

Château Branaire-Ducru 2021

CSPC# 785890

750mlx12

13.0% alc./vol.

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| Grape Variety | 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 5.5% Petit Verdot, 6.5% Cabernet Franc. |
| Appellation | St Julien |
| Classification | Fourth Growth. Quatrieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855. |
| Website | http://www.branair.com/ |
| Sustainability | Château Branaire-Ducru is committed to environmental initiatives with High Environmental Value certification and ISO 14001 certification for an effective Environmental Management system. |
| General Info | Château Branaire-Ducru is situated on the opposite side of the road from Château Beychevelle in the south of the St-Julien appellation. The Château has its origins in the 17th century, when it formed part of the estate of Château Beychevelle. After the latter's owner died in debt, the land was parceled up and sold off, with Jean-Baptiste Braneyre acquiring the Branaire hectares in 1680 (the name has metamorphosed across the centuries). Braneyre's daughter married Pierre de Luc and the estate was passed down through the De Luc family and later the related Ducru family for over 140 years. The last family members to own it were three noble nephews who are represented by the crowns on today's Branaire label. In 1919, Branaire-Ducru was sold to the Tapie family, but its modern renaissance had to wait until 1988 and the influences of the Maroteaux family, under whose direction the wine's quality has surged. Patrick Maroteaux has invested heavily in new plantings as well as installing a spanking new cuvier and an ultra-modern chai. |
| Winemaker | Cellar Master: Mr. Campadiou. Eric Boissenot - consults |
| Vintage | The 2021 vintage started off with a very mild and exceptionally rainy winter. The bud break was quite early and regular, thanks to warm weather at the end of March. Three episodes of frost, at the end of April and the beginning of May, caused us concern, but nothing more than isolated damage. Spring was very cool and wet: flowering was late. However, as the temperatures rose, the vines developed significantly. The beginning of the Summer was cool, with no water stress. The development of mildew was closely monitored resulting in only small losses in some Merlot plots. From 10 August onwards, the Summer was dry, but not very hot: ripeness evolved slowly, with the grapes nicely concentrated in sugar and a good level of acidity. In mid-September, frequent showers arrived and continued to the end of the month. The grapes began to swell, and ripening slowed down. |
| Vineyards | Château Branaire-Ducru is tucked away in the south-eastern most part of the St Julien appellation, close neighbours being Beychevelle, which lies between Branaire-Ducru and the <i>Gironde</i> , and Château Saint-Pierre. The vineyards run west-east in several plots close to the <i>château</i> , over typical Médoc terroir of Quaternary alluvial gravels. There are 52 hectares in all, planted with 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot and just 5% Cabernet franc and 3% Petit Verdot, with an average age approaching 40 years, although there are many vines approaching a century. |
| Harvest | The harvest started slowly on 24 September at Branaire-Ducru. We were waiting for the maximum maturity of each of our parcels. The dry and sunny weather, though not very hot, returned after October 6th. We then waited a few days before resuming the harvest. The parcels benefited particularly well from the final fine weather. The grapes had a magnificent concentration and refinement of tannins. A beautiful late season is especially beneficial to the Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. We finished the harvest on October 14th with a lot of optimism for the quality. The yields, at just over 32 hl/ha, are moderate. This is good for the quality as the conditions of the Summer and early Autumn would not have allowed the ripening of a large crop. |
| Maturation | Aging in oak barrels for 16 to 20 months with 60 to 65% of new oak. Woods selected in various French forests according to their flavours and tannins quality. Light toasting respecting the wine's fruit and aromatic purity |



