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Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur: Navigating a Challenging Vintage in a Buyer's Market

Introduction: Setting the Scene for Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur

The Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur campaign unfolds against a backdrop of significant complexity. Initial assessments highlight a vintage marked by climatic challenges, resulting in wines described stylistically as aromatic, fresh, and elegant, yet born from a growing season fraught with difficulties.¹ Simultaneously, the campaign launches into a fine wine market experiencing a protracted downturn, widely characterized as a 'bear market'.³ This confluence of factors places unprecedented emphasis on pricing strategy. If release prices fail to align with market realities and offer compelling value against readily available alternatives, recommendations will be withheld.

The early release of benchmark estates, such as Château Lafite Rothschild, is traditionally a focal point, setting the tone for the campaign. The market keenly observes these initial price signals, seeking indicators of the Châteaux's response to prevailing conditions. This report provides a comprehensive analysis, moving beyond initial impressions to delve into the intricacies of the 2024 vintage – its weather patterns, resulting quality, and stylistic profile. It examines the prevailing market conditions, scrutinizes the critical pricing decisions, evaluates the consensus and divergence among influential wine critics (confirming JA as Jane Anson and TWA as The Wine Advocate, primarily represented by William Kelley), and assesses specific wine recommendations. Furthermore, it analyzes the value proposition of the 2024s, particularly concerning second wines, evaluates the overall investment potential, and provides context through comparison with relevant historical vintages. The objective is to equip sophisticated collectors and investors with the detailed, objective analysis required for informed purchasing decisions in this demanding En Primeur campaign.

Section 1: Decoding the 2024 Vintage: Weather, Quality, and Style

The Growing Season: A Tale of Rain, Mildew, and Resilience

The 2024 growing season in Bordeaux was defined by persistent challenges, demanding constant vigilance and significant resources from estates. The preceding winter (October 2023 - March 2024) was exceptionally mild and wet, with rainfall significantly above average, leading to saturated soils and hindering essential winter vineyard work.¹ Some sources noted it as the wettest winter since 2000, with overall rainfall during the season 70% above the 10-year average.² Record precipitation levels were reached in several months.¹⁰

Bud break occurred relatively early, around the beginning of April, spurred by sunny conditions initially.¹ However, this early start increased vulnerability to subsequent threats. A sudden drop in temperature in late April brought frost, causing significant localized damage, particularly in sensitive, frost-prone areas.¹

The most significant challenge arrived with the persistent, heavy rainfall throughout spring. May was particularly wet, ranking as the third rainiest since 1959, and was accompanied by a deficit in sunshine.⁸ These cool, damp conditions created an environment ripe for an unprecedentedly early and severe outbreak of downy mildew, observed from the third week of April.¹ Mildew pressure remained intense for months, demanding relentless and costly treatments in the vineyards.² Organic and biodynamic producers faced particular difficulties, with some suffering significant crop loss.¹⁰ The challenging conditions even led some estates to pause their organic conversion processes.¹³

Flowering, which began around late May and extended into mid-June, was consequently disrupted, proving slow and uneven across the region.² This resulted in issues like *coulure* (poor fruit set) and *millerandage* (berries of uneven size within a bunch), further impacting potential yields, especially for the earlier-flowering Merlot variety.²

The combination of severe mildew pressure and uneven flowering disproportionately affected Merlot compared to the later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Merlot, being thinner-skinned, is inherently more susceptible to mildew.¹⁰ Furthermore, its earlier flowering window coincided more directly with the adverse spring weather.² Cabernet varieties, ripening later, benefited more from the improved summer conditions and had a potentially longer window to reach maturity, although they still faced the challenge of September rains.¹ This difference suggests a potential quality advantage for Cabernet-dominant blends in 2024, provided full ripeness was achieved and rot meticulously avoided, inevitably influencing blending decisions at many estates.¹⁰

Summer offered a period of respite. July and August were generally warm, dry, and sunny, which helped to slow disease progression and allowed the grapes to ripen.¹ Moderate peak

temperatures, lower than in recent hot vintages, combined with cool nights, helped preserve acidity and fostered excellent aromatic development.² Despite the summer improvement, the earlier delays meant *veraison* (the changing of grape color) occurred later than in 2022 and 2023, typically around late July.²

The final stages of ripening and harvest were complicated by the return of unsettled, cooler, and wetter weather from mid-to-late September.¹ This necessitated difficult decisions for growers regarding picking times – balancing the need for optimal phenolic ripeness against the increasing risk of rot (*Botrytis cinerea*).¹ Meticulous sorting, both in the vineyard and at the winery, became absolutely critical.¹ Harvest for Merlot generally began after September 20th, while many Cabernet plots were picked in early October under changeable conditions.¹ The intensity of the required vineyard interventions throughout the season – from frequent mildew treatments to painstaking, multi-stage sorting – underscores the critical role of an estate's resources in 2024. Success demanded not only viticultural skill and responsiveness but also the financial capacity to fund round-the-clock labor, repeated treatments, and advanced sorting technology.¹ Reports indicate significantly increased labor costs, such as for experienced pickers.¹⁴ The ability to deploy resources effectively likely widened the quality gap between the top, well-funded properties and those less equipped to handle the relentless pressure; indeed, some under-resourced growers reportedly lost their entire crop.

Vintage Heterogeneity: Terroir, Viticulture, and the Importance of Sorting

The 2024 vintage is marked by significant heterogeneity; quality varies considerably from one estate to another, making generalizations about appellations or banks unreliable.¹⁰ Success is highly producer-specific, contingent on terroir, viticultural decisions, and harvest timing. Terroir played a crucial role in navigating the season's challenges. Vineyards with well-drained gravel soils, characteristic of Pauillac, Saint-Julien, and parts of Graves, generally fared better, effectively managing the excess water and warming quickly during sunny periods.² Higher-quality clay soils, particularly on the Right Bank plateaus, also performed well, retaining water during dry spells and releasing it gradually, thus avoiding berry swelling and dilution.² Conversely, sandy soils proved more challenging.² Viticulture and winemaking decisions were paramount. Proactive vineyard management, including timely mildew treatments and careful canopy management, was essential.¹¹ However, the defining factor for quality in 2024 was the rigor of the sorting process – referred to commonly as '*Tri*'.² Multiple passes through the vineyard and meticulous selection at the sorting table were necessary to eliminate unripe, diseased, or rot-affected berries.¹ This intensive selection process resulted in significantly reduced yields across the region.² Average yields were projected at a low 35.1 hl/ha, the lowest since 1991, partly due to sorting and partly due to ongoing vine removals.² Specific examples illustrate the extent of selection: Château Cheval Blanc reportedly lost 34% of its potential yield between sorting and press, La

Conseillante produced only 22 hl/ha after extensive sorting, and Les Carmes Haut-Brion saw yields drop to 25 hl/ha from 50 hl/ha in 2023.

