

Château Les Carmes Haut Brion 2012

CSPC# 771296

750mlx12

14.1% alc./vol.

Grape Variety
Appellation
Classification
Website
General Info

44% Merlot, 38% Cabernet Franc, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon

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 water-mill 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 Frut 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 anther purchase in the appellation when they bought 17 hectares of vines from the Briest 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.

Vintage After a chaotic beginning of the vine cycle: early bud break and blockage in April (cold and wet); the vine found back a proper growing path with the beautiful weather conditions from May to September. However, the delay and heterogeneity undergone because of this difficult start of the vine cycle was to be felt all year long. Once more, the reality of great terroirs, the efforts made in the quest for the balance between the plant and the soil, the vitality of the soils and the low yield reduced greatly theses gaps and induced a slow yet complete maturity of the grapes.



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.
Vinification/ Maturation	To produce the wine of Chateau Les Carmes Haut Brion, vinification takes place in wood vats that range in size from 40 hectoliters to 80 hectoliters. The range of vat sizes allows the estate to vinify on a plot by plot basis. Malolactic fermentation takes place in barrel. The wine of Chateau Les Carmes Haut Brion is aged in an average of 50% new, French oak barrels for close to 18 months. There is a second wine, Les Clos de Carmes Haut Brion.
Tasting Notes	The <i>grand vin</i> , Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion, epitomises the perfect balance between the voluptuous richness of Merlot, the aristocratic finesse of Cabernet Franc, and the power and length of Cabernet Sauvignon. The wine's elegance is typical of Pessac-Léognan, whereas the large proportion of Cabernet Franc confers a truly unique style. A refined, distinguished wine, Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion has considerable freshness, bright fruit and a floral note throughout. The tannin is very smooth.
Production	2,833 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2013-2028
Scores/Awards	<p>91 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2015</p> <p>90-93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2013</p> <p>94 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #218 - April 2015</p> <p>89-91 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #206 - April 2013</p> <p>90-92 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2013</p> <p>92-93 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2013</p> <p>92 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 1, 2015</p> <p>86-88 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 10, 2013</p> <p>88-91 points - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - May/June 2013</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - October 2014</p> <p>15.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2013</p> <p>16.75 points - Stephen Spurrier, Decanter.com - April 2013</p> <p>90-92 points - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2013</p> <p>91 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)</p> <p>90 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only)</p> <p>92 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 15, 2015</p> <p>90-93 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 13, 2013</p> <p>86-88 points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2013</p> <p>88 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2013</p> <p>94-96 points - Gilbert & Gaillard - April 16, 2013</p> <p>16.5 points - John Berry, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants - April 2013</p> <p>88-90 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p>16 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only)</p> <p>17 points - Gault & Millau (score only)</p> <p>17 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only)</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Features a smoldering tobacco edge around the core of steeped plum and raspberry fruit, while hints of dried anise and alder line the finish. Shows range and character, with well-embedded acidity bolstering the length. Best from 2016 through 2022. 2,833 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p>

Reviews *“Juicy and direct, with solid plum, raspberry and bitter cherry notes pushed by wood spice, singed alder and charcoal. Nice range, and with a pleasantly chewy, grippy feel. Score range: 90-93”*
- JM, Wine Spectator

“An inky, bluish-black color, this wine has deep black raspberry and blueberry notes mixed with charcoal, graphite and subtle smoke. Rich, full-bodied and silky textured, this complex, stunning Pessac-Léognan from this tiny jewel of a vineyard near Haut Brion is hitting all the high notes in 2012. It should drink well for 15-20. This is another bottled wine that dramatically out-performed its barrel sample”
- RP, Wine Advocate

“The 2012 seems to be a move in that direction. A blend of 44% Merlot, 38% Cabernet Franc and 18% Cabernet Sauvignon, it tips the scales at 14.1% alcohol. Only 53% of the crop made it into the grand vin as they have introduced a second wine called Les Clos des Carmes. The medium-bodied, fragrant 2012 Les Carmes Haut Brion offers lots of unsmoked cigar tobacco, red and black currant, scorched earth and toasty notes. This wine, which is now being looked after by Guillaume Pouthier, whom I met when working with Michel Chapoutier in Tain l’Hermitage, has considerable talent, so readers take note. This 2012 possesses impressive purity and density along with its tell-tale elegance and finesse. It should drink well for 10-15 years. This property changed proprietors several years ago and is now owned by a Bordeaux real estate magnate who appears to be committed to pushing Les Carmes Haut-Brion up to the level of its nearby neighbors, La Mission Haut-Brion and Haut-Brion – a courageous as well as expensive proposition.”
- RP, Wine Advocate

