

Finding Bordeaux AOC gems in challenging vintages

2017 may not be in the same category as top red Bordeaux vintages like 2005, 2010, 2015 or 2016, but one can find excellent values. A terrible late April frost wiped out at least 40% of the potential crop: the lowest quantity of red Bordeaux produced since 1991. The frost damage was so widespread that the government allocated funds to help estates that had been especially hard hit. Public spending helped pay for new vine plantings to replace those destroyed by frost, for example.

But for properties that were able to make wine, many 2017 reds are ripe, bright and smooth, as the tasting notes show. International wine consultant and harvest observer Bill Blatch said it best: many have an "underlying gentle nature" that brings forth "charm, moderate alcohol levels and pleasing aromatics". Some with more noticeable tannins will require another year in bottle before optimal drinking.

While frost was the culprit in 2017, aggressive mildew hit vineyards in 2018. Furthermore, a summer hailstorm devastated some vineyards, too. What mattered most for producers who successfully managed the mildew and escaped the hail was the dry and rather hot summer and harvest period that led to splendid reds. The high temperatures with dry weather conditions were excellent for being rot-free, as well, but proved more challenging for a lack of enough balancing acidity for many dry whites, which seem to lack the panache and balance of the 2017 vintage and the zingy energy of 2014, 2010 and 2008.

However, vintners who picked earlier or harvested grapes from colder soils were able to retain freshness, crafting better-than-expected whites. Colder clay soils especially retained enough acidity to bring about fine whites with body and enough energy, as the tasting notes attest. And the prices are more than promising.

WINES TO TRY Whites 2018

Bordeaux Revolution, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 90

Up to £10 www.producta-vignobles.com
100% Sauvignon Blanc. Lovely brightness, and a nose of ripe, juicy expressions of morning grapefruit! The wine has a mouth filling appeal that is not heavy in any way. The dry heat of 2018? Not an issue. Bravo to David Hohnen of Cloudy Bay in New Zealand, who vinified this wine in its first year of production for the vintage 2018. Only £9 suggested retail in the UK market, but not yet officially listed. Look out for it. **Drink** Until 2023

Château Bel Air Perponcher, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 90

£10 [The Wine Society, the Internation Exhibition Co-operative](http://TheWineSociety.com)
85% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Sémillon, 5% Muscadelle. One of the top wines of the tasting, with white apricot, ripe pear, and decent mid palate density. With admirable freshness and lift on the finish, the wine works



well with steamed or grilled fish. The owner, Vignobles Despagne, is responsible for six properties in Bordeaux spanning 300 hectares and is known for taking excellent care of its vines. At under £10 per bottle, you cannot go wrong. **Drink** Until 2023

Château de Bonhoste, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 [Hourlier Wines, Bloombury Wine](http://HourlierWines.com)
60% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Sémillon, 10% Muscadelle. I like the salinity to the aromas here. The fruit is crispy and pure, especially for a dry and hot vintage like 2018. A certain density makes this fit to match you dinner. Nice job! **Drink** Until 2022

Château de Marsan, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 [Ellis Wine \(London\)](http://EllisWine.com)
60% Sauvignon, 40% Sémillon. Superb balance between 60% Sauvignon Blanc and 40% Sémillon, as the wine delivers both freshness and creaminess. Medium plus body with vivid fruit driven flavors makes for a superior by-the-glass Bordeaux white selection for restaurants looking for savvy purchases. Also worth noting is that the estate boasts the coveted Haute Valeur Environnementale ("High Environmental Value") certification, which even many classified wines lack, in its commitment to sustainable viticulture. Bravo! **Drink** Until 2022

Château d'Haurets, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

[Vignobles Ducourt](http://VignoblesDucourt.com)
95% Sauvignon Blanc, 3% Muscadelle 2% Sémillon. Svelte and even creamy on the palate, with fresh croissant aroma. Nicely balanced by grapefruit citrus on the palate, with enough tonic lift on the finish. Not only did cooler clays help in retaining freshness but the owners have a wide variety of vines, which no doubt helped them to craft a fine white in this challenging vintage.

