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## Domaine de Chevalier 2012

CSPC# 765467

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

### Grape Variety

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot

### Appellation

Pessac-Léognan

### Classification

Cru Classe de Graves in 1959

### Website

<http://www.domainedechevalier.com/>

### General Info

The owners of Domaine de Chevalier, the Bernard family, have a long history dating all the way back to the 1155! Documents are available stating that the Count of Angoulême awarded the Bordeaux wine property to Chateau-Bernard for his for his valour in battle against the English.

Domaine de Chevalier in the Graves/Pessac Leognan, appellation, was purchased in 1865 by Arnaud Ricard and his son Jean the Bernard family for 33,000 francs. At the time, the Ricards family were familiar with the Bordeaux wine trade as they worked as coopers, producing some of the best barrels used by many of the best chateau. In 1865, the estate began selling their wine under the Gascon name of "Chivaley". In those days, the 44-hectare property was used for mostly food crops and breeding animals. While there was a tiny Bordeaux wine making operation at the estate, it was not the main interest of the property.

Shortly after the elder Ricard passed away, the son discovered the outstanding potential of the terroir and soil at Domaine de Chevalier and transformed it into a full-time vineyard. The name was changed from "Chivaley" to the French "Chevalier". When Jean Ricard died, his son-in-law, Gabriel Beaumartin, took over and managed Domaine de Chevalier for the next 4 decades. At various times the Ricard family owned other top estates in the Graves appellation including Chateau Malartic Lagraviere and Chateau de Fieuzal.

When Gabriel Beaumartin died in 1940, no one was interested in managing the estate. After a few years, Claude Ricard, Jean's son, started at Domaine de Chevalier in 1948. He was only 21 years old. Under Claude Ricard, Domaine de Chevalier was included in the 1959 Graves Classification. When Domaine de Chevalier was purchased 1983, Olivier Bernard was not much older at 23 years of age. By the time Olivier Bernard arrived, Claude Ricard had already managed the estate for over thirty years.

Domaine de Chevalier is fortunate to have such a fine team to run its affairs. Olivier, whose family business owns the estate, is the outgoing but canny administrator whilst Rémi Edange is hands-on, knowing every vine and every barrel. Whilst their white wines have always been amongst the very finest, the reds were simpler affairs. But from the 1995 vintage onwards greater flair and concentration was in evidence. The quality curve is now further accentuated by the team's bold move to appoint Stéphane Derenoncourt, of La Mondotte fame, as consultant winemaker. Domaine De Chevalier is classified as a Graves Cru Classé.

### Vintage

A rainy spring was welcome after two years of strong drought. Risks of diseases (mildew ....) have been checked with preventive works by a very good technique strategy. A long period of flowering created a serious heterogeneity which was homogenized by precise green works all along July and August.

Finally, we had a wonderful summer after a hesitant July but lightly rainy (in terms of quantity). Growing cycle stopped early August. Ripening period (August-October) was fully sunny without any drop of rain.

Such conditions have been excellent to clean the vineyard. We observed high sugar potential and very good acidity (quality of gravely and clayey soils) together with high level of tannins in red skins.



**Vineyards** The 80-hectoliter vineyard of Domaine de Chevalier has 42 hectares under vine. The vines are relatively young due to replanting and the fact that the vineyard has frequently been hit by frost. The vineyard of Domaine de Chevalier is used to produce both red and white Bordeaux wine. For the white Bordeaux wine, 5 hectares are planted to 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Semillon. For the red wine, 37 hectares are planted to 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 3% Petit Verdot. The vineyard is planted to a vine density of 10,000 vines per hectare. On average, the vines are close to 30 years of age. The vineyard management techniques used are sustainable farming methods. Only organic Fertilizers are used and this is on a parcel by parcel basis. Approx 40-60% of annual crop goes into the grand vin. Domaine de Chevalier has a complex terroir and soil that starts with the forest that surrounds the vineyards three sides. The forest enhances the extremes of temperature and increase the risk of frost. The terroir is also gravelly black sand soils that are on average 60-90 cm deep. The rich sub-soil consists of a clay-gravel base mixed with hardpan. The vineyard drainage system, built in 1962, important as it drains excess water. At Domaine de Chevalier, it makes a big difference because the sub-soil is prone to retaining humidity. A wind machine and even helicopters are also used to keep the vines dry on occasion. This works because the helicopter blades stir and blend the lower layers of cold air with warmer air and helps avoid damage from frost.

**Harvest** Our 80-ha red vineyard (all properties) was also handpicked in a short time between 9/10 and 18/10. The difficulty in 2012 was the lack of homogeneity between technic maturity (sugar-acid) and phenolic maturity (skins): Quality of aromas and tannins are fundamental to success a vintage. We had to be able to wait for optimal ripening to get soft skins. High risk of this late date was grey rot, but our vineyards were very clean because of summer preparation work. Finally, we have picked rich and ripe fruits with very fine tannins.

