

Château Haut Bages Libéral 2019

CSPC# 831117

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot

Appellation

Pauillac

Classification

5ème Cru Classé

Website

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

Sustainability

The wine is certified organic in 2019, and still on conversion to biodynamics farming.

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. Château Haut-Bages Libéral oversees a 30-hectare vineyard with an exceptional terroir located on the famous Bages plateau that rests on Garonne gravel soil dating back to the Gunz Ice Age.

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

Thomas Bontemps. Winemaking consultant Eric Boissenot

Vintage

January was the only cold month of winter, while February experienced mild temperatures, perhaps the highest in the past 20 years. Cool spring temperatures have slowed the mineralization of organic matter in the soil. The vines budded early but grew slowly. These conditions were also not favorable to flowering, aggravated by significant rainfall. On the other hand, the freshness helped contain the virulence of downy mildew.

The first day of summer marked a meteorological turning point and led to a hot and dry summer. There have been several heat waves with a risk of water deficit. Fortunately, beneficial rains accelerated veraison and maintained phenological homogeneity. The night temperatures in August were below average and favored the early development of the aromatic palette of the grapes and a particularly high anthocyanin loading.

The basic agronomic work in biodynamics carried out on the vineyards to optimize the balance of the vines and the buffering capacity of the soils is fundamental for the proper management of the hottest and driest episodes of summer. The harvested grapes had mature maturity. Alcohol levels are slightly above average. There is a good acid balance and a tannic and aromatic richness which is very interesting for the taste balance of the wine. The wines in 2019 will be ripe, rich, and powerful, everything you need to appreciate them young or let them age.



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. 20% aged in concrete. 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	Château Haut Bages is marked by a very beautiful black fruit, liquorice, and mineral notes. The palate is voluptuous and very aromatic with a hint of salinity. A nice balance and a lot of freshness. The finish combines the power of tannins with elegance. The wine is of great length. The 2019 is a very great vintage with ripe tannins, richness, and power. The style is very representative of the appellation, particularly in terms of its tannic quality.
Serve with	Chateau Haut Bages Liberal is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Haut Bages Liberal is also good with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta.
Cellaring	Drink 2026-2060
Scores/Awards	<p>90 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2022</p> <p>94 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022</p> <p>95 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2022</p> <p>95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2020</p> <p>#7 - James Suckling's 10 Best Value 2019 Bordeaux</p> <p>93-95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2020</p> <p>93 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - June 2020</p> <p>93 points - Jane Anson, Insidebordeaux.com - January 2022</p> <p>92-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2020</p> <p>92-93 points - Yves Beck (score only) - June 2020</p> <p>93 points - Terres de Vins (score only) - September 2021</p> <p>17.5 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2022</p> <p>95-96 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - July 2020</p> <p>18 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2020</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Leans slightly to the austere side, revealing a ripe, fresh, and rather direct beam of cassis and bitter plum fruit lined with a bright iron note. Delivers a dash of savory on the sleek finish. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Best from 2023 through 2032"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The 2019 Haut-Bages-Libéral has turned out superbly, offering up aromas of wild berries, cassis, licorice, rose petals and sweet soil tones, followed by a medium to full-bodied, velvety, and seamless palate, its powdery structuring tannins hidden in an ample core of lively, succulent fruit. From biodynamically farmed vineyards located on clay-limestone and gravel soils to the north of Château Latour (as well as a parcel of gravel sandwiched between Pichon-Baron and Lynch-Bages), this is a terrific effort from an estate that deserves to be much better known.</i></p> <p><i>Claire Villars-Lurton took over this 30-hectare estate in 2000 and shortly after initiated a viticultural revolution. Herbicides were banished in 2004; in 2005, cover crops were introduced; soon after, organic conversion began; and farming has been biodynamic since 2007. The unaccustomed competition in the vineyard initially resulted in very low yields and rather firm wines, but in recent years, Haut-Bages-Libéral has really come into its own, delivering a rather fleshy, charming style of Pauillac that deserves to be better known. The vineyards themselves are situated both on clay-limestone soils north of Château Latour, and on the plateau of Bages between Lynch-Bages and Pichon-Baron."</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"Complex nose of blackberries, currants, oyster shells, iodine, gravel, cloves, dried leaves, and bark. Medium-bodied with firm, very fine tannins. Layered and serious. Extremely long in the finish. Classic Pauillac. 20% aged in concrete. 80% cabernet sauvignon and 20% merlot. From biodynamically grown grapes. Try after 2026."</i></p> <p>- JS, JamesSuckling.com</p>

Reviews *“The cabernet sauvignon is coming out beautifully here with a full body and very polished, chewy tannins. Chocolate, walnuts, and spice. Full and racy with wonderful length and purity. Classic style. From biodynamically grown grapes.”*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“Barrel Sample. This organic estate is in conversion to biodynamic practices. The wine is solid in stature, full of dark tannins and concentrated black fruits. Currently resting in 40% new oak, there is plenty of potential to cellar”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Clear muscles on display, speaking to Pauillac. Real depth of flavour also, with a sense of energy and forward motion through the palate, filling out with cassis fruits alongside liquorice root and a clear saline lick on the end of play. Ageing takes place in a mix of barrel and amphoras as with Ferrière, including new amphoras that are made in Limoges and have a porcelain-lined interior. First year officially certified Ecocert. 3.6pH. A yield of 49hl/ha. Drinking Window 2028 – 2042”
- JA, Decanter.com

“The 2019 Haut-Bages Libéral is plush and radiant from the very first taste. Inky red fruit, new leather, cedar, mint, and sweet pipe tobacco envelop the palate, with suggestions of mocha, licorice and dark red cherry that appear later. Readers will find a bold, sumptuous Pauillac with soft contours, generous fruit, and tons of sheer appeal. Yields were a healthy 49 hectoliters per hectare. The 2019 is projected to spend 18 months in a combination of 40% new oak, 40% once-used barrels and 20% amphora.”
- AG, Vinous
