

Time Well Spent

S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 8



BORDEAUX

BY JILL NEWMAN

FOR ALL OF ITS FAMOUS REDS, Bordeaux remains a mystery to many—even serious wine lovers. France's premier winemaking region may be home to lauded and legendary labels—Lafite Rothschild, Latour, and Margaux among them—but the birthplace of the grand crus is notorious for its old-fashioned (some may even say snobbish) ways. Lately, however, it seems the Bordelais are turning over a new leaf: Longstanding wineries are slowly—quietly—opening their cellar doors to eager oenophiles, and new châteaux, Michelin-starred restaurants, and museums are even encouraging visitors to stay awhile. It's not quite friendly Napa, but Bordeaux is suddenly more social than ever. And now is the time to sample all of its fruits.

ROBB PRICE

The city's fresh face



A City Reawakened

FACTS + FIGURES

➕ About 8,000

Number of domaines and châteaux in Bordeaux

5

Percentage of wineries classified as Premium

7 million

Number of visitors to the region this year, compared with two million visitors in 2008

1855

The year Bordeaux's official wine classification was established at the request of Emperor Napoleon III

5

Number of premier crus that call Bordeaux home: Château Lafite Rothschild, Château Latour, Château Margaux, Château Haut-Brion, and Château Mouton Rothschild

IT WASN'T LONG AGO that Bordeaux was cloaked in a dark and dirty layer of soot. But the port city brims with new life thanks to Mayor Alain Juppé, whose ambitious urban-renewal project has buffed and polished the 18th-century Haussmannian structures, Romanesque churches, and cobblestone streets to a brilliant shine.

No longer a mere pit stop en route to the vineyards, Juppé's new Bordeaux overflows with reasons to stay in town: Newly constructed trams, pedestrian walkways, and bike paths now connect the historic city center with burgeoning

neighborhoods packed full of vibrant cafés, boutiques, and museums. And perched on the banks of the Garonne River in the Bassins à Flot district is perhaps the most convincing evidence of a city on the rise: the striking new **Cité du Vin** (lacityduvin.com). The museum, whose curving facade resembles a giant glass of swirling wine, is easily worth a full day of exploration on its own. Wander its multisensory exhibits tracing the worldwide history of winemaking before embarking on a self-guided tour of the Latitude20 wine bar's collection of more than 800 vintages.

The historic Grand Théâtre



WHERE TO EAT

More Than Filet Mignon

AS WITH EVERYTHING in this storied city, Bordeaux's culinary scene is rooted in tradition. But not every dish you'll taste here is old-fashioned Bordelais. Joining the bastions of hearty classics are evolving restaurants where both Michelin-starred chefs and up-and-coming talent are spinning local produce, fish, and wine into something entirely of-the-moment. Here, we take a tour of the best establishments, both old and new.

LE PRESOIR D'ARGENT GORDON RAMSAY

Ramsay's Michelin two-star restaurant in the InterContinental Bordeaux-Le Grand Hotel takes advantage of the local



Le Pressoir d'Argent
Gordon Ramsay

bounty with a menu that highlights Breton lobster, foie gras from the Landes, and organic vegetables from Basque country. gordonramsayrestaurants.com

