

LA ROSE SARRON (France, Bordeaux, Saint Pierre de Mons)



BACKGROUND: The vineyard's history of this property, whose tradition dates back to the 19th century, really began in 1985 when Roland Belloc analyzed the unsatisfying condition of all the vineyards in Le Rose Sarron. Just after purchasing the Chateau, located in the commune of Saint Pierre de Mons in AOC Graves, he took the tough decision to replant

all the vineyards and to work with a quality driven mind set. For 20 years Roland Belloc, helped by Philippe Rochet, fought together, day in day out, to develop the Château La Rose Sarron reputation with huge investments focused on modern equipment (vats, barrel cellars, storage building) which have been carefully planned in order to keep at the highest level this property. At the same time the two men promoted an efficient internal organization.

Philippe Rochet has been a winemaker since 1983 and took over the property from his father-in-law Roland Belloc in 2008. Today Philippe is quietly preparing to pass the torch, notably to his son Damien who studied engineer. After all La Rose Sarron is an artisanal family business.

PRESENT DAYS: Château La Rose Sarron includes 31 hectares cultivated with red grapes, 5 of which are dedicated to the Damien cuvée (named after the son, obviously), and 11 hectares planted with white varieties including 3 for the Anaïs cuvée (named after the daughter!). Global property production averages around 100.000 - 110.000 bottles per year, while the rest of the fruit is sold to wine merchants.

The diversity of its terroir is a key element here: gravel, clay and silt, on one side, allow the production of excellent red wines, while the siliceous soils offer charming and elegant white wines. Historically, this sector was included in the Sauternes appellation until 1939. This explains why the soil of La Rose Sarron is perfectly suited to whites. "*But the reds here are really thriving as well*" notes Philippe Rochet.

The grape varieties planted are: Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and a bit of Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc.

This estate is part of the Independent Vigneron Association.

SAINT PIERRE DE MONS AND THE GRAVES LEGACY: Bordeaux, as a wine producing area, is divided by two rivers, the Dordogne and the Garonne and, after their confluence, the Gironde. The western side, the Left Bank not only housed the great names of the Médoc, Graves and Sauternes but also the most powerful merchants.

With access to the port, these merchants dominated the market and this was reflected in the prices fetched by the wines of the Right Bank to the east. The wines of Blaye, Bourg, Fronsac and even Pomerol and Saint-Emilion tended to be overlooked, regardless of their quality.

The highly respected Bordeaux reference tome, Charles Cocks & Ferret, did attempt a classification not only of Pomerol but even of Graves in their 1868 edition. Within Graves white wines from Saint Pierre de Mons commune (just 13 km eastward of Sauternes) were considered among the most fashionable. This ranking has unfortunately fallen into disuse.

At the beginning of the 20th century, white wines' production in St. Pierre de Mons was still very prestigious and local terroir considered the true quintessence of Bordeaux style. All this came to an end when in 1939 the Sauternes appellation was officially recognized for the production of luscious sweet white wines. The big mystic name overshadowed everything.

History did not preserve the Cocks & Ferret classification and the property slowly disappeared, including its vineyards, reaching a rusty oblivion status and shadowed by the rising star Sauternes.

It was not until 1986, knowing the past and observing the terroir's quality, that on this beautiful hilltop of gravel, clay or sometimes silt soil, vineyard have been replanted to craft gorgeous wines. The estate's name, La Rose Sarron, shows evidence of the historical presence of the vines: the word "sarrot" evoking the cellar master's apron and



the rose reminding the rosebushes at the end of the vines' rows, presaging the unfortunate arrival of oidium.

Thanks to the attentive vineyard's monitoring and the careful work in the cellar La Rose Sarron produces fine wines gaining excellent results in wine competitions and praised by guides.

LA ROSE SARRON'S WINES: The estates produces 6 wines: two white wines (an entry level and a cuvee coming from selected vineyards called Anaïs), one rosè (labeled as Bordeaux), two reds (and entry level and Damien) and a blanc moelleux (labeled Graves Supérieures).

Philippe Rochet sells 30% of his production to private individuals. The rest is delivered to wine merchants. He exports very little of his production, because "*I do not speak English, it is my son who will take care of it*", he confides with a smile.

Steep Hill currently imports two wines:



Graves Blanc 2020: A blend of mainly Semillon (50%) and Sauvignon Blanc (40%) plus Muscadelle elaborated with sustainable practices. The three varieties are completely destemmed and pre-fermented with cold maceration in order to preserve the aromas. They all mature in thermo-regulated stainless steel tank with 5 months of lees ageing. The color is straw yellow, clear, with golden reflections. Nose is aromatic and the mouthfeel's freshness marked by notes of citrus and quince. The ideal serving temperature is round 10° Celsius. To ideally consume within 2020. Food pairing: Aperitifs, Seafood, shellfish, fried fish and soft cheeses. 15.000 bottles produced.

Graves Rouge Cuvée Damien 2016: 45% each of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot with a dash of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. After the harvest grapes undergo a cold maceration for two days plus extended maceration for 3 long weeks. All the varieties ferment spontaneously with indigenous yeast in tanks. After racking this blend spends 12 months in oak barrels plus extended extra time in the bottle before being released to the market.

Our notes: Inky at sight with aromas of graphite and concentrated peppery notes with an infusion of subtle woody notes. Rich and voluminous in the mouth with extracted and intense fruit and coating tannins ending in a long rewarding finish. This is benchmark Graves with finesse at a nice price point. 10.000 bottles yearly produced.



THE GRAVES APPENDIX: While it is no longer as famous as the Médoc, Graves (establishes as a AOC in 1937) is one of the two mainstay wine areas of the Left Bank. The region was reinvented when the area home to all the greatest reds, Pessac-Léognan, broke off from Graves AOC in 1987. Now the region of Graves is best known as a container to both Pessac-Léognan and Sauternes, but the appellation itself is a bit considered pedestrian for some wine lovers (partially this consideration derives from a cliché, partially derives from the big AOC's dimension).

Graves extends south from the city of Bordeaux all the way to Langon, bordering the Garonne as it passes the great havens for Botrytis wines of Cérons, Barsac and Sauternes. The soil is mainly Gravel as the name suggests, with pockets of sand, sandstone and eventually clay further to the south. This region has much more in the way of historical artifacts, castles, cathedrals and tourist attractions than the Médoc to the north, and is often one of the more visited areas of France.



The wines of Graves are full-bodied, use approximately even percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and are highly influenced by the gravel banks that give Graves its name. The wines generally have more feminine flavors than their Médoc neighbors, but are significantly structured and take a very long time to mature. Unfortunately for Graves all of the most famous estates are now sold as Pessac-Léognan. The appellation guidelines forbid a reclassification of the vineyards in this area,

so for the time being Graves wines, no matter what the quality will be sold simply as Graves. Quite a bit of off-dry to sweet wines are produced in the region under the AC Graves Supérieures.

Guess the good thing about Graves? As compared to the Médoc, where any white wine produced is disaffectedly labeled under the Bordeaux or Bordeaux Superieur AOCs, Graves and Pessac-Léognan are allowed to produce white wine under their appellations. A style of Bordeaux often overshadowed by the reds and Sauternes, Graves whites can have good dry fruit and impressively full body, generally thanks to the grapes Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon.