
Château Les Carmes Haut Brion 2018

CSPC# 848995

750mlx6

13.55% alc./vol.

Grape Variety
Appellation
Classification
Website
General Info

37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot
Pessac-Léognan
Grand Vin de Bordeaux
<http://www.les-carmes-haut-brion.com/en/>

Les Carmes Haut Brion got its start due to the efforts of the owner of another Bordeaux wine property that was located in Graves, or what we now call Pessac Leognan, Chateau Haut Brion. Jean de Pontac of Haut-Brion, gifted a watermill that was situated in the middle of what would shortly become the Carmes Haut Brion vineyards. The vineyard was named after a group of friars who managed the estate from as early as 1584 until the French Revolution in 1789.

Leon Colin, a Bordeaux wine merchant, and direct descendant of the current owners, the Chantecaille-Furt family, bought the Bordeaux wine property at the start of the 19th Century. Didier Furt began managing Les Carmes Haut Brion in 1987. Under his leadership, the estate was able to one additional hectare of vines to their vineyard. Until recently, Didier and Caroline Furt, along with their daughter Penelope run the Pessac Leognan chateau until 2010 when Les Carmes Haut Brion was sold in late 2010 to Patrice Pichet, head of the Bordeaux real estate company, Groupe Pichet. The price set a new record for Bordeaux wine vineyard land at 3.8 Million Euros per hectare. At close to 18 million Euros, that set a new record as it was almost twice the price of any previous deal for prime Bordeaux vineyard property! the estate was sold to the Pichet Shortly after the purchase by Partice Pichet, the vineyard of Les Carmes Haut Brion was expanded by the purchase of 5.6 hectares of vines.

The Pichet group, headed by Patrice Pichet has continued to increase their holdings in Pessac Leognan. In July 2011, they purchased 6.5 hectares of vines from Chateau Le Thil. This was to be expected as Les Carmes Haut Brion was already leasing a large portion of that land from Le Thil. The remaining Bordeaux vineyard land was sold to Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte. Patrice Pichet had even bigger plans for Le Carmes Haut Brion.

The new owners have continued added to their holdings in Pessac Leognan. In September 2013, the Pichet group made another purchase in the appellation when they bought 17 hectares of vines from the Priest family, the owners of Chateau Haut Nouchet for 11 Million Euros. The Briest family retained the vines to produce white wine, as well as 12 hectares of vines for the production of red wine. Patrice Pichet has said they plan to completely replant the vineyard at a much higher vine density of 10,000 vines per hectare. Initially, the young vines will be used in the production of the second of Les Carmes Haut Brion, Le Clos de Carmes Haut Brion. In time, it is expected the better vines will be added to increase the quantity of the Grand Vin.

The style of Les Carmes Haut Brion is light for the Pessac Leognan region, due to the high percentage of Cabernet Franc planted in the vineyard. With the new owners, the style has changed a bit, as the wine is showing more depth and concentration, while retaining its elegance. The wine offers more in the nose, than in the mouth. On average, 1,600 cases of Bordeaux wine are produced on average each year of Les Carmes Haut Brion. The estate makes a second wine, Le Clos de Carmes Haut Brion.

Winemaker
Vintage

Derenoncourt Consultants

After a mild and humid winter marked by abundant rainfall, spring was stressful, with hailstorms at the end of May and an historic mildew pressure. But miraculously, a very dry and hot weather set in from the end of June until October, offering a large window in the choice of the harvest dates. At the Carmes, 2018