LA TABLE DE PLAISANCE

Touted by some as the best



La Tupina

Kervarrec's gourmet picnics. hostelleriedelaissance.com

LOGIS DE LA CADÈNE

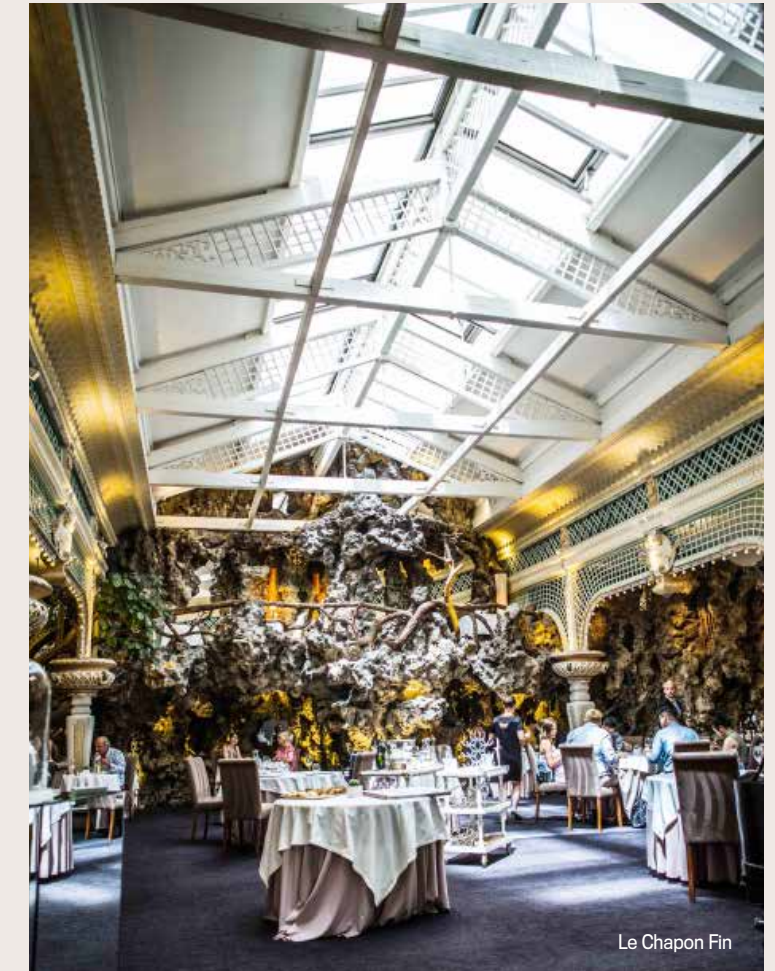
Established in Saint-Émilion in 1848, and held by the family that owns the celebrated Château Angéus, this charming Michelin one-star restaurant is run by chef Alexandre Baumard, who gives classical French dishes a light, modern flavor. logisdelacadene.fr

LE CHAPON FIN

Founded in 1825, this fine-dining stalwart was one of the first-ever Michelin three-star restaurants, initially earning its trio of stars in 1933. Today, its menu offers contemporary cuisine with a nod to local traditions and produce. chapon-fin.com

LA TABLE D'HÔTES

One of Bordeaux's best-kept secrets, the 12-seat dining room at the Grand Théâtre opera house's Le



Le Chapon Fin

Quatrième Mur just earned its first Michelin star thanks to chef Philippe Etchebest's inventive seven-course tasting menus. quatrieme-mur.com

LA TUPINA

Queen Elizabeth and Nicolas Sarkozy have both dined at this cozy portside restaurant where southwestern French cuisine is cooked the traditional way: on an open hearth. latupina.com

GAROPAILLES

Helmed by Tanguy Laviale—one of Bordeaux's most promising young chefs, who earned his first Michelin star this year—this charming 20-seat restaurant is in high demand for its ultra-fresh dishes using herbs from its courtyard garden. garopailles.com

WHERE TO STAY

Sip and Sleep

WHEN IN BORDEAUX, a château stay is a must. More intimate than hotels, these family-run estates offer an in-depth experience among the vines—not to mention a chance to sample the newest vintages.

CHÂTEAU LAFAURIE-PEYRAGUEY

Perched on a hilltop in the heart of the Sauternes region, this 400-year-old estate recently reopened under the auspices of Swiss entrepreneur Silvio Denz with 13 rooms and suites and a gourmet restaurant. The house grand crus are especially palatable thanks to Denz's house collection of Lalique glassware. lafauriepeyragueylalique.com

LES SOURCES DE CAUDALIE

This countryside château set among the cru vineyards of the Smith Haut Lafitte wine estate is a beloved retreat as much for its Caudalie spa (where you can soak in a grape-infused barrel bath) as for its Michelin two-star La Grand Vigne (featuring one of Bordeaux's most extensive wine lists). sources-caudalie.com

THE CHARTREUSE AT COS D'ESTOURNEL

The private residence of Cos d'Estournel is Bordeaux's most exclusive rental property. Designed by Jacques Garcia, it comes with six bedrooms, two suites, a private hammam, a gym, indoor and outdoor pools, and, of course, the best selection of Cos d'Estournel vintages. estournel.com

CHÂTEAU CORDEILLAN-BAGES

This welcoming 17th-century charterhouse near Château Lynch-Bages in Pauillac has 28 simple rooms overlooking its famous vineyards. Chef Julien Lefebvre runs the property's Michelin-starred restaurant, where the contemporary cuisine is designed to be enjoyed with the region's most famous grand crus. relaischateaux.com



Unlocking the Cellar Door

NAPA VALLEY THIS IS NOT. Though Bordeaux's legendary châteaux are increasingly rolling out the welcome mat for visitors, many of the region's most highly regarded labels only open their doors for a select few. Enter Mary Dardenne, whose **Decanter Tours** (decantertours.com) holds the key to tastings at elusive wineries like Châteaux Latour and Lafite Rothschild. Here, she takes us inside Bordeaux's best.

