

BORDEAUX REGION

Bordeaux is probably the most well-known wine region in France. Bordeaux counts for one third of the good quality French wine (AOC, crus bourgeois, crus classés). The wines are so good there that a Bordeaux ranking is needed to classify them. Bordeaux has about 7,000 châteaux!

Geography of the Bordeaux region

Bordeaux is near the Atlantic coast, in the south west of France. The Bordeaux wine region covers Gironde, an administrative department (also a river) of the Aquitaine region.

Bordeaux wine takes its name from the region's main city.

The **Bordeaux** wine region wide spreads 60 miles around the city on the biggest estuary in Europe along 3 rivers (Gironde, Garonne, Dordogne) creating the appropriate setting for wine.

The climate in **Bordeaux** is generally temperate with a short winter and a high degree of humidity generated by the close proximity of the Atlantic Ocean.

Wine making in Bordeaux

Wine production in Bordeaux:

Bordeaux is 60 appellations, about 7,000 wine-producing châteaux, and 13,000 wine growers. The large diversity of Bordeaux suggests an equal diversity of soil.

Wine Grapes in Bordeaux:

Most of the grapes grown in the **Bordeaux** region for red wine are Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc which give vigour, tannin and good keeping qualities, and Merlot which brings softness and suppleness. Merlot is the most planted grape in Bordeaux, covering 50% of the wine region (see chart below).

White wines are elaborated mostly from Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon, and sometimes also with Muscadelle.

Bordeaux Wine classification :

Wines from the Médoc area :

+ **Grands crus classés** are classified in five categories to distinguish even more the best of the best from the 6 "communales" appellations from the Haut Médoc area :

4 Premiers grands crus classés (1st) – 14 Deuxièmes grands crus classés (2nd) – 14 Troisièmes grands crus classés (3rd) – 10 Quatrièmes grands crus classés (4th) – 18 Cinquièmes grands crus classés (5th) - also second wines

+Cru Bourgeois (new selection for the 2010 vintage)

The new Cru Bourgeois classification has 260 Châteaux coming from the 8 appellations of the Médoc vineyards.

+ Classification of Cru Artisan (new classification as of January 2006)

44 châteaux have been classified in January 2006

Crus Artisans are a selection of wineries and chateaux in the 8 appellations of the Médoc vineyards, such as for the Crus Bourgeois

Crus Artisans rank below Crus Bourgeois in the complicated Bordeaux classification of wine.

Wines from the Pessac-Léognan appellation: 16 chateaux which may produce red and or white wine are classified; Haut Brion is the only one "premier cru Classé"

Wines from St Emilion area

+ **82 Grands crus classes from St Emilion : classification of 2012 :**

***4 Premiers grands crus classés A (First Great Growths category A)**

Château Ausone, Château Cheval Blanc, Pavie and Angelus

***14 Premiers grands crus classés B** follows among the best châteaux could be: Figeac, Clos Fourtet, Pavie Macquin, Troplong Mondot...

* There is a wide list of **64** others **grands crus classés** with Ch. Fombrauge, Jean Faure...

Wines from Sauternes area :

1 first superior growth (premier cru supérieur) : Ch. (d') Yquem

11 first growths for example La Tour Blanche (wine growed by an agricultural school), Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Rieussec, Sigalas-Rabaud...

14 second growths for example: Filhot, d'Arche, Suau...

Wines from Bordeaux

Bordeaux A.O.C. and Bordeaux supérieur

Bordeaux AOC wines are coming from everywhere in the Bordeaux wine region.

The quality of both red and white wine depends very much on the wine maker talent and on the quality of the grapes. It means that the quality varies from very disappointing wines to excellent bargain chateaux.

The **Bordeaux supérieur** appellation grows on the same soils. Red wines may have a higher quality and can age better.

The **Médoc** is situated north of the town of Bordeaux, on the left bank of the Gironde. **Médoc** is divided in two parts, the **Haut-Médoc** in the south, near the town, and the north part traditionally called **Médoc**.

Wines from **Médoc** are red. They are delicate, medium coloured; they are fine and elegant; often tannic when young, harmonious and splendid when matured.

Grands crus classés in Médoc count for 25% of the vineyards, 20% of the production and about 50% of the sales.

Haut-Médoc is actually south of the Médoc region. 5 Grands Crus Classés (Great Growths) are based in Haut-Médoc. All the others are in the adjacent and smaller in size appellations: Pauillac, Margaux, Saint-Julien and Saint-Estèphe.

Haut-Médoc - such as in Médoc - is a land of red wine. They are generous, not too powerful red wines with a delicate bouquet of vanilla and black fruits.

Saint-Estèphe

Saint-Estèphe is a true "terroir" wine. The influence of the soil, gravels as usual and more clays than in Médoc, can be experienced when tasting a **Saint-Estèphe** wine. Although Pauillac is just close-by, Saint-Estèphe wines are different.

Saint-Estèphe wines are very coloured, earthy, firm, robust and tannic. They reach their maturity slower than other Médoc wines.

Saint-Estèphe hosts 5 Grands Crus Classés (great growths) such as Château Montrose and Château Cos d'Estournel

Pauillac

Pauillac is maybe the best appellation of Bordeaux with three premiers grands crus classés (1st great growth) out of 4. Pauillac has 18 grands crus classés in total! The great châteaux of **Pauillac** are Château Lafite, Château Latour and Château Mouton-Rothschild.

