

Château Les Carmes Haut Brion 2020

CSPC# 888351

750mlx6

13.65% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

40% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot

Appellation

Pessac-Léognan

Classification

Grand Vin de Bordeaux

Website

<http://www.les-carmes-haut-brion.com/en/>

Analysis

3.62 pH

General Info

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 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

Derenoncourt Consultants

Vintage

The 2020 vintage was marked by 3 major climatic events:

After a mild winter, the 3rd mildest winter ever recorded, and a bud break 15 days ahead of schedule, the spring was marked by great humidity, with a record rainfall on the weekend of May 10 and 11. These climatic conditions caused the appearance of a very virulent mildew on our red grapes.

From mid-June onwards, the weather changed radically with a very dry summer marked by 8 weeks without rain, a first for the region of Bordeaux. The few rains in mid-August were essential to reactivate the ripening of the grapes. This drought had a major impact on the vines growing on gravels, which gave us small but very concentrated grapes. Finally, the early harvest was marked by an unprecedented heat wave in mid-September. This had the effect of further concentrating the grapes. And for the third time in our history, we finished harvesting our last Cabernet-Sauvignon in September.



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 soil located close to Haut Brion is gravel based. Close to the chateau, the soil is 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	Hand picked between September 14 to 26, which is early here.
Winemaking	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). The initial fermentation was for 35 days. 80% new oak barrels, 11% foudres, 9% terracotta amphorae for 24 months. All vats were vinified in full grapes and partly in entire bunch. Pigeage only.
Tasting Notes	What a nose, expressive, floral, with tobacco, tea, lots of dark fruit, cherries, blackberries, violets, rocky notes, grandiose and very Burgundian in appearance. Accessible on the palate and yet with top structure, silky soft tannins, a mix of red and dark berries, highly elegant, precise and with excellent length. One of the great wines of the vintage.
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	Approx. 3,000 cases made annually.
Cellaring	Drink 2025 – 2055
Scores/Awards	<p>97 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023</p> <p>95-97+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - May 2021</p> <p>98 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - March 2023</p> <p>98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023</p> <p>97-98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021</p> <p>100 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023</p> <p>96 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021</p> <p>97 points - Jane Anson, janeanson.com - January 2023</p> <p>99 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023</p> <p>96-98 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2021</p> <p>94 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021</p> <p>93-95 points - Farr Vintners - May 2021</p> <p>94-96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - April 2021</p> <p>100 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>95-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021</p> <p>96-98 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2021</p> <p>97 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2023</p> <p>100 points - Yves Beck (score only) - June 2021</p> <p>94-96 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021</p> <p>98 points - Terres de Vins (score only) - September 2021</p> <p>96-97 points - Vert de Vin - May 2021</p> <p>93-94 points - Michael Schuster, The World of Fine Wine - May 2021</p> <p>95-97 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - July 2021</p>
Reviews	<p><i>“The 2020 Les Carmes Haut-Brion has turned out beautifully, wafting from the glass with aromas of blackberries, red fruits, exotic spices, rose petals, raw cocoa, and licorice. Medium to full-bodied, seamless, and layered, it's intensely flavored but weightless, with a compelling sense of harmony and a long, orange-inflected finish. A blend of 40% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 26% Merlot, it was vinified with some 65% whole bunch and attained 13.5% alcohol. This is the first vintage where Pouthier's methods (whole bunch with weighted cap and long élevage incorporating larger vessels) were applied writ large, and the results are striking.”</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>“Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2020 Les Carmes Haut-Brion issues forth a beguiling array of savory</i></p>

Reviews *scents—black olives, charcuterie, bouquet garni and Sichuan pepper—over a core of bright redcurrant jelly, black cherries and cassis scents, plus fragrant hints of rose petals and preserved mandarin peel. The medium-bodied palate is refreshing and elegantly styled yet with a rock-solid backbone of firm, finely grained tannins, and bags of freshness, finishing long, and perfumed. This is a stunning expression of the vintage that should be long lived and age with fantastic grace.”*
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“The 2020 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is a blend of 40% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 26% Merlot with a pH of 3.62 and aged for 24 months in 80% new oak, 11% foudres, and 9% terracotta amphoras. A proportion of whole-bunch fermentation was used, depending on the suitability of the batch: 50-60% whole bunch was generally used on the Merlot and Cabernet Franc, less on the Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple in color, it slowly releases the most gorgeous perfume of violets, dark chocolate, black cherry preserves, and creme de cassis, followed by suggestions of crushed rocks, tar, wild sage, and anise. The medium-bodied palate delivers a solid foundation of firm, grainy tannins, and seamless freshness to support the tight-knit black fruit and mineral layers, finishing long and perfumed.”
- LPB, Wine Independent

