

## Your Future is Bordeaux



If you're interested in acquiring some of the best wines in the world, you might be interested to know that the least expensive way to buy them is to buy them before they're even available. Now this may be a bit counterintuitive, but buying French Bordeaux wines "on future," before they hit the traditional retail market, is a surefire way to make sure that you get the wines you want at a price below the "future" cost.

But how do you know which wines to buy? After all, some Bordeaux wines, particularly ones from popular vintages, are incredibly expensive due to demand by collectors. Many of the wines from this famed region – located about 300 miles southwest of Paris - are capable of delivering solid quality at a relatively good price. The trick is finding the best value.

And the good news is the Bordelaise are ready to deal. After three consecutive mediocre vintages, producers throughout the region are grateful for the solid 2014 vintage. A late spate of warm, sunny weather favored the Cabernet Sauvignon grape – one of the five classic varieties that are sanctioned in the region (the others are Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec), so look to the Cabernet-based wines from the Left Bank of the Medoc. The Merlot-centric Right Bank wines, including Pomerol, are not as powerful as their cousins across the Garonne river, but there are still some excellent values to be had.

And to add icing to the proverbial cake, the famous sweet wines of Barsac and Sauternes also finished strong, thanks to some light rains in the fall that set the stage for the Noble Rot, the botrytis fungus used to shrivel the grapes and concentrate the juice, in the vineyard.

According to renowned wine critic Robert Parker, 2014 futures may be a good time to buy. Not only is it a very good vintage, but, from Parker's point of view, the backlog of prior inventory has put some additional pricing pressure on the Bordelaise. Said Mr. Parker, "As they (Bordeaux producers) have three unsold vintages in their inventory... they know they better lower prices or they are going to have some real issues to deal with."

Their good vintage is your good luck. Here are several excellent values in the Futures market that are on sale now.

The Pauillac region is considered the king of Bordeaux. The red wines of Pauillac are predominately powerful, full-flavored, elegant and long-lived. An excellent example is the **2014 Château Clerc Milon**. It features a solid core of dark plum and blackberry fruit on the front of the palate, backed by subtle toasted oak that highlight tobacco and earthy notes on the finish. **\$45**

Another great value from the Pauillac region is the **2014 Château D'Armailhac**. A solid, well-built wine, it offers a core of plum, black licorice and blackberry notes built on a supple frame. Vanilla and toasted oak flavors float in the background followed by a hint of lead-pencil on the finish. **\$34**

Staying on the Left Bank, the large Margaux region is famous for producing highly fragrant wines from Cabernet Sauvignon. One of the more celebrated Chateaux in the region is Chateau Palmer, whose wines can fetch beyond \$200 per bottle on the futures market. However, their second label, **2014 Alter Ego de Palmer**, is a fantastic bargain and worthy of its own attention. Bright and juicy, with a core of plum, blackberry and black cherry fruit up front, it is backed by hints of stewed fruit and baking spices on the supple finish. It has remarkable balance and excellent aging potential. **\$55**

On the Right bank of the Garonne river, lies the Pomerol region, the smallest of the red wine districts of Bordeaux. But good things come in small packages, since Pomerol is known for producing some of the most expensive and sought-after wines in the world. Here, the Merlot grape rules the vineyard, and the **2014 Château Gazin** shows off Merlot with style and elegance, which includes a base of dark plum, black cherry and black currant fruit melded together with racy acidity and fine minerality. The mouthfeel is velvety, yet firm tannins provide grip and depth on the finish. **\$55**

Other Bordeaux wines from the 2014 vintage to consider:

- 2014 Chateau Coutet – Barsac (sweet wine), \$37
- 2014 Chateau Beychevelle - St. Julien, \$58
- 2014 Chateau Lynch Bages – Pauillac, \$83
- 2014 Chateau Pichon Baron – Pauillac, \$85
- 2014 Chateau Cos d'Estournel - St. Estephe \$115
- 2014 Chateau L'Evangile – Pomerol, \$129