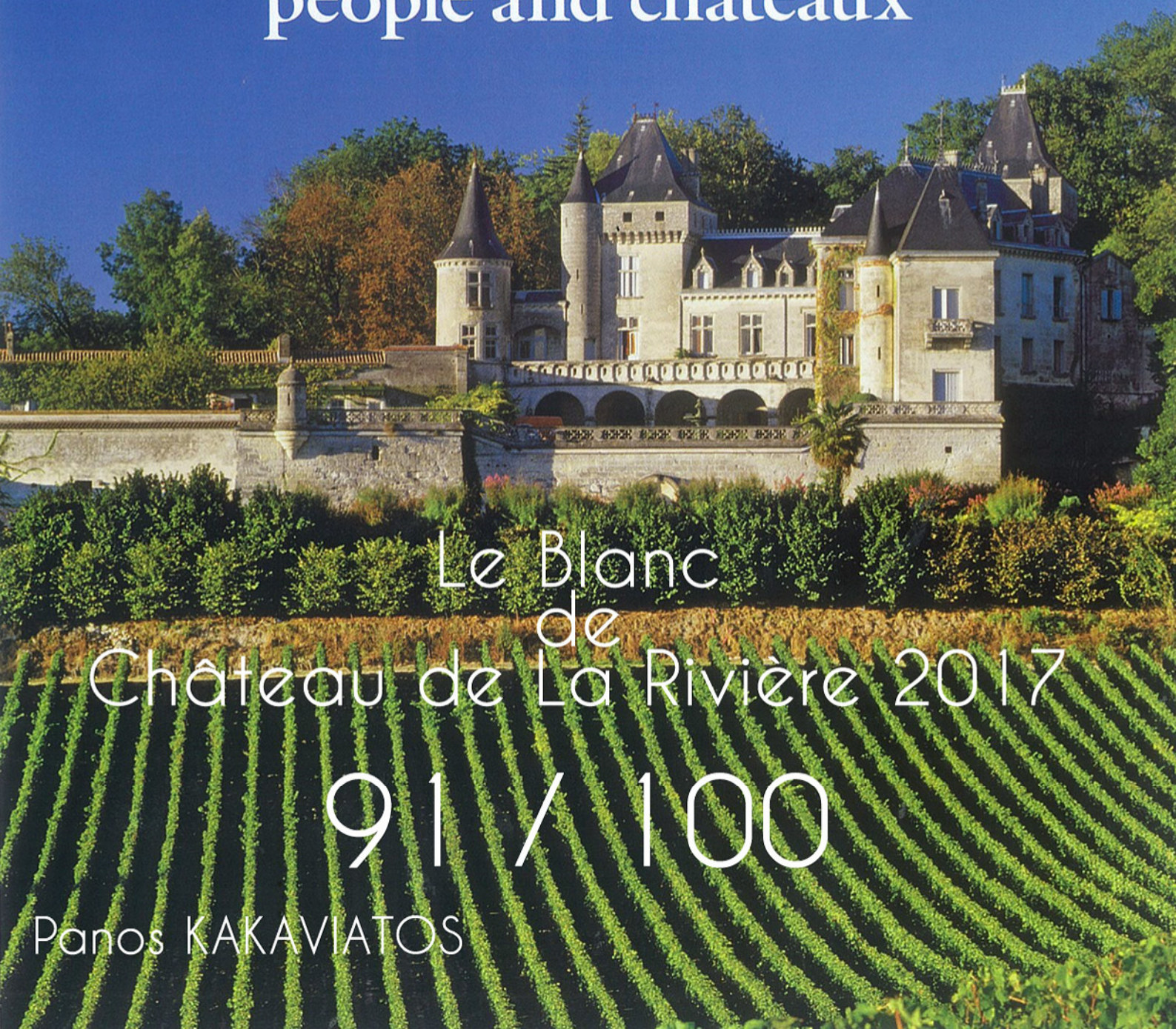


The world's best wine magazine 2018 issue

Decanter

Bordeaux

Your guide to the wines,
people and châteaux



Le Blanc
de
Château de La Rivière 2017

91 / 100

Panos KAKAVIATOS

Assessing Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur

Good to excellent 2016 reds
and very good dry whites from 2017

In tasting nearly 300 wines in April this year at Planète Bordeaux in France to prepare this article, it was striking to see how much less wine was made in 2017, a vintage sadly known for a late April frost of epic proportions.