At under £10 a bottle retail, UK buyers should take notice. **Drink** Until 2021

Château Le Gardera "Le Ruisseau", AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 [Ellis Wine \(London\)](http://EllisWine.com)
100% Sauvignon Blanc. Very agreeable expression of 100% Sauvignon Blanc that is certified organic. Pure expressions of lime, grapefruit and iodine, that come across rather creamy on the palate. Medium to full body but with vivacity. **Drink** Until 2022

Château Pierrail, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 [Booths](http://Booths.com)
70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Sauvignon Gris. Pink grapefruit aromatics precede a palate smooth and fresh, with suggestions of mango, citrus and stone fruit. Frank attack on the palate with subtle opulence. One of best of nearly 90 white Bordeaux AOC tasted. There is a noble white pepper aspect to the finish. **Drink** Until 2023

Château Tour de Mirambeau, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 [Ratcliffe and Brown](http://RatcliffeandBrown.com)
80% Sauvignon Blanc, 17% Sémillon and 3% Muscadelle. What creamy smoothness without being glossy or "modern"! This wine is a success for the vintage, evoking white peaches dripping with juice on your palate. The finish is smooth with lift. Enjoy with broiled salmon or even roasted veal. **Drink** Until 2023

Château La Verriere, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 [Jascot](http://Jascot.com)
www.chateaulaverriere.com
100% Sauvignon Blanc. This estate is proving to be regularly successful, as it manages to

convey freshness in a hot and dry vintage. The Sauvignon Blanc is bright and round in expression. While a vintage like 2016 may be more successful, I find this satisfying. **Drink** Until 2021

Château Belle Garde, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 [Lea & Sanderman](http://LeaandSanderman.com)
80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sémillon. Very bright and fruit driven with mid palate sap. The medium body makes it accessible for easy summer drinking. Lovely. **Drink** Until 2021

Château Bellevue, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

www.famille-damecourt.com
50% Sauvignon Blanc, 46% Sémillon, 3% Columbard and 1% Merlot Blanc. Like taking a bite out of a juicy peach, this wine has sap and fun. Medium bodied but with a certain creamy texture that makes it a good match for fish in a cream sauce. **Drink** Until 2021

Château Closiot, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 [Farr Vintners](http://FarrVintners.com)
50% each of Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc. Nice freshness here, with both white apricot and some citrus aspects. The palate shows grip and tension for the vintage. Lovely. **Drink** Until 2022

Château de la Vieille Tour, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

www.boissonneau.fr
30% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sauvignon gris, 40% Sémillon, 10% Muscadelle. This 100% organic wine has freshness and purity, with no oxidative notes. Indeed, it reflects a certain tropical aspect of the vintage, with pineapple notes as well as

juicy, ripe breakfast grapefruit, coming from the 30% Sauvignon Blanc. Not quite as good as the 2017 that I tasted last year, but a very good wine for the vintage. If you ever visit, the winemaker also makes fine craft beers at his estate. **Drink** Until 2021

Château des Antonins, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£12.90 [The Sampler](http://TheSampler.com)
80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sémillon. Like biting into a juicy red apple, this wine has vivacity and succulence in a hot and arid vintage. The 20% Sémillon lends opulence, and the finish is longer and brighter than many other whites tasted for this article. Lees stirring in stainless steel lends richness, but no oaky notes. A top wine, as the relatively high price reflects. **Drink** Until 2022

Château Grand Jean, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

www.vignobles-dulon.com
70% Sémillon 30% Sauvignon. The cold clays and freshening limestone soils from this producer have ensured a lovely white, with stone fruit that is pure in expression. The 70% Sémillon is round, but not overripe or heavy, as the wine has energy and lift for the vintage. Another wine that UK buyers should seek, as should retail for under £8. **Drink** Until 2022

Château Jean Faux "Sainte Radegonde", AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

Up to £15 [Bon Coeur Fine Wines](http://BonCoeurFineWines.com)
80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sémillon. I like the juicy mid palate even if the aromas are somewhat reserved. This wine is impressive for an opulent palate of juicy melon and clementine orange. The talented



Stéphan Derenoncourt has been consulting here since 2003. A nice choice for lobster and butter. **Drink** Until 2022

Chateau La Peyruche,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89
www.chateau-lapeyruche.com

90% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Sémillon. What a lovely expression of bright Sauvignon Blanc that thoroughly charms you. The palate shows subtle opulence and a certain depth. Partial aging in oak lends a touch of toast that is so well integrated. This is a by-the-glass selection that will impress clients (and make restaurants happy, because the wine is not pricey). Bravo! **Drink** Until 2021

Chateau Lamothe de Haux,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 **Rodney Densem Wines**
40% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Sémillon, 20% Muscadelle. Excellent grip and ripe fruit, with a fine balance between the 40% each of Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon. The nose combines floral with white peach and touches of pear. Medium bodied and rather refined in expression. Lemon infused roasted organic chicken would work well with this! **Drink** Until 2021

Château Lamothe-Vincent Intense,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 **The Real Wine Company**
100% Sauvignon Blanc. Sap driven fruit, but also a pronounced Old World earthiness that makes this ideal for your cheese plate. I like the medium plus body and salinity on the finish. Nice! **Drink** Until 2021