Pauillac wines generally have a lot of body, tannic and acid when they are young; they have an opulent bouquet with aromas of blackcurrant and cedar when they age.

Saint-Julien

Just a little bit less powerful than Pauillac and rustic than Saint-Estèphe, **Saint-Julien** wines are very aromatic. They are harmonious and well balanced red wines. Saint-Julien is the right balance between Pauillac and Margaux.

Saint-Julien has 11 Grands Crus Classés (great growths). The quality is so good in Saint-Julien, that second wines from those châteaux are very attractive like Clos du Marquis.

Listrac

Listrac is more distant from a river and from the ocean than any other Bordeaux.

At the beginning of the last century, Listrac was one of the largest appellations in Médoc. The traditional link between **Listrac** and Moulis should not prevail. Actually, the wine is closer to Saint-Estèphe. Listrac produces vigorous and tannic red wines.

Moulis

Moulis name is coming from "moulin" (French word for windmill). Indeed nowadays, three ancient mills are still viewable in Moulis.

Moulis produces a velvety red wine, less tannic than Listrac. It's ready to drink sooner than other Médoc wines.

Margaux

Margaux lays on a soil of white graves - a special kind of gravel brought from the mountains by the river. **Margaux** (also a female name in France) is the quintessence of the terroir and of the winemaker's work. In **Margaux**, Château Margaux produces the most delicate wine of the Médoc. They are 18 Grands Crus Classés (great growths) in Margaux.

Margaux wines have a full-flavoured bouquet and a magnificent elegance

Graves

The area of **Graves** gets its name from the soil. Graves are a mix of gravels, clay and sand carried out by the river. Graves appellation is located just outside the town of Bordeaux.

The red wines of **Graves** are recognizable by their garnet-red colour, rich, attractive and more robust than the other Médoc wines.

Two third of **Graves** wines are white. Among the best white wines in Bordeaux, they are generally fresh, fruity and dry (some time half-dry).

The appellation of "Graves supérieures" is strictly reserved to sweet white wines.

Pessac-Léognan

The famous "clairets" wine was made first in **Pessac-Léognan**.

Pessac-Léognan was detached from the Graves appellation. North of the Graves, Pessac-Léognan tends to get closer and closer to Médoc.

Red wines from **Pessac-Léognan** have a powerful bouquet.

White wines are well-structured and can age in a cellar. After 5 years they begin to express rich aromas.

Barsac

In the southern part of the Bordeaux region, **Barsac** is famous for outstanding sweet wines such Chateau Climens and Chateau Coutet.

In Barsac, wine growers have the choice to market their wine under the Barsac AOC or Sauternes AOC. It means that all Barsac wines could also be Sauternes wines while Sauternes wines cannot wear Barsac on their label. Barsac is maybe a little bit less sweet and more fruity than Sauternes.

Sauternes

Sauternes is famous for sweet wines such as Yquem, Raymond-Lafon and Rieussec. They are among the best dessert wines in the world

Sauternes is made with noble rot (also called botrytis, a moisture covering the grape), Because soils are so diverse, and each house has its own way of making the golden wine.

Sauternes are often delicious, golden, unctuous and delicate. The famous roasted note comes when Sauternes is a little bit older. **Sauternes** has its own ranking shared with Barsac.

Premières Côtes de Bordeaux (First Côtes of Bordeaux)

Overlooking the Garonne river, **Premières Côtes de Bordeaux** starts South of Bordeaux city to Cadillac.

Entre-Deux-Mers (between-two-seas)

Entre Deux Mers is not exactly between two seas but between two rivers: Dordogne and Garonne.

Entre-Deux-Mers produce a very good dry white wine. However because of the compact soil, this is not the best place to grow vines in Bordeaux.

Blaye, Castillon, Cadillac and Francs Côtes de Bordeaux

These four appellations producing mostly red wines based on Merlot have recently joined their name under the "Côtes de Bordeaux" banner". Note that Blaye and Francs also produce white wines.

Pomerol

With 800 ha **Pomerol** is the smallest wine producing area in the Bordeaux region. Actually,, You will not find typical huge Bordeaux chateaux as in the Médoc area. However Pomerol hosts one of the most famous of all: Pétrus.

The Pomerol wine can be more robust than others in Bordeaux. They have an exclusive velvety quality. Pomerol is at its very best when the bottle reaches the age of 15!

Don't forget the **Lalande de Pomerol** AOC which gives red wines too.

Saint-Emilion

Saint-Emilion is the oldest wine area of the Bordeaux region. The UNESCO organization recognized the great terroir of Saint Emilion and put the site on the World Heritage List.

Saint Emilion wines are considered the most robust of the Bordeaux. They are generous, very coloured, and reach their maturity quicker than other red Bordeaux.

The classification in St-Emilion is complex. Do not confuse **St.-Emilion-Grand-Cru** AOC and St.-Emilion-Grand-Cru-Classé* (for the best chateaux) fewer and much better.

Fronsac

Fronsac wine region is a lovely area of hills along the Dordogne and l' Isle rivers, west of Saint Émilion.

Merlot is the most important grape giving to the wine body and richness although the wine keeps a strong personality.

Bour and Côtes de Bourg

Côtes de Bourg is located on the right bank of the Dordogne at the point where it meets the Gironde River.

South of Blaye, the small appellation around the village of Bourg produces a better medium-body red wine than its neighbour. The wine from **Côtes de Bourg** is quite tannic with strong aromas of red fruits.