

Chapter 13

Bordeaux



Climate and Grape Growing

- **Climate: Maritime** (warming Gulf Stream)
 - No spring frost/long growing season
 - Atlantic = rainfall/humidity likely
 - **Landes Forest** = protects vineyards from storms
 - Can disrupt flowering/fruit set and promote rot/dilute grape flavours
- Variation variety = problem (some ripe/others not each year, ie, Cab Sauv)
- Change of canopy management over time = healthier grapes/less sprays/rise in sugar/flavour development

Grape Varieties and Winemaking

White grape varieties	Black grape varieties
<p>Semillon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pessac-Leognan/Graves ● Thin-skin = noble rot influenced. Used for sweet wines. ● Blend with SB for dry Bordeaux 	<p>Cabernet Sauvignon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Haut-Medoc/Bas-Medoc/Graves ● Stone, gravel soil - raise temp - CS can ripen ● Account for 3/4 of finest blends
<p>Sauvignon Blanc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citrus/green fruit flavours ● Can be dry/single varietal ● Adds acidity to sweet wines 	<p>Cabernet Franc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Saint-Emilion (mainly)/Medoc/Graves ● Unripe = herbaceous stalky. Ripe = fruity/floral - less body/tannin. ● Well drained warm soil preferred
<p>Muscadelle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grapey/floral flavour ● Small addition to dry/sweet wine blends 	<p>Merlot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Saint-Emilion/Pomerol ● Grow on cooler clay soils ● Can be found in high-vol/inexpensive wines

	<p>Petit Verdot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small plantings ● Only ripens in hot years ● Deep coloured/tannic/ages slowly ● Minor role in blends - adds tannin/colour/spice
<p>Winemaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fermented in all types of vessel (depends on producer) ● <u>Most wines blended in spring following vintage</u> (can be kept separate until end of maturation) ● Most leading Chateaux make 2nd/3rd wines with grapes not suitable for 'grand vin' (can be sold to negociant) ● Premium = aged in 225-litre <i>barrisques</i> (new oak) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fewer properties - less/no new oak 	<p>Winemaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lower end dry white Bordeaux = fresh/fruity - temp controlled fermentation in inert vessels (min aging) - some toasty oak ● Premium dry whites - <i>Pessac-Leognan</i> → ferm + mat in oak = rich/concentrated nut + fruit ● Sweet Bordeaux - noble rot - ferm + mat in new oak barrels up to 3 years.

Regions and Wines

- **Gironde Estuary - Dordogne + Garonne rivers**
 - West/south of Gironde/Garonne = *Medoc/Graves/Sauternes* (**left bank**)
 - Between Dordogne + Garonne = **Entre-Deux-Mers**
 - North/east of Gironde/Dordogne = *Saint-Emilion/Pomerol* (**right bank**)
 - 50 different appellations in Bordeaux

Generic Appellations

- Bordeaux + Bordeaux Supérieur (BS = more rules/regulations on alcohol levels)
- White = Bordeaux.
- Rosé = Bordeaux Clairet.
- Red = Early-drinking/medium body/ripe red fruits/black fruits/cedar (best)
 - Lighter body/astringent tannin (inexpensive)
- Bordeaux Clairet (Rosé) - longer maceration - deeper colour/fuller body
- White Bordeaux = Sauv Blanc - grassy

The Reds of Médoc and Graves

- **North tip of Medoc = Bas-Medoc (wines labelled 'Medoc')** - clay soil (some gravel) - more Merlot/easy drinking.
- **Haut Medoc = Saint Estephe, Pauillac, Saint-Julien, Marguax**
 - Cab Sauv dominated = blackcurrant/cedar/grippy tannins (young)/aging potential
- **Pessac Leognan in Graves**
 - Gravel soil
 - Wines = lighter body/more fragrant
 - Also v. premium/expensive

- **Graves**
 - Extends south of Pessac-Leognan. Less concentrated/complex wines = higher proportion of Merlot. 7
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Saint-Emilion and Pomerol

Merlot and Cab Franc dominate the area

- **Saint-Emilion** (3 groups of vineyards)
 1. Plateau to north + west of SÉ. Warm, well drained gravel + limestone soil. Cab Franc (+ some Cab Sauv). Premium.
 2. Escarpment to south + east. Clay/limestone soil. Premium. Wines - high tannin/soft mouthfeel/plum/berry/tobacco
 3. Foot of escarpment - sandy soils - lighter body/less prestigious
- **Pomerol**
 - Richer/spicier fruit

Trend of full-bodied, very ripe wines from small plot of land (low quantities = v. expensive to produce and buy) - **vins de garage** (“garagiste” = winemaker) - now part of the Saint-Emilion appellation system.

Pomerol and SÉ surrounded by area producing Merlot-dominated wines.

