

# CHÂTEAU DE FRANCE

*Member of the Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux*

*“An estate that lives up to its name...”*



**SAS B. THOMASSIN – CHÂTEAU DE FRANCE**

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The Thomassin family counts among the forerunners producing the appellation. Château de France was purchased in 1971 by Bernard THOMASSIN and is consulted by Michel Rolland since 1996 and managed by Arnaud THOMASSIN.

This familial estate of 40 hectares in production includes 36 hectares of Cabernet sauvignon and Merlot for the production of red wine and 4 hectares of Sauvignon and Semillon for the production of white wine.

**Château de France** red and **Château de France** blanc share worldwide distinctions.

The estate is located on the Graves' area typical rare Ferbos soil and – more confidential – a 19-million year old parcel called "Coquillat" (50 ares).



From ferbos soil...



...to the million year old fossils

**OWNER : FAMILLE THOMASSIN**

**GENERAL MANAGER : ARNAUD THOMASSIN**

**WINEMAKER: MICHEL ROLLAND**

**CELLAR MASTER: GILLES REY**

**VINEYARD MANAGER: LAURENT BOURNERIE**



# THE THOMASSIN FAMILY

COUNTS AMONG THE FORERUNNERS PRODUCING THE APPELLATION

**The family property  
chooses to be independant,  
regarding capitals as well as  
distribution**

Arnaud Thomassin manages Château de France, he continues the family line with the same objective of quality and market development. His sisters Veronique and Virginie are involved in the estate's management.

**Arnaud is first and foremost a winemaker**

*“When I arrived at Château de France, I paid special attention to the vineyard. Green harvesting, which rapidly produces qualitative results, was immediately implemented.”*



Family Thomassin chooses its sales networks in order to control prices and distribution circuits in order to control prices.

Arnaud Thomassin wishes to directly control his customers. He travels France and Europe as well as worldwide, local support for retailers, who are « objective and constructive allies who come at the property ».

## Château de France in dates

1971: acquisition of the property. Coming from distilling industries, Bernard Thomassin discovers the property where nothing had changed since the 19th century and entirely concentrates on one objective, that of restoring Château de France in order for it to produce great prestigious wines worthy of its image.

1985: he then makes the decision of replanting Sauvignon and Semillon grape varieties, renewing with the multi-secular and original tradition of the appellation which is that of producing both white and red wine.

According to “History of Vines and Wines” (Enjalbert) in 1986: “the harvests overseen by this enterprising and stubborn owner will enable Château de France to recover its prestige and the notoriety it had back in the 19th century and to admirably carry, notably on the export front, a name it has to live up to”.

1987: birth of AOC Pessac-Leognan, Bernard Thomassin was right!

1994: Arnaud joins the property, after specializing in viticulture and winegrowing and gaining work experience in various growing regions.

1997 : acquisition of 10 hectares in AOC Pessac-Léognan at lieu-dit Le Sartre, a very qualitative terroir

2000/2009: restructuration of part of the vines, planting or replanting the most interesting parcels.

2011: destruction of the cellar by a terrible fire. A severe avatar but not only: the reconstruction endowed Château de France with the most advanced facilities, adapted to its fine terroir.

2013-2015 : reconstruction of the red and white winemaking facilities. A laboratory has been added to taste and analyze the wines.

October 2013: Bernard Thomassin dies before the end of works.



# CHÂTEAU DE FRANCE: AN EVENTFUL PAST

Château de France was constructed on the foundations of an old manor, the attractive arched cellar of which still exists today... a mansion constructed at the end of the 17th century by the prosecutor Philippe Decoud.

## From the jurisdiction of Gardère to the jurisdiction of France

The château has preserved the name of the former locality on which it was constructed. It is probable that the land of “de France” was previously only a part of the jurisdiction of Gardère. The actual domaine de France, was in effect, before 1681, a group of small parcels, united in the 16th century by Marseau Dubasque and Jean de Latreilles. Indeed historic records show that in 1648, husbandman, Marseau Dubasque purchased parcels of land from barrel carpenter, André Dejean.