Château Le Grand Verdu,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 **Robert Rolls**
60% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Sémillon, 10% Muscadelle. An excellent expression of wet stone like minerality. The palate is nuanced and ripe and fresh. The 30% Sémillon lends body while the Sauvignon Blanc adds a needed energy for the dry heat of the 2018 summer. The 10% Muscadelle gives some floral aspects. Medium finish. If you grill fish on the barbecue, this is a good match. **Drink** Until 2021

Chateau Panchille Blanc de Fernand,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10 **Ben van de meutter**
50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Sémillon. I love the nuanced body to this wine, which manages iodine freshness with robust citrus and white stone fruit. A wine that will



pair well with your pork chops, preferably with a fruit like sauce (apricot or mango) given its palate weight. The finish has freshness. Lovely! **Drink** Until 2022

Château Roquefort,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89
www.chateau-roquefort.com

85% Sauvignon Blanc and 15% Sémillon. Very crisp for the vintage, this has both lemon and lime freshness and does not feel "acidified" in any way. There is a refreshing medium bodied palate, and a fresh finish. Easy to imagine this with Aquitaine oysters. **Drink** Until 2021

Château Turcaud Cuvée Majeure,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 **Caves de Pierre**
46% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Sauvignon Gris, 14% Sémillon. Well, why not say "Force Majeure", which can be translated as "superior strength". At 14.5% alcohol, this wine has oomph but is not hot from the vintage. There seems enough acidity for balance, without denying its richness. Try with fettuccini and parmesan cheese with mushrooms in a cream sauce. I like the ripe fruit. **Drink** Until 2021

DSA du Domaine de Saint Amand,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

www.domainedesaintamand.fr
60% Sauvignon Blanc and 40% Sémillon. Pleasantly intriguing aromas of shaved almonds, Indian tonic and citrus. The palate displays fine energy for the vintage, with a smooth and never "varietal" expression of 60% Sauvignon Blanc, with 40% Sémillon adding depth and contour. Excellent! **Drink** Until 2022

Légende Bordeaux White,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

£10-15 **Ocado.com**
55% Sauvignon Blanc, 45% Sémillon. Subtle aromas of citrus, albeit a hint of reduction. I like the sap filled palate, which then explodes with vibrant lemon, undeniably dominated at this early stage by the Sauvignon Blanc. But the Sémillon lends density to the palate, which is noticed especially on the finish. Perfect with barbecued fish. **Drink** Until 2022

Les Hauts de Lagarde,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 89

www.maison-raymond.vin
60% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Sémillon. The bottle proudly proclaims "made with organic grapes" and the wine is well balanced, evincing ripe white stone fruit, white flower and lime. For the vintage, the acidity is good enough for goat cheese and charcuterie. **Drink** Until 2021

Arsius, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

www.ugbordeaux.fr
66% Sauvignon Blanc, 22% Muscadelle, 7% Sémillon, 5% Ugni Blanc. Crispy fruit here, a pleasing performance for the vintage, with a bright attack of grapefruit flavors. The smooth mid palate leads to a medium, satisfying finish. This makes for a good by the glass selection, as the 22% Muscadelle lends a rather floral note to the experience. **Drink** Until 2020

Cap Royal, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10 **Bibendum**
100% Sauvignon Blanc. Lovely white made under the direction of Jean-René Matignon, the director at Château Pichon Baron in Pauillac. A very balanced expression of 100% Sauvignon Blanc, with freshness and medium body. I like the citrus lift on the finish. Enjoy with fillet of cod! **Drink** Until 2021

C'est la vie, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

www.chateau-malbat.com
100% Sémillon. At 100% Sémillon, the nose is a tad reduced but the palate shows fine body and dry extract, with enough gastronomic richness to match veal in a cream sauce. **Drink** Until 2023

Château Argadens,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

www.sichel.fr
65% Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Sémillon. The Sémillon displays lovely dry extract for the wine, with a certain serious weight. The acidity is enough to lend lift. **Drink** Until 2022

Château Freybernat,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10-15 **Anthony Byrne Fine wines**
60% Sémillon, 40% Muscadelle. Very floral in expression due to the ripe Muscadelle. The palate shows fine grip and better than some higher priced wines I tried en primeur with Muscadelle. Early drinking pleasure with low acidity, a nice job! **Drink** Until 2021

Château Gandoy Perrinat 1281,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

[//maisonlestar.com](http://maisonlestar.com)
100% Sauvignon Blanc. Clementines on both the aromatics and the palate! A very agreeable wine by the glass selection that would please consumers of riper forms of Sauvignon Blanc. **Drink** Until 2020

