CHÂTEAU
BRANE-CANTENAC
MARGAUX
THE ESTATE
THE BIRTH OF BRANE

Founded in the 18th century by the Gorce family, who gave it its original name, this great wine estate was producing one of the most highly regarded wines of the Medoc well before the 1855 classification. The high price of its wines gave the estate its rank at the top of the second classed growths. Sold in 1866 to the Roy family, who were also the owners of Château d’Issan, Brane continued to prosper, before it was bought by the Société des Grands Crus de France (a consortium of merchants and growers) in 1920.
A STAR RISES

In 1925, Léonce Récapet and his son-in-law François Lurton took over the whole of Brane-Cantenac and a majority share of Château Margaux. Lucien Lurton (the son of François) inherited Brane-Cantenac in 1956. By now one of Bordeaux’s most esteemed viticulturists, Lucien left ten estates to his ten children. Since 1992, his son Henri has held the reins.
A PIONEER AT THE HELM

Like his father before him, Henri’s greatest passion is creating outstanding wines, year after year, from the terroir entrusted to him. Affable, knowledgeable and down-to-earth, he is determined to produce a great Margaux with pedigree, character, complexity and balance that reflect Brane’s deep gravel terroir. A pioneer and experimentalist, he worked in South Africa, Australia and Chile before devoting himself entirely to the family estate.
HENRI’S PHILOSOPHY

As a living, constantly evolving product, a great wine requires attention, patience and experience. Since 1992, Henri Lurton has made it his aim to produce the best wine possible while remaining faithful to the outstanding, historic terroir of Brane. Reliance on technology alone has its limitations; ultimately you must understand and respect the terroir in order to achieve optimal grape quality and perfectly healthy and ripe fruit.
The 15 hectares behind the chateau grounds make up the historic heart of the estate. The soils are sandy-gravel, with large pebbles. Replanting of vines in recent years has enabled optimal matching of grape variety and rootstock with the specific composition of these soils. Although the wines produced in this plot have a different tannic structure to those produced on the plateau, they are of excellent quality and mostly go into our First Wine.
THE ‘PLÂTEAU DE BRANE’

The famous gravel outcrop of Brane stands in front of the chateau. These thirty or so hectares include some of the finest strips of deep gravel soil in the Margaux region. A 12-metre-deep gravel layer, rich in clay, encourages the growth of deep roots and prevents excess water from reaching the vines. Sandy topsoil saturates quickly after heavy rainfall and the topography of the land encourages water to run off, protecting the vineyard from summer rainstorms.
‘LA VERDOTTE’

‘La Verdotte’, a 10-hectare vineyard over 35 years old, has medium depth gravelly-sandy soil and the vine roots are sometimes restricted by ferruginous concretions. Understanding perfectly the composition of the soils enables plot-by-plot management at harvest time. This means that the highest quality zones can be identified and vinified separately. This plot was organically grown in 2010 and a replanting program is currently underway.
The 13-hectare Notton vineyard is situated on a very high quality gravel plateau. The deep, coarse gravel soil with a low clay content means that the water supplied to the roots is directly linked to the level of the water table. Replanting and deep drainage works in 1994 have brought great benefits to this wonderful terroir. Its Merlot is powerful and concentrated, while the Cabernet Sauvignon has a very fine tannic structure. The best plots are blended into the First Wine.
VINE GROWING
AT BRANE
QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

Our focus is on producing the highest quality of wine possible, not extracting the maximum output from the soil. Every job carried out in the vineyard has this aim in mind, from manual preparation and care of the vines, to hand-rejection of poorer grapes. Recent changes include the conversion of 18 hectares to organic growing in 2011. All of this results in lower yields but drastically superior wine. We also conform to integrated and sustainable viticulture requirements, so that we can continue to produce excellent wines for generations to come.
SOIL PREPARATION

After tired or sick vines have been pulled up, soils are planted with a cover crop of cereals and left to settle for several years. Studies are carried out before any planting, so as to make the right decisions for soil preparation (drainage systems, deep and superficial plowing, choice of rootstock, and grape variety). Organic manuring is a strict necessity for successful, terroir-friendly vine growing without excessive vigour.
PLANTING AND PRUNING

The density of our vines ranges from 7,000 plants per hectare on the ‘Plâteau de Brane’ to over 8,000 plants per hectare behind the chateau and at Notton. Planting vines at these densities forces them to compete for nutrients and develop optimal root systems. The Medocain pruning system takes into account the vigour of each vine. The plants are pruned very low so as to benefit from the distinctive microclimate created by gravel soil. Higher trellising of all the vines makes de-leafing easier whilst preserving good canopy cover that favours photosynthesis.
VINEYARD MANAGEMENT

Meticulous canopy management helps ensure moderate yields, optimal ripening, and healthy fruit. Bunches must be correctly ventilated and grapes exposed to the right levels of sunlight. This includes de-budding, removing double buds, and de-suckering. De-leafing takes place at fruit setting and again three weeks before the harvest, as well as crop thinning and elimination of small, unripe bunches. Marking unhealthy vines in the summer and pulling them up in autumn prevents wood diseases, and we fight grape worm pests using sexual confusion techniques.
Every decision concerning spray treatments respects guidelines for environmentally responsible viticulture: constant observation, decision making taking into account weather data and forecasts, use of pest presence thresholds before intervening, limited use of chemical products, and respect for areas outside spraying zones (sides of ditches and streams). We strongly favour using certified organic products and prioritise the reduction of phytosanitary treatment. Brane also has its own weather station linked up to the Demeter network for highly accurate long-range forecasts.
HAND PICKING OF THE GRAPES

The grapes are picked solely by hand—varietal-by-varietal, plot-by-plot—only when they reach ideal ripeness levels, in order to obtain the best fruit flavour possible. The date of picking is decided after numerous phenolic and technological ripeness tests, as well as extensive tasting of the grapes by Henri Lurton and his team.
The fruit is transferred to the winery using the Air Tec Wine system, a new crop transport technology that makes use of pneumatic suspension to keep the bunches perfectly intact as they make their journey, by tractor, from the vineyards to the sorting tables, with slow, gradual emptying by vibration to avoid any of the grapes being crushed or otherwise damaged.
WINEMAKING
AT BRANE
On arrival, the grapes are weighed, thus giving specific data about the yields and the volume going into vat. Bunches first pass through a manual sorting process. Next, after de-stemming, the grapes are sorted by an optical scanning machine. The Brane vat cellar has been designed so that