**It was a councillor of the Parliament of Guyenne, Taffard**, who developed the vineyard of the Château de France during the 18th century at an important time: that of the creation of the qualitative notion of grand cru. As a result, he thus followed in the footsteps of another family of parliamentarians, the Pontacs in Haut-Brion, which explains the development of the Graves growing area, southwest of Bordeaux in the 18th century.

## Notoriety at the end of the 19th century

Jean-Henri Lacoste, a merchant in furniture fabric, and owner of the domaine for 32 years, created the existing château: following the purchase in 1862 of this 25-hectare property which didn't bear the name of the château, but simply that of domaine or land, he took charge of the estate. He obtained its recognition as a grand cru from wine critics such as Ferret who after neglecting it in his 1850 publication finally mentioned the château in the following volumes.



J.H. Lacoste extended the size of the domaine by acquiring several pieces of land: part of a field in Noaillac and a prairie situated in Gardère, belonging to the Griffon family (owners of the future Fieuzal and Haut Gardère!).

## The new architecture of Château de France

The 19th century is also the era of appearances. During this period domaines switched to the appellation of château, and great domaines started to appear. It was at this time that Jean-Henri modestly renovated his old mansion: he eliminated the wings in the form of a “u”, added small pavilions at each end, and created a second story.

## Exile

During the 20th century, the domaine, like most of the Grave Grands Crus for over 50 years, kept its distance with the Bordeaux wine industry, from 1920 through to the 1970's.



## AOP PESSAC-LÉOGNAN

### **A terroir found nowhere else on earth**

Situated around the port, two thousand years ago, “Las Grabas de Bourdeus” was the cradle of a vineyard of which the prestigious name is now known all over the world. Its history is linked to that of the capital of Aquitaine.

### **1987: birth of the AOC Pessac-Léognan**

Famous well before the birth of Médoc, the “Graves de Bordeaux”, have always been known for their very attractive terroirs situated around two chief poles: Pessac and Léognan.

On July the 6th 1984, a decree passed in line with INAO directives, recognised the appellation areas of “Pessac” and of “Léognan” under the form of two denominations. On September the 9th, 1987, another decree, then recognised AOC “Pessac-Léognan” extending across 10 districts: Cadaujac, Canéjan, Gradignan, Léognan, Martillac, Mérignac, Pessac, Saint-Médard d’Eyrans, Talence and Villenave d’Ornon. The decree was retroactive in that which concerns the 1986 vintage.

### **A well delimited micro-climate**

Situated in the northern part of Graves, on the southern and southwest side of the town of Bordeaux, the terroir of Graves of Pessac-Léognan

profits from the protection of Gironde’s Landes Forest, its western neighbour.

Its climate is representative of that of Gironde, mild and favourable to the vine, thanks to its gentleness and regular hydrometry, influenced by the ocean close by on the 45th parallel. In addition, the territory of Graves of Pessac-Léognan is situated in the North at the limit of a climate produced by the “Le Saucats” water current cutting across the village of La Brède at the foot of the famous château where Montesquieu was born.

### **A rare soil and so poor that it's only adapted to growing vines and forests**

The Graves of Pessac-Léognan are situated on a clay subsoil, of sand, hand pan layer, and limestone. They bear witness to the ancient current of the Garonne river, established at the end of the tertiary era, then during the quaternary era during the various ice age periods.

These Graves, composed of gravel and stones smoothed out by the waters, have a thickness varying between 20 centimetres to 3 metres or more: an exceptional variety with quartz and ochre, white, red, pink quartzite, jasper and flint... a careful harmonious and colourful mixture.

The diversity of the terroirs comes from the different layers of soil: sands, silt, clay etc.





## A PLAYGROUND FOR PALEONTOLOGISTS

# THE ESTATE OWNS A 19 MILLION-YEAR OLD PARCEL

There is a parcel at Chateau de France called "Coquillat" (50 ares), that is filled with fossils from its surface down through to the vineyard's roots.