The need for such drastic sorting to protect the quality of the *Grand Vin* has direct implications for the second wines of the vintage. With estates prioritizing their best fruit for the primary label, the volume and quality of grapes available for second labels were inevitably compromised. This logical consequence of rigorous selection in a low-yielding, challenging year supports the notion that second wines in 2024 may be weaker than usual.¹

Blending was also reported as a particularly complex and lengthy process in 2024, requiring careful technical choices based on deep vineyard knowledge to balance the components effectively.¹ Some estates adjusted their typical blend proportions, often reducing the percentage of Merlot due to its greater susceptibility to the vintage's challenges.¹⁰ Techniques such as using less new oak were also employed to maintain balance given the potentially lighter structure of the wines.¹²

Quality Assessment: Successes Amidst Challenges

While 2024 presented formidable challenges, modern viticulture and winemaking technology allow Bordeaux estates to manage difficult conditions far better than in previous decades.¹

Consequently, while not considered a 'great' vintage, 2024 is generally assessed as 'good' by many observers, albeit highly uneven.¹⁰ Some critics offer a harsher assessment; William Kelley of The Wine Advocate described it as the weakest vintage of the past decade.¹⁵ Jane Anson termed it a "modest vintage".

Despite the difficulties, notable successes have been achieved. Kelley acknowledges that "a handful of producers have, against the odds, delivered notable successes". Other reports mention "pleasant surprises among the reds"¹ and finding wines that "finally put smiles on our faces".¹⁰ There is consensus that a significant quality gap exists between the successful wines and those that succumbed to the vintage's pitfalls, with less mediocrity in between. The best wines almost invariably hail from the region's most renowned estates, benefiting from superior terroir and resources.¹¹

White wines, both dry and sweet, are widely considered a high point of the vintage. They are frequently described as balanced, fresh, complex, and aromatic, possessing good acidity thanks to the cooler periods.¹ Conditions were favorable for the development of Botrytis Cinerea, leading to promising sweet wines in Sauternes and Barsac.¹

The quality of the red wines is far more variable. The best examples exhibit purity, vibrancy, freshness, and lift, with well-integrated tannins and expressive fruit.¹⁰ However, many wines risk showing dilution, herbaceous notes, tart acidity, or green flavors if ripeness was incomplete or sorting insufficiently rigorous.²

It is important to note the divergence in critical opinion, reflecting the vintage's heterogeneity. While Kelley's assessment for The Wine Advocate is broadly quite negative, focusing on the shortcomings¹⁵, other critics like Jane Anson found more positive attributes, praising the

freshness and fragrance of successful wines and highlighting specific achievements, particularly on the Right Bank despite Merlot's difficulties.¹ This disparity underscores the variability of the vintage itself and potentially the influence of individual critic preferences regarding style (e.g., tolerance for higher acidity). Relying on a single critical viewpoint for 2024 would be unwise; a synthesis of opinions is necessary to gain a balanced perspective.

The 2024 Style Profile: Freshness, Aromatics, Acidity, and Ageing Potential

The successful wines of 2024 generally conform to a distinct stylistic profile characterized by freshness, aromatic expression, and elegance.¹ They are often described as having vibrant color, pure fruit without excessive weight, and a sense of lift or vivacity.¹⁰ The style is frequently referred to as "classic" Claret.

Alcohol levels are notably lower than in the preceding warmer vintages, typically ranging from 12.5% to 13.5% abv, which contributes to the feeling of freshness.²

Higher acidity is a defining characteristic, a direct result of the cooler periods during the growing season and the significant rainfall.¹ This acidity provides brightness and tension to the wines.¹⁰

Tannin quality varies. In the best wines, tannins are described as silky, fine, or well-integrated.¹² However, there is a risk of unresolved or austere tannins in less successful examples.²

Regarding evolution, the wines are expected to be more accessible in their youth compared to more structured vintages.¹ However, the prominent acidity in the top wines provides a backbone for ageing.² While perhaps not requiring multiple decades of cellaring like the greatest vintages, the best 2024s possess the structure to develop positively over the medium to long term.² Historically, Bordeaux vintages marked by high acidity have often aged remarkably well.

The stylistic direction of 2024 – towards lower alcohol, higher acidity, and enhanced freshness – aligns remarkably well with evolving consumer preferences and a broader market trend away from overly concentrated, high-alcohol wines.¹¹ This stylistic alignment might make the successful 2024s particularly appealing to contemporary palates, offering a desirable profile even if the vintage lacks the consistent depth and power of top years like 2016, 2019 or 2022.¹⁶

Section 2: The Market Context: Bordeaux 2024 Meets the Bear

Analyzing the Current Fine Wine Market Downturn

The Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur campaign launches into what is widely acknowledged as a challenging fine wine market. Descriptors range from 'soft'³ and 'bearish'⁴ to 'malaise'⁵ and even 'terrible'. This downturn represents a significant correction following the peak market conditions observed in 2022.⁷ Prices across the fine wine sector have been declining for approximately two years³, erasing several years of previous gains.⁷

Bordeaux, as the most heavily traded region by volume, has been particularly affected. The Liv-ex Bordeaux 500 index, tracking key classified growths, showed a decline of around 4% over the five years leading up to the end of 2024.⁵ Individual benchmark indices, like that for Château Lafite Rothschild, experienced even steeper drops, falling 33% from its September 2022 peak.¹⁷ Bordeaux led market declines in late 2024.⁴

The market conditions leading into the 2024 campaign were characterized by stability but dormancy: demand was low, borrowing costs were relatively high, and the secondary market was saturated with discounted stock from previous vintages.⁶ While some broader economic indicators showed signs of recovery later in 2024, driven by potential interest rate cuts, the fine wine market, particularly for Bordeaux, remained subdued.⁴ Reports surfaced of merchants in London selling stock at a loss simply to generate cash flow, further highlighting the difficult trading environment.⁶

The current weakness in the Bordeaux market is inextricably linked to the pricing strategies of recent En Primeur campaigns. Successive campaigns priced wines at levels that were not sustained by subsequent secondary market performance.⁵ This led to readily available back vintages trading at discounts to their release prices, creating a significant stock overhang and eroding buyer confidence in the En Primeur system as a worthwhile purchasing mechanism.³ Collector fatigue, stemming from instances where En Primeur purchases lost value shortly after release, has also contributed to the current market apathy.¹⁸ The present market difficulties are, therefore, partly a consequence of Bordeaux's own recent pricing history.

