

## 2005 revisited

1 Nov 2008 by Jancis Robinson/ FT

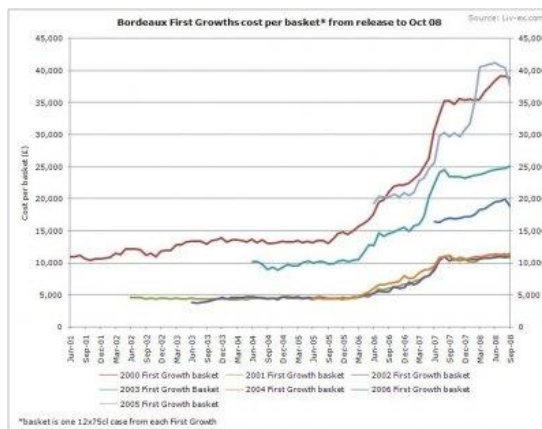
If I had to give two words of advice to lovers of French wine today, scouting in any price range, they would be 'o' and 'five'. The 2005 vintage seemed exceptional at the time virtually throughout France and especially in the classic regions of Bordeaux and Burgundy. Now that we can judge the wines in bottle, it continues to shine brilliantly.

In fact 2005's lustre is now all the greater since the perfect 2005 growing season has been followed by a series of increasingly difficult ones. Growers were challenged by 2006 (to be re-examined in detail next week), but 2007 and now 2008 have also presented them with much wetter and/ or greyer summers than they would like, together with what anglophone viticulturists call 'disease pressure' (i.e. rampant rot and mildew). In the old days they might not have tried so hard to control this, hoping that consumers wouldn't notice a hint of mouldiness in the finished wine, but nowadays they know they have to make the strictest of selections to survive, whatever the economic implications.

I last looked at a comprehensive range of Bordeaux 2005 classed growths 12 months ago (see [here](#)) but I have recently had a chance to revisit 22 of the very best reds of all (see my [detailed tasting notes](#)). I have also recently tasted a good range of much less glamorous 2005 Bordeaux reds. At both these ends of the spectrum, the vintage is truly outstanding. In fact I complimented my fellow Master of Wine Philippa Carr, who has been pepping up the wine range at Walmart's ASDA supermarkets in the UK, on the red Bordeaux her new Fine Wine Range, Ch Bernateau 2005 St Emilion. "It was the easiest wine of the entire range to buy," she smiled, waving at a roomful of her selections. "I was presented with a range of different vintages of that château. What else would I choose?" What else indeed.

But first the most glamorous 2005s. Last month fine wine traders Farr Vintners put on a truly inspiring comparative tasting of top Bordeaux 2005s in Vintners' Hall in the beleaguered City of London. James Suckling of The Wine Spectator moderated, but really all he had to do was moderate our enthusiasm. These wines looked stunning. Wines are not always flattered by being shown together, in the early evening, without food. But in these wines there was shortage of anything – colour, acid, tannin, fruit, richness – but they were also brilliantly etched. I think we were all wondering whether they would have started to go into retreat as so many fine wines do two or three years after bottling (only to re-emerge gloriously in most cases). On the night, only a handful of wines – Chx Rauzan- Ségla, La Conseillante, Pontet Canet and Église Clinet – were anything other than gorgeously expressive. These four wines may have started to close up for they have shown very well in the past. The only other slightly disappointing one, Ch Pichon Lalande, disappointed in its hint of greenness (such an odd fault for a 2005) which it has shown consistently since it was first shown en primeur.

With these exceptions I found myself dispensing enthusiasm and high scores with delighted abandon. I still feel this is by far the greatest Bordeaux vintage I have been lucky enough to taste. And it's the consistency right down to petit château and lowly AC Bordeaux level that is so exciting. You do not have to be an oligarch to enjoy 2005's bounty, though you still do have to be an oligarch to invest heavily in 2005 Bordeaux at the top end. Prices may have softened quite noticeably over the last few months (see Liv-ex's graph of first growth prices below), but it will surely retain its robust price level relative to other Bordeaux vintages throughout its life. Of the wines we tasted, Chx Canon and Domaine de Chevalier looked positive bargains at around £590 and £380 a dozen respectively.



