



#1 of Wine Spectator TOP 100 2025: 2022 Giscours

Château Giscours

Margaux 2022

95

Score

When it comes to Bordeaux, things aren't easy these days. Recent vintages have been mercurial in quality, while the region's annual spring en primeur campaigns have fizzled. Tariffs haven't helped. But if you needed a reminder that Bordeaux still makes some of the greatest wines in the world—and that its producers can evolve with changing times—the Château Giscours Margaux 2022 is your wine. This third-growth classified estate earns our top honor this year.

The route to fashioning this benchmark '22 bottling has been long and winding. Flashback to 1995, when Dutch businessman Eric Albada Jelgersma purchased a controlling stake in Giscours from Nicolas Tari for \$31 million. Soon thereafter, Jelgersma encountered his first hurdle: accusations from French anti-fraud authorities who claimed that the estate had engaged in illicit winemaking in the '95 vintage, including the addition of wine from the less-prestigious Haut-Médoc appellation into its grand vin and the use of oak chips for flavor. By all accounts, Jelgersma had been unaware of what Giscours' technical team was up to. He quickly offered to buy back the affected bottles and replaced those responsible for adulterating the wine.

Initially hired as a harvest intern by Jelgersma, a young Alexander Van Beek soon took on a full-time job at Giscours that included defending its reputation going forward. While there was some reputational damage for Giscours, the result was a newfound focus on quality and authenticity, with Van Beek as the tip of the spear and technical director Didier Forêt, hired in 2008, by his side.

Tari died in 2001, and his children began a dispute over ownership of Giscours. Albada Jelgersma's 51 percent stake was in Société d'Exploitation du Château Giscours SAS, an entity that controlled the farming of the vineyard as well as the brand and sales rights. The Tari heirs controlled GFA du Château Giscours, the entity that owned the buildings and vines. The dispute would last 22 years, during which time Albada Jelgersma died, leaving his enterprise to his children: Dennis, Derk and Valérie. Finally in 2023, the remaining Tari family members liquidated their assets and sold to the Albada Jelgersma heirs.

All along, Van Beek, now 54, stayed focused, steadily elevating and adding consistency to the grand vin. Giscours' estate totals about 1,000 acres, with nearly 400 of them planted to vines; about 250 are in the Margaux AOC, and the rest are in the neighboring Haut-Médoc AOC. (The estate has retained its historical boundaries over time, which were bisected by the Margaux AOC boundary when it was drawn in 1954.) When Van Beek started, the vineyard had 140,000 missing vines.

Using a parcel of vines planted in 1923, Van Beek began a selection massale, propagating new cuttings to help replace them. The effort helped bring the vineyard back into full production and better health. Today, nearly 60 percent of the vineyard is more than 30 years old.

Those new plantings brought a hurdle of their own, however. Historically, the estate was picked all at once, over two weeks. Yet as the vineyard progressed, Van Beek saw that parcels with varying vine ages were ripening at different periods. With the 2018 vintage, Van Beek began having his vineyard team spend five weeks to bring in the crop, making successive passes through the same parcel to bring in only fruit that was at optimal ripeness.

Consultant Thomas Duclos began working with Giscours during the 2018 vintage, and Van Beek says his influence is significant both in the vineyard, where cover crop has been implemented, and in the cellar, focusing on purity and finesse in extraction. Jérôme Poisson was hired as estate manager in 2021. With his new team assembled and a vineyard that had undergone a major overhaul, Van Beek had the table set for the final stage in the renaissance of Giscours.

The vineyard excelled in the warm 2022 vintage, producing a 64/30/3/3 blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc that shows a decidedly fresh profile as it offers up an array of floral nuances along with classic cassis and plum fruit flavors. The mouthfeel is seductive, while a light-handed toast allows the finish to sail through unencumbered. Additionally, the team felt the 2022 vintage was so strong that no second wine was made—resulting in an ample case production.

The efforts of Van Beek to surpass numerous obstacles over a generation is a clear example of how wine is a long game. His strivings coalesced in a superb '22 grand vin, earning Château Giscours our Wine of the Year honors for 2025. Bravo!—James Molesworth



Tasting Note

Warmed cassis and plum notes form the core, while lilting lilac, violet and iris accents stream throughout. Offers a flash of black tea on the finish, along with a beguiling, cashmere-like mouthfeel. Judicious toast lets it all play out beautifully. A pitch-perfect example of the vintage profile. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2026 through 2040.—James Molesworth

Special Designation: Highly Recommended

Region: Bordeaux, France

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