

ENTRE-DEUX-MERS WHITES

Bordeaux's largest white wine appellation is renowned for its fresh and vibrant, easy-drinking wines that are pleasingly affordable, too. We present 18 of the best.

While Bordeaux's Left and Right Banks monopolise critical attention, the often-overlooked area 'between the two waters', as the colloquial French has it, is producing a number of exceptional wines.

The Entre-deux-Mers region lies between the Dordogne and Garonne rivers and extends over 18 APs in all, producing a range of wine styles and colours; the regional Entre-deux-Mers AP title, however, applies solely to its dry whites.

With a total of 1,617ha under vine – 94% of which have an environmental certification – it is Bordeaux's largest white wine appellation and one of France's most important hubs for affordable whites. Vineyards are set on gently rolling hills at 10m-100m altitude, earning its regional nickname 'the Tuscany of France', with predominantly alluvial soils made up of varying proportions of sand and clay from the two rivers.

The wines are typically blends, usually based on Sauvignon Blanc or Semillon, often with a dash of Muscadelle, though some include small percentages of Sauvignon Gris or Ugni Blanc. Given the variety of grapes and resulting styles it is difficult to specify a core Entre-deux-Mers taste profile, however producers tend to favour a dominance of lively and fresh Sauvignon Blanc, using Semillon to add structure and fullness, and Muscadelle for florality.

Good examples showcase bright citrus or tropical flavours, with added minerality or herbal notes, depending on terroir, and vanilla or spice notes, depending on oak usage. They usually have vibrant and

mouthwatering acidity and offer a generous length. These wines are best served cold – at about 8°-10°C – and make an ideal aperitif on hot summer days. They pair perfectly with seafood, often served alongside the fresh fish and oysters found in Bordeaux's seaside bars and restaurants, but also work well with risotto, soft cheeses, spicy Asian food and summer salads.

Overall, these wines are best drunk as young as possible, ideally within the first two years of being bottled. This tasting comprised a majority of the new 2020 vintage, with four 2019s drinking very well. Almost all of the wines listed can be found for less than £15/€15, and wines from the region are generally exceptionally good value for money. However, since most of the region's 9m-bottle annual production is consumed domestically (with only about 26% exported), some of these wines will need tracking down via the producers and French retailers.

Graves and Pessac-Léognan may be the traditional – and oldest – white appellations, also home to the only classified dry whites in Bordeaux, but there's no faulting Entre-deux-Mers for drinkable and affordable everyday whites. Furthermore, with a target to plant 100% of the 10,000ha available by 2036, in time there should be plenty more where these came from.

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Blanc 2019

CHÂTEAU LE SÈPE

N/A UK www.chateaulesepe.com A bold nose offers oak-touched exotic fruit notes. Slightly fuller in density than some from the region, this is more of a serious wine to be enjoyed with food. It has some softly honeyed lemon and pear flavours on the palate with a nice crunchy acidity that lasts into a long finish.

Drink 2021-2022 Alc 13%