Côtes de Bordeaux

- Côtes de Bordeaux = *Blaye, Cadillac, Castillon, Francs* (ie, Francs Côtes De Bordeaux)
 - Merlot-dominated/easy drinking
 - Not in group
 - Côtes de Bourg (similar style)
 - Premières Côtes de Bordeaux (sweet wines)
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Premium Dry White Wines

- *Entre-Deux-Mers* - only white wine
 - *Graves/Pessac-Leognan* - white and red
 - *EDM/Graves* - Sauv. blanc/unoaked
 - *Pessach Leognan* - Best whites (some cru classé)
 - Sauv. Blanc + Semillon - ferm + mat partly in oak - med-full body/toast flavours
 - *Medoc/Sauternes* - also dry white - must be labelled under generic Bordeaux appellation
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Sweet Wines

- Best = banks of Garonne and its tributary, the Ciron
- River - misty, autumn - noble rot
- Passillage (drying grapes on the vines) - done in years when little/no noble rot
- *Sauternes* - within it is *Barsac*
 - *Barsac* (can either be labelled Barsac or Sauternes)
 - **Semillon** (thin skin/Botrytis)/ **Sauvignon Blanc** (acidity/fruit)/ **Muscadelle** (exotic perfume)

- Apricot/citrus peel/high alcohol/sweet/balanced. Oak ferm and/or mat.
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Bordeaux Classifications

Classifications outside the appellation system (except SÉ)

The Medoc and Sauternes

- 1855, Paris Universal Exhibition, Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce asked to list best reds from Medoc and whites from Sauternes [1855 Classification]
 - Chateaux listed as Cru Classés (five ranks)
 - Premier cru = **Châteaux Lafite Rothschild, Latour, Margaux, Mouton Rothschild, Haut Brion** (Graves)
 - 3 Sauternes listed (Châteaux d'Yquem)
- Cru Bourgeois = classification for other châteaux
 - Based on vintage, so each year new vintages submit to gain status

Graves

- Separate - red/white lists
- No ranking; '**cru classés**' status
- All cru classes château in Pessac-Leognan, as appellation created after Graves classification invented

Saint-Émilion Grand Cru

- Integrated with the appellation system
 - There is a Saint-Émilion Grand Cru appellation - Chateaux within this.
 - Saint-Émilion Premier Grand Cru Classe A (Best)
 - Saint-Émilion Premier Grand Cru Classe B
 - Saint-Émilion Premier Grand Cru Classe
 - Promotions/demotions possible once every 10 years
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Multiple Choice Practice Questions

Questions:

1. Which river runs through the Bordeaux wine region, influencing its climate and vineyard locations?

- a) Seine
- b) Douro
- c) Loire
- d) Garonne

2. The Bordeaux wine region is divided into two main banks by which river?

- a) Dordogne
- b) Gironde
- c) Rhône
- d) Lot

3. Which of the following is a key grape variety used in the production of red wines in the Left Bank of Bordeaux?

- a) Merlot
- b) Cabernet Sauvignon
- c) Malbec
- d) Sauvignon Blanc

4. In Bordeaux, what is the significance of the term "Cru Classé" on a wine label?

- a) Indicates a specific grape variety
- b) Denotes a classified growth
- c) Signifies organic certification
- d) Represents a sweet wine

5. Which appellation in Bordeaux is renowned for its sweet white wines made from botrytized grapes?

- a) Pauillac
- b) Sauternes
- c) Margaux
- d) Pomerol

6. What is the primary grape variety used in the production of wines from the Pomerol appellation?

- a) Cabernet Franc
- b) Merlot
- c) Malbec
- d) Petit Verdot

7. The "Right Bank" of Bordeaux is known for its wines dominated by which grape variety?

- a) Cabernet Sauvignon
- b) Merlot
- c) Cabernet Franc
- d) Malbec

8. Which of the following sub-regions is part of the Left Bank in Bordeaux?

- a) Pomerol
- b) Saint-Émilion
- c) Pauillac
- d) Sauternes

9. What is the significance of the "Bordeaux Supérieur" appellation?

- a) Designates higher alcohol content wines
- b) Denotes wines of superior quality

- c) Signifies organic farming practices
- d) Represents a specific grape variety

10. Which classification system ranks Bordeaux châteaux into five growths based on quality, with Premier Cru being the highest?

- a) AOC classification
- b) Crus Bourgeois
- c) Saint-Émilion Classification
- d) 1855 Classification

Answers:

- 1. d) Garonne**
- 2. b) Gironde**
- 3. b) Cabernet Sauvignon**
- 4. b) Denotes a classified growth**
- 5. b) Sauternes**
- 6. b) Merlot**
- 7. b) Merlot**
- 8. c) Pauillac**
- 9. b) Denotes wines of superior quality**
- 10. d) 1855 Classification**