affected: 50 vines with curled leaves out of 160,000 vines. A huge relief.

Second test: the flowering, very complicated in the northwest part of Saint-Emilion bordering Pomerol, with an important coulure on our old Merlots in the first days of June. The pollination did not go well because of the cool temperatures and resulted in a 50% loss of harvest on the old vines. Finally, the abundant rainfall from mid-June (100 mm of water between the last ten days of June and the first of July) generated a strong parasite pressure and complicated the interventions in the vineyard.

We have resumed the oldest traditions and carried out treatments with machines on our backs. How can we not congratulate our winegrowers, always reactive, always courageous? The invading fungus caused a 5% drop in yield. The lack of sunshine was fortunately counterbalanced by a low load on the vines and allowed a very good ripening of the grapes.

CHATEAU  
GRAND CORBIN-DESPAGNE  
SAINT-EMILION GRAND CRU  
SAINT-EMILION



Consorts Despagne  
PROPRIÉTAIRE À SAINT-EMILION





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## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

In spite of all these climatic ups and downs, the Cabernet Franc grapes did very well as they were not affected by the frost and were not very sensitive to coulure or mildew. Their yield is almost normal. The other nice surprise of this vintage is the quality of the wines. Initial concerns have given way to enthusiasm: a great, classic Bordeaux, with chiselled tannins, a pleasant freshness, and reasonable alcohol levels.

Undeniably, it is a more oceanic than Mediterranean vintage. The only shadow: a half-sized harvest, which makes the management of a family estate even more difficult. Another observation: in the past, climatic incidents occurred every 10 years, but for the last few years three vintages out of eight have experienced significant drops in volume.”



## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

### Guillaume Pouthier, director of Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion



“A vintage of the All Blacks, a reference that speaks for itself in our region where oval sports, a unique blend of strength and beauty, is like a second religion. Throughout the year, we had to fight against nature. The slightest inattention could have dramatic repercussions. If we rested on our laurels, Mother Nature would not forget us. Of course, we are not all equal when faced with climatic disturbances: the best drained and exposed terroirs react differently to frost... these places are blessed by the Gods! After the frost, we had to fight cryptogamic diseases, including the dreaded mildew. And, finally, the strong pressure of the grape leaf hopper, which causes a browning of the leaves. The necroses were ones that we did not believe we would see again in the vineyards of Bordeaux.

We saw struggles and we saw victories, thanks to the work done in the vineyard, not just throughout the seasons, but for many years. The effects of the frost have been considerably reduced by vines that are balanced in their supply of potassium and nitrogen, giving healthier growth and more resistance to various diseases. It is true that in Bordeaux we only make good wines; and each year, we only have to make minutious, careful adjustments. Therefore, we chose to multiply the passages through the same parcel, as they do in Sauternes. The drastic selection of the berries erased the possible hazards of an excess of hygrometry combined with average temperatures. Then, there was the famous change on October 2nd and 3rd; rain was forecast but, in the end, very little water fell. This was followed by 15 days of good weather with significant temperature variations which allowed the late Merlot (on clay-limestone) and the Cabernets to reach full maturity.

It was a vintage shaped by viticultural, geographical and human parameters. Each château will share their results with its own point of view. There is only one way to decide between them: come and taste them!”

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## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

**Bernard Magrez, owner of Châteaux Pape Clément, Fombrauge, La Tour Carnet, Clos Haut-Peyraguey, Les Grands Chênes**



“2021 is vintage, as everyone knows, marked by several climatic setbacks: frost, rain and drought. At Pape Clément, we had an intensely rainy period, with up to 1,250 mm of rainfall. And, in the end, the vintage has had a happy ending because we benefited from a sunny end of the season, particularly during the harvest. Thanks to Michel Rolland's expertise, we harvested as late as possible and of course at the right time. Ripening was successful, which explains the quality of the grapes harvested and the taste profile of the vintage. If some deplore the heterogeneity of the grapes, we are pleased with the level of our white and red wines. Brightness, elegance, harmony. And we hope to achieve a good release during the primeurs, and this for several reasons, as like the négociants, we have no more stock, and the world demand is extraordinarily strong.



The great wines of Bordeaux confirm their attractiveness in France and abroad, multiplied tenfold by the efficiency of a unique commercial organization that has reinvented itself in a restrictive health and financial context.”

## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

### Nicolas Glumineau, director of Château Pichon Comtesse

“A challenging vintage, as the English say! It was particularly so for us, especially during this first year of conversion to organic farming. We have reached a milestone, with firm conviction and the feeling of having better control over our farming practices. This mastery can be explained by ten years of intense work and reflection, starting with the in-depth restructuring of the vineyard. Pedological studies have allowed us to adapt grape varieties and rootstocks to the different parcel identities (uprooting and replanting in favour of Cabernet Sauvignon). Not to mention the revision of our viticultural practices: pruning methods, plant cover, agroecology (5.5 total linear kilometres of hedge plantations on the Pichon plots). The 2024 vintage will be officially certified organic.

