

the results...

A printing error in the December issue of *Decanter* meant the Corbières 2003 Panel Tasting was incomplete. The full tasting results follow below. *Decanter* apologises for any inconvenience this may have caused.





Corbières 2003

Fantastic feedback from our panel. The hot vintage didn't lead to the high alcohol that some tasters feared, and most wines in this large appellation achieved a certain, consistent level of quality. These are great-value wines of character, all agreed. AMY WISLOCKI reports

the scores

82 WINES TASTED

★★★★★ Outstanding (18.75–20pts)	3
★★★★ Very good to excellent (16.75–18.74pts)	11
★★★ Good (14.75–16.74pts)	35
★★ Fair (12.75–14.74pts)	31
★ Poor (10.75–12.74pts)	2

 lay down  2–5 years
 drink now  good value

■ A resounding success then?

Yes. All the tasters had positive comments to make about these wines. 'Exceptionally positive,' said Patricia Stefanowicz MW. 'Consistently very good,' Steven Spurrier said of the wines. 'Some cracking wines,' added Andrew Shaw. And, what's more, these are not going to break the bank, either. 'These wines are probably around half the price of most that I taste at *Decanter*,' said Andrew Jefford, 'and yet I found it a hugely enjoyable set of wines to taste.'

There was a lot to be enthusiastic about here – Corbières is moving on.'

■ What did the producers get right?

For a start, they coped well with the heat of 2003. This was partly thanks to geographical factors, with many vineyards on the coast or at altitude exposed to cooler air. 'With a vintage like this, I'd rather be on a Corbières hillside than a Languedoc plain because the natural acidity will come through much better,' observed Jefford.

Decanter award ★★★★★

■ Château de Caraguilhes, Solus available on request

'Lots of coffee and super-ripe plum. Lots of soy sauce, a very supportive dry fruit style, this has appeal. Lush, soft, full, sweet, with some acidity. A lot of care has been taken and this is a very attractive drink. 1–6 years.' (AJ)



■ Domaine des 2 Anes, Les Cabrioles

£9.90

'Fine, solid extraction, pure blackberry/blackcurrant fruit, Syrah spice and good oak. Full and spicy. Lots of flavour and terrific depth of fruit. 2–5 years.' (SS)








■ Domaine des 2 Anes, Fontanilles

£ £5.99–6.99

'Aromatic, bold berry fruit, vanilla note. Rich and ripe, full bodied but elegant, lively with silky tannins, long. Complete wine. Up to 5 years.' (PS)



highly recommended ★★★★★

wine name	price	tasting note	drinkability	stockist	mean score
■ Arnoa, Grande Réserve		'Complex aromas with Grenache-style fruit and a lavender hint. Vivid, crunchy, fresh, with plum, well-judged tannins and balanced acidity. 2–6 years.' (AJ)		N/A UK +33 6 12 31 68 08	17
■ Cellier de Graffan, Les Grès de Graffan		'Concentrated, dry herb, blackcurrant nose. Very deep fruit, shows remarkable sophistication. Nice Syrah lift, will be really good. Up to 7 years.' (SS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 83 80	17
■ Château la Pujade, Cuvée Charlemagne	£10.50–12.50	'Very ripe fruit, black cherry/tar. Full blackberry, grainy tannins, sustained finish. Has an earthy, cool edge, promising evolution on a long finish. 2–5 years.' (CB)		PWW	17
■ Château le Bouïs		'Shouts rosemary, thyme and wild garlic scents. Garrigue character carries through to the palate. Deep, dark berry fruits. Fine, elegant, good finish. Up to 5 years.' (MS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 75 25 25	17
■ Clos Canos, Les Cocobirous		'Rich, ripe Syrah fruit. Intense yet not heavy. Very expressive fruit, concentration, old vines, ripe and bursting with energy. A very good wine. Up to 10 years.' (SS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 00 06	17

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■ So the wines were well balanced?

