

Château Charmail 2019

CSPC# 801687

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

42% Cab Sauv, 36% Merlot, 12% Cab Franc, 10% Petit Verdot

Appellation

Haut Medoc

Classification

Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel

Website

<http://www.chateau-charmail.fr>

General Info

Charmail has to be one of the best wine values in Bordeaux. A wonderfully made Haut-Médoc; fresh, full of life and flavour which in certain vintages, like 2000, 2005 and 2009, Charmail operates at the level of the classed growths – quite remarkable for a relatively inexpensive wine. In 2008 Bernard d'Halluin bought the property from Olivier Sèze.

What we know of today as Chateau Charmail dates back to the 1500's, when it was founded by the Trevey de Charmail family. Vines were not planted until the 17th century, about one years later, give or take. However, the modern era beings in 1982, when Olivier Sèze purchased the Haut Medoc estate.

By the time Olivier Sèze purchased Chateau Charmail, Olivier Sèze was already well established in the Bordeaux wine community, due to his experience as an agricultural engineer.

Chateau Charmail and Olivier Sèze are best known in the Bordeaux wine trade for being the first chateau to practice the now common and popular, technique of pre-fermentation, cold maceration, whereby the temperature of the fruit in the tanks is dropped to as low as 5 degrees Celsius and the berries are held in the vats for as long as two weeks. Olivier Sèze sold Chateau Charmail to Bernard and Marie d'Halluin in 2008.

Winemaker

Bernard d'Halluin

Vintage

Because 2019 had a very hot and dry, sunny summer, pHs were high, the grape skins were thick, and the tannins were strong. Alcohol was raised particularly with the Merlot-dominated Right Bank but about the same as 2018 on the Left.

Another key factor in determining the character of the vintage was the rain at the end of September which helped the Cabernet Sauvignon in particular recover lost ground – ending up with yields that were just below average. The high pHs, however, led to many estates acidifying their reds with up to 1g/l tartaric.

2019 was an unusual vintage also because the En Primeur campaign was limited in time and scope by the pandemic restrictions, and it witnessed a rare feat – prices actually came down compared to the previous year rather than the customary rise. Another notable aspect of the 2019 vintage is that there is plenty of wine, even though the overall production was just shy of the 10-year average, in 2017 volumes were 40% down and it won't be long before 2021 (and 2022 for those badly affected by frost) will be coming round, so buyers will be wise to look at 2019 as a vintage with which to replenish stocks.

Vineyards

34 hectares on a single plot on sloping terrain with a southerly aspect looking out to the Gironde estuary. Soils are clay gravel, sandy gravel, and colluvium. 48% merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot. Average vine age is 30 years. The vineyards are situated not that far from Chateau Sociando Mallet in the northern part of the Left Bank. The vineyards of Chateau Charmail are planted to a vine density that ranges between 6,666 to 8,700 vines per hectare. Newer plantings are done at the high level of vine densities.

In 2010, 6 hectares of vines were replanted with Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, which brought the average age of their vines down for a while. The vineyard, which is in one, single, large parcel of vines has a terroir of clay and gravelly soils. In fact, it is the large portion of clay in their soil, that makes their vineyard perfect for the Merlot vines. The Merlot helps impart a richness to the character of the wine. On average, the vines are close to 30 years of age.