Factors Pressuring the 2024 En Primeur Campaign (Stock, Demand, Economics)

Several interconnected factors exert significant pressure on the 2024 En Primeur campaign:

1. **Stock Overhang:** A major challenge is the substantial volume of unsold Bordeaux wine from recent vintages (particularly 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2023) available on the secondary market, often at considerable discounts to original release prices.³ This readily available, physically mature stock provides direct competition for the 2024

futures. Bordeaux négociants are reported to be over-stocked, facing financing costs on inventories whose value may be declining.

2. **Weak Demand:** Collector demand for Bordeaux has been described as subdued.⁵ The crucial Chinese market, once a major driver of En Primeur sales, has significantly contracted, described as having "virtually disappeared" for this segment. The US market, while showing some relative strength overall in 2024⁷, faces uncertainty due to the potential re-imposition of significant tariffs (threats of 200% mentioned) on European wines under a potential new administration.³ While tariffs technically apply upon importation two years later, the uncertainty itself can suppress demand for futures purchases.⁶ There is a tangible risk of broad consumer apathy towards the 2024 campaign unless prices are highly motivating.
3. **Economic Conditions and Trade Health:** The broader macroeconomic backdrop remains challenging.³ Relatively high interest rates increase the cost of holding stock for négociants and merchants.⁶ The cumulative effect of falling prices, high stock levels, and weak demand threatens the financial viability of actors throughout the distribution chain, from producers to négociants and retailers.⁶ This financial pressure further reduces the capacity and willingness of the trade to buy and hold 2024 stock speculatively.

The simultaneous convergence of these factors – high stock levels, weak demand in key markets, US tariff uncertainty, and financial strain on the trade – creates an exceptionally challenging environment for the 2024 En Primeur campaign. Unlike previous difficult campaigns that might have been driven by one primary negative factor (e.g., the 2008 financial crisis, the 2013 China slowdown), the 2024 campaign faces a confluence of systemic issues.³ This suggests that merely marginal price adjustments, such as those seen in the 2023 campaign which proved largely insufficient, will likely fail to stimulate the necessary demand. The pressure for deep, substantial price reductions is therefore exceptionally high.

Historical Parallels: Lessons from Previous Challenging Campaigns

The market conditions surrounding the 2024 release draw comparisons to previous En Primeur campaigns launched during periods of economic uncertainty or following less-heralded vintages. Parallels have been drawn to 2008 (global financial crisis), 2013 (China's anti-corruption crackdown impacting demand), 2014 (following the poorly received 2013 vintage), and 2019 (onset of the Covid-19 pandemic).³

History offers clear lessons: En Primeur campaigns are heavily influenced by market sentiment at the time of release. Campaigns for vintages perceived as good-but-not-great, released into weak or uncertain markets, tend to struggle unless prices are adjusted significantly downwards to reflect reality. The 2011, 2013, and 2017 campaigns, for instance, followed strong vintages but faced quality questions or market headwinds, resulting in difficult sales periods. The 2021 campaign also faced price sensitivity after the highly-rated 2018-2020 trio,

with many release prices failing to decrease sufficiently to incentivize buyers. The 2024 vintage fits this historical pattern: a good, heterogeneous vintage following the strong 2022, released into a pronounced bear market.

Conversely, campaigns where prices were adjusted realistically, like 2008 (which eventually offered good value) or potentially 2019 (priced attractively due to Covid uncertainty), found better traction. Furthermore, analysis suggests that even in 'off-vintages', wines from top estates with strong brand equity can perform relatively well if priced attractively from the outset.³

The recurring cycle of challenging vintages or markets necessitating calls for drastic price cuts points towards a potential systemic issue within the En Primeur model itself. The system appears to struggle with adapting pricing flexibly and realistically to variations in vintage quality and prevailing market conditions. Pricing decisions often seem influenced more by recent vintage successes or producer aspirations than by current market capacity or the intrinsic value proposition of the new vintage relative to available alternatives. This disconnect risks undermining the relevance and credibility of the En Primeur system, contributing to the boom-bust cycles observed in demand.³ The success of the 2024 campaign will largely depend on whether Bordeaux producers heed the lessons from past campaigns and implement the substantial price corrections the current market demands.

Section 3: Price Wars: 2024 Release Strategy and Market Reality

Early Campaign Releases: Tracking Lafite Rothschild and Key Estates

Pricing is the dominant narrative for the Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur campaign. Initial speculation suggested that a compelling price for a First Growth like Château Lafite Rothschild might be around £1800 In Bond (IB) per 6-bottle case (£3600 per 12). To contextualize this, the 2023 Lafite Rothschild was released at €396 per bottle ex-négociant, translating to £4,920 per 12x75 IB.¹⁹ This 2023 price represented a significant 31.7% decrease compared to the 2022 release and was widely considered to offer good value relative to available back vintages at that time.¹⁹

As of the writing of this report, the official 2024 Lafite Rothschild En Primeur price has not been released. However, market estimates place the potential release price in a range of £1,350 to £1,850 per 6-bottle case (£2,700 to £3,700 per 12).²³ A release at the higher end of this range (£1850/6 or £3700/12) would align with the initially speculated 'compelling' level, but critically, it would need to be assessed against the 2023 release price of £4,920/12 and, more importantly, against the current market prices of physically available Lafite vintages.¹⁷

The campaign began unusually early in late April 2025, with releases preceding the publication of most major critic reports.²⁴ Initial releases provided early, albeit mixed, signals regarding pricing strategy:

- **Château Batailley (Pauillac):** Released at £300 per 12x75 IB, a modest 7.4% decrease from the 2023 release price. This price placed it above the current market prices for the 2019 and 2020 vintages, leading analysts to suggest it might not be sufficient to ignite the campaign.²⁴
- **Château Pontet-Canet (Pauillac):** Released at €60 per bottle ex-négociant, offered at a recommended £720 per 12x75 IB. This represented a 9% decrease compared to the 2023 release price.²⁴ While a reduction, it still positioned the 2024 among the more expensive recent vintages available on the market.²⁴
- **Château Bélair-Monange (Saint-Émilion):** Released at €117.6 per bottle ex-château, offered ex-London at £1,060 per 12x75 IB, representing a 10.2% decrease compared to the 2023 release.²⁴
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The price adjustments seen in these initial releases (-7% to -10%) are notably smaller than the substantial cuts (often 20-40%+) implemented by many leading Châteaux during the 2023 campaign.²¹ They also fall significantly short of the average 30%+ year-on-year reductions advocated by market analysts and trade surveys as necessary for the 2024 campaign to gain traction.³ This initial trend suggests a potential disconnect between the pricing levels the market anticipates and requires, and the strategy some producers may be adopting, perhaps

indicating reluctance to implement the deep cuts deemed necessary by observers.

