



March 2016

CRUS CLASSÉS DE GRAVES

Press release

Location & Information

The Crus Classés de Graves are fourteen prestigious estates that were classified as great growths in 1953 (and then in 1959) and have the unusual distinction of producing both red and white wines. One of which, the prestigious Château Haut-Brion, was classified as a First Growth in 1855.

Located on the outskirts of the city, our estates have stayed family-owned and are run with respect of nature using a sustainable approach to farming. Our union is constituted of 14 classified growths who share a common interest in this approach and strives to protect the ecosystem of their vineyards.

The Graves region takes its name from its stony terroir. Recognised for their superior quality as far back as the 17th century, the grands crus of the Graves were the first great wines of Bordeaux.

Graves wines have stayed true to their much-loved style with a respect for the use of traditional viticulture practices, and a very natural approach to winemaking. The style can be described as «elegant».

The Graves Classification

A classification endorsed by a tradition of excellence

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The Crus Classés de Graves, the cradle of Bordeaux's vineyards, have perpetuated a tradition of excellence for over 2000 years.

The Classified Growths "Crus Classés" of the Graves, the birthplace of Bordeaux winegrowing, have followed a tradition of excellence for nearly a thousand years... It is this culture of excellence which in 1953, was officially recognized and rewarded by a jury of professionals, assembled by the National Institute of Denomination of Origins (I.N.A.O) in order to establish a classification for these exceptional wines.

There are strong indications to suggest that since ancient times, vines had begun to colonise these lands around the fortified Gallo-Roman town of Burdigala (the old name for Bordeaux).

But very little evidence of this period has survived until now... The name Graves appeared in texts in the Middle Ages as "Las Gravas de Bordeu" which comprised of the lands around the walls of Bordeaux...

Although it is not until 1904 that the Syndicat Viticole des Graves de Bordeaux is created and in 1950 the members officially ask the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO) to classify the wines of the Graves. A jury was composed of professionals appointed by the INAO and in January 1953 it enacts the new Graves classification for red and white wines and publishes a list of the 16 Graves estates in the «Northern Graves» including Château Haut-Brion (1er Grand Cru Classé en 1855). This classification was officially approved in August 1953 and slightly increased later in the 1959 (without entailing any fundamental changes). This classification is in effect today.

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The Graves Classification

Altogether, sixteen châteaux were classified for their red wine, white wine, or both:

RED WINES: Château Haut-Brion (1er Grand Cru Classé en 1855) ; Château Bouscaut ; Château Carbonnieux ; Domaine de Chevalier ; Château de Fieuzal ; Château Haut Bailly ; Château La Mission Haut-Brion ; Château La Tour Haut-Brion* ; Château Latour-Martillac ; Château Malartic-Lagravière ; Château Olivier ; Château Pape Clément ; and Château Smith Haut Lafitte.

WHITE WINES: Château Bouscaut ; Château Carbonnieux ; Domaine de Chevalier ; Château Couhins ; Château Couhins-Lurton ; Château Latour-Martillac ; Château Laville Haut-Brion* ; Château Malartic-Lagravière ; and Château Olivier.

*Since 2014, two of these estates, Château La Tour Haut-Brion and Château Laville Haut-Brion have merged into existing estates belonging to Domaine Clarence Dillon vineyards. Since the 2009 vintage, le château Laville Haut-Brion has produced under its original name, Château La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc (white).

The terroir of Graves

The Graves stones, a hidden gem

The great growths of the Graves have a unique gravelly soil which accounts for the appellation's name. While all the estates have a similar geological composition, consisting of layers of alluvial, sandy, and pebbly soil deposited on the left bank of the Garonne during several glacial periods, there are significant variations in configuration from one estate to another. The pebbles were worn smooth by glaciers as well as rivers and streams rising in the Pyrenees and the Massif Central.

The Graves' terroir dates back to the late Tertiary and early Quaternary periods. The limestone bedrock on which it lies, also found in many other parts of Bordeaux, is even older. In terms of topography, erosion formed low-lying hills over the centuries (or rather, millennia). Known as croupes de graves, or «gravelly rises», these are viewed by many historians as the origin of the great wines of Bordeaux. The Graves' warm, meagre, very permeable and easy-to-cultivate soil is ideal for producing both great red wines and dry white wines.



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The climate

A mild climate.