“Gorgeous aromas of crushed berries with orange peel. Fresh spices. Flowers. Salty. Full and so bright and vivid, with an elegance and beauty at the beginning and then it goes on and on. You see the intense fine tannins at the end. Dusty and bright. Unique wine. 55% whole cluster. 80% new wood, 10% amphora, and 10% foudra.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“Exotic fruit aromas of blackberry, blueberry, peach, and orange peel. It’s full-bodied with a vertical flow of layered, chewy tannins that are integrated and intense. Extremely polished and focused. Crushed stone to the fruit in the aftertaste. Some bark and forest flowers, too. Great potential.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“The best 2020s seem to be confident without showing off or shouting too loudly and this Carmes does just that. Focused and precise, this is complex and characterful, rich yet vibrant with a texture and taste that makes an impact straight away. Fresh black fruits, floral notes and sensational minerality do the talking - it has weight, density, and structure - broad and bold yet svelte, it has direction and persistence, building quickly then settling and elongating with such clarity and purity. This is a wine you want to drink. Cool, classic, sharp and decisive with a flawless texture. Whereas 2019 was more generous, this is more classic and easier to understand. An excellent job - seemingly effortless winemaking in 2020 - and a bottle that is sure to be emptied pretty quickly.”
- GH, Decanter.com

“Clear violet edging to the colour, vibrant and enticing. This is elegant and full of personality, with high floral aromatics, a ton of dark fruits, and a blueberry dominance that gives a classic Carmes Haut Brion feel. Slightly austere, slightly bitter, both in the best possible expression of those terms, where it is mouthwatering and moreish. A juicy salinity ensures this is a wine that doesn't overpower, its flavours are revealed slowly and carefully, tugging backwards, with a texture that heads towards linen rather than silk - meaning that you don't glide through, you carefully step through well-placed tannins and fruits. There is clear delicacy here, and with 55% whole bunch fermentation - the highest level that they have done to date. 3.62pH (they harvested this at almost 1% ABV higher), fermented with their own natural yeasts. Highest percentage of the two Cabernets on recent record (before 2010 Carmes was regularly at 50% Merlot). Strong candidate for the score moving upwards when in bottle. Drinking Window 2028 – 2048.”
- JA, Decanter.com

“Inky plum colour, violet and peony aromatics followed up by orange zest and pencil lead on the opening beats. Just so much depth, quality and character, chalky tannins are softening just enough to show the form of the fruit beneath, giving a sense of architecture and form. Sculpted blue and black fruits appear as things expand through the mid palate, with crushed mint leaf and mouthwatering oyster shell on the finish. The flavours evolve and the character emerges the longer you linger over this glass, and it's an excellent vintage

Reviews *of Carmes, with sculpted delicious fruits. 3.58ph, 55% whole cluster, 80% new oak, 10% foudres, 10% amphora for ageing.”*
- JA, janeanson.com

“Medium/full-bodied, concentrated, vibrant, fresh, refined, elegant, and completely focused on its purity of fruit. Initially, you find notes of flowers, tobacco leaves, thyme, red pit fruits, mint, and an array of spices. The fruit gracefully unfolds on your palate with nuances of sea salt, herbs, spices, red, and black currants, cocoa, and espresso. The long, seamless, vivacious finish, with its spicy, mint, and oceanic edge takes its time building in intensity and width as it lingers. Drink from 2027-2060.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Garnet in color, the wine opens with tobacco leaf, cigar box, thyme, herbs, flowers, and red berries. Medium/full-bodied, vibrant, fresh, and focused on its purity of fruit and elegance, this sublime wine is silky, sweet and sensuous. This finish is long and refined, with sweet, ripe cherries, dark cocoa, spice, herbs, and cigar wrapper with a cool touch of salt and crushed rock in the endnotes. The wine was made using 55% whole bunch clusters during fermentation. From a blend of 40% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 26% Merlot, 13.7% ABV. The wine is aging in 80% new, French oak which is already close to fully integrated.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The production is down 20% in 2020. It is made from 40% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 26% Merlot. The abv is 13.6%. This year the proportion of whole bunch fermentation is 55%, the highest ever. It is aged in 80% new French oak, 11% large oak barrels and 9% amphora. Deep ruby colour in the glass. The aroma could not be mistaken for any other wine in Bordeaux - full of green spices from the whole bunch, lightly reductive at this early stage, and bursting with red and blue fruit. There is a light graphite tone too that adds a savoury, cool tone. The palate is grippy and yet full of fruit, rich tannic structure matched by fruit density. Dark cherry, graphite, dried herbs, and cedar all come through. A unique take on what Bordeaux can be, with a persistent, moreish finish.”