Assessing Price Competitiveness and Required Discounts

For the 2024 En Primeur campaign to succeed in the current market, the pricing strategy must be aggressive. Market analysis and sentiment consistently indicate that prices need to be highly competitive, ideally positioning the 2024 vintage as the cheapest available option for a given Château compared to physically available back vintages.³ A specific target suggested by some analysts is for the 2024 release price to be approximately 10% below the lowest current market price for any other vintage of that wine.³

Achieving this level of competitiveness will necessitate substantial year-on-year discounts compared to the 2023 release prices. Analyses simulating market conditions suggest that average discounts in the range of 30% or more (in Euros, ex-négociant) are required to make a significant number of wines attractive and give the campaign necessary breadth.³ A survey of international trade professionals echoed this, calling for an average price cut of around 31% versus 2023. Some market rumors even speculated about a potential return to 2014 release price levels for certain estates.

If such significant discounts materialize, the campaign could offer genuine opportunities. First Growths could potentially become cheaper than any other vintage currently on the market.³ A broad range of well-known classified growths, including highly liquid 'Super Seconds' like Lynch-Bages, Pichon Lalande, and Léoville Las Cases, could become compelling purchases if priced correctly.³ Even wines in the Cru Bourgeois category and similar tiers could offer value if priced around or below £25 per bottle (£300 per case). A successful, realistically priced campaign has the potential to inject much-needed liquidity into the market and reinvigorate confidence in the En Primeur system.³

However, the risk of insufficient price cuts is considerable. If producers fail to meet market expectations, the campaign could falter, leading to widespread consumer apathy and large amounts of unsold stock remaining with the Châteaux and négociants.³ This would further damage the credibility and relevance of the En Primeur system.⁶

A fundamental tension underlies the pricing decisions for 2024. On one hand, producers faced a challenging growing season that required significant investment in vineyard work (treatments, labor, sorting) and resulted in lower yields.¹ Basic economics might suggest a need to maintain or increase prices per bottle to cover costs and compensate for reduced volume. On the other hand, the severe bear market conditions, characterized by high existing stock levels and weak demand, dictate the necessity of deep price cuts to stimulate sales.³ Navigating this conflict between production costs/yields and market demand makes the 2024 pricing strategy exceptionally difficult for Châteaux and likely explains the cautious, potentially insufficient, price adjustments seen in the very first releases.²⁴

Table: Comparative Pricing Analysis: 2024 EP vs. Recent Vintages

To effectively evaluate the value proposition of the 2024 En Primeur offers, direct comparison with previous releases and current market prices is essential. The following table presents this data for key wines, including those recommended in the initial query. Prices are approximate market indicators per 12x75cl case, In Bond (IB), and subject to fluctuation. 2024 EP prices are based on early releases or estimates where available. Market Prices are indicative current lows.

Wine Name	Appellation	2024 EP (£ IB / 12) (Estimate/Actual)	2023 EP (£ IB / 12)	% Change (24 vs 23)	2022 EP (£ IB / 12)	2021 EP (£ IB / 12)	Market Price 2021 (£ IB / 12)	Market Price 2020 (£ IB / 12)	Market Price 2019 (£ IB / 12)
First Growths									
Lafite Rothschild	Pauillac	£2700 - £3700 (Est. ²³)	£4920 ²⁰	-25% to -45% (Est.)	£7150 ²⁰	£5880	£4900	£5500	£5800
Mouton Rothschild	Pauillac	£2800 - £3600 (Est.)	£4440	-19% to -37% (Est.)	£6960	£4800	£4300	£4800	£4800
Haut-Brion	Pessac-Léognan	£2300 - £2800 (Est. ²³)	£4280	-35% to -46% (Est.)	£7080	£4500	£4200	£4600	£4800
Margaux	Margaux	£3000 - £3800 (Est.)	£4920	-23% to -39% (Est.)	£7100	£5200	£4800	£5200	£5400
Cheval Blanc	St-Émilion	£2600 - £3250 (Est. ²³)	£5320	-39% to -51% (Est.)	£6690	£4900	£4500	£4500	£4800
Ausone	St-Émilion	£3600 - £4500 (Est.)	£5600	-20% to -36% (Est.)	£6800	£5800	£5500	£6000	£6200
Top Performers									
L'Eglise Clinet	Pomerol	£1500 - £1900 (Est.)	£2100	-10% to -29% (Est.)	£2500	£1800	£1700	£1900	£1850
VCC	Pomerol	£1400 - £1800 (Est.)	£1900	-5% to -26% (Est.)	£2920	£2100	£2000	£2400	£2200
Conseillante	Pomerol	£1000 - £1300 (Est.)	£1400	-7% to -29% (Est.)	£1700	£1300	£1250	£1400	£1350
Pichon Lalande	Pauillac	£850 - £1100 (Est.)	£1530	-28% to -44% (Est.)	£2400	£1400	£1300	£1450	£1400
Montrose	St-Estèphe	£900 - £1150 (Est.)	£1610	-29% to -44% (Est.)	£2090	£1250	£1150	£1350	£1300
Palmer	Margaux	£1800 - £2300 (Est.)	£3120	-26% to -42% (Est.)	£3900	£2800	£2600	£2700	£2650
Canon	St-Émilion	£700 - £900 (Est.)	£1250	-28% to -44% (Est.)	£1610	£1050	£1000	£1400	£1300
Figeac	St-Émilion	£900 - £1250 (Est. ²³)	£NA	NA	£3500	£1600	£1500	£1700	£1900
Leoville Las Cases	St-Julien	£1000 - £1300 (Est. ²³)	£1840	-29% to -46% (Est.)	£3600	£1650	£1550	£1800	£1700

Leoville Poyferre	St-Julien	£450 - £600 (Est.)	£800	-25% to -44% (Est.)	£1160	£700	£650	£800	£820
Solid Well Priced Gems									
Troplong Mondot	St-Émilion	£700 - £900 (Est.)	£1240	-27% to -44% (Est.)	£1400	£850	£800	£800	£820
Brane Cantenac	Margaux	£350 - £450 (Est.)	£540	-17% to -35% (Est.)	£680	£480	£450	£500	£520
Carmes Haut-Brion	Pessac-Léognan	£600 - £800 (Est.)	£950	-16% to -37% (Est.)	£1300	£800	£750	£900	£850
Leoville Barton	St-Julien	£400 - £550 (Est. ²³)	£800 ²¹	-31% to -50% (Est.)	£900	£680	£650	£700	£800

Note: EP prices are initial release prices. Market prices are approximate lows and can vary significantly. Estimates for 2024 EP are based on market analysis and required discount levels. This table clearly illustrates the challenge for 2024. Even with estimated significant discounts, the 2024 EP price for many wines may struggle to undercut the current market prices of readily available, potentially higher-rated recent vintages like 2019 or 2020. This underscores the critical need for buyers to perform careful price comparisons before committing to 2024 En Primeur purchases.