The vineyards of Pessac-Léognan and the "Crus Classés" are subject to an oceanic climate, of which the main features are:

-Mild Winters due to the proximity of the ocean. The proximity of the Landes forest is another benefit as it provides protection for the vineyards. This mildness is partly responsible for the early ripening found here. It is not unusual, in fact, that in all of Bordeaux the first harvests are done in this region!

-Abundant sunshine from May to August (more than 200 hours/month), which is particularly favourable during the growing cycle of the vine;

-Predominance of Westerly winds, which bring with them the rain. This rainfall, varies greatly from one year to the other, fluctuating between 650 and 850 millimeters of water per year.

Nature's gardeners

Within a close reach of the city, the Classified Growths of Graves vineyards start on the very outskirts of the city of Bordeaux. Located close to the city of Bordeaux the vineyards enable city dwellers to stay in touch with nature. The winemakers take pride in looking after their vines and grounds meticulously and aesthetically.

« A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust. » Gertrude Jekyll

The vineyard

Even though the vineyards have such an impeccably managed and well-ordered appearance, they remain, of course, an eminently natural source of beauty.

The vineyards are tended like gardens, the object of countless attention. Vineyard work takes place only after close observation of each plot, season after season, and always with the greatest respect for nature.

This is because as winegrowers we know that the grapes' full potential will only show if the terroir receives the care it deserves... One of the mutual commitments of our fourteen estates is a concern with respecting the environment.

We share a global view that restoring ecological balance and protecting the vineyards is necessary and each chateau has its own ecological response: manual farming, the use of natural products (...), integrated farming, are all part of these sustainable agricultural efforts.

The combined vineyards of the Graves great growths cover 620 hectares, all of which are in the Pessac-Léognan appellation, south of Bordeaux. Five hundred hectares produce red wines and one hundred and twenty hectares produce dry white wines.



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Grape varieties

The Graves great growths owe a great deal to the experienced blending of wines from different grape varieties. The main white wine varieties are Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon for the white wines (followed by Muscadelle and Sauvignon Gris) and the main red wine ones are Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, complemented by Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc, depending on the estate. This makes a total of eight varieties. The exact proportions of each grape variety in the final blend often depend on the vintage, the quality of each vat, and the winemaker's preference. This is why the assemblage, or final blend, changes from one year to the next and from one estate to another.

An important scientific role

Thanks to the proximity to the Bordeaux Faculty of Oenology – which is actually located in the Pessac-Léognan appellation – our union has established a long term working relationship with this prestigious institution.

In our constant strive to develop quality in the Graves, our institution has always been interested in innovations in viticulture and winemaking. The wine makers maintain ongoing contacts with researchers and oenologists and frequently agree to collaborate with them with their experiments. By doing so, Science plays a key role in the heart of our vineyards, and we contribute to winegrowing standards throughout Bordeaux.

Among other estates, Château Haut-Brion has long been a research partner, especially in the field of ampelography. Château Couhins, which belongs to INRA (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique) is, as one might expect, also actively involved in research.

Recently the CCG funded a PhD student, on research of the vines in this region, collaborating with the INRA (French National Institute for Agricultural Research).

The wines

The white cru classé wines have a small production, however this is inversely proportional to their reputation.

These are the best dry white wines of Bordeaux, and connoisseurs consider them among the greatest white wines in the world. Fruity, long, and extremely elegant, they have complex citrus fruit aromas, especially when young. However, they also age very well, offering a dazzling range of flavours and a remarkably long aftertaste.

Our red wines combine the elegance and class of Cabernet Sauvignon and the roundness of Merlot. They are very attractive when young and highly attractive when ten or twenty years old. These red wines have a lovely bouquet, and display the concentration and subtlety that many specialists view as the epitome of fine Bordeaux.

Château Haut-Brion

Premier Grand Cru Classé en 1855
Cru Classé de Graves Rouge
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Château Bouscaut

Cru Classé de Graves Rouge et Blanc
1477 avenue de Toulouse 33140 Cadaujac
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www.chateau-bouscaut.com

Château Carbonnieux

Cru Classé de Graves Rouge et Blanc
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Château Couhins

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Château Couhins-Lurton

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Château de Fieuzal

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Château La Mission Haut-Brion

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Château La Tour Haut-Brion

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Château Latour-Martillac

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