

Château Haut Bages Libéral 2009

CSPC# 742344

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot

Appellation

Saint Julien

General Info

Haut-Bages Libéral, a great growth Pauillac, takes its name from the Bages plateau where part of its wines are located, and also from its first known owners, the Libéral family. The vines are planted on a truly excellent vineyard site which has been consolidated since the early 18th century from among the finest land in Pauillac. Haut-Bages Libéral's largest vineyard plot borders on Château Latour; the rest adjoins Château Pichon Baron Longueville, among other illustrious neighbours. The estate was acquired by the Cruse family in 1960, and then by the Villars family in 1983. The winemaking facilities were entirely renovated and modernised, and the replanted vines have since reached maturity. Haut-Bages Libéral is a full-bodied wine, both elegant and powerful. It has become quite famous for its fine balance and concentration. Second wine: La Chapelle de Bages.

Vintage

The vintage is the earliest of the last 5 years. Rainfall from April to September was lower than previous years, about 45% less compared to 2007. This resulted in a lower yield per vine. September and October had cool nights, which resulted in a steady and rapid maturation of the grapes with optimal health conditions. All the varieties reached a high level of polyphenols and kept a nice freshness.

Vineyards

Chateau Haut-Bages Libéral has 30 hectares of vines overlooking the Gironde river. Half of this area, located right next to Chateau Latour, features gravel on limestone, and the other part, on the plateau of Bages, has deep gravel soil.

Harvest

Hand harvested. The merlot was harvested from September 21st to 29th and the cabernet sauvignon from September 29th to October 9th of 2009.

Maturation

The property is run by Claire Villars Lurton who modernised the winemaking facilities and introduced new, environmentally friendly methods. Wines are aged for 16 months in 40% new oak barrels.

Tasting Notes

The 2009 vintage has an intense purple red color. The nose is open with lots of black fruit and also red, but also floral notes. The attack is frank. The palate is powerful and has a good balance between freshness, fat and tannin. The finish is long and voluminous. The wine has character. 2009 was a long aging potential and is a great vintage.

Production

10,000 cases made

Cellaring

Drink now - 2020

Scores/Awards

91 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2012

91-94 points - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2010

92 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #199 - February 2012

90-93 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #188- April 2010

90 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - January 2012

90-92 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - March 2010

94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2012

91 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 1, 2012

91-93 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - September 8, 2010

90 points - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - July/Aug 2012

15.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 20, 2010

17 points - Stephen Spurrier, Decanter.com - April 2010

94 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2010 (score only)

90 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 5, 2012

87-89 points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2013

89-91 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 18, 2013

16.5 points - Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants - April 2010



Scores/Awards **16.5 points** - La Revue du Vin France (score only)
Review Only - Jeff Loo, JJBuckley Wines - January 2012

90 points - Gilbert & Gaillard - March 12, 2012

17.5 points - Vinum Wine Magazine - April 2011 (score only)

Reviews *"Singed bay leaf and briar notes run along the edges, with ripe, almost sappy blackberry, black cherry and currant fruit leading to a finish of tobacco and olive. Latent grip hangs through the finish. Drink now through 2020. 10,000 cases made."*

- JM, Wine Spectator

"Currant and mint, with hints of fresh herbs. Lovely complex nose already. Full-bodied, with super silky tannins and a long, racy finish. Solid core of beautiful fruit. Score range: 91-94"

- JS, Wine Spectator

"Probably the finest Haut-Bages Liberal since the 1982, this beautifully rich wine has an inky purple color, a big, sweet kiss of creme de cassis, incense, some background spicy oak and forest floor. Its gorgeous fruit, full-bodied opulence, impressive purity, expansive texture and broad, savory finish make for a terrific wine to drink over the next 25+ years."

- RP, Wine Advocate

"Served blind at the Southwold 2009 tasting. The Haut Bages Liberal '09 has an earthier, undergrowth-scented bouquet with dusky, broody black fruit. The palate is medium bodied with firm, slightly abrasive tannins. Good weight in the mouth. This is a bit of a rough diamond, but time should polish the edges. Tasted January 2013."