The former existence of a prehistoric sea in this area is confirmed by these marvelous fossils. They have played an important role in the evolution of our planet's composition. Over thousands of years, these traces of ancient organisms, helped to create of this remarkable terroir.

The Coquillat site in Leognan is an example of the Burdigalian era, dating back to up to 20 million years, as explained in 1892 by Charles Deperet, a geologist and paleontologist at the French Academy of the Sciences.

The shells found in the vineyard of Chateau de France show that the Bordeaux area benefited from a tropical climate.

It is difficult to remain unmoved by these rare traces of history, for the process of fossilization is a mean feat in itself. The future fossil has to escape from biological agents (bacteria) and atmospheric agents (oxygen). Over time, rocks can also change in terms of shape and structure, thereby damaging the fossils inside. It is only after they have escaped from destruction, when covered by sediments or under water, that these fossils reappear millions of years later, thanks to erosion.



*A parcel of Chateau de France reveals the prehistory of Aquitaine, 19 million years ago  
The terroir of Chateau Coquillas is illustrated by its bottle, which bears a shell*



# FROM THE VINEYARD...



**Situation**

15 kilometers South of Bordeaux, the vineyard of Château de France extends over one of the highest terraces of Léognan, the highest of four terraces of gravelly soil produced over time.

**Hectares/varieties**

40 hectares: 36 hectares of Cabernet sauvignon (55%) and Merlot (45%) for red wine production, 4 hectares of Sauvignon (80%) and Sémillon (20%) for the white wine.

**Terroir**

The terroir of Château de France is privileged to be situated on an outcrop of deep gravelly soil from the Pyrenees, sometimes on a chalky-clay subsoil. On this model of hillsides, the presence of fawn coloured sand of plastic clay and many hues, confirm that this is the best winegrowing sector within this terroir. The same sand is also located in the Haut-Sauternais area and in some sectors of the appellations of Medoc.

**Rootstock**

3309 C / 101-14 / 110 R / Gravezac / 420 A / 161-49 / Riparia.

<b>Plantation density</b>	5,000 rootstocks/hectare for the old vines up to 6,950 rootstocks/hectare for the most recent plantations.
<b>Viticulture</b>	Double and simple Guyot pruning. Leaf-thinning on the side that the sun rises. Green harvesting Environmentally friendly growing techniques.
<b>Yield</b>	Like all Pessac-Léognan, Château de France has to respect strict appellation laws, defined by the decree of September 1987: a yield of 45 hectolitres/hectare for reds and 48 for the whites, variable depending upon the years.
<b>Harvest</b>	Handpicked.

## ... TO THE BOTTLE



### RED WINEMAKING

- Since the 2011 vintage: a vibrating destemmer carefully eliminates plant debris. This efficient machine respects the harvest and also the environment, thanks to its compact size and ease of use.
- The harvest is sorted once again on a vibrating table.
- 7 to 10 days alcoholic fermentation then 3 to 4 weeks maceration in 134 and 85 hl vats. Extremely precise temperature control. Fermentation temperature: 28°-30°C.
- Malolactic fermentation in vats.
- Maturing in barrels in a partially underground cellar for 12 to 14 months - 30% in new oak, 70% in one wine barrels (Fine grained medium toasted barrels). The second wine is aged in barrels that have already been used twice before.
- Light filtration before bottling.

### WHITE WINEMAKING

- Direct pressing, with a pneumatic closed press.
- The cellar includes 3 buried 25 hl vats and 3 buried 35- hl vats for settling purposes.
- 7 to 10 days alcoholic fermentation in new barrels - 40% in new oak (Some barrels have acacia bottoms. These are aptly called, “fresh barrels”, as they conserve the wine’s freshness), 60% in one year barrels. Precise temperature control. Fermentation temperature: 18°-22°C.
- Maturing in barrels: 8 to 9 months - stirring once a week and near the end every two weeks.
- Filtration before bottling...