How do you decipher the different crus?

There are huge contrasts in Bordeaux. Most visitors don't realize that only five percent of the thousands of properties in the region are classified as premium châteaux. The rest are attainable, affordable, and accessible. Visitors

often remark that they are surprised at the diversity in Bordeaux—not only of the soils and grape varieties, but also of the wine styles, types of people, and châteaux.

What's the best strategy for experiencing that large diversity?

We try to plan a mix of bling châteaux—like Pavie or Mouton [Rothschild]—and family-owned châteaux. We also suggest visits [that] are exceptional and surprising, like Lamothe Bergeron, a château that most people may not have heard of but that offers a unique tour.

How do we get into the grand crus?

We have access to all the most famous wineries, but I would caution a word of advice: Plan at least six months in advance. Most of the top properties are not in the tourism business and

generally only offer one or two visits per day.

Which winery is a must-see right now?

Château Sigalas Rabaud, the smallest first classified growth in Sauternes. It has a new terrace where you can enjoy an aperitif with views over the vines, and you'll likely be welcomed personally by a member of the family—perhaps even the Count of Sigalas himself.

What are the best châteaux for a meal?

In the Medoc, I like to have lunch at Château Pichon Longueville Baron; it's very exclusive and just what one expects of a château experience. We also offer a picnic on Saturdays at Château La Croizille in Saint-Émilion for a more informal experience. The château is located on a hillside with plunging views, and we have a picnic table amongst the vines.

ROBB RICE: ILLUSTRATION: PADDY MILLS

Time Well Spent

BORDEAUX



Master of the Maison

NOTHING QUITE RIVALS the artful cuisine and presentation at Pierre Gagnaire's Michelin two-star restaurant in Bordeaux, which is perhaps the hottest dinner reservation in town. Situated inside **La Grande Maison** (lagrandemaison-bordeaux.com), an elegant 19th-century mansion that houses six rooms and two suites, the restaurant serves the inventive and meticulously presented cuisine that made Gagnaire famous. The menu features dishes inspired by Bordeaux's terroir, and while many of the dishes change seasonally, the restaurant also offers a selection of some of the chef's most celebrated dishes—including his langoustine appetizer, which presents the crustacean prepared five ways, from cooked in a custard to raw in a galette. Also on the menu is Gagnaire's famous take on duck, smoked in a bitter chocolate shell and dramatically hammered open tableside. Of course, there is also an exceptional wine list, with many bottles sourced from the private stock of the restaurant's owner, Bernard Magrez, a local wine baron who owns four Bordeaux grand crus and 40 wine estates around the world.



Family Roots

EIGHTH-GENERATION vintner Stephanie de Boüard-Rivoal began tasting wine at the dinner table when she was just seven years old. It prepared her palate for a lifetime of winemaking. "Our family has owned this vineyard for more than two centuries," says the young vintner, who took over the premier grand cru **Château Angélu** (angelus.com) from her father, Hubert Boüard, and uncle Jean Bernard Grenié in 2012. "I'm a link in a chain that has to survive for a long time."

Boüard-Rivoal's deep connection to her family's history—and trade—is a common occurrence in Bordeaux, where the business of winemaking means more than just exceptional vintages. Here, multigenerational families are laying down roots beyond their vineyards in an effort to champion a newer, friendlier wine country.

The Boüard family, for example, recently acquired the Michelin one-star restaurant and boutique hotel **Logis de la Cadène** (logisdela cadene.fr) in a bid to encourage roving oenophiles to stay the night. Nearby, the Cazes family—which has owned and operated the prestigious **Château Lynch-Bages** (jmcazes.com) grand cru in Pauillac since 1938—has built a Bordelais empire comprising the Cordeillan-Bages hotel, Château Haut-Batailley, a trio of restaurants (including Le Chapon Fin), and a wine-tour company. Fourth-generation vintner Sylvie Cazes, who runs **Château Chauvin** (chateauchauvin.com), has also branched out as the driving force behind the establishment of the Cité du Vin museum, which welcomed 445,000 visitors last year alone. **R**

TOP RIGHT: DEEPIX; OTHERS: ROBB RICE