



Château Latour, its famous tower and the Gironde estuary behind

EXPLAINED

Left & Right Bank Bordeaux

The Left Bank and Right Bank are two Bordeaux winemaking regions separated by the Gironde estuary and two rivers – the Dordogne and the Garonne. The Right Bank is the area to the north of the Dordogne river, and the Left Bank is the area directly south of the Garonne river. The area in between is known as Entre-deux-Mers.

However, it is not just geography that distinguishes Bordeaux's two famous vineyard regions. Here's a quick guide.

Appellations The Left Bank encompasses the Médoc wine region north of Bordeaux city. Its four best-known appellations, north to south, are St-Estèphe, Pauillac, St-Julien and Margaux. South of Bordeaux city centre, the Left Bank includes Pessac-Léognan and Graves, along with Sauternes and Barsac, famed for their sweet wines. The Right Bank's most famous appellations are St-Emilion and Pomerol.

Grapes While all the Left Bank wines are usually blends, Cabernet Sauvignon is the dominant force here. Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec tend to play supporting roles. Right Bank wines are predominantly Merlot-based, with the increasingly used Cabernet Franc as well as Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Petit Verdot used as blending components.

Soil and style Left Bank terrain is mostly flat with gravel topsoil and limestone underneath. Wines typically have more tannin and a bigger overall structure than their Right Bank counterparts, which generally comprise a limestone surface with less gravel and more clay. Right Bank wines tend to be rich in fruit and softer in mouthfeel with lower levels of tannin and acid.

Classifications There are several classification systems at play. The most important on the Left Bank is the official 1855 Classification of the Médoc, which was drawn up for Emperor Napoleon III as part of the Exposition Universelle de Paris celebrations that year.

It's a five-tier hierarchy, led by the five 'first growth' estates of Château Lafite Rothschild, Château Latour, Château Margaux, Château Haut-Brion (even though it's in Graves) and Château Mouton Rothschild (which was promoted to the top tier in 1973). Then there are 14 second-growth estates followed by 14 third, 10 fourth and 18 fifth. Further south, Sauternes and Barsac producers also got their own classification system in 1855.

The Left Bank is also home to a classification for dry red and white Graves wines, which includes 16 cru classé estates, all of which sit inside the

Pessac-Léognan appellation; and then there is the wider classification of cru bourgeois estates, now under the auspices of the the Alliance des Crus Bourgeois du Médoc (crus-bourgeois.com).

On the Right Bank, you'll find the St-Emilion Classification, introduced in 1955 and reviewed every 10 years, unlike the 1855 Classifications. The 2012 list comprised 82 estates and was topped by 18 premier grand cru classé properties – themselves separated into four 'A' and 14 'B' rankings. Châteaux Angélus and Pavie joined Ausone and Cheval Blanc as premier grand cru classé A estates in 2012. However, Cheval Blanc, Ausone and Angélus have all withdrawn from the next classification, due in 2022.

Château Tour du Pas St-Georges, St-Georges St-Emilion, Bordeaux 2016 92

£15-£22.99 Alexander Hadleigh, Co-op, Noble Grape, Wine and Glass Co

Now more than five years old, this St-Emilion satellite wine is already exhibiting tertiary complexity such as mushroom and forest floor, in addition to vanilla-spiced dark plum and cassis notes. Aged in oak for 18 months. Juicy fruit cake on the palate with creamy chocolate and tea, supported by chalky tannins and elegant acidity. **Drink** 2022-2024 **Alc** 14%

Tesco, Finest Margaux, Bordeaux, France 2016 90

£22 Tesco

Made by Margaux classified third-growth Château Boyd-Cantenac, this comes from vines of about 30 years' age. The wine has spent some 16 months in oak (60% new) and then a few years in bottle before release, giving it some leathery complexity. Spicy dark bramble fruit is balanced by cedar and coffee notes, and there's an attractive, lifted elegance that would make it the perfect pairing for Sunday roast lamb or beef Wellington. **Drink** 2022-2024 **Alc** 14%