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| Tasting Notes | The wines are less powerful than the previous three vintages, but have a good structure and balance. The purity of the fruit is not impaired by any hint of under-ripeness and offers a beautiful classical style. Good structure on the palate, offering lovely Cabernets that have matured very gradually in this classic vintage with a more Atlantic feel. A nice acidity underpins the harmonious finish. |
| Serve with | Chateau Branaire Ducru is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Young vintages can be decanted for 2-3 hours. This allows the wine to soften and open its perfume. Older vintages might need very little decanting, just enough to remove the sediment. Chateau Branaire Ducru is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, stewed, and grilled dishes. Branaire Ducru is also good when served with Asian dishes, hearty seafood or fish like tuna, mushrooms, pasta, and cheese. |
| Production | 11,500 cases made |
| Cellaring | Drink 2026-2036 |
| Scores/Awards | <p>88 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - January 2024</p> <p>94 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - February 2024</p> <p>93-94+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022</p> <p>91-93 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - May 2022</p> <p>94-95 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2022</p> <p>16 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - May 2022</p> <p>94 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - March 2022</p> <p>92 points - Jane Anson, Inside Bordeaux (score only) - May 2022</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2024</p> <p>92-94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2022</p> <p>90 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>89-91 points - Thomas Parker, Farr Vintners - April 2022</p> <p>92 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2024</p> <p>91-93 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>89-92 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - June 2022</p> <p>18 points - Matthew Jukes - August 2022</p> <p>92 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Yves Beck - June 2022</p> <p>91 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2022</p> <p>94-95 points - Terres de Vins (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>94 points - Vert de Vin - July 2022</p> <p>92-93 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - May 2022</p> <p>92-93 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - May 2022</p> |
| Reviews | <p><i>“Restrained in style, with mulled plum and black currant fruit lined with charcoal and cast-iron notes. The focused finish is on the pleasantly austere side of the spectrum. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2031. Tasted twice, with consistent notes. 11,500 cases made.”</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>“The 2021 Branaire-Ducru has realized all the potential it showed en primeur. Wafting from the glass with aromas of dark berries, plums, menthol, violets, and baking chocolate, it's medium to full-bodied, supple, and suave, with a velvety attack that segues into a deep, fleshy palate. This is especially impressive in the context of the vintage.”</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>“Having tasted the 2021 Branaire-Ducru six times over the course of a month and a half, I feel confident in saying that it is a beautiful wine that numbers among the vintage's real successes. Offering up aromas of raspberry coulis and red cherries mingled with notions of rose petals, cigar box and spices, it's medium to full-bodied, ample, and seamless, with a layered core of fruit, lively acids and beautifully powdery tannins. Why is it quite so good? It isn't because a lot of wine was declassified, as around 60% of the estate's production went into the grand vin this year—a touch more than average. Rather, the key factors seem to be waiting to pick despite an alarming weather forecast; the blend itself, which emphasizes ripe Cabernet and the estate's later-ripening Merlot on clay-limestone soils; and the fact that a partially completed new winery means that Branaire already had fully 63 fermentation vats at its disposal to pick and vinify parcel by parcel. The exact composition is 66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot and the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.”</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> |

Reviews

“The 2021 Branaire-Ducru is deep garnet-purple in color. It comes bounding out of the glass with bold scents of warm cassis, blackberry preserves, and ripe black plums, followed by hints of camphor, violets, black truffles, and tapenade, with a waft of wood smoke. Light to medium-bodied, the palate delivers impressive intensity with firm, fine-grained tannins, and seamless freshness, finishing long with a mineral lift.”

- LPB, Wine Independent

“A very pretty wine, showing blackberry and blackcurrant aromas with crushed stone. Medium to full body with layers of fine-grained tannins. Bright and refined. Lots of dark fruit at the end. Solid weight.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“Open and aromatic on the nose with savoury and dark-fruit notes. Supple and fleshy on the palate. Lacks a bit of density but there’s a structure well in place. Competent rather than stirring. Drink 2026 – 2036.”

- JL, JancisRobinson.com

“Purple and pink flowers on the nose, sweet strawberries and cherries and some milk chocolate notes. Delicate and poised on the palate, this has an air of elegance and refinement from the first sip, the sleek tannins giving support and a fine grip while the herbal Cabernet and Petit Verdot touches give spice, bright summer berry fruit and tension. This has a good core and persistence of flavour that doesn’t let up, not weighty of particularly dense, but well defined and focused. Stylish and glamorous in the best way while being understated - a difficult feat in 2021. Totally moreish and just so well constructed and delivered. A top wine! You get energy and precision here but it’s the understated character I like so much, it just grows and grows quietly and then leaves you with the lingering impression of the beauty of St-Julien.”

- GH, Decanter.com

“Well balanced, showcasing the possibilities of the vintage, a little austere in its rose stem and cassis bud character, but it opens up to show finessed blackberry fruit, precisely cut tannins, and has plenty of potential to age. 32hl/ yield, up to 20-month ageing depending on tasting. Tasted twice.”

- JA, janeanson.com

“Fresh, vibrant, elegant, and almost discreet, the wine is classic in style, in a good way. The nose, with its display of flowers, tobacco, cherries, kirsch, and hints of cocoa shines with little effort. The medium-bodied palate, with its profile of sweet, ripe, red cherries, comes along with gentle accents of leafy herbs, cocoa, espresso and soft-textured plums. The wine drink well young, yet age and develop for 2 decades. Drink from 2025-2050.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Flowers and black raspberries with black and red currants open the wine in the nose. The wine is medium-bodied, fresh, sweet, juicy, and pure. Classic in style, this is going to be approachable early, so you will be able to enjoy all the ripe, elegant, cherries, plums, and peppery currants without a long wait. Yet, the wine will age for 2 decades or more easily. The wine is a blend of 66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, 6.5% Cabernet Franc and 5.5% Petit Verdot, 13% ABV, 3.68 pH. The harvest took place September 24, finishing October 14. The yields were low at 32 hectoliters per hectare and from there, roughly 60% of the harvest was placed into the Grand Vin. Drink from 2024-2050.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Francois-Xavier told us that this is a Cabernet vintage and that the proportion of Merlot in the blend is the lowest for nearly 20 years. The vintage was saved by them being able to pick Cabernet Sauvignon until October 14th and it makes up 66% of the blend with 22% Merlot, 6.5% Cabernet Franc and 5.5% Petit Verdot. The yield was 32 hl/ha, down from 40 hl/ha last year. Deep ruby colour. Mint oil and blackcurrant on the nose, that has a lightly forced sweetness. The palate follows, quite rich in extract and structure with layered cassis and dark fruit. Firm for the vintage, lingering with dark fruit, blackcurrant leaf, incense, and more mint on the finish.”