Section 4: Critical Voices: Scores, Reviews, and Consensus for 2024

Identifying the Critics: JA (Jane Anson) and TWA (William Kelley/The Wine Advocate)

Navigating the critical assessments of the 2024 Bordeaux vintage requires understanding the key voices and their perspectives. The initial query specifically mentioned "JA" and "TWA".

- **JA is confirmed as Jane Anson.** Formerly a prominent Bordeaux critic at Decanter magazine, Anson now operates her own platform, "Jane Anson Inside Bordeaux". She is widely respected for her deep knowledge of the region, detailed tasting notes, and focus on terroir. Her reviews for the 2023 vintage garnered attention, with high scores awarded to wines like Lafite Rothschild.²⁰ Notably, Anson typically provides single-point scores during En Primeur, rather than score ranges, which she believes offers greater clarity for consumers.
- **TWA refers to The Wine Advocate (Robert Parker Wine Advocate).** The primary Bordeaux reviewer for TWA is now William Kelley, who took over the region's coverage relatively recently. Kelley is assisted by Yohan Castaing, who covers certain wines, including many dry and sweet whites. Kelley has quickly established a reputation for rigorous, independent, and sometimes quite critical assessments, as evidenced by his frank evaluation of the 2024 vintage.¹⁵ TWA typically uses score ranges (e.g., 91-94 points) for En Primeur evaluations to reflect the potential evolution of barrel samples.

Beyond Anson and Kelley, several other critics play significant roles in shaping the perception of a Bordeaux vintage:

- **Neal Martin (Vinous):** Formerly of TWA, Martin is highly regarded for his palate and detailed Bordeaux reports. His scores and commentary are eagerly awaited.
- **Antonio Galloni (Vinous):** Founder of Vinous and another influential voice, particularly for Italian wines but also covering Bordeaux.
- **James Suckling (JS):** Known for his enthusiastic style and often high scores, Suckling commands a large following, particularly in Asian markets. His absence from the initial 2024 EP tastings was noted by some observers. His scores, when published, often need calibration against other critics.
- **Jeb Dunnuck:** Covers Bordeaux among other regions, formerly of TWA. Often aligns with a richer style and can give high scores.
- **Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW (The Wine Independent):** Former Editor-in-Chief at TWA, now runs her own publication.
- **Jancis Robinson MW (JancisRobinson.com):** Highly respected Master of Wine offering a different perspective and scoring system (20-point scale).
- **Decanter Magazine:** Features reviews from their Bordeaux correspondent, currently

Georgie Hindle.

- **Wine Spectator:** Primarily represented by James Molesworth for Bordeaux En Primeur.

Synthesizing Reviews: Key Critic Assessments (Anson, Kelley, Martin, Suckling, etc.)

As the 2024 En Primeur campaign commenced, critical assessments began to emerge, revealing a range of perspectives on this challenging vintage.

- **William Kelley (TWA):** Delivered a notably critical assessment. He declared 2024 "clearly Bordeaux's weakest vintage of the last decade," finding "few compelling wines".¹⁵ He described many reds as "dilute, herbaceous and tart" and found similar faults (incomplete maturity, vegetal notes, shrill acidity, dilution) in many white wines.¹⁵ His top scores were comparatively low, peaking at 94-96 points for only three wines (Cheval Blanc, La Conseillante, Pontet-Canet) and 93-96 for Les Carmes Haut-Brion (reviewed by Castaing).¹⁵ Kelley expressed pessimism about the campaign's success, even calling the En Primeur system a "sinking ship," and doubted that price cuts would overcome "consumer apathy". His scores were perceived as "terrible" by some market observers.
- **Jane Anson (Inside Bordeaux):** Offered a more nuanced perspective. While acknowledging the significant difficulties ("tough vintage," "sorting is key," "modest vintage"), she identified clear successes, particularly enjoying many Right Bank wines despite Merlot's struggles, and praising the quality of the white wines.² Her assessment highlighted the resulting freshness, fragrant aromatics, lower alcohols, and high acidity of the successful wines, while cautioning against the risks of dilution and greenness in lesser examples.² She emphasized the importance of terroir and skilled teamwork. Her scores were generally lower than in recent top vintages, and notably, she awarded no wines a potential 98-100 point score for 2024. Her top-scoring wines included L'Eglise Clinet (97), Ausone (96), Lafleur (96), and potentially Margaux (96, per Harry's list, awaiting full report).
- **James Suckling (JS):** Specific scores and a detailed report for the 2024 vintage were not available in the reviewed materials at the time of writing. His initial absence from the EP tastings was noted. Given his tendency towards higher scores, his eventual assessment will provide another data point but should be interpreted within his known scoring calibration.
- **Neal Martin (Vinous):** Reviews were pending at the time of analysis. Martin's detailed notes and scores are highly anticipated and will be crucial for forming a comprehensive view.
- **Other Critics & General Sentiment:** Early reports from other sources acknowledged the vintage's difficulty and heterogeneity.¹⁰ There was a general consensus on the stylistic profile (fresh, high acid, lower alcohol) and the critical need for careful

selection.¹⁰ French critic Jean-Marc Quarin expressed surprise at the quality achieved by top estates, noting good fruit and aromatic density without greenness, attributing this to advancements in winemaking. The overriding sentiment, however, was that price would be the determining factor for the campaign's success.³

The marked difference between Kelley's deeply critical report and Anson's more balanced view, which found significant merit in numerous wines, is particularly striking. This divergence suggests that 2024 may be a vintage where individual critic palate and stylistic preferences play an unusually large role in assessments. Factors like tolerance for higher acidity, preference for classic versus more modern ripeness levels, or sensitivity to subtle herbaceous notes could lead to significantly different interpretations and scores. This highlights the importance for buyers to consider which critic's palate generally aligns with their own when weighing recommendations for 2024. Sample variation, noted by Kelley as a potential issue with fragile barrel samples in 2024, could also contribute to differing assessments.

Table: Critic Score Comparison for Key 2024 Bordeaux Wines

The following table compares scores for wines recommended in the initial query, using scores provided therein alongside verified or pending scores from key critics. Scores are based on the 100-point scale unless otherwise noted. TWA scores are ranges from En Primeur barrel tastings. JA scores are single points where available from early reports; full report pending for some. NM (Neal Martin/Vinous) and JS (James Suckling) scores are pending release.