On the whole, yes. Many tasters were pleasantly surprised to find that few wines showed signs of too much alcohol, overextraction and overoaking, despite expectations. 'There were some that were clearly trying to do the New World thing,' said Maggie McNie, 'and some had extracted too much tannin and acid, but by and large I was thoroughly encouraged by the wines I tried.'

■ What about regional character?

Corbières is a large appellation by French standards, so you would expect some diversity, and our tasters found it. 'What this region delivers is fantastic value for money, great diversity and great individuality (which is something you don't often find at this price point in the New World),' said Lesley Stubbs. 'The best wines showed the floral, fruity

and mineral characters that I look for in Corbières,' she added.

Jefford summed up what he sees as the hallmark style of the appellation: 'The intrinsic character for me is its austerity. It's a very wild place – almost as if parts of Scotland have been dragged into the south of France to see what the climate would do to it – and that wildness and stoniness is evident in the wines.'

'The problem for producers is that if they make wine uncompromisingly in this style, it will only appeal to French wine lovers. Producers who aim for a wider appeal may try and go for super ripeness, but then are you foregoing the Corbières style? Reassuringly, the genes really show through in the best wines. If you tasted them with top wines from Bordeaux, Napa or Burgundy, they would stand out as Corbières.'

DOMAINE DES 2 ANES, FONTANILLES

£5.99–6.99



Aromatic, bold berry fruit, vanilla note. Rich and ripe, full bodied but elegant, lively with silky tannins, long. Complete wine. Up to 5 years..

DBy, GNW, Nob, Thr



best value wine of the month

highly recommended (cont...) ★★★★★

wine name	price	tasting note	drinkability	stockist	mean score
■ Domaine du Grand Crès, Cuvée Majeure	£12.60	'Clean, poised wine showing a cedar/berry character. A streamlined palate still carrying a cloak of oak, with good acid and balanced fair tannins. 2–5 years.' (CB)		RdW	17
■ Domaine Lerys		'Ripe, plummy fruit and exotic Indian spices, very attractive. Juicy berry and damson fruit, balanced structure. Good length, spicy aftertaste. Up to 5 years.' (PS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 45 95 47	17
■ Château Grand Caumont, Cuvée Spéciale		'Gamey, quite earthy and evocative. Fine, earthy, wild roses and wild fruit, a new individual wine, fine winemaking. Up to 4 years.' (SS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 10 82	16.75
■ Château Mansenoble, Réserve	£9.95	'Deeply fruited, clean, broad and a touch brooding. Smooth, satin palate – deep fruit, fills the palate, needs several years. Powerful but elegant. 5–10 years.' (CB)		Rvs	16.75
■ Château Pech-Latt	£5.99	'Fine, deep expression of fruit and vineyard spice. Nice touch of ripeness, blackberry/blackcurrant, good oak, good long flavour, classy wine. Up to 5 years.' (SS)		Wai	16.75
■ La Combe des Oliviers	£5.75	'Soft, lifted, sweet, berry, fragrant. Really open, plenty of flavours, pure and refined. Excellent balance and length, fantastic complexity. Up to 2 years.' (AS)		Wdw	16.75

recommended ★★★

wine name	price	tasting note	drinkability	stockist	mean score
■ Château Prieuré de Bubas, Clos Bubas		'Jammy brambles and creamy vanilla. Full, warm, richly fruited, lively acidity, big tannins, not subtle but very tasty. Good creamy finish. Up to 4 years.' (PS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 79 18 48	16.33
■ Château Ollieux Romanis, Cuvée Classique	£6.55	'Beautiful, herbal scented and garrigue nose. Concentrated violets and dark fruits. Deceptive concentration, fresh poise, restraint. 5 years.' (AS)		CPy	16.25
■ Château Camplong, Cuvée Grande Pièce		'Attractive nose, has depth and style with herbs, spice and fruit. Some ripe berry fruit, herbal edges. Ripe fruit continues on finish, fine. Up to 5 years.' (CB)		N/A UK +33 4 68 43 60 86	16
■ Château de Caraguilhes	£5.99	'Unashamedly ripe black fruit with spice and garrigue. Supple body, pastille fruit, velvety tannins and an impression of harmony and plump fruit. Up to 5 years.' (CB)		P&V	16
■ Château de Luc, Les Murets	£5.99	'Juicy, jammy mixed berry fruit, hint of smoke, perfumed. Lively, fresh, gluggable, soft textured, attractive, good length, mid weight. Up to 3 years.' (PS)		Maj	16

the results...