2021 was painful but edifying: one always learns in difficulty. We must salute the ‘superhuman’ mobilization of our workers who worked tirelessly and urgently to contain the parasite pressure and obtain honourable yields. Cabernet Sauvignon, the majority grape variety, has singularly distinguished itself. In the end, our wines have many charms: power, elegance, tannic structure in perfect balance with very complex aromas. After a pure and generous fruit, a waltz of mineral and citrus notes.

This 2021 vintage, which has so often played with the nerves of the winemakers, was marked by a dichotomy: the urgency of the first six months and the serenity of the late season. It showed us once again that viticulture remains a school of humility.”

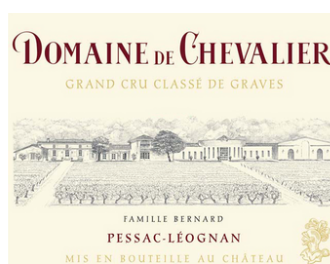




## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...



### Olivier Bernard, owner of Domaine de Chevalier

“A complicated vintage! But the whites and reds are nevertheless with great class. This 2021 vintage at Domaine de Chevalier will remain in the annals for two reasons. First of all, a chaotic climatic season, with 7 spring frosts, 320mm of rain between May and June and finally mildew on grapes in July! A perfect training for all our vineyards that are on the road to organic farming! Then, an extraordinary autumn, as much for the maturity as for the harvest, which allowed us to produce two very beautiful successes for both white wine as red. September, the month for white grapes, was mild and clement, completing the maturity of the Sauvignon Blancs and Semillons. They gained in power, in aromatic intensity, in finesse of flavours, while keeping a freshness essential to their balance. October, the month for red grapes, was blessed with a huge anticyclone: fully sunny, windy, dry and cool. Such conditions nipped any grey rot in the bud and ensured the best possible ripeness, especially for the Cabernet Sauvignon, the king of our gravel-based terroir.

As for the white wines, we can speak of a great success, with a satisfactory yield (40hl/ha). Harvested between 13/09 and 24/09, our white grape varieties today express purity, density, freshness, great aromatic brightness and a racy structure, worthy of the great vintages. The reds have been heightened by magnificent Cabernet Sauvignons, with a yield of 30hl/ha. Picked between the 6 of October to the 15th, the emblematic grape variety of our gravelly soils benefited from a record amount of sunshine during the first two weeks of October to refine its maturity. It is of a superb quality: aromatic brightness, very fine fruity flesh, racy and refined, elegant tannic structure and great class. This great red wine of 2021, with almost 80% of Cabernet Sauvignon in its blend, will be a milestone in the history of Domaine de Chevalier.”



## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

**Julien Viaud, consulting Oenologist & Agronomist  
Associate of Laboratoire Rolland & Associés**



"2021, the story of an eventful journey! The beginning of the vegetative cycle of 2021 was eventful to say the least. Frost once again hit the vineyard. The capricious and fluctuating weather conditions of spring made the winegrowers shudder. But the happy weather of the later season offered a great opportunity to finish this vintage with panache.

Mid-August marked the final phase of grape colouring, with a significant deficit of heat and light cumulating since the end of June. The grapes, like many other fruits, are still bland and watery at the end of August. The pulp is overflowing with acidity and water. The skins lack taste. At this stage, the grapes are simply not ripe enough to offer wines of character, which combine the velvety texture, concentration, and freshness typical of what we want in Bordeaux wines.

In spite of this, and as is often the case in Bordeaux, the weather conditions of the autumn - and particularly the month of October - positively changed the vintage. The sun and the heat erased the herbaceous and vegetal notes that we had observed only a few weeks earlier. The skins became thinner and more delicate. The pips lost their bitterness and gained in maturity.

## BORDEAUX VINS SÉLECTION 波爾多精選佳釀



## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"This year, patience and level-headedness were required to reach the right level of maturity. The best Merlot and Cabernet were harvested with a smile and under the sun from the end of September.

In the cellar, we were careful as we worked with levels of maturity that were not excessive. We tried to reconcentrate the juices; we worked with very soft extractions at the beginning of the fermentations. We played with post-fermentation macerations: we let them infuse and built up the mouthfeel by varying the duration of infusion and the intensity of the extractions of the marcs. What guided us then was the desire to preserve the charm of the fruit that we had when we tasted the grapes in October. We wanted to find a charming tannic structure, without looking for a power that was not naturally present. This is what characterizes the 2021 vintage!"



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## 2021 IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

### Michel Rolland, oenologist-consultant



“By the time I reached my 49th harvest, I thought I had seen it all and I was wrong. So many difficult episodes in the same vintage is not common! The early budding could have augured a vintage of great quality, as has so often been the case in history. But the devastating spring cold was going to ruin our hopes and make the whole sector sweat. Some defended themselves against the frost, others resigned themselves to observing the damage done. The last week of May we saw an early flowering, weakened after the frost episode, with coulure and millerandage. From June to July 14th, it was cold, with a lot of rain. Fortunately, September was mild, but still again punctuated by numerous rainstorms. With the month of October, an Indian summer set in; however, the botrytis pressure remained important.

The human performance in the vineyard and the precise work in the cellars allowed us to finish this real battle in a serene way. The results are more than satisfactory, even if we deplore a great heterogeneity which gives, more than ever, meaning and logic to the Primeurs week. Tasting is always the best way to get an idea of the quality of the vintage.”