### Château de France is certified HVE since 2018

Arnaud Thomassin sees in the HVE certification obtained in 2018 the confirmation of « *the property and its employees engagement towards the environment around us and further* ».

Joining the SME (Environmental Management System of Bordeaux wine) in September 2016 was already a challenge to improve the viticultural methods in order to reduce their impact on environment:

This practically concerns energy consumption, waste sorting and recycling, intrants, pest control, cultural methods, workers, local residents and consumers health protection, improvement of working conditions etc as well as the integration of good practices.

This could achieve in the ISO 14001 certification, with the collective support of Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bordeaux, reducing costs and optimizing the operation tools.

2019: hives are installed in the vineyard “*we encourage biodiversity by using practices that preserve and use natural zones inside our parcels, with respect to the ecosystem and to our landscapes beauty*”.



## THE WINE SELECTIONS



Average annual production: 200 000 bottles  
All the wine produced is bottled

## THE RED WINES

Average annual production: 180 000 bottles

### CHATEAU DE FRANCE, THE FLAGSHIP

The Chateau has preserved the name of the former locality on which it was constructed.

A wine for long ageing.

Average annual production: 80,000 bottles.

### CHATEAU COQUILLAS IS A WINE PRAISED BY RESTAURANTS, ESPECIALLY IN BORDEAUX

“Coquillas” is a name evoking the numerous fossils found throughout one of the parcels of the estate.

Average annual production: 80,000 bottles.

### LE BEC-EN-SABOT, A RARE AFRICAN BIRD FOUND IN PAPYRUS-LADEN MARSHES!

Bernard Thomassin, a keen birdwatcher, is very fond of the rare, tough, shy and solitary shoebill stork, which measures up to 150 cm and lives in the papyrus swamps of eastern Africa.

Average annual production: 20,000 bottles.

## THE WHITE WINES

Average annual production: 20 000 bottles

### CHATEAU DE FRANCE

A refined and elegant wine, which is definitely age-worthy.

Average annual production 10,000 bottles.

### CHATEAU COQUILLAS

The most supple cuvée makes Chateau Coquillas, fermented and aged in oak barrels just like Chateau de France blanc.

Average annual production: 10,000 bottles



## LOCAL SALES AND EXPORTS IN GENERAL, DIRECT FROM THE PRODUCER TO THE SELLER

Going a minimum through Place de Bordeaux, Château de France claims his choice to manage his sales networks in order to control prices.

*“Our network is well structured and I try to develop export sales and to find sales agents in the regions of France where we haven’t as yet made inroads. We consider directly dealing with the majority of our clients to be a major asset», Arnaud Thomassin.*

**The French market** (170 000 bottles, 85 % of sales).

- ↳ 70% is distributed by the restaurant trade, and wine stores.
- ↳ 30% is sold directly to consumers and the corporate sector.

**The export market** (30 000 bottles, 15 % of sales) currently includes the following countries: Belgium, Colombie Britannique, USA, the Netherlands, ...

### Château de France importers’list

#### BELGIUM

RABOTVINS SA - GENT

#### BRAZIL

ATABLE - RIO

#### COLOMBIE BRITANNIQUE

BC LIQUOR - VANCOUVER

#### HONG KONG

CITYSUPER - HONG KONG

#### THE NETHERLANDS,

DE BRUIJN – AN NIJMEGEN

#### QUÉBEC

VITIS

SAQ – MONTRÉAL

SWITZERLAND BERTHAUDIN SA - GENÈVE

#### TAIWAN

SMART WORLD TRADE LTD - TAICHUNG

#### USA

K&L WINE MERCHANTS

**Primeur sale** is proposed for each vintage and represents about 20% of sales.

### First, direct sales at the Château

Visits by appointment, a wine shop, a reception room overlooking the vineyard, which is also an exhibition gallery.

Château de France participates in the “Open Door” event of the Pessac Léognan appellation on the first week-end of December.