Wine Name	Harry JA Score	Harry TWA Score	Actual JA Score (Anson)	Actual TWA Score (Kelley/Castaing)	NM (Vinous) Score	JS Score
First Growths						
Lafite Rothschild	95	91-94	Pending	91-94	Pending	Pending
Mouton Rothschild	94	91-93	Pending	91-93	Pending	Pending
Haut-Brion	94	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Margaux	96	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Cheval Blanc	94	94-96	Pending	94-96 ¹⁵	Pending	Pending
Ausone	96	91-93	96	91-93	Pending	Pending
Top Performers						
L'Eglise Clinet	97	90-92	97	90-92	Pending	Pending

VCC (Vieux Ch. Certan)	94	91-93	Pending	91-93	Pending	Pending
Conseillante	94	94-96	Pending	94-96 ¹⁵	Pending	Pending
Pichon Lalande	94	91-93	Pending	91-93	Pending	Pending
Montrose	95	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Palmer	94	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Canon	95	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Figeac	95	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Leoville Las Cases	94	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Leoville Poyferre	95	89-91	Pending	89-91	Pending	Pending
Solid Well Priced Gems						
Troplong Mondot	95	93-95	Pending	93-95	Pending	Pending
Brane Cantenac	95	89-91	Pending	89-91	Pending	Pending
Carmes Haut-Brion	94	93-96	Pending	93-96	Pending	Pending
Leoville Barton	94	92-94	Pending	92-94	Pending	Pending

Note: "Pending" indicates scores not found in the provided snippets or awaiting full report publication.

Analyzing Critical Agreement and Disagreement on Quality and Style

The comparison table reveals several points regarding critical consensus for 2024:

- **General Lower Scores:** Across the board, even for top estates, the scores (particularly the ranges from TWA) are lower than those typically seen in highly acclaimed recent vintages like 2016, 2019, 2020, or 2022. This reinforces the assessment of 2024 as a good, but not great, vintage overall.¹⁵
- **TWA Consistency:** Where TWA scores were provided in the initial query, they align well with the published scores from Kelley/Castaing.
- **Potential JA/TWA Divergence:** Several wines show a potential significant gap between the high JA score provided and the lower TWA score (e.g., L'Eglise Clinet: 97 JA vs 90-92 TWA; Leoville Poyferre: 95 JA vs 89-91 TWA; Brane Cantenac: 95 JA vs 89-91 TWA). While Anson's full Left Bank report is awaited for confirmation, these discrepancies highlight wines where critical opinion may be strongly divided and

personal tasting or careful review comparison is essential. Ausone (96 JA, 91-93 TWA) also shows this pattern.

- **Top Tier Agreement:** Wines like Cheval Blanc and Conseillante received Kelley's top score range (94-96), indicating recognition of their success even within his critical framework.¹⁵ Carmes Haut-Brion also stands out with Castaing's highest score (93-96).

The generally lower scores awarded by critics, even those known for more generous scoring in other vintages, send a clear message: 2024 is not a vintage to purchase based on historical high scores or brand reputation alone. Success is relative to the challenging conditions of the year. Therefore, purchasing decisions must prioritize wines identified as genuine successes *within the context of the 2024 vintage*, and critically, only if the price reflects this context and offers compelling value against alternatives.

Section 5: Evaluating Harry's Recommendations: A Closer Look

Performance Analysis: First Growths, Top Performers, and Solid Gems in 2024

Evaluating the specific wines recommended requires cross-referencing them with the available critical assessments and scores, particularly those from the identified critics, Jane Anson (JA) and William Kelley/TWA.

- **First Growths & Equivalents:**

- Lafite Rothschild (JA 95, TWA 91-94): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible recommendation based on TWA.
- Mouton Rothschild (JA 94, TWA 91-93): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
- Haut-Brion (JA 94, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
- Margaux (JA 96, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. The high JA score needs verification; if correct, it suggests strong performance according to Anson.
- Cheval Blanc (JA 94, TWA 94-96): TWA score confirmed as one of Kelley's top wines.¹⁵ Awaiting Anson's score. Strong recommendation based on TWA.
- Ausone (JA 96, TWA 91-93): Both JA and TWA scores confirmed. Represents a significant critic split, with Anson rating it much higher than TWA.

- **Top Performers:**

- L'Eglise Clinet (JA 97, TWA 90-92): Scores confirmed. Anson's top-rated Right Bank wine, but a major divergence with TWA's assessment. Requires careful consideration.
- VCC (Vieux Château Certan) (JA 94, TWA 91-93): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
- Conseillante (JA 94, TWA 94-96): TWA score confirmed as a top wine.¹⁵ Awaiting Anson's score. Strong recommendation based on TWA. Noted for classic style and freshness.¹²
- Pichon Lalande (JA 94, TWA 91-93): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
- Montrose (JA 95, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible. Noted for classic profile and recent stylistic evolution towards floral notes.¹⁰
- Palmer (JA 94, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible. Palmer noted challenges with Merlot due to biodynamics.¹⁰

- Canon (JA 95, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
 - Figeac (JA 95, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible. Anson noted Figeac retained its typicity.
 - Leoville Las Cases (JA 94, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
 - Leoville Poyferre (JA 95, TWA 89-91): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Represents another significant potential critic split. Anson/Kemp noted it performed well.
- **Solid Well Priced Gems:**
 - Troplong Mondot (JA 95, TWA 93-95): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible.
 - Brane Cantenac (JA 95, TWA 89-91): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Potential critic split. Anson/Kemp were delighted with it.
 - Carmes Haut-Brion (JA 94, TWA 93-96): TWA score (Castaing) confirmed as top-rated. Awaiting Anson's score. Strong recommendation based on TWA, despite low yield.
 - Leoville Barton (JA 94, TWA 92-94): TWA score confirmed. Awaiting Anson's score. Plausible. Anson/Kemp noted it performed well.

Based on the available data, the TWA scores provided in the initial query appear accurate. The JA scores align where confirmation exists (Ausone, L'Eglise Clinet) but require full verification, especially for Left Bank wines. The analysis highlights several wines (Ausone, L'Eglise Clinet, Leoville Poyferre, Brane Cantenac) where Jane Anson's assessment appears significantly more positive than William Kelley's (TWA). This underscores the importance of consulting detailed reviews from multiple critics whose palates are trusted before making purchasing decisions on these specific wines.

Style Alignment: Do the Recommended Wines Match the Vintage Profile?

The recommended wines largely represent estates known for producing high-quality, terroir-driven wines, capable of navigating challenging vintages. Available tasting notes suggest many align with the described 2024 profile of freshness, aromatics, and structure derived from acidity rather than sheer power.

- **Conseillante:** Noted for violet and spice aromatics, a silky texture, good structure, and freshness.¹²
- **Montrose:** Described as having driving minerality and tension (classical traits) married to more floral aromatic qualities, reflecting recent stylistic shifts.¹⁰
- **Ausone:** Highlighted for spice and floral notes (particularly Cabernet Franc expression)

and balance.¹²

- **General Typicity:** Anson specifically noted that top estates maintained their essential character ("Lafite's Lafite, Margaux is Margaux, Figeac is Figeac"), albeit potentially slimmer versions than in great years.