Vineyards



Harvest	Manual harvest
Vinification	Grapes following harvest are immediately cooled and given a pre-fermentation cold maceration for 15 days, aimed at extracting softer tannins from the skins rather than the pips. Charmail pioneered this approach in Bordeaux, a technique which is also much used in Burgundy. Alcoholic fermentation takes place in temperature controlled, stainless steel tanks with a 21-day cuvaision. Malolactic fermentation takes place in vat. Charmail is aged for twelve months in French oak barrels, approximately one third of which are new. The wine is raked only twice a year and is bottled unfiltered and unfiltered.
Tasting Notes	This Exceptionnel was my wine of the tasting; great complex nose – blackberry, mulberry, cassis, vanilla pod, cheese cloth. On the generous palate it had ripe black fruit, a great spine of wood-tinged acidity, fine-grained, ripe tannins, great grip on the finish. Now it needs food, but you can see it has many more years ahead of it and where it wants to go.
Serve with	The wine of Chateau Charmail is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes.
Cellaring	Drink 2023-2039
Scores/Awards	<p>90-92 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - June 2020</p> <p>91 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2022</p> <p>91-92 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2020</p> <p>16.5+ points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com (score only) - December 2021</p> <p>91 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - June 2020</p> <p>91 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2022</p> <p>90-92 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - June 2020</p> <p>92 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2022</p> <p>91-93 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - June 2020</p> <p>92 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2022</p> <p>92 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - April 2022</p> <p>88 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2020</p> <p>92 points - Yves Beck (score only) - June 2020</p>
Reviews	<p><i>“Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2019 Charmail rolls out of the glass with notions of plum preserves, baked cherries, and fruitcake plus hints of spice box, gingerbread, and pencil shavings. Medium to full-bodied, the palate has bags of spicy black fruit preserves on offer with a fine-grained frame and just enough freshness, finishing long and harmonious. Nicely done!”</i> - WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>“This has a perfumed nose of wild strawberries, currants, lavender, chocolate orange and praline. Medium-bodied with fine-grained tannins. Pretty and polished with a fresh finish. Drink or hold.”</i> - JS, JamesSuckling.com</p> <p><i>“Sweet-berry and orange-peel aromas and flavors. Medium to full body and juicy tannins. Yet, it’s structured and focused.”</i> - JS, JamesSuckling.com</p> <p><i>“This has all the right elements to be successful; austerity without being off putting, cassis and blackberry fruits that are welcoming and give an extra whoosh of freshness by bright acidity. Overall clear quality with lovely violet edging, needs a few years to open. A new Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel. Drinking Window 2027 - 2040.”</i> - JA, Decanter.com</p> <p><i>“The touch of spice adds a lot to the soft, polished, vibrant, sweet red fruits. The finish, with all of its black cherries, coffee bean and currants are already shaping up nicely. This is one of the better values for Cabernet Sauvignon dominated, Bordeaux blends. Drink from 2023-2039.”</i> - JL, thewinecellarinsider.com</p>

Reviews *“Medium/full-bodied, soft, round, polished red fruits, spice, and herbs are easy to find on the nose and palate. The freshness, elegant styling and sweetness in the fruits is really strong here in this vintage.”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The 2019 Charmail has an understated bouquet that unfolds with aeration, revealing pretty red berry fruit, rose petal and crushed stone. I admire the focus here. The palate is rounded, sweet and nicely poised, with nice grip. A little oak toward the finish suggests this will age with style. Very fine.”
- NM, *Vinous*

“The 2019 Charmail, a recently elected Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel, has a fragrant raspberry and wild strawberry bouquet with traces of damp moss/sous-bois. It is very well defined and 'natural'. The palate is fresh on the entry with breezy red berry fruit, well-judged acidity, not powerful but bright and vivacious. Classic Haut-Médoc, probably quite approachable, but there is breeding here.”
- NM, *Vinous*

“The 2019 Charmail is a very pretty and expressive Haut Médoc Cru Bourgeois. Dried herbs, rose petal, mint, and sweet red cherry all grace this perfumed, lifted wine. A wine of real beauty, understatement, and elegance, the 2019 is impeccable in its balance. This could be a sleeper.”
- AG, *Vinous*

“Always an overachiever, the 2019 Château Charmail comes from vines on the northern side of Saint-Estèphe, within sight of the Gironde River. Based on Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc, this deep ruby/purple-hued effort offers a deep, smoky, red, and black-fruited bouquet as well as lots of cedary spice and leafy herbs, medium-bodied richness, and depth, plenty of tannins, and a great finish. It's going to warrant a year or three of bottle age and keep for over a decade.”
- Jeb Dunnuck