Vintage	avoids the extravagance of the vintage: moderately high degrees, a dense phenolic constitution with fine granularity, powerful Cabernets Sauvignons and fresh Cabernets Francs. A miraculous vintage like only Bordeaux knows how to give birth to.
Vineyards	The 28.8-hectare Pessac Leognan vineyard of Les Carmes Haut Brion has a terroir of gravel, sand and clay with some limestone in the soil. As you might expect from the name of the chateau, the vineyards are located not far from Chateau Haut Brion or Chateau La Mission Haut Brion. Essentially, the complex soil composition of Les Carmes Haut Brion serves to create three separate terroirs. The soils located close to Haut Brion are gravel based. Close to the chateau, the soils are a mix of gravel, sand, clay and stones. Also located not far from the chateau are limestone and clay soils. The vineyard of Les Carmes Haut Brion are planted to 50% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon with vines that average about 35 years of age. Chateau Les Carmes Haut Brion has a higher percentage of Cabernet Franc than perhaps any other vineyard in the Left Bank or Pessac Leognan. The vineyard is planted to a vine density typical of the Medoc at 10,000 vines per hectare.
Harvest	13rd September – 28th September 2018
Vinification/ Maturation	To produce the wine of Chateau Les Carmes Haut Brion, vinification takes place in Thermoregulated tanks: Tron conic stainless steel tanks (60HI) • Wooden tanks (76 HI) • Concrete tanks (50 HI). 75% new oak barrels, 16% foudres, 9% terracotta amphorae for 18-24 months.
Tasting Notes	The march of Carmes Haut-Brion continues in 2018. Once again it stands out for a number of reasons: not least because of its high amount of Cabernet Franc, and also because it is made with 53% whole-bunch fermentation - a brave choice by winemaker Guillaume Poutier and one that pays off hugely in terms of balance and lean muscular build. Even without knowing any of the story behind the bottle, you would be hard-pressed to pass this wine by. It has obvious intensity but as you sit with it the softness and approachability of the tannins becomes apparent, helped by the inviting floral edge to the nose, adding peony and violet lift. The black fruits running through the palate are tight but silky and seductive - this has a higher Cab count than usual because the Merlots were more affected by the challenges of the vintage. The palate pulses, switching between richness and delicacy, feeling expertly handled. You get the feeling that you can relax - they've got everything covered! It will inevitably close down in a few years, but until then you could almost go for it with a good carafe.
Serve with	Best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised and grilled dishes.
Production	36,000 bottles
Cellaring	Drink 2024 – 2050
Scores/Awards	<p>95-98 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2019</p> <p>96+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021</p> <p>94-96+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019</p> <p>97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021</p> <p>97-98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019</p> <p>92-94 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2019</p> <p>17 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2020</p> <p>16.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2019</p> <p>98 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - February 2021</p> <p>98 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021</p> <p>98-100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019</p> <p>17+ points - Farr Vintner - April 2019</p> <p>94+ points - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2021</p> <p>94-96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019</p> <p>97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - March 2021</p> <p>95-98 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - May 2019</p>

Scores/Awards **100 points** - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021
96-98 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2019
17.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019
98 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - May 2019
96 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2019

Reviews *"This throws off a stream of cassis, cherry preserves and raspberry fruit that is pure and bright, laced with a racy mineral edge through the finish. Stands apart from the pack for its purity and finesse. Really beautiful. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Score range: 95 – 98."*
- JM, Wine Spectator

"The 2018 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is composed of 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 29% Merlot. It was made using 52% whole cluster and has 13.75% alcohol. It was aged in 75% new oak barriques, 16% foudres and 9% amphorae. Deep garnet-purple in color, it needs a little coaxing before bursting from the glass with vibrant scents blackberry preserves, redcurrant jelly, mulberries, and Black Forest cake, leading to an undercurrent of pencil lead, black truffles, cast-iron pan and charcoal with an emerging waft of violets. The elegantly crafted, medium-bodied palate dances with red and black fruits before bursting into earth and mineral sparks. It has a sturdy frame of firm, grainy tannins, and bags of freshness, finishing long and savory. The stem tannins lend this wine a firmness and textural interest, which should integrate further with another 5-6 years in barrel, allowing the nuances to shine through even more, then you can continue to enjoy its slow evolution for a further 30+ years."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"The 2018 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is composed of 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 29% Merlot. It was made using 52% whole cluster and has 13.75% alcohol. It is anticipated to age 18-24 months in 75% new oak barriques, 16% foudres and 9% amphorae. Deep garnet-purple colored, it is slightly broody and reduced to begin, slowly growing to reveal notions of charcoal, smoked meats, truffles, and tilled soil over a core of black raspberries, warm black cherries, blackberry coulis and redcurrant jelly plus wafts of Provence herbs and iron ore. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is taut and muscular, tense with latent energy, offering a rock-solid backbone of firm, grainy tannins and bold freshness to support the bright, vibrant fruit, finishing long and mineral laced."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"The essence of black fruit here, offering blackberry and brambleberry aromas with dried flowers and licorice. Crushed stones and some iodine, as well as nuts. Full-bodied palate that opens and delivers an encompassing mouth feel of fine, creamy tannins. Some whole-berry fermentation. A special wine with elegance and complexity. Try after 2026, but already so in tune."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This is really exotic with peaches, oranges and blackberries. Full body, lovely purity of fruit and soft and integrated tannins that are barely detectable. Extremely long and persistent. Savory. White pepper and bark with black-tea and charcoal undertones. Superb complexity. 53 per cent whole-cluster fermentation."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This wine has bold, ripe black fruits and fine acidity. Its structure shows well through the fruitiness of the wine. This will certainly age well. Barrel Sample: 92-94."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot. Black core and crimson rim. More subtle on the nose than the other Pessac's tasted so far this morning. Opens up to refined black and dark-red fruit. A light mineral note, like lead pencils. Sweeter and riper on the palate than I expected but the tannins like the aroma are more subtle than in many 2018s. There's both intensity and refinement in this more mineral style. Long and fresh. (JH)"
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

