

# Precisely: **BORDEAUX**

## Teaching one of the classic fine wine regions

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### TWINING'S TEACHING TIPS

- Select specific information to illustrate
- Determine topics for comprehension
- Start with basics and expand
- Simplify the difficult
- Isolate the necessary information
- Integrate Bordeaux into your classes
- Answer detailed questions after class
- Clearly explain the processes/concepts
- Use questions/quizzes to gauge learning
- Repeat facts/concepts to ingrain
- Make it fascinating and enjoyable!
- Break down concepts to 3 issues/parts

“Never talk down to your audience.” *Dorothy Fuldheim*

### **World's largest fine wine region**

**Focus** – dry red wines (11% dry white, 2% sweet white)

**Region** – 300,000 acres, 5,800 wine growers, 7000 Chateaux

All quality levels and price points produced

Origin of many fine wine grapes

Blended wines are typical

### **Environmental factors** – Proximity to water important

Atlantic Ocean

Gironde/Dordogne/Garonne/Ciron - largest estuary in France

Medoc's gravel – precipitation control in wet years (can be challenging in dry)

### **Large properties and availability**

Single owner estates (Roman inheritance laws) – estate passed to oldest son.

Numerous estates of various sizes and quality levels

**Style** – subtlety over power

Cool climate

Blending of varieties

Winemaking philosophy (balance)

### Defining the wines – by category & origin

- Red wines from the Left bank - Medoc and Graves
- Red wines from the Right Bank - St. Emilion, Pomerol, Fronsac, Bourg, Blaye
- Red and White wines between the rivers - Entre-Deux-Mers
- White Wines on either side of the Garonne Sauternes, Barsac, Graves/Pessac-Leognan Cadillac, Loupiac, Sainte-Croix-du-Mont

### Appellation Contrôlée: implies a certain level of authenticity

1. Delimited area of production
2. Approved grape varietal(s)
3. Alcohol percentage (& chaptalization)
4. Yield
5. Viticultural methods
6. Vinification methods
7. Required analysis, tasting and approval
8. Bottling in production region
9. Labeling

### 1855 Classification

For the Universal Exposition in Paris. Ranked by Union of Brokers (know all trade)  
Based on price, demand, reputation, owner stability\* (original Mouton ranking)  
Classified the Medoc reds, Sauternes/Barsacs, Haut-Brion from Graves.

### Designations – Left Bank

**Cru Classe** (Noble wines - 1-5th growths) 1855

Medoc Crus (60 Chateaux) + 1 Graves (Haut-Brion—classified also in Graves)

**5-1st Crus, 14-2nd Crus, 14-3rd Crus, 10-4th Crus, 18-5th Crus**

Sauternes/Barsac (27 Chateau)

**1-1st Cru Superieur, 11-1st Crus, 15-2nd Crus**

**Crus Bourgeois** (2020 – Merchants classified 1932 – established in Middle ages)

Red wines, Medoc Appellations, chateau of highest standards – 5 years (2018-2022)

Quality/taste, environment, Traceability/authentication, Ongoing tasting checks

For Superieur and Exceptionnel + technical management & marketing/promotion

**249 Chateaux – 8 appellations**

**31% of Medoc output**

**Exceptionnel (14)**

**Superieur (56)**

**Cru Bourgeois (179)**

**Cru Artisan** (1989 Syndicate - 1994 legally re-introduced - existed over 150 years)

36 Chateaux – in 8 Medoc appellations      2012 – reviewed every 5 years

### DESIGNATIONS – RIGHT BANK/GRAVES

**ST. EMILION** (2012 - first classified in 1954 – 82 crus – revised every 10 years)

**Premier GR Cru Classes** (18 Chateaux)

Angelus, Ausone, Cheval Blanc, Pavie=A

**Grand Cru Classes** (64 Chateaux)

**POMEROL** - never classified, Petrus and Le Pin equal to Medoc first growths

**GRAVES** (1959 – first classified in 1953 – 1 level - no revisions – 16 crus)

**Cru Classes** (red/white – 6 estates) (red only – 7 estates) (white only – 3 estates)

**Commune** (Pauillac)

**Regional** (Haut Medoc, Medoc)

**Bordeaux Superieur** (.5% more alcohol)

**Bordeaux**

## Historical background

60 BC – Roman occupation south and east of Bordeaux.

1 AD – wines first made.

Middle ages passed to the English crown – encouraged export business

Late 1700's – investment by French aristocrats, 1800's – bankers, entrepreneurs.

