

Decanter

# BORDEAUX GUIDE 2025

FROM NEW CELLARS TO OLDER VINTAGES, LEFT BANK TO  
RIGHT BANK, FIRST GROWTHS TO EVERYDAY DRINKING...  
SETTLE IN WITH A GLASS OF CLARET AND ENJOY THE READ



Decanter<sup>®</sup>  
RECOMMENDS

92  
POINTS

CHÂTEAU  
COUCY

MONTAGNE SAINT-ÉMILION

## Origines 2022

### AOC Montagne Saint-Émilion

Discover our second vintage of the Origines cuvée from Château Coucy. I wanted to highlight the Cabernet Franc to recall my roots in the Loire Valley. The key words for this cuvée are conviviality, sharing, and pleasure.



#### GRAPE VARIETY

100% Cabernet-Franc



#### SOIL

Blue and white clays and clay-limestone



#### SUSTAINABLE VITICULTURE

Biodiversity preservation, inter-row grassing, eco-grazing, biocontrol, mating disruption.



#### VINIFICATION AND AGEING

Double sorting using a vibrating table and a densimetric bath. Alcoholic fermentation in concrete tanks. Extraction by punching down and regular pumping over. Amphorae Aged for 12 months.



#### PRODUCTION

3000 bottles a year.



#### TASTING CHARACTERISTICS

A vintage that exudes freshness and indulgence. A vibrant cherry color with crisp notes of fresh red fruits and spicy notes. A gourmet vintage to be enjoyed young.



#### FOOD AND WINE MATCHING

Dishes • Roasted chicken, spicy dishes, grilled salmon  
Cheese • Sheep's milk, Comté...  
Desserts • Chocolate (70% minimum).



*Discover Le Château  
Coudy*

# Montagne St-Emilion

This low-profile Right Bank sub-region is really coming into its own, thanks to changing climatic conditions and a new focus on highlighting the fruit

WORDS & SELECTION ANDY HOWARD MW

Tucked away on Bordeaux's Right Bank, east of Pomerol and north of St-Emilion, the 1,600ha Montagne St-Emilion AP is a hidden gem. Merlot dominates (at least 75%), together with Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, in this appellation with an enviable location. Separated from St-Emilion itself by the river Barbanne, Montagne shares many influences with its more famous neighbour. Yet the wines of Montagne are still relatively unknown.

Montagne St-Emilion is one of the four APs commonly referred to as the 'St-Emilion satellites' – a description referring to the location of the vineyards, as well as the fact that they share similar underlying soil structures. Being linked to this appellation powerhouse undoubtedly brings marketing advantages. But this can also be seen as a 'double-edged sword', perhaps casting the lesser-known APs in the role of poor relations.

However, Montagne is no sidekick, being the largest of the satellites, with St-Georges St-Emilion (closest to St-Emilion) the smallest; growers here can choose whether to label their wines as St-Georges or Montagne. Puisseguin St-Emilion (some 730ha under vine) lies east of Montagne, with similar clay-limestone soils and slightly lower temperatures. Lussac St-Emilion (1,450ha) is the furthest north of the satellites, with a varied mix of terroir including both heavier clays and sandier soils, with a distinctly cooler, fresher feel to the wines.

## Tangible change

Pascal Lambert, marketing director for the Montagne appellation, highlights the similarities between the underlying limestone rock, overlaid with clay, with those of St-Emilion. The topographical differences between the appellations are visually barely perceptible when crossing over the Barbanne river, although the elevation gradually climbs as one moves north.

Today, elevation is one of Montagne's biggest advantages. Recent studies by Kees Van Leeuwen, Professor of Viticulture at Bordeaux Sciences Agro, identify the cumulative degree-day measurements (Winkler Index) for various right bank APs. St-Emilion is undoubtedly a major 'hot-spot', while



Montagne is markedly fresher; Puisseguin and Lussac, further north and east, are cooler still.

This cooler climate used to be a weakness for Montagne St-Emilion, yet now it's proving to be a benefit. With similar bedrock and soils to St-Emilion, combined with lower cumulative temperatures, the wines of Montagne are significantly ahead of where they were just a few years ago. Chewy, rustic tannins have now been replaced by smooth, ripe tannins.

Winemakers are making big strides, with distinct moves to reduce oak influence and emphasise fruit ripeness, while embracing new techniques such as ageing in clay amphorae. The new wave is evident from the plethora of different labels on show – some looking distinctly traditional, whereas others have a much more modern style.

Prices and value in Montagne St-Emilion are competitive, and even more so when compared to the St-Emilion grand cru classé level. When next visiting the region, take a trip north over the Barbanne – the village of Montagne is less than 15 minutes' drive, and the trip will prove very worthwhile.