Reviews

“Barrel sample. Deepest cherry red. Lifted dark-red fruits, inviting and lively aromas with a hint of crushed stones. Juicy and full of beans. Crunchy fruit, well-defined tannins. Not sure why everyone is making so much fuss about this wine. (JH)”

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

“A beautiful nuance of salty caramel is clear even on the nose. On the palate, the concentration and focus is immediately clear, uplifted by touches of gentle salinity. There is really a sense of place and of being itself which I always love about this wine. It's closed of course, but with an unrolling of sappy black fruits, and a freshness that gives you confidence in its future. So much pleasure to be had here, with notes of chocolate, peony, and liquorice. Extremely successful, as it was en primeur. 3.62pH. 53% whole-bunch fermentation. IPT95. Harvested 13-28 September. Ageing is mostly in large oak casks, 76% new, plus 9% aged in amphorae.”

- JA, The New Bordeaux

“Aromatically, this beauty kicks off with an array of just-picked flowers, smoky, dark red and black fruits, licorice, herbs, wet earth, cigar box, forest leaf, and salty, crushed rocks. Deeply colored, concentrated, full-bodied, elegant, soft, refined, and pure on the palate, the seamless finish keeps on going with layers of fresh, ripe, sweet, sensuously textured fruits. The wine is a blend of 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 29% Merlot, 13.75% ABV. This has the potential to age and evolve for 2-3 decades with ease.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Caliginous in hue, the wine exudes tobacco, smoke, blackberry, pepper, flowers, and spearmint. On the palate, you'll find density with lift, intensity with complexity, sweetness with verve. The fruit shows a sublime sense of purity, similar to picking grapes off the vine during harvest and eating them right there. The finish matches power with elegance and length. The deep, opulent, mellifluous, mineral accented fruits just don't want to quit, and they remain with you for at least 60 seconds. From a blend of 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 29% Merlot and reaching 13.75% alcohol with a pH of 3.61, the wine was made using 55% whole bunches during fermentation. Currently aging in 75% new, French oak barrels, 15% in foudre and 10% in amphora for 18-24 months before bottling. The harvest took place September 13 to September 28.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The unique winemaking here makes for a very different, complex and enticing nose of almost hoppy, vibrant red fruit that pairs with opulent kirsch, creamy strawberry and milk chocolate. The palate is chalky and rich but very polished, with the density and weight of tannin building through the mid palate to give deceptively rich structure. The fruit is wild and ripe, brambly yet pure, and accented with lifted green spices, almonds, graphite, and cherry blossom. This is very complex already for a barrel sample, and very moreish due to the savoury herbal notes that continue on the long finish. This is very much of a style, but it is a style to be applauded. Very different, but perfectly balanced and equally impressive.”