Some 3.2 million hectolitres of wine were made in 2016 – the highest amount over the last five years – but only 2.15 million hectolitres were produced last year: the frost damaged many vines used to make Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur wines. Much loss was assessed in Entre-Deux-Mers and lowland areas near Saint Emilion and its satellites. Cooler white grape vine terroirs were struck hard.

Despite lower yields, the better dry whites of 2017 combine freshness and density, because they benefitted from a dry, but not too hot summer, as well as cool evenings. Many observers note that the best dry whites were made from grapes picked before a short heat wave struck at the end of August, to preserve freshness. In any case, many 2017 dry white Bordeaux AOC wines merit your attention for offering excellent price/quality ratios.

The 2016 vintage is known justifiably as a great year for reds. Savvy consumers can find Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur that punch above their appellation weight. The long dry summer concentrated grape juices and thickened skins for structure-lending tannin. Early September rain brought relief and colder clay soils – common to these levels of wines – maintained freshness. Cabernet Sauvignons enjoyed a longer hang time, achieving ripeness from a lengthy Indian summer.

An increasing number of properties from these appellations are converting to organic winemaking. Several wines in that process displayed particular purity.

Over half of all Bordeaux wine comes in bottles from the three appellations of

Bordeaux AOC, Bordeaux Supérieur AOC and Bordeaux Blanc AOC, amounting to over 260 million bottles of wine in 2017, according to Planète Bordeaux, an association that includes 5,400 member châteaux from these appellations, and which organized the tasting for Decanter.

Not all of the wines can be acquired for, say, £5 per bottle, but many can. Other producers have achieved recognition already in key markets, so price tags may reach as high as £20, which means that while you can find wines ideal for summer barbecues, excellent wines for discerning gastronomic palates can be found, too.

Many wines selected for this article are available in the UK, but others have not been discovered by UK buyers. I strongly urge you to contact Planète Bordeaux (at +33 5 57 97 19 22) to try some of the higher scoring wines unavailable directly in the UK, and have them delivered from France to your door.

All wines tasted are in bottle and ready to purchase, including the white 2017s. Decanter has published the notes of wines I scored highest.

Wines to try Whites 2017

**Château de La Rivière,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 91**

www.chateau-de-la-riviere.com

Made from hand picked grapes, but only about 20% of the normal yield this vintage, because frost struck plots situated down the slope where the soil is mostly made from gravel and sand. It is a pity because it is one of the very best whites assessed for this article. About 90% of the production ages four months in stainless steel tanks on their lies and the other 10% ages in barrels with regular lees stirring to add more body to the wine. Robust flavors and

fine length. This wine has gastronomic character. Opulent yet also vibrant. Various fruit profiles, but mainly white stone fruit and some oak-derived spice, as perfect seasoning. Delicious! **Alcohol** 13.5%

**Château Argadens,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**

£12- £13 **The Wine Society, Davy's, Tanners**

One of the better wines of this tasting – and the 45 hectare clay-limestone soil vineyard is well situated on one of the highest hills of the rolling Entre-Deux-Mers wine region. During aging in barrel, weekly lees stirring adds richness and complexity and new oak is well integrated. The aromatics are at first a bit reductive, but the palate exudes kiwi and white stone fruit: this has character and medium body. Very fine! **Alc** 12.5%

**Château Briot,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**

£10-12 www.ducourt.com

Very Sauvignon Blanc but smooth and not annoyingly varietal. Lime and grapefruit, fine energy and depth combine to make this a most lip smackingly delicious white Bordeaux! **Alc** 12.5%

**Château de la Vieille Tour Blanc,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**

£10 **Contact Planete Bordeaux**

What a lively palate! It is at once floral and fruit driven on the nose. The palate has more citrus but also white stone fruit. Excellent balance and elegance, and do not hesitate to order online. A good deal for an overperforming white wine. **Alc** 12.5%

**Château Vermont Prestige,
AOC Bordeaux Blanc 2017 90**

www.chateau-vermont.fr

Someone in the UK should get this wine in their shop: one of the top whites tasted for