**Maturation** The wine is fermented in temperature-controlled, stainless steel vats and then matured in oak barriques (50% new) for 18 months

**Tasting Notes** An oaky and intense nose of blackcurrants; big palate with considerable amount of fruit and tannin and strong structure. Splendid effort.

**Production** 8,333 cases made

**Cellaring** Drink 2020-2050

**Scores/Awards** **92 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2015  
**90-93 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2013  
**92+ points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #218 - April 2015  
**92-95 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #206 - April 2013  
**92-94 points** - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2013  
**94 points** - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2015  
**93-94 points** - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2013  
**94 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 1, 2015  
**93-95 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 10, 2013  
**89-92? points** - Stephen Tanzer, ST's International Wine Cellar - June 2013  
**16.5 points** - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - October 2014  
**16.5 points** - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2013  
**17.5 points** - Steven Spurrier, Decanter.com - April 2013  
**93 points** - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2013  
**94 points** - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2013  
**91 points** - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)  
**90-92 points** - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 23, 2013  
**89-91 points** - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2013  
**17 points** - Farr Vintner - April 2013  
**90-94 points** - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2013  
**91 points** - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2013  
**93-95 points** - Gilbert & Gaillard - October 19, 2008  
**88-90 points** - Falstaff Magazine (score only)  
**17 points** - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only)  
**17 points** - Simon Staples, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants - April 2013

**Scores/Awards** **18 points** - Gault & Millau (score only)  
**18 points** - La Revue du Vin France (score only)

**Reviews** *"This sports lovely, enticing plum sauce, melted black licorice, blackberry pâte de fruit and cherry compote notes, along with fruitcake and graphite accents that fill in the background. The solid structure is fully absorbed into the fruit, and this should cellar well. A solid effort for the vintage. Best from 2017 through 2025. 8,333 cases made"*  
- JM, Wine Spectator

*"Fresh and nicely polished, with a rounded feel to the mix of plum skin, cherry preserve and currant notes. Alluring spice and dark tea notes fill in the finish. Sneakily long. Score range: 90-93"*  
- JM, Wine Spectator

*"Very floral and elegant with raspberry and blackcurrant fruit mixed with toasty oak/vanillin, followed by a medium to full-bodied, stylish, polished wine that is the quintessentially refined style of Pessac-Léognan. Nevertheless, the complexity and nuance has yet to fully emerge. This medium to full-bodied Domaine de Chevalier is poised for a bright future. It is tight and backward now, as well as restrained aromatically, but everything is there for the future. Forget it for 5-7 years and drink it over the following 30 years."*  
- RP, Wine Advocate

*"One of the stars of the vintage, it boasts a dense purple color as well as a big, sweet bouquet of red and black currants, graphite, subtle flowers and well-integrated, toasty oak. Impressively built rich and medium to full-bodied without losing the quintessential elegance and finesse for which this famous estate is renowned, the 2012 Domaine de Chevalier is filled with purity, equilibrium and balance. The tannins are sweet enough that this wine should be accessible when released and will last for 15-20 years. Is this a modern day clone of their brilliant 1953 (which I drank from magnum at Bern's Steak House in November for less than \$500!)? I was joking with proprietor Olivier Bernard, who is now the president of the Union des Grands Crus, that his position seems to be accompanied by much higher scores from wine critics. Nevertheless, there is no question that Domaine de Chevalier has been on a relatively hot streak lately, and this 2012 is a beauty."*  
- RP, Wine Advocate

*"Tasted from a barrel sample at en primeur. The Domaine de Chevalier has a lovely understated, very pure, quite feminine bouquet with seamlessly integrated oak that neatly encases the blackberry and blueberry fruit. There is a floral note that emerges with time. The palate is medium bodied with very fine tannins. There is a real backbone to this Pessac-Leognan, although the structured is disguised behind layers of velvety tannins. Gorgeous – but it deserves several years in the cellar. Tasted April 2013."*  
- NM, Wine Journal

*"Extremely complex with cinnamon, dried fruits and dried flowers. Full body, super-integrated tannins and a silky, polished finish. Very impressive. Better in 2018 but very beautiful already"*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"This shows wonderful depth of fruit with blackberries, blueberry and spice. Minerals too. Full body, with beautiful and silky tannins and a long, long finish. Superb finish. Sensational for the vintage."*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"This structured wine with big, bold red fruits offers ripe acidity, a dense texture and considerable concentration. It also has the hallmark freshness of the vintage that balances the strong aging potential. Drink from 2022."*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"93–95. Barrel sample. Firm, wood-aged character shows strongly here. The wine is dense and very firm, with a dark feel of extraction, but the juicy fruitiness underneath shows enormous potential."*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