Château Gayon,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

www.chateau-gayon.com
50% each of Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris. Give the wine some air, as the nose is reductive, but the palate has fine dry extract and body. Maybe a tad warm on the finish? But overall, a very solid white with mouth filling juice. **Drink** Until 2021

Château La Freynelle,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10-15 **Tees Ltd**
60% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sémillon, 20% Muscadelle. The 20% Muscadelle adds some subtle flower notes, but the main attraction is a fine grip, with medium body and length. There is freshness for the vintage and this could easily match your baked clams (the raw clams or oysters need more acidity). **Drink** Until 2021

Château La Gabarre,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

www.vignoblesgabard.com
90% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Sémillon. For the arid summer, appreciable notes of iodine and white apricot. The sandy and gravelly soils are not the coolest, so a very good effort for the vintage. If there were a bit more zing, I would score higher! **Drink** Until 2021

Château Le Bonalguet,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10 **Direct wine**
60% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Sauvignon Gris. Lemon custard comes to mind when tasting this, as the citrus aspect is somewhat creamy on the palate. The medium body appeals as does a certain freshness overall. May not be a very long term white, but

delicious and a good choice for your summer party! **Drink** Until 2021

Château Penin,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10-15 **Genesis Wines Ltd**
65% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sauvignon Gris and 15% Sémillon. While the soils from this estate are pebbly and hot, the owners managed to craft a wine that has fine body while not ending up heavy, given the dry and arid summer leading up to the harvest. Enjoy with olive tapenade on toast, as it would cut through the oily richness. **Drink** Until 2020

Château Suau, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10 **Nicolas**
80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sémillon. Has finesse on the palate, with notes of grapefruit and some bright notes of mandarine orange. The overall sense is of a solar vintage but with enough vivacity for drinking pleasure. **Drink** Until 2021

Château Haut Mouleyre,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10-15 **Waitrose**
65% Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Sauvignon Gris. The nose seems more marked by the vintage, but in a pleasant manner, with honeysuckle as well as orange, grapefruit and mango. The palate is medium bodied with creamy texture, and some light vanilla tones. A nice Bordeaux. **Drink** Until 2021

Le Sec de Rayne Vigneau,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10-15 **Fine & Rare**
100% Sauvignon Blanc. From the same producers of the famous Sauternes, this dry exudes "contained vibrancy". Sure, it has a certain 2018 "warmth", so serve a bit more chilled... but the flavours are pleasingly multiple, from white flower to juicy peach, nicely tied together with enough lime like acidity. Not bad! **Drink** Until 2021

Léo by Léo, AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10 **Maison Bertrand Ravache**
95% Sauvignon 5% Sémillon. Lime lemon aromatics prelude a palate built for raw oysters: no need to add lemon juice because the wine does this already with its lip smacking lemony finish! **Drink** Until 2020

Madame Etienne,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

www.madame-etienne.com
50% Sauvignon, 50% Sémillon. Creamy aspect that is downright seductive. It may lack the energy of a vintage like 2014, but vivid flavors of juicy white peach and grapefruit convince me that this is worth your attention. A lovely white. **Drink** Until 2021

Reignac,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

reignac.com
53% Sauvignon Blanc, 26% Sémillon and 21% Sauvignon Gris. Well made white, with freshness as well as ripe fruit. **Drink** Until 2021

Réserve des Propriétaires,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2018 88

£10 **Franske Vingarde**
65% Sauvignon Blanc, 21% Sauvignon Gris and 14% Sémillon. Richness is evident from the 13.5% alcohol and the 14% Sémillon part of the blend, but the Sauvignons lend brightness to the wine. Enjoy with chicken roasted with oranges. **Drink** Until 2021

Crémant de Bordeaux

Crémant de Lisennes,
Crémant de Bordeaux 88

www.lisennes.fr
45% Sémillon, 45% Cabernet Franc, 10% Muscadelle. One of the top wines from the short series of bubbly tasted here, with nuance and richness and fine acidity and polish! The Blanc de Noir of Cabernet Franc (45% of the blend) initially surprised me, but it works well as does the floral touch of 10% Muscadelle. The UK market should take notice as the gold medal this vintage obtained at the Concours de Bordeaux is merited. **Drink** Until 2022

Premius, Crémant de Bordeaux 88

£10-15 **Anthony Byrne Fine Wines**
90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. Lovely grip, tangy mandarine orange flavors, with a rich mouthfeel: they managed to make a fine bubbly from such a hot vintage. Hats off! And the Blancs de Noir of Cabernet Franc lend freshness. **Drink** Until 2022