- Farr Vintners

“The 2020 Les Carmes Haut-Brion was picked at 38hl/ha and matured in 80% new oak, 11% foudres and the remainder in clay amphorae. It has an intense bouquet of blackberry and wild strawberry, plus some light torrefactory scents, undergrowth, and black pepper, all delineated and focused. The palate is medium-bodied with beautifully defined black fruit and delicate touches of mint, bell pepper and cracked black pepper. Though it shares the same surname, it is interesting to see how, stylistically, it is cut from a totally different cloth than Haut-Brion and La Mission, which each possess their own distinct attributes. Quite thickly textured and weighty on the finish with a long, spicy aftertaste, this is a serious Les Carmes Haut-Brion with a very long future ahead. 2025 - 2050.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is a total stunner. For the first time I can remember, Les Carmes Haut-Brion marries all of its elements so well that nothing stands out. In the past, the high percentage of Franc and/or the whole clusters were evident. The 2020 is the first modern vintage in which all the elements are so well balanced. Dark red/purplish fruit, rose petal, mint, lavender, dried herbs and incense all build in a ravishing Pessac-Léognan that will take your breath away. The 2020 is 40% Cabernet Franc, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon and 26% Merlot, picked between September 14 to 26, which is early here. Whole cluster was 55%. Vinification took place over five weeks, using very gentle extraction, with no pump-overs or punch-downs. Aging was 80% new oak, 11% 18hL foudres and 9% amphorae. In tasting, the 2020 is simply magnificent. There are no soloists, just the most exceptionally vivid, breathtaking orchestra imaginable. The 2020 is a masterpiece from Technical Director Guillaume Pouthier and his team. Don't miss it! 2030-2070.”

- AG, Vinous

Reviews *“The 2020 Les Carmes Haut-Brion is dazzling, but it is also a wine of reserve and understatement. I imagine it will be some years, at the very least, before the 2020 is ready to show all it has to offer. Today, it is not particularly expressive. The aromatics, which are usually so penetrating are quite shy, although the significant presence of Cabernet Franc that distinguishes this wine comes through in its energy and sense of drive. I can't wait to taste the 2020 from bottle and won't be at all surprised if it turns out even better than this note suggests.”*
- AG, Vinous

“On another level, the flagship 2020 Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion is one heck of a dense, backward, concentrated wine that's going to require bottle age. Coming in with the same technical analysis (acidity and alcohol) as the 2018, this full-bodied beauty offers a thrilling nose of blackcurrants, smoked tobacco, charcoal, and gravelly earth. Full-bodied on the palate, with a terrific mid-palate and wonderful purity, it holds things close to its vest yet has flawless balance, impeccable purity, and just a great, lengthy finish. Nevertheless, this is one big bruiser of a wine that's going to demand bottle age. Do your best to hide bottles for 7-8 years, count yourself lucky, and enjoy over the following three to four decades.”
- Jeb Dunnuck

“Dark ruby, opaque core, purple reflections, discreet brightening on rim. Hints of noble wood, ripe cherry fruit, delicate nougat, wild berries, candied orange zest, inviting bouquet. Juicy, ripe cherries, fine fruit expression in the texture, well integrated, ripe tannins, peppery aftertaste, certain ageing potential.”
- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“The nose is fruity, beautifully precise, beautifully elegant, racy and offers deepness, delicacy, a good definition, a multi-layer side, precision, a contained power, delicacy, a stretchy/tight side, and intensity (full of finesse). It reveals notes of pulpy Boysen berry, bright cassis, small notes of wild strawberry associated with small touches of bright violet plum, cornflower, violet as well as fine hints of racy minerality, iod, small juicy/fresh black fruits, discreet hints of grilled, liquorice and an imperceptible hint of camphor. The palate is fruity, full of elegance/precision (dentelle) and offers freshness, juiciness, evolution, subtlety, minerality, a multilayer side, a compact/aerial side, a small stretchy side, and an acidulous frame. On the palate this wine expresses notes of pulpy/bright blackberry, cassis, small notes of small fresh/pulpy red berries associated with touches of violet, lily, Madagascar pepper as well as fine hints of toasted, graphite, toasted hazelnut, nutmeg, racy graves as well as a discreet hint of zan, a subtle hint of toasted and tea. Tannins are precise, elegant, racy, very finely soft, and discreetly powdered. Good length. A beautiful persistence on notes of bright/juicy blueberry. A beautiful work on the bitter in the finish.”
- Vert de Vin

“(40% CF, 34% CS, 26% M; 38hl/ha; 13.65% ABV; 80% new). Dense, sweet, florally fragrant, very lightly minerally; full, fresh, finely but firmly tannic; long and compact, both juicy and linear, pure, transparent-yet-dense, with a succulent, brisk ripe red and black fruit, very long across the palate, effortless, finely defined and tightened by its acidity and tannin; there is a wonderful freshness and vitality here, alongside a very gentle defining texture, and then gorgeous length, particularly perfumed in its persistence. Gorgeous wine understated but very complete. So fine-textured, it will be accessible fairly early, but keep and develop beautifully, too. 2028–50+.”
- MS, The World of Fine Wines