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■ What about the blends?

Some producers favour Carignan-led wines, others like a strong Syrah stamp. Shaw enjoyed the unoaked Carignan-based wines for early drinking – 'I'm a fan of the grape' – while Jefford had some reservations. 'The problem with Carignan is that anything less than fanaticism is almost always problematic. When it's great, it can produce really fantastic wines, but in more middling wines, more evidence of

other grapes in the blend would help.' Clive Barlow agreed: 'The prospect of more wines with a bigger Syrah influence heralds well for the future.'

■ Will these wines age?

They're certainly not long-term keepers – partly because of the character of the 2003 vintage – but tasters found many wines that will age for two to five years. 'I found them all ready to drink with food,' said Spurrier, 'but with two to five















years ahead for just about all of them.'

■ Go buy

The verdict here was resoundingly positive, despite some minor criticisms. Tasters agreed that Corbières is making good progress, and the wines still offer great value for money. 'There's great potential in this region,' summed up Stefanowicz. 'We just need to work out a way to get people to discover it and to drink the stuff.' **D**

Clive Barlow MW wine educator, Press Wine Services; Andrew Jefford wine writer; Maggie McNie MW freelance wine consultant; Andrew Shaw wine merchant, Stone, Vine & Sun; Steven Spurrier Decanter consultant editor; Patricia Stefanowicz MW wine educator and consultant, Plumpton College; Matthew Stubbs wine broker and consultant

recommended (cont...) ★★★

wine name	price	tasting note	drinkability	stockist	mean score
■ Clos de la Miro	£8.99	'Deep damson, spice notes, good intensity, quite supple, soft, vanilla/oak/toffee. Very forward style, open, generous, soft textured, good. Up to 2 years.' (AS)		Whb	16
■ Domaine Barons de Rothschild, Château d'Aussières	£11.50–12.99	'Concentrated essence of blackcurrant nose, really intense, almost sweet. Herby, rich, almost sweet, very concentrated, a bit of lift at the end. Up to 5 years.' (SS)		Ave, Brs, Dsm, HtM, L&W, Ply	16
■ Château la Condamine, Cuvée Tradition	£5.95	'Lifted, pure raspberry and strawberry, some white pepper. Open, sweet style, spicy and raspberry fruit – lots of character and red fruit. Drink now.' (AS)		Ave	15.75
■ Les Auzines, Cuvée des Roches	£10.25	'Licorice and apple. Smooth and light. Intense, impressive, smooth and dense, with ample tannin. Good wine. 1–6 years.' (AJ)		HvN, VTr	15.75
■ Cellier de Graffan, Graffan		'Smooth, blackcurrant spice. Ripe blackcurrant fruit, quite soft and easy, oak, quite complex and intense, highish acidity. Up to 3 years.' (SS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 83 80	15.66
■ Châeau Capendu, l'Excellence		'Soft fruit mingles with earth, garrigue and spice. Quite muted. Big and youthful – quite gangly still, plenty of fruit. 5–10 years.' (CB)		N/A UK +33 4 68 79 00 61	15.66
■ Domaine Louise-Fabry, Le Pountil		'Vibrant, dark berry fruit, cinnamon spice. Juicy, generous palate, lively acidity and velvety tannins, good concentration and length. Up to 4 years.' (PS)		N/A UK +33 4 08 24 04 89	15.66
■ Château Meunier St-Louis, A Capella		'Elegant fruit balanced with wood. Ripe fruit, very raspberryish, good fresh flavours – lingers well. Up to 2 years.' (MM)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 09 09	15.5
■ Château Meunier St-Louis	£5.95	'Rhône-style nose, smooth, ripe, oaky fruit. Loads of blackberry fruit, lasts well, nice fruit, well-balanced finish. 1–4 years.' (MM)		Jer, Lay	15.5
■ Domaine Baillat, Cuvée Emilien Baillat	£10.69	'Ample yet not dominant oak; lots of spice; ripe plum and damson, enticing. Massive wine. It has the real stones and thorns, outstanding herbal. 3–9 years.' (AJ)		Whb	15.5
■ Domaine des 2 Anes, l'Enclos	£9.49	'Well-watered red fruit and oak – summer pudding again. Plenty of ripe fruit, round, slightly spicy, good length and weight. Up to 3 years.' (MM)		DBY, GNW, Wlc	15.5
■ Château Grand Caumont, Cuvée Tradition		'Dark berry fruit and smoke. Fresh, deep fruited, linen textured, nicely integrated, exotic spice notes. Up to 4 years.' (PS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 10 82	15.33
■ Château Pech-Latt, Sélection Vieilles Vignes	on request	'Lifted scents of very ripe fruit. Smooth, approachable palate, quite full and dusty tannins. Has warmth and needs some more time. 2–5 years.' (CB)		P&V	15.33
■ Château de Sérème	£5.99–6.49	'Toasty style. Blackberry and mocha. Massive wine, textbook. Forward, intense, concentrated, big fruit with balanced acid – long and bold. 2–5 years.' (AS)		Dou	15.25

