

The Margaux is closely followed at the top of the charts by four reds at 98 points apiece. Fellow first-growth Château Haut-Brion's Pessac-Léognan 2015 (98, \$570) is a powerhouse of a wine, loaded with roasted fig, warmed currant compote and plum reduction flavors that are as broad as they are deep. A trio of St.-Emilions—Château Cheval-Blanc St.-Emilion 2015 (98, \$781), La Mondotte St.-Emilion 2015 (98, \$305) and Château Pavie St.-Emilion 2015 (98, \$351)—show just how compelling the vintage is in this Right Bank appellation.

## The Right Bank

In the spring of 2016, during the en primeur tastings, Château Cheval-Blanc turned heads when it announced that it would not produce a second wine from the 2015 vintage. (Typically the estate culls 25 percent or more of its crop for its second wine.) Now that move seems prescient.

St.-Emilion is the epicenter for quality on the Right Bank in 2015. Atop the limestone plateau that fans out from the town itself, a number of châteaux made classic-scoring reds. The Château Canon St.-Emilion 2015 (97, \$228), Château Beauséjour Duffau-Lagarosse St.-Emilion 2015 (96, \$112), Château Bélair-Monange St.-Emilion 2015 (96, \$155), Clos Fourtet St.-Emilion 2015 (96, \$105) and Château Beau-Séjour Bécot St.-Emilion 2015 (95, \$65) are among the many highlights of the vintage. Marked by vivid, racy cassis- and raspberry-laden fruit flavors lined with fine minerality and backed by long, enticing finishes, these wines will open up over the next two decades and then carry on well from there.

In fact, the 2015 vintage seems to provide a nearly foolproof buying opportunity in St.-Emilion. Of the 117 St.-Emilions reviewed in this report, 84 earn 90 points or higher. Spreading out farther from the plateau, the wines of châteaux Angélu, Canon-La Gaffelière, Figeac, Pavie Macquin, Pavie-Decesse, La Gaffelière, Larcis Ducasse, Monbousquet, Peby Faugères, Troplong Mondot



The stainless-steel vats in the cellars of Château Canon reveal the extensive work this St.-Emilion estate has done to modernize its winemaking practices in recent years. Its *grand vin* is one of the standouts of the 2015 vintage.

and Valandraud also earned classic ratings of 95-plus.

The strength of the vintage in St.-Emilion means that there are scads of cellar-worthy wines at much more modest prices as well, including the Château Les Grandes Murailles St.-Emilion 2015 (93, \$55), now owned and run by Clos Fourtet; Château Fonplégade St.-Emilion 2015 (92, \$41); Sophie Fourcade's Clos St.-Martin St.-Emilion 2015 (92, \$75); and Olivier Decelle's Château Jean Faure St.-Emilion 2015 (92, \$40). Also worth tracking down are the wines from châteaux Bellevue, Berliquet, Laroque, La Dominique and more. (For a list of smart buys in 2015 Bordeaux, see the chart on page 47.)

While Cheval-Blanc chose only to produce a *grand vin* in 2015, many of the St.-Emilion estates that did produce second wines made outstanding bottlings that deliver great value. All earning at least 90 points, the second wines from châteaux Beauséjour Duffau-Lagarosse, Canon, Figeac, Larcis-Ducasse, Pavie, Pavie Macquin, Troplong Mondot, Quintus and Valandraud should provide delicious drinking over the next decade—ideal while you wait for their bigger siblings to fully mature.

Stretching east into neighboring Castillon, which shares a swath of the region's limestone plateau, additional values abound. The wines of Domaine de l'A, Château d'Aiguilhe, Clos Puy Arnaud, Château Joanin Bécot, Château Montlandrie and Château Clarisse are delightful, and they typically check in at less than \$40—or even \$30—per bottle. Located even farther afield, the Château Puygéraud Francs Côtes de Bordeaux 2015 (90, \$16) is a buy-by-the-case value.

On the other side of St.-Emilion lies Pomerol, centered on a clay plateau that also provided fertile ground for quality in 2015. Like the limestone in St.-Emilion, Pomerol's clay soils mitigated the effects of the heat, while their water-retentive properties helped ward off a maturity blockage during the drought. Of the 52 Pomerols in this report, 32 earned 90 points or higher.

In general, the top Pomerols in 2015 are dense and fleshy wines, laden with dark plum and blackberry fruit and driven by a swath of graphite through the finish. The Château Le Pin Pomerol 2015



Despite weather conditions in 2015 that challenged his Pomerol estate's sandy soils, Château La Dapente director Eric Monnerot produced an outstanding red.