- NM, Wine Journal

"Tasted at the UGC. A blend of 68% Cabernet Sauvignon and 32% Merlot, this has a ripe, quite floral, feminine nose with bright black fruits, pencil shaving and a touch of cedar. Very Pauillac, refined and understated. The palate has slightly chewy tannins on the entry, giving way to a more succulent texture with a little aeration: blackcurrant wine gums, cedar, a touch of white pepper, foursquare with graphite on the finish. It could do with a little more depth and length, but I appreciate the balance and poise and I think this will round out during élevage. Tasted March 2010."

- NM, Wine Journal

"Pretty nose of blueberries, currants and blackberries, follows through to a full body, with ultra-refined tannins and polished, caressing texture. Very refined and long. Perhaps the best ever from here. Try after 2018."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"As so often, the wine is foursquare, tough and dark. It has powerful tannins with the weight of fruit well behind at this stage, structure to the front. It needs several years to come into balance."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"91-93 Barrel sample. Very juicy wine, with high acidity, the fruit very fresh, bright, all blackcurrant fruits. The structure is light and brilliant."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Bright ruby-red. Aromas of cassis, licorice, bitter chocolate and spicy oak. Sweet, rich and vinous, with harmonious acidity giving shape and grip to the fine-grained flavors of dark berries, cedar, smoke and leather. Good structure and energy here. This firmly built wine spreads out nicely on the lingering aftertaste. A big success for this property."

- ST, International Wine Cellar

"Sweet and oddly floral on the nose...? Plus, a note of greenness. Rather simple and austere. Did this really ripen properly?"

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Black red, finely concentrated and rather tight black-currant fruit, a certain leafy leanness that is made up for by good middle concentration and length. Drink 2015-25."

- SS, Decanter.com

Reviews *"From a blend of 68% Cabernet Sauvignon and 32% Merlot, notes of tobacco, cassis, earth and leafy scents emerge. Medium bodied, with a hint of old school rusticity in the mid palate, the wine ends with a cassis filled finish."*

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Mid depth; vibrant edge; high toned; some perfume and violet lift; almost floral tones; blackcurrants on the palate; little dryness and tannins very present. Palate feels a little lean. Should fill out but will always be 'fresh and grippy'. Tasted UGC April 11, 2013. 86-88 [Earlier note] Mid depth; not as saturated as Lynch-Bages; more floral tones; pretty and lifted; spice, perfume and blackcurrants. Attractive and pretty on the nose; more earthy notes on the palate; leaf and blackcurrant and a bit of undergrowth; tannins dry and lacks a bit of mid-palate richness. Will fill out but will always be a leaner, sappy style. Tasted UGC Tuesday April 9, 2013. 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot. 87-89"

- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

"Concentrated dark berry fruit with smoky, toasty oak finish and firm tannins. A serious wine that shows off its structure and muscles rather than its fruit at the moment. Should age well - easily for a decade or two. Still too young. Tasted in Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young."

- JCL, asianpalate.com

"A final blend of 68% cabernet sauvignon and 32% merlot was aged in 50% new oak. Dark ruby in color, the wine opens with black fruits, a basket of jasmine and a rich sense of oak. The wine is medium bodied and has some pretty high tannins but shows the acidity to rein in the palate. Flavors of saddle leather and blue fruits mingle on the palate into a medium length finish. Give this another 2-3 years and enjoy over the following 15."

- JL, JJ Buckley Wines

"With its fantastic texture and crunchy cassis fruit, Claire Villars-Lurton acquitted herself with honours with her 2009 Ch. Haut-Bages Libéral. This is a beautiful wine which wears its new oak seamlessly whilst a cleansing freshness and an intriguing earthy complexity add perfect balance. Punching well above its weight, this is destined to be a great value buy in 2009."

- SS, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants

"Intense crimson. Profound nose of focused, ripe red and black fruit. Very full attack, tightly-wound, refined, tense stuffing. Powerful and focused. Good fruit-driven length."

- en.gilbertgaillard.com