From the first growths (we did not taste Ausone or Pétrus), Ch Margaux was the favourite of the tasters in Vintners' Hall but Chx Haut- Brion and Latour were almost as popular. I also gave scores of at least 18 out of 20 (very high for me) to the following non first growths: Angélus, L'Évangile, Les Forts de Latour, Lynch Bages, La Mission Haut- Brion, Léoville Barton and Pichon Longueville (Baron). This is surely a truly great vintage.

But throughout the month of October I tasted a wide range of much less expensive 2005 red Bordeaux and hardly found a dud. Often these were in ranges of examples from other Bordeaux vintages in which the 2005s shone out like a beacon of ripeness and rigour – an admirable combination. Some specific recommendations that are easy to find in the UK are listed in the box, but I would urge Bordeaux lovers to consider any 2005 red Bordeaux sold by a reputable retailer. In the UK The Wine Society has very sensibly just added 11 red Bordeaux 2005s under £10 to its list.

While it was excellent, the 2005 vintage is not quite such a standout further south in France. The Rhône Valley and the Languedoc- Roussillon seem to have been blessed by a succession of good vintages both before and after 2005. In Burgundy on the other hand, the 2005 growing season was undoubtedly much easier than most so far this century, but on the basis of what I have seen so far it seems that the wines that resulted from the 2005 vintage are not quite so obviously head and shoulders above those of other vintages as they seem in Bordeaux.

This is certainly the time to scour the lists and shelves for the lesser red Bordeaux, and it may even be the time to pick up some smarter stuff, especially the less glamorous classed growths, most of which made outstanding wine in this blessed, but very expensive, vintage.

### RECOMMENDED 2005 BORDEAUX BARGAINS

Wines are listed with UK stockists, best value examples at the top.

**Seigneurs d'Aiguihe 2005 Côtes de Castillon**  
£6.74 until Tuesday Waitrose Wine Direct and 163 branches

**Ch Bel Air Perponcher 2005 Bordeaux Supérieur**  
£7.50 The Wine Society, Ava Wines of N Ireland

**Ch la Tuilerie du Puy 2005 Entre- Deux- Mers**  
£6.93 Quantock Abbey of Yeovil

**Ch Mayne Lalande, Cru Bourgeois Supérieur 2005 Haut- Médoc**  
£95 a case of magnums in bond, Farr Vintners

**Ch Bernateau 2005 St Emilion**  
£10.97 ASDA

**Ch Langoiran, Cuvée Prestige 2005 Premières Côtes de Bordeaux**  
£10.49 Appellation Wines of Edinburgh

**Ch de Plassan 2005 Premières Côtes de Bordeaux**  
£10.99 Averys

**Ch Lamothe- Cissac 2005 Haut- Médoc**  
£11.03 Vintage Cellars, Ava Wines

**Ch de Paillet Quancard 2005 Premières Côtes de Bordeaux**  
£7.99 Hayward Brothers

**JP Moueix 2005 Bordeaux Supérieur**

*£8.89 Private Cellar*

**Ch Roc de Calon 2005 Montagne Saint-Émilion**

*£9.99, or £7.99 if two bottles are bought, Majestic*

**Baron la Rose, Vieilles Vignes 2005 Bordeaux**

*£8.99 Morrisons*

**Ch de Beaugard- Ducourt 2005 Bordeaux**

*£8.95 Ten Acre Wines Ltd*

**Ch Magnol, Cru Bourgeois 2005 Haut- Médoc**

*£11.99 Co- op*

For global stockists see [wine-searcher.com](http://wine-searcher.com)

For thousands of tasting notes on 2005s, see [tasting articles by region](#)