These descriptions fit well with the overall vintage character of aromatic complexity, freshness derived from acidity, and potentially lower alcohol levels. While individual expressions will vary, the list focuses on properties expected to excel in producing balanced, elegant wines even under duress.

The selection strategy appears focused on mitigating risk in a heterogeneous vintage. By concentrating on First Growths, established 'Super Seconds', and top Right Bank properties, the recommendations favor estates with the best terroirs and the technical and financial resources necessary to overcome the season's hurdles.¹⁰ Many of these wines received the highest scores from critics like Kelley/TWA, even within their generally lower-scoring framework for the vintage.¹⁵ This approach prioritizes consistency and proven track records over seeking out potential, but riskier, overachievers from less prestigious appellations or estates. In a year marked by significant quality polarization, focusing on the likely "safest bets" is a rational, albeit conservative, strategy.

Section 6: Second Wines and Value Propositions in 2024

Assessing the Quality of Second Labels in a Challenging Vintage

A strong recommendation was made to avoid purchasing second wines En Primeur from the 2024 vintage, based on the rationale that estates prioritized their best fruit for the *Grand Vin*, leaving the second labels potentially short on quality components. This assessment finds considerable support in the analysis of the vintage conditions and early critical reviews. The defining characteristic of the 2024 vintage was the absolute necessity for rigorous sorting (*Tri*) due to uneven ripeness, mildew, and rot pressure.¹ This intense selection process, combined with already low potential yields, logically means that the quantity and quality of grapes declassified into second wines would be diminished compared to more abundant or homogenous vintages. William Kelley's observation that many 2024 reds and whites suffered from dilution, incomplete maturity, and herbaceousness further suggests that fruit not meeting the stringent criteria for the *Grand Vin* would likely exhibit these flaws more prominently.¹⁵ Lay & Wheeler also characterized second wines this year as generally simpler.¹¹ Early scores for prominent second wines from TWA, while respectable, reflect this context:

- Carruades de Lafite: 89-91
- Le Petit Mouton de Mouton Rothschild: 90-92

- Le Clarence de Haut-Brion: 90-92
- Chapelle d'Ausone: 90-91
- Alter Ego de Palmer: 90-93
- Les Pagodes de Cos: 90-92

These scores generally fall below those of their respective *Grands Vins* and are not typically compelling enough on their own to warrant an En Primeur purchase, especially given the alternatives available. The combination of the logical impact of intense sorting, the documented challenges of the vintage potentially affecting declassified fruit, and the respectable but unexceptional early critic scores strongly corroborates the advice that buying 2024 second wines En Primeur is generally inadvisable.

Value Analysis: 2024 En Primeur vs. Available Back Vintages

The value proposition of any En Primeur purchase must be weighed against alternatives available in the market. For the 2024 vintage, this comparison is particularly stark. As highlighted previously, the secondary market currently holds significant quantities of Bordeaux from recent vintages, often at discounted prices relative to their original release.³

Prices for many back vintages have fallen over the past two years.⁵

Therefore, buyers have the option to purchase physically available wines, often from superior or more consistent vintages (e.g., 2016, 2019, 2020), potentially at prices close to or even below the anticipated En Primeur prices for the 2024s. The Comparative Pricing Table (Section 3) illustrates this clearly for many top estates. Unless the 2024 En Primeur price offers a substantial discount compared to these readily available, mature, and potentially higher-rated alternatives, the rationale for buying futures is significantly weakened.

This logic extends to the "value-driven" segment (e.g., Cru Bourgeois, satellite appellations) which was also dismissed for EP purchase. Given the heterogeneity of the vintage and the risk of underripe or dilute wines, buying less prestigious labels En Primeur carries additional risk. Analysis suggests these wines would need to be priced extremely attractively (e.g., average below €27/bottle or £25/bottle) to resonate with the market. Given the availability of proven wines from better vintages in this price category already on retail shelves, the case for buying 2024 "value" wines EP is weak.

Ultimately, the primary value proposition for acquiring any 2024 Bordeaux En Primeur wine – whether a First Growth or a more modest label – rests almost entirely on price. The purchase price must be sufficiently low to compensate for the vintage's inherent quality limitations (relative to top years), the delayed gratification (wines delivered ~2 years post-purchase), the cost of capital tied up, potential future costs (shipping, storage, tariffs), and critically, it must represent a significant saving compared to *all* comparable back vintages currently available on the secondary market. In the prevailing buyer's market, this constitutes a very high threshold for the 2024 releases to meet.

Section 7: Investment Potential and Strategic Considerations for 2024

Synthesizing Factors: Quality, Price, Market, and Critical Reception

Assessing the investment potential of the 2024 Bordeaux En Primeur campaign requires synthesizing the key findings regarding the vintage quality, prevailing market conditions, pricing strategies, and critical reception.

- **Quality:** The vintage is broadly characterized as good but not great, marked by significant heterogeneity. While top estates produced successful wines reflecting a fresh, aromatic, high-acid style, widespread challenges like dilution and incomplete ripeness impacted overall consistency.² It is generally considered weaker than recent highly-rated vintages like 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2022.
- **Price:** The campaign launched into a bear market demanding substantial price reductions (ideally 30%+) compared to 2023 releases to be competitive against discounted back vintages.³ Initial releases showed reluctance from some Châteaux to implement such deep cuts.²⁴
- **Market:** The fine wine market remains soft, with significant stock overhang from previous campaigns, weak demand in key regions like China, and economic pressures on the trade.³
- **Critical Reception:** Reviews are mixed, with some influential critics (like Kelley/TWA) offering harsh assessments and lower scores than usual, while others (like Anson) find more merit but still acknowledge the vintage's limitations.² Overall scores are down compared to recent top years.

Investment in wine relies on the potential for future appreciation exceeding the initial purchase price plus associated costs (storage, insurance, eventual selling commission). Several factors challenge this potential for the 2024 vintage:

1. The generally lower intrinsic quality ceiling compared to truly great vintages may limit long-term appreciation potential.
2. The high likelihood of readily available stock on the secondary market post-release, potentially at prices close to or below EP levels, reduces scarcity and upward price pressure.
3. The current downward trend in the fine wine market makes short-to-medium term gains unlikely.⁴
4. Historical data shows that En Primeur prices, particularly in recent years, have often failed to provide a reliable platform for positive returns, with prices sometimes falling after release.

Considering these factors, the general investment potential for Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur

appears very limited and highly selective. It profiles primarily as a "drinking vintage" rather than an "investment vintage." The appeal lies more in securing wines for future consumption, particularly for those who appreciate the classic, fresher style, provided they can be acquired at prices that reflect the vintage context and offer genuine value compared to market alternatives.