## Reviews

*“Deep, fully saturated ruby-purple. Blackberry, minerals, graphite and herbs on the nose, with added punch delivered by peppery spices. Sweet, supple and nicely concentrated, if with a bit less density and complexity than in recent top vintages, such as 2009 and 2010. Lovely black cherry and blueberry flavors display a tangy sweetness. The very long finish features dusty, fine-grained tannins and a clean mineral overlay. A little more concentration and I would have scored this wine much higher.”*

- ST, International Wine Cellar

*“65% Cab Sauv, 30% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. (Thanks for the back label!) Glowing dark crimson. The most complex nose of all 2012 Pessac’s, with the exception of the Haut-Brion stable. Pretty muscular and a little obviously chewy on the end for the moment but confidently presenting a wine whose charms do not depend on ripeness but on terroir. Appetising.”*

*“Very dark crimson. Very concentrated and interesting on the nose. Sweet and voluptuous. Perhaps lacking a teensy amount of energy and drive. And the tannins are a little drying on the end. Acidity and grip are marked. Very much work in progress. As usual.”*

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

*“Velvety black-red, impressive concentration of ripe, slightly leafy fruit, good depth and clarity, slight green”*

- SS, Decanter.com

*“Purple rim, chocolate nose, modern contemporary style. Like this, it has vim and vigour and feels young, which not all wines do this year, sometimes in this vintage you feel you are tasting one or two years on, not primeur. But this has that acidity-tannic backbone combo that is so needed in a young wine that will be able to go the distance. Some high alcohol makes an abrupt finish, but potential, and a young buck. 93 / 18. Highly recommended. Drink 2020-2035.”*

- JA, The New Bordeaux

*“Further proof that the top Pessac-Léognan reds were a step up on the 2011s and not far behind the quality of the 2010s, this is a very elegant, patrician wine, described as "frockcoated" by one colleague. Spice, tobacco and freshness with plenty of oak, good cassis dominated fruit and a savoury reticence. Drink: 2020-35”*

- TA, timatkin.com

*“With soft dark red berries, smoke, earth, coffee bean and cherry tones, the medium-bodied wine was produced in a fresh, elegant style, which will drink well young. 90-92 Pts*

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*“Deep and saturated; very pretty nose [immediately reminds me of the 2005]; perfume and lushness; lots on the nose; powerful entry; plenty of matter but a little angularity to the tannins on the end which gives a sappy finish. 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. 89-91+ UGC Weds April 10, 2013.”*

- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

*“This much respected property in Léognan is run with great care by Olivier Bernard whose family took it over from Claude Ricard in 1983. During the 1980s and 1990s there was a massive programme of replanting and it is only in the last few years, with the vines reaching maturity, that the quality here has returned to that of the great vintages of the 1960s and before. Without doubt, the best vintages of Chevalier are the most recent ones. Domaine de Chevalier performed an amazing treble at our annual Southwold blind tasting, winning the Graves flight in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Prices, however, have remained reasonable. Monsieur Bernard has recently engaged the talented winemaker Stéphane Derenoncourt (of La Mondotte, Canon la Gaffelière and Pavie Macquin fame) and the wine has benefited greatly from his input. Not only is Domaine de Chevalier the best value wine in Pessac-Léognan these days, it is now becoming one of the best of all. A property on the rise - one to watch. An intense, purple colour. Black fruit on the nose with hints of pepper, vanilla and wood smoke. Wonderful complexity on the palate. The ripe (but unforced) fruit is complemented by notes of vanilla, tar and spice. This is a finely balanced wine with silky roundness, finesse, suppleness and no hint of over extraction despite the impressive depth. Clearly super-second quality.”*

- Farr Vintners

**Reviews** *“The nose is rich deep with a mix of ripe black fruits and fresher red. The palate is the same with the rich flavours underpinned by freshness all supported by firm but ripe tannins. The lighter feel on the back palate gives way to richness on the finish. 2018-35.”*

*- Derek Smedley MW*

*“This wine is very pretty, open and softly elegant. Tasted alongside the 2013, there is more tannins but less depth. 65% Cabernet, 30% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. Tasted in Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young. (04-Jan-2014)”*

*- JCL, asianpalate.com*

*“Muted on first pour then focused fruit and refined oak after swirling. Supple, sappy palate with polished tannins and showcased fruit. A very harmonious style. (16-Apr-2013)”*

*- en.gilbertgaillard.com*

*“This is one of my top five ‘must haves’ this year...again! I have bought it for my own cellar every year since 2004. It’s just heavenly and you know, because Olivier Bernard is a pragmatic realist, that it is going to be priced at a level where we can all indulge ourselves a little. It is multi-layered, sophisticated but still generous. Pure yet decadent, it has such silky tannins that you have to go digging about in the glass to find any at all. It also has the honour of having the longest finish of any wine we tasted during the en primeur tasting week. This is an outstanding wine from 2012. Drink 2018-2035.”*

*- SS, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants*

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