Andy Howard MW is a Decanter Contributing Editor and DWWA Regional Chair. Formerly a long-serving retail wine buyer, he now runs his own consultancy Vinetrades, focusing on wine education, judging, investment and sourcing



### Château de Malengin, Eve 2022

£40.50 (2020) Goedhuis Waddesdon

Named after one of Benjamin and Ariane de Rothschild's four daughters. Blending 91% Merlot with Cabernet Franc and aged mostly in amphora, its vibrant, fresh nose shows the subtlest hint of part-ageing in barrels (one third in large oak foudres, 6% in stainless steel tank). Elegance and purity combine with an intriguing lift. Drive and concentration with impeccable overall balance. A fine example of Montagne that will drink very well for many years to come. **Drink 2025-2032 Alcohol 14%**



### Château Coucy, Origines 2022

chateaucoucy.com

A new cuvée, fermented in concrete tanks before maturation for 11 months in terracotta amphora. Clearly very modern in the winemaking approach (sporting an amphora design on the label), this more than delivers in the glass. Fresh, juicy, vibrant, leafy 100% Cabernet Franc fruit that isn't overwhelmed by wood. There are hints of spice on the finish and a long, lingering flavour. A delicious effort that delivers a very different style. **Drink 2025-2030 Alc 14.5%**



### Château Vieux Bonneau 2022

£21 (2019) Peter Watts

A family estate run by vigneron Franck Despagne, a champion of the Montagne terroir. Merlot-dominant blend with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc, aged in barrels for 12 months. Forward plum, blackberry and dark cherry nose. Full, concentrated palate with a fine combination of fruit ripeness, acidity and oak-derived spice notes. It needs a year (or two) to fully meld but will be a great example over the next five years or more. **Drink 2026-2032 Alc 14.5%**



### Clos de la Barbanne 2022

closdelabarbanne.com

New producer Patrick Garrity arrived from California in 2021, setting up this small estate of 1.7ha, with 50-year-old vines. Fermentation in steel tanks and large oak barrels (10%) before ageing in a mix of new, first- and second-use 300L/350L barrels, with 10% in amphorae. Very nicely put together with concentrated dark fruit, spice notes, a hint of wood and ripe tannins adding a glossy feel on the finish. A great effort in only the estate's second vintage. One to watch. **Drink 2025-2030 Alc 14.5%**



### Maison Blanche 2019

£38.50 Swig, The Good Wine Shop

The estate is a single-block to the west of Montagne, with two valleys linked by a plateau. 32ha of vines, massal selection since 2013. Aged for two years, 18 months of that in second-use French oak barrels. Pungent aromas of dark cherry and plum, subtle oak evident. Juicy and fleshy palate with soft tannin, bright acidity and medium weight. Very good balance between the ripeness of the vintage and freshness to finish. Certified biodynamic since 2013. **Drink 2025-2030 Alc 14.5%**



### Château Arbo 2021

chateau-arbo.com

Originally created in 1924, this 5.5ha estate was purchased by Astrid and Dorian Arbo in 2015. 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc, aged for 12 months, half in new oak, half in second-use barrels. Plenty of appeal now, with juicy, ripe, dark fruit on the nose. Super-clean, fresh and lively on the palate with elegant tannins and subtle oak. Good chew to the tannins suggests this will continue to drink well for several years. A fine result in this difficult vintage. **Drink 2025-2030 Alc 13.5%**



### Château Coucy, Confidences Grande Cuvée 2019

chateaucoucy.com

The grapes – 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc – were double-sorted prior to fermentation. New French oak was used for malolactic fermentation and the 24 months of maturation, evident on the nose, along with notes of coconut. Shows the weight and warmth of the 2019 vintage with tannins still a tad rugged. Distinctive and cut in the mould of a glossy St-Emilion grand cru classé. **Drink 2025-2032 Alc 14.5%**



### Château Franc Baudron 2020

£16 Cambridge Wine Merchants, Humble Grape

Owned for a century by the Guimberteau-Foray family, with Charles Foray now in charge. Vinified in stainless steel, 12 months' ageing in oak barrels of mixed ages, mostly French. Complex, with an interplay of vibrant red and black fruit on the nose, with alluring floral notes. Attractive, juicy and clean, this shows the variability of 2020 with less concentration and fleshiness compared to 2019. But there is still lots to like here. Organic. **Drink 2025-2029 Alc 14.5%**



### Château Haut Bonneau, Vieilles Vignes 2022

chateau-haut-bonneau.com

From 40-year-old vines, 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in oak barrels for about 12 months. Refined and understated, oak very much in the background. Pure, precise nose, dark fruits mingling with hints of spice. Fleshy and juicy, with fruit sweetness, no harsh edges. A fine effort, ready now but no hurry to drink. Also excellent is the Château Haut Bonneau 2023 (90pts). **Drink 2025-2030 Alc 13.5%** ►