“Tasted from a barrel sample at en primeur. The Les Carmes Haut-Brion is a blend of 38% Cabernet Franc, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon and 44% Merlot. It has a fine, gravelly bouquet with well-defined black fruit and well-integrated oak. It unfurls nicely in the glass. The palate is medium bodied with firm tannins. This is actually more structured and masculine than I expected. Classic Pessac-Leognan with a touch of chewiness and sinew on the finish, a second sample tasted one week after the first exhibited the persistency and depth that the first lacked. This could be a very fine Les Carmes after bottling. Tasted April 2013. “
- NM, Wine Journal

“This shows amazing fruit with blackberries and licorice character. Smoky too. Full body, with wonderful fruit and tannins. Goes on for a very, very long time. 40% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“New wood shows strongly in this wine that has structure and a dry core to match the ripe berry fruits and rich texture. The wine has potential with its juicy fruitiness and dark chocolate flavors. Wait until 2019 before drinking.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“86–88. Barrel sample. This is a very dense and solid wine—structured and hard around the edges. The juicy freshness shows, although reluctantly, giving a wine that is extracted and on the tough side.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“(44% merlot, 38% cabernet franc and 18% cabernet sauvignon; 14% alcohol; 53% selection for the grand vin): Saturated ruby with purple highlights. Dark plum, blackberry, ink and minerals on the knockout nose. Silky and deep for 2012, but with no shortage of underlying structure. Quite full and complex, with sneaky concentration and building sweetness to the mineral, dark berry and floral flavors. Finishes with superb persistence, very fine tannins and a delicate herbal nuance. This is impressively silky for the year, and one of the best Les Carmes in memory, although I would have preferred just a little less alcohol.”
- ST, International Wine Cellar

- Reviews** *“Healthy ruby. Unusually ripe with meaty, savoury nose and no obvious over ripeness. Refreshing and definitely silky and Graves-y. Well done! The tannins are still in evidence, but this is proper claret as opposed to a tarted-up vintage rescue.”*
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- “Very dark purple. Almost excessively sweet, coconut-like oak – the sort I just happen not to like though I'm sure some people do. An awful lot of work has gone into extracting and polishing this fruit. But the overall effect lacks the freshness that is to me characteristic of Graves. Even a bit bitter on the end. Exaggerated wine that lacks a bit of soul. Overworked.”*
- JR, JancisRobinson.com
- “Good ripeness and depth, natural warmness of vineyard is there, quite broad and will gain complexity.”*
- SS, Decanter.com
- “Here again extraction, but this one is successful, tannins are tight, firm, insisting. Real power driving them, feel you are being shunted along by a steam engine. Alcohol high, the acidity manages to hold it at bay. Don't love this for me personally but recognise the success. Again, one of the wait 10 years, check on coat at the door. 90-92. 15-17.75. Highly recommended.”*
- JA, The New Bordeaux
- “With good color, a nose of forest scents, herbs, black raspberry, mint and cassis, the medium/full bodied, round, soft wine finishes with sweet, mineral driven dark red fruits.”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- “With licorice, smoke, blackberry and earthy notes, this wine has plush, soft, polished textures and a sweet blackberry and dark chocolate finish. 90-93 Pts (18-Apr-2013)”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- “Deep and saturated look; dense centre; feels deep; black fruits on the palate with oak; good material here; some dryness at the back; tannins a bit chewy. Tannic finish. 40% Cabernet Franc, 40% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon 86-88 UGC April 2013”*
- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com
- “This estate has been under new ownership since 2010 and the 2012 is a great success story. The fruit shows luscious redcurrants and the overall style is really soft and attractive. It is the finish, however, where the wine really shows off a wonderful sapidité (a French term meaning an almost salty, mineral savouriness). The château's director, Guillaume Pouthier, puts this down to using ripe stalks in the blend, a difficult method frequently used in Burgundy but very rarely seen in Bordeaux. This 2012 is very much a success.”*
- JB, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants
- “Plush, generous tannins and full body in this modern style red Bordeaux with nice depth of fruit. Dark berries, cedar and plums. This property is just next to Haut-Brion but a different owner. Tasted in: Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young. (06-Apr-2013) “*
- JCL, asianpalate.com
- “Crunchy black fruits on a racy nose. The palate shows abundant volume, ripe, melted tannins and remarkable aromatic persistency. Already a very accessible wine. (16-Apr-2013) “*
- en.gilbertgaillard.com
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