- English heir ruled the region, married the French Duchess of Aquitaine.
- Encouraged vineyard development due to shipping access/English market.
- Preferential trade arrangements. No export tax = fewer restrictions/lower prices.
- Bordeaux first in the region to be shipped each vintage = market domination.

1800's – Bordeaux merchant class that could purchase, cellar and export wines.

1855 – Classification – brought prosperity to the region.

1860 – Anglo-French Treaty (1<sup>st</sup> trade treaty)

- Lower duties = 2X exports to England.
- Major wars
- French government relocated from Paris to Bordeaux

1924 - Mouton estate bottles.

1936 – Appellation Contrôlée established for authenticity and regional protection.

1945 – First post-World war II vintage – right bank wines became known and desired.

1950's – profits meant modernization for the region.

1972 – Mandatory estate bottling by classified growths.

1973 – market crash = foreign ownerships.

1990's – good vintages and growth of the Asian/ far East market.

## Grapes – “Wine is an individual interpretation of the appellation”

*Steven Spurrier*

Varietals are specified by law, percentages planted/blended by estate are not.

**Cabernet Sauvignon** – firm structure and acid, long finish, color/flavor intensity.

**Merlot** – Texture over flavor, moderate structure/acidity, lighter color.

**Cabernet Franc** – Light color, soft tannins, aromatic, firm acidity.

**Malbec** – Firm tannins/structure and acidity, offers smoothness and dark fruit.

**Carmenere** – Cabernet structure/Merlot charm, sweet, dark fruit, low acidity.

**Petit Verdot** – small amounts for color, spice, tannins and acidity.

**Sauvignon Blanc** – firm acidity, direct/pure flavors and aromatics, mod. weight.

**Semillon** – Texture and weight, low acidity, thin skins susceptible to botrytis.

**Muscadelle** – small plantings, musky aromatics, less subtle.



## Defining the wines

**Climate** – maritime, moderate, very warm summers, cool nights = acid retention

- Moderated by Gulf Stream, Atlantic ocean and wide Gironde estuary.
- Growing challenges = insufficient warmth and excess rainfall
- Spring frosts, winter freeze protection.
- Forests protect from salt ocean winds.
- Spring frosts during flowering, cold rain during pollination, hail.
- Rain at harvest – oidium, mildew, dilution of juice, fruit splitting, soil toxicity.

**Climate variability** = vintage specific purchases

Fair and simply good vintages – easier to drink early or with food

- Often great values at better price points

Define “Best quality”.

- Sometimes it is specific use and price/value ratio.

## Impacts of sunlight and cool climate temperatures

Acidity level	+
Nuance	+
Overtness	-
Tannins/astringency	+ (can be green)
Fruit ripeness	-
Varietal character	-
Alcohol	-

**Remember-under-ripe wines “ripen” in bottle, cooler/lesser vintages improve**

**Soils** (part of the equation with climate and vine – always a generalization)

- Left bank – more gravel, well-drained and warmer soils.
- Right bank – more clay, water holding, cooler soils.
- Limestone in Graves, Sauternes, Barsac and also Pomerol, St. Emilion

## Man’s influence

Harvest date (Sugar, acidity, tannin, color components - balance)

Reception/cellar treatments

- Triage
- Destem/crush, whole cluster, whole berries, cold soak
- Adjustments – Sugar, acidity, concentration, SO<sub>2</sub>

## Fermentation and aging choices

Yeast (cultured and indigenous normally)

Concentration/chaptalization

Fermentation vessel (inert or flavor impartation, anaerobic or oxygen aging)

Fermentation temperature

- whites 18-20C (64/68F)
- reds 28-30C (82/86F)

Color extraction (gentle or intense methods)

Maceration - additional time steeping on the skins (phenol polymerization)

Malolactic or not (maintain malic acidity or not)

Malolactic in barrel (integration of oak/fruit) or tank (no interplay with oak)

Aging vessel (wood/inert, large/small, age of wood)

Micro-oxygenation (controlled oxygen impartation – often replaces barrel)

Lees contact/bâttonage for dry whites

Racking, lees aging, fining, filtration

Blending lots and varieties, aging

Timing of bottling (last style impact to wine)