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recommended (cont...) ★★★

wine name	price	tasting note	drinkability	stockist	mean score
■ Château du Vieux Parc, La Sélection	£7.95–8.50	'Floral, mixed nose. Herbal character backed up with good ripe fruit, good sense of terroir. Up to 2 years.' (MS)		GWV, Jer, Lay, VGW	15.25
■ Château de Caraguilhes, Le Jardin de Galatée	on request	'Clean, scented nose yielding up briar fruit. Soft, full palate. Plenty of flavour, good extract and weight, grainy tannins, generous fruit. Good finish. 2–5 years.' (CB)		P&V	15
■ Château de Tersac	£5.95–6	'Pungent, smoky blackberry fruit. Ripe, rich, full bodied, nicely balanced tannins, and fresh acidity support excellent quality fruit, spicy finish. Up to 5 years.' (PS)		HBa, Pip	15
■ Château la Bastide	£6.99–7.99	'Lifted, floral, sweet, aromatic edge, authentic style. A little high toned but lovely, graceful, pure, plenty of character, fresh red fruits. Up to 2 years.' (AS)		Sel, Wmb	15
■ Domaine Calvel	£7.99	'Fine, gamey, wild violet nose. Really good fruit, blackcurrant, well balanced, good length, classy. Up to 4 years.' (SS)		Ear	15
■ Domaine Montmija	£5.99	'Pungent fruit. Lots of black fruits, plums and damsons, well structured, lingers well. Up to 3 years.' (MM)		VRo	15
■ Abbaye de Fontfroide, De Gratias		'Spice, blackberry, pure and poised. Delicious gentle, elegant attack, some grainy tannins on the finish but fruit overcomes this. Sustained finish. 2–5 years.' (CB)		N/A UK +33 4 68 45 11 08	14.75
■ Château Grand Moulin, Vieilles Vignes		'Red fruited, some sugar. Soft and green, some spice. Big fruit though, enjoyable. Up to 2 years.' (AS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 27 40 80	14.75
■ Château la Pujade, Cuvée Gomard	£8–10	'Blackcurrant, prune, tar, ripe and spicy. Gentle palate with a degree of elegance and structure. Good level of fruit. Well balanced. 2–5 years.' (CB)		PWW	14.75
■ Château la Voulte-Gaspards, Cuvée Romain Pauc	£22	'Leafy, spicy, dried fruits, thyme. Concentrated, well balanced, fresh ripeness, great fusion of fruit and garrigue flavours, and tannic structure. 2 years.' (MS)		CeG, Gpl, Upt	14.75
■ Château Montfin, Cuvée Margot		'Concentrated blackcurrant spice, very Syrah, slightly reductive. Good Syrah-based wine, impressive leathery style. Up to 8 years.' (SS)		N/A UK +33 6 08 93 84 27	14.75
■ Château Villeroige la Crémade		'Powerful black cherry and spice. Extracted, concentrated style, over ripe fruit, more modern approach, tannin. Up to 2 years.' (MS)		N/A UK +33 4 68 43 59 70	14.75
■ Domaine Barons de Rothschild, A d'Aussières	£7.49–8.49	'Very withdrawn, dark fruit. Soft, spicy brambles – crisp flash, very pleasant finish. Up to 2 years.' (MM)		Ave, Brs, Dsm, HtM, L&W, Ply	14.75
■ Domaine de Fontainte, Cuvée du Centurion	£10.50	'Smoky autumn bonfires, mixed fruit of the forest, black and red. Plenty of good fruit which lingers on the finish. Good balance, quite rich. Up to 3 years.' (MM)		Ear	14.75
■ Domaine du Grand Crès	£8.49–9.49	'Lifted, charming, open aromas, strawberry, raspberry fruit, some soft spice. Charming style – open, pure, soft strawberry fruit. Approachable. Drink now.' (AS)		Aph, Gad, Tan	14.75
■ Selected by Marks & Spencer	£5.50	'Subtle aromatics of blackcurrant and pepper. Subtle, easy drink, ripe fruit, some power on palate, well balanced. Up to 2 years.' (MS)		M&S	14.75

