

Château Haut Bages Libéral 2020

CSPC# 832572

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% 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

After an especially mild winter, the 2020 growing season began with a very warm March and April (2.25°C warmer than average), which brought about an early bud-break in the vines on 21st March and with it the happy prospect of an early harvest! The vine cycle thus got off to an almost perfect start. However, the first period of wet weather, which came at the end of April and particularly during the weekend of 8th May, brought 80mm (3.15 inches) of rain in the space of a few hours. Our Cabernet vines then enjoyed 3 weeks of fine, sunny weather during which they flowered quickly. With the new moon on 23rd May, conditions quickly changed: rain fell heavily until 20th June.

Boiling-hot weather at the beginning of August was followed by violent rainstorms (85mm/3.35 inches), which swelled the grapes and weakened the skins. By halting soil ploughing earlier than usual and not trimming the vine shoots, the leaves and weeds were able to evaporate this surplus water, and this allowed the berries to regain their normal size. We knew right from the start of the season that this 2020 vintage would be a very early one, and the harvesting dates soon confirmed it.

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, 40% 1-yr old) for 16 months, and also 20% aged in Amphorae. 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

Freshness, power, and elegance are the key words of this Château Haut-Bages Libéral 2020 which seduces with its refined tannins and its significant aging potential.



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 2025-2055

Scores/Awards **94 points** - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023
97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023
95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021
94 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2023
93-95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2021
17 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021
91 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021
93 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021
96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023
93-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021
93 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2023
91-93 points - Yves Beck - June 2021
93-95 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021
94 points - Terres de Vins (score only) - September 2021
93-94 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2022
93-94 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - July 2021
17 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2021

Reviews *"The 2020 Haut-Bages-Libéral is supple and seamless, bursting with aromas of sweet dark berries, petals, and licorice, followed by a medium to full-bodied, ample, and fleshy palate. Succulent and polished, it will offer a broad drinking window. As readers will remember, this wine derives 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)."*
- WK, Wine Advocate

"Blackcurrant, orange peel and green coffee bean aromas follow through to a full body with medium, round tannins. Citrusy, juicy, and rose bush finish. Chewy and intense. Some old vine character with bark and dark mushroom. Solid! One for the cellar. 72% cabernet sauvignon and 28% merlot. From biodynamically grown grapes. Demeter certification. Best After 2027."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Unique character to this with mushroom, wet-earth, spice, and black-tea character on the nose and palate. It's full and layered with chewy tannins that are plush and pure. Rose-bush and bark undertones to the fruit. Old merlot vines showing through! 72% cabernet sauvignon and 28% merlot. From biodynamically grown grapes. Demeter certification"
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Bold and rich, this wine shows power and structure. But it also has delicious black currant fruitiness to go with the tannins. The wine will age well. Drink from 2027. Organic and biodynamic."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"The wine is refreshing from the start. Its tannins underline the line of acidity and lightness that gives the wine a fine structure. It is vibrant and bright, yet it is possible to sense the depth of the tannins. Organic. Barrel Sample: 93–95."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Pure and precise with plenty of energy and drive. Fruit evident on the nose and palate. Sufficient depth on the latter. Firm and minerally behind but the tannins are silky and refined. Pauillac of a caressing nature. This property continues to improve. Should be GV."
- JL, JancisRobinson.com

"A ton of blackcurrant and blackberry fruit, chewy and concentrated, cassis fruit pastilles give a sweet but well textured feel, and a shot of acidity picks everything up on the finish. A yield of 44hl/had. They have limestone and clay soils here, atypical for Pauillac but they help in such a dry summer."
- JA, Decanter.com

Reviews *“The 2020 Haut-Bages Libéral is exceptionally beautiful and vivid. Hard candy, kirsch, rose petal, cinnamon and blood orange are some of the many notes that race across the palate. A wine of magnificent purity and silkiness, the Haut-Bages Libéral is simply captivating in its intensity. Bright acids punctuate the articulate, persistent finish. Magnificent.”*

- AG, Vinous

“The 2020 Haut-Bages Libéral is a powerhouse in its first impression. Veins of bright mineral notes give the 2020 its textural feel and persistence. Bright red fruit, cedar, dried flowers, mint, spice, and sweet tobacco. Time in the glass brings out very pretty floral notes that add finesse and considerable aromatic presence.”

- AG, Vinous

“Dark ruby, opaque core, purple reflections. Attractive nuances of ripe sweet cherry, red wild berries, a hint of spices like ginger and cinnamon, notes of fresh plum. Juicy, fine sweet texture, ripe red cherry, ripe tannins, mineral, delicately nutty on the finish, harmonious, has length and ageing potential.”

- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“Medium purple with violet reflections. The bouquet of Haut Bages Libéral immediately displays its terroir side through notes of graphite. Add nuances of blackcurrant and licorice wood. On the palate, the wine has fairly dense, fine-grained tannins. These grant potency that needs to be somewhat surrounded. Breeding will fine-tune everything. Beautiful aromatic expression on the finish. A promising wine.”

- Yves Beck