Risk vs. Reward: Identifying Potential Opportunities (If Any)

Purchasing 2024 Bordeaux En Primeur involves notable risks:

- **Overpaying:** Acquiring wines at prices that do not sufficiently discount for the vintage quality relative to available back vintages.
- **Quality Disappointment:** Barrel samples can be variable, and the final bottled wine might not meet expectations, especially given the risks of dilution or greenness.
- **Market Weakness:** The fine wine market could remain stagnant or decline further, eroding the value of the purchase.
- **Future Costs:** Unforeseen increases in shipping, storage, or potential import tariffs (particularly relevant for US buyers ⁶) could increase the effective cost.

Potential rewards appear limited and specific:

- **Securing Allocations:** For highly sought-after, limited-production wines that demonstrably overperformed in the vintage, EP might be the primary or only way to secure an allocation.
- **Price Advantage (Conditional):** *If* a specific wine is released at a price significantly below its current and anticipated future market value (a high bar in 2024), a buying opportunity exists.
- **Provenance:** Buying En Primeur guarantees direct provenance from the Château via the négociant system.
- **Stylistic Preference:** For consumers who particularly favor the fresher, lower-alcohol, high-acidity style, the 2024 vintage offers wines tailored to that preference.

Genuine opportunities, from an investment or value perspective, are likely to be scarce and confined to wines meeting stringent criteria:

1. **Clear Quality Standouts:** Wines identified by a consensus of trusted critics as having significantly outperformed the vintage context. This requires careful synthesis of reviews, paying attention to consistency across different palates.
2. **Compelling Price:** Release prices must offer a substantial discount (likely 30% or more) compared to *both* the 2023 EP release and, more importantly, the current market prices of relevant back vintages (e.g., 2019, 2020, 2021).
3. **Strong Brand Equity:** Focusing on estates with strong global brands that tend to hold

value better, even in less-celebrated vintages, may offer slightly lower risk.³

A highly selective, rigorously price-driven approach is therefore essential. Buyers should pre-determine strict price thresholds for target wines based on objective market data (referencing the Comparative Pricing Table). Only wines that meet both the quality validation (strong critical consensus) and the pre-set price target should be considered. Given the market dynamics and vintage profile, buyers must be prepared to purchase very little, or potentially nothing at all, if compelling value propositions do not emerge.

Historical Context: Comparing 2024 to Vintages like 2021, 2017, 2014, 2013

Placing 2024 in historical context helps understand its potential trajectory. Stylistically and meteorologically, it shares characteristics with other cooler, wetter Atlantic vintages that required significant selection, such as 2021, 2017, and 2013. Kelley explicitly positions 2024 as the weakest since 2013, albeit qualitatively superior to 2013. Some growers suggested the quality might be slightly above 2017 and 2021.¹¹ The style, with its freshness and aromatics, has drawn comparisons to vintages like 1985 or potentially 1988/2012 for specific wines like La Conseillante.¹¹

In terms of market context and pricing challenges, 2024 echoes campaigns like 2008 (released into the global financial crisis)³, 2013 (difficult quality, China slowdown), 2014 (weak market post-2013), and 2019 (Covid uncertainty). The call for 2024 prices to potentially revert to 2014 levels highlights the perceived need for a significant market reset.

History demonstrates that En Primeur campaigns for "good-not-great" vintages released into weak markets typically fail unless prices are cut drastically. The 2011, 2013, and 2017 campaigns largely struggled due to insufficient price adjustments following stronger vintages or amidst market headwinds. The 2021 campaign also faced criticism for not reducing prices enough relative to the preceding trio of strong years. Conversely, campaigns where prices were perceived as realistic given the context (e.g., 2008, 2019) tended to fare better. The critical lesson is that ignoring market realities and vintage quality leads to unsold inventory, damages négociant relationships, and erodes buyer confidence.³ The success of the 2024 campaign hinges on whether Bordeaux producers demonstrate they have learned from these past experiences and price their wines according to the demanding realities of the current market, rather than repeating mistakes by implementing inadequate discounts.

Conclusion: Navigating Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur

The Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur campaign presents a complex equation for collectors and investors. The vintage itself, shaped by a challenging Atlantic growing season marked by rain and mildew pressure, is highly heterogeneous. While modern winemaking ensured that successful wines were made – characterized by freshness, vibrant aromatics, high acidity, and moderate alcohol – overall quality is inconsistent and generally considered below the level of recent top vintages. Rigorous sorting was essential, leading to low yields and likely impacting the quality of second wines.

This "good-not-great" vintage arrives in a depressed fine wine market suffering from a two-year correction, significant stock overhang from previous campaigns, and subdued demand in key regions. Consequently, price is the paramount factor determining the campaign's viability and the wisdom of participation. Critical reception is mixed, with some influential voices offering starkly negative assessments while others find more merit, highlighting the need for careful consideration of multiple reviews.

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are offered for navigating the 2024 En Primeur campaign:

1. **Exercise Extreme Caution and Selectivity:** This is unequivocally not a vintage for broad-based buying. Purchases should be highly targeted and limited to wines that demonstrably excelled within the vintage context.
2. **Prioritize Price Discipline:** Use objective market data, such as the Comparative Pricing Table provided, to establish strict price thresholds for any considered purchase. These thresholds must reflect significant discounts (likely 30%+) compared to both 2023 release prices and, crucially, the current market prices of comparable or superior back vintages. Do not deviate from these price targets; overpaying in this market carries substantial risk.
3. **Demand Critical Consensus:** Focus on wines that receive strong, consistent praise from multiple trusted critics whose palates align with your own preferences. Pay close attention to tasting notes assessing balance, ripeness, and potential longevity. Be wary of wines with significant critic score divergence unless confident in your own assessment or preference for a particular critic's view.
4. **Validate Specific Recommendations:** Carefully cross-reference any recommendations received (including those discussed in Section 5) against finalized critic scores, detailed tasting notes, and the established price thresholds before committing.
5. **Avoid Second Wines and Most "Value" Labels:** The analysis strongly supports the initial advice to avoid purchasing second wines En Primeur in 2024 due to likely compromises in quality and quantity. Similarly, most "value-driven" labels are unlikely to offer compelling value EP compared to readily available bottled alternatives from better vintages.
6. **Focus on Consumption Value:** Approach the 2024 vintage primarily as an opportunity

to acquire wines for future drinking pleasure, particularly if the classic, fresher style appeals. The general investment potential appears limited.

7. **Be Prepared to Sit Out:** If the anticipated deep price corrections fail to materialize across the board, or if specific target wines are not released at compelling prices, the most prudent strategy may be to abstain from the 2024 En Primeur campaign entirely and focus on opportunities within the secondary market for physically available wines.

In summary, Bordeaux 2024 En Primeur is a buyer's market defined by a challenging vintage and economic headwinds. Success requires rigorous analysis, price discipline, and a highly selective approach. Only wines offering both validated quality relative to the vintage and undeniable value relative to market alternatives warrant consideration.

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