fair ★★

■ **Château Belaussel (14.33);** ■ **Château Fontareche, Pierre Mignard (14.33);** ■ **Château Lionel Faivre (14.33);** ■ **Château Montauriol Rigaud, Grande Réserve (14.33);** ■ **Domaine des Boulières (14.33);** ■ **Château Villeroige la Crémade, Evohé (14.25);** ■ **Les Auzines, Fleurs de Garrigues (14.25);** ■ **Château Berlioz, Adagio (14);** ■ **Château Ciceron, l'Orangerie du XIXème (14);** ■ **Château Etang des Colombes, Bois des Dames (14);** ■ **Château Fontareche, Sélection Vieilles Vignes (14);** ■ **Château Hélène, Pénélope (14);** ■ **Château la Voulte-Gaspards, Cuvée Réserve (14);** ■ **Clos de l'Anhel, les Dimanches (14);** ■ **Clos de l'Anhel, les Terrasselles (14);** ■ **Bernard Alias, Cuvée Hector & Juliette (13.75);** ■ **Château Grand Moulin, Terres Rouges (13.75);** ■ **Domaine Aonghusa, Laval (13.75);** ■ **Château de Lastours (13.66);** ■ **Château de l'Horte, Cuvée Marquis de St Felix (13.5);** ■ **Château Etang des Colombes Bicentenaire, Vieilles Vignes (13.5);** ■ **Château Montfin, Cuvée Marcel Cabanier (13.5);** ■ **Clos Canos,**

Tradition (13.5); ■ **Les Vignerons de la Méditerranée, Cuvée Mythique, Limited Release (13.5);** ■ **Château Donos (13.33);** ■ **Château Vieux Moulin (13.33);** ■ **Château Vieux Moulin, Vox Dei (13.33);** ■ **Château de Lastours, Cuvée Simon Descamps (13.25);** ■ **Château de Cabriac (13);** ■ **Domaine du Trillol (13)**

poor ★

■ **Château Moulin la Mondière (12.25);** ■ **Château Donos, Cuvée Gonezinde 1er (12)**

To see past panel tastings, visit www.decanter.com and click on 'Recommendations'.

For full stockist contact details, see page 121