- Farr Vintners

“The 2018 Les Carmes Haut-Brion was always going to be a wine that I would leave for 12–24 hours to monitor its evolution. It has a splendid bouquet of a mixture of blackberry, freshly rolled tobacco, autumn leaves and touches of brine. It is classic in style and showcases the Cabernet Franc element supremely well. The palate is in many ways uncompromising. The Cabernet is in full effect: herbaceous, with bell pepper and bitter cherry, quite tannic, and for the vintage, one of the most austere wines you will find in Bordeaux, let alone Pessac-Léognan. I personally find it to my taste, but it is not a wine for hedonists seeking bundles of juicy fruit. An intellectual Les Carmes for sure, one that leaves you pondering in which direction it will age.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2018 Les Carmes Haut-Brion was picked from 13 to 28 September, vinified 52% with whole bunch and pigeage only. It is aged in 75% new oak, 16% Stockinger foudres and 9% terracotta amphorae. I love the aromatics here: intense black cherries, violet, black olive compote and orange blossom, all beautifully

Reviews

delineated and focused, the oak seamlessly integrated. The palate is medium bodied with a structured opening, the whole bunch contribution altering the texture with a slight graininess. Good freshness here, very well balanced with fine tannins and plenty of freshness, this segues into a poised sapid finish with hints of oyster shell on the aftertaste. 2024 – 2050.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2018 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is a total knock-out, just as it was from barrel. Soaring in its aromatic intensity, Les Carmes dazzles from the very first taste. Inky red fruits, mocha, new leather, licorice, dried flowers, sage, and mint envelop all the senses. Today, the 2018 appears to be slightly closed, but time brings out tons of aromatic energy and nuance. Cabernet Franc plays the leading role, unusual for this part of the region. Franc aromatics and a fair amount of whole cluster savouriness lend energy but also a feeling of richness without weight that is especially appealing. This is a masterpiece from Les Carmes Haut-Brion and Technical Director Guillaume Pouthier.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2018 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is one of the wines in this vintage that comes very close to its 2016 sibling. A wine of dazzling intensity and stature, Les Carmes Haut-Brion is simply magnificent. Rose petal, wild black cherry, sage, menthol, licorice, and dried herbs add myriad shades of complexity to this explosive, dense wine. As always, Les Carmes is done with a fair amount of whole clusters, 40% in this case, but in 2018, the maturity is such that the stems are very well integrated into the wine's fabric. The blend is 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Merlot and 29% Cabernet Sauvignon.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2018 Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion is a rock star of a wine and is based on a unique blend of 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 29% Merlot that was brought up in 80% new French oak. Offering a deep ruby/purple color as well as a thrilling bouquet of blackcurrants, smoked tobacco, chocolate, violets, damp earth, and truffle, it hits the palate with a full-bodied yet almost understated, building style that carries ripe, supple tannins, gorgeous amounts of smoky black fruits, and an endearing, layered, multi-dimensional texture that keeps you coming back to the glass. A dead ringer for a great vintage of Haut-Brion, it is far from unapproachable today yet needs 7-8 years of bottle age for the fireworks to develop and will have 50-years or more of longevity! Hats off to Guillaume Pouthier for a magical, seamless, singular beauty!”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“In the same realm as the magical 2016, the 2018 Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion comes from the talented Guillaume Pouthier, who has this estate firing on all cylinders. Checking in as an interesting blend of 37% Cabernet Franc, 34% Merlot, and 29% Cabernet Sauvignon, it was fermented with roughly 40% stems and is expected to spend 18-24 months in 75% new French oak. Its deep purple color is followed by an incredibly pure and complex bouquet of sweet cassis, crushed violets, graphite, smoke tobacco, and beautiful minerality. Medium to full-bodied, flawlessly balanced, and elegant on the palate, it shows a more vibrant, fresh side to the vintage, has terrific tannin quality, and is simply pure class any way you look at it. I was served the 1945 Carmes-Haut-Brion by Guillaume blind, and it reminded me of a ripe, youthful vintage from Haut-Brion. It certainly didn't taste like a wine approaching 75 years in age! This is a magical terroir which is being maximized by Pouthier today. Believe the hype.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“(37 Cabernet Franc, 34 Cabernet Sauvignon, 29 Merlot) | 75% new oak | 13.75% alc | 36000 bottles produced Extremely exotic and perfumed on the nose this is a fabulously flamboyant wine and the oak is massive but also extremely enticing, too. The richness and depth of fruit is sensational, and I love the overall balance, even though this is a rather heavy and muscular wine.”

- MJ, matthewjukes.com