

Château Haut Bages Libéral 2016

CSPC# 832572

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot

Appellation

Pauillac

Classification

5ème Cru Classé

Website

http://www.hautbagesliberal.com/_flash/index.html

General Info

The name of Château Haut-Bages Libéral has two roots. The LIBERAL family ran the property in the early eighteenth century. Brokers from father to son, they sold the harvest in the Netherlands and Belgium. Their name adjoining to the topographical designation, earned them to be invited worldwide to the table of political parties of the same name. Over time, these connoisseurs gathered the best soils of Pauillac. Thus, this 5th Classified Growth in 1855 now has half of its vineyards adjacent to Château Latour and the other half behind Château Pichon Baron, on the heights of the locality "Bages", a large plateau in the south of Pauillac.

The property would regain his youth when, in 1960, the Cruse family, owner of Château Pontet Canet, another 5th Classified Growth in Pauillac, acquired the property. The Cruse would launch an extensive program of replanting the vineyard. However, it was in 1983 at the arrival of the Villars family that Château Haut-Bages Libéral really recovered its former glory. Today, the property is run by Claire Villars Lurton. She undertook an overhaul of the tool of winemaking, and she directs the vineyard management to a sustainable viticulture.

Winemakers

Claire Villars Lurton. Winemaking consultant Eric Boissenot

Sustainability

Today, Claire Villars-Lurton owns the estate; she has undertaken a complete overhaul of the winemaking tool and is orienting her management of the vineyard towards a sustainable viticulture. The vintage is now undergoing certification in organic and biodynamics farming. The estate is in the process of getting its organic agriculture certification with the aim of achieving certification in biodynamics.

Vintage

The vintage had many climatic incidents that made the start of the season complex: winter experienced rainfall records, some very mild temperatures, the frost, and a constant pressure of fungal diseases until the end of June. This pressure was complicated to manage biodynamically, but a great vigilance made it possible to limit the attacks on the bunches. In summer, the trend reversed with the driest month of July since the last 10 years. August and September experienced temperatures above seasonal averages. The water deficit reinforced the accumulation of anthocyanins in berries and the high temperatures lead to the production of sugar. The drop in temperatures in mid-September helped preserving the aromatic quality of the berries and encouraged the maturation of the tannins and their extraction. The wines produced are very balanced, rich in color and tannins.

Vineyards

The 30-hectare property is superbly sited in the south of the Pauillac appellation between Château Latour and the 2 Pichon's. The vineyards (Cabernet Sauvignon 75%, Merlot 25%, lie on deep gravel beds over limestone.

Maturation

The wines are matured in oak barriques (40% new) for 16 months. Since Claire Villars has been at the helm, the wines have become deeper in colour and more concentrated, with notable depth of fruit. It is classified as a 5ème Cru Classé.

Tasting Notes

The colour is dense and deep. The nose is precise and sumptuous. Aromas of red and black berries mingle with a minty touch. On the palate, the tannins are fine and coated with aromas of blackberry and raspberry. The palate is full and silky. A very long finish with an incredible depth.

Production

10,000 cases made.

Cellaring

Drink 2024-2038



Scores/Awards **92 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2019
91-94 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - November 2017
90-92 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #230 - April 2017
94-95 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2017
93 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 2019
91 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2017
91 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2017
89 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - January 2016
95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - January 2019
88 points - Falstaff Magazine - May 2017
94 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com (score only) - April 2017
88 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - January 2021
17.5 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2020
17.5 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2019

Reviews *"This is a sleek, almost brisk-styled Pauillac, with bright iron and chalk notes flanking a core of red currant, cherry and violet flavors. Persistent and defined, just frankly taut in style, so be prepared. 10,000 cases."*
- JM, Wine Spectator

"Seriously focused, with a bolt of graphite coursing through, while waves of fig, blackberry and black currant fruit follow along. Offers a long, sleek, mineral-driven finish. A strong showing."
- JM, JamesSuckling.com

"The 2016 Haut Bages Liberal has a very focused and much more sumptuous bouquet than in previous years, thankfully without dispensing any of its character. It just seems more confident on the nose. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannin, pretty blackberry and boysenberry fruit laced with a touch of oyster shell, sashaying towards a quite elegant finish with admirable depth. You would not describe this as a potentially exciting Pauillac, but I suspect it will be delicious once in bottle."
- NM, Wine Advocate

"Very chewy and long already with ripe tannins and plenty of fruit suggesting tobacco and blackcurrant character. Long finish. From biodynamic grapes."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Rich tannins, generous black fruits and an opulent character mark out this wine. Under the same winemaking team as Ferrière and La Gurgue in Margaux, this exceptional wine comes from an estate that is now biodynamic. Drink this wine from 2025."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"This wine shows notes of charcoal, cassis and blackcurrant bud. It is more restrained than some in the appellation, with a well-placed structure and a pleasurable future ahead of it. A Villars-Lurton estate in the process of converting to organic and biodynamic farming methods. 40% new oak."
- JA, Decanter.com

"Lead pencil, cigar box, cedar and cassis give this a correct Pauillac profile. Medium bodied with polish to the tannins and round fruits in the finish, I really like the wine this year."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"The 2016 Haut-Bages Libéral has turned out beautifully. Rose petals, lavender and sweet red cherry are some of the notes that grace this fine, translucent Pauillac. Medium in body and precise, with exquisite finesse and nuance, the 2016 is incredibly expressive today."
- AG, Vinous

"Dark ruby garnet, opaque core, subtle brightening of the edges, black berry fruit with a delicate vegetal background, leafy nuances. Lean, red berry, present tannins that dry out a bit, lemony, that is definitely not enough for this vintage."
- Falstaff Magazine