- TP, Farr Vintners

“The 2021 Branaire Ducru, one of the smallest crops in recent years (32.5hl/ha) was bottled in early June. It has a clean and precise bouquet: blackberry, cedar, light pencil box scents and just a faint touch of undergrowth. It’s certainly classic in style yet displays more precision than you would have found in a Branaire a decade ago. The

Reviews *palate is medium-bodied with fine tannins. Again, black fruit comes to the fore—graphite-infused black fruit, with a little more salinity than I recall from barrel. There’s a pleasing strictness here; the 2021 is linear, without the frills of the 2019 or 2020. Yet for those seeking traditional claret, this will fit the bill perfectly. Drink it over the next 20-25 years.”*

- NM, Vinous

“The 2021 Branaire Ducru was picked from September 24, albeit slowly, until October 14, at 32hL/ha. It has quite an intense, dare I say precocious bouquet of bold brambly red fruit that eventually settles in the glass and turns darker. The palate is medium-bodied with sappy black fruit and a touch of black pepper and tobacco. Quite a marine-influenced Saint-Julien, it fans out gradually toward the finish and exerts a gentle grip. Though not quite reaching the heights of recent vintages, it represents a true articulation of the growing season and of Branaire-Ducru itself.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2021 Branaire-Ducru is sleek, elegant, and nuanced. There is more Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc in the blend than in the 2018-2020 period, when the Merlots were especially successful. As a result, the aromatics are absolutely alluring, but the wine is much less forthcoming on the palate. At 12.9% alcohol, the 2021 is a classically austere Branaire that looks like it will need quite a bit of time to blossom. It is undoubtedly a very pretty wine, even if not fully expressive at this stage. Dark cherry, plum, chocolate, leather and rose petal linger. Tasted three times.”

- AG, Vinous

“Bright red and blue fruits, violets, and floral notes define the bouquet of the 2021 Château Branaire-Ducru, a medium-bodied, nicely balanced, elegant Saint-Julien. It has nicely integrated background oak, plenty of mid-palate depth, and the balance and length to shine for two decades. It's incredibly well done and should end up being an outstanding wine.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“I am so impressed with how each of the finest estates seems to have nailed both the essence of their ‘house style’ and also their location so perfectly in 2021. And so Branaire follows this theme with a lusty, densely-packed, daringly structured wine with just a little more oomph than many. It manages to carry this trick off in spite of the 13% alcohol, and while there is intensity here, there is no unwanted astringency, just tense, refreshing tannin. This is consummate winemaking from a first-class Château.”

- Matthew Jukes

“Opaque ruby core, purple reflections, subtle brightening on the rim. Fine aromas of blackberry fruit, fresh black cherries, hints of cassis and wood spices. A fresh and juicy palate with red cherries, integrated tannins, and a touch of minerality on the finish, has good ageing potential.”

- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“The nose is fruity, elegant, chalky, racy and reveals a nice definition, power (in delicacy/fine). There are notes of pulpy/sparkling blackberry, fleshy strawberry and more slightly chocolate combined with hints of fleshy/pulpy cherry, racy minerality, a discreet hint of blueberry, camphor, a subtle hint of lily, racy minerality, salinity and sap. The palate is fruity, nicely sapid and offers freshness, minerality, a nice definition, an acidic backbone, delicacy, finesse in its power, harmony, a certain purity, some roundness, vibrant energy. On the palate, this wine expresses juicy/acidic blackberry, crisp cherry and slightly juicy raspberry notes combined with hints of blueberry, violet and fine notes of racy/iodine minerality and discrete pepper. The tannins are racy, elegant, and discreetly creamy. Good length. A lovely, classic wine with good balance.”

- Vert de Vin

“It is the finesse that marks the bouquet of Branaire Ducru, which is not really new in itself. Pleasant freshness and beauty burst of fruit through notes of raspberries and cherries followed by floral nuances and a spicy touch. On the palate the wine is distinguished by its freshness and its linear side. Perfectly balanced, it is equipped with structuring tannins which are good augury in the context of acidity tense, the resulting symbiosis is convincing. What a great success, the finesse pays off, sooner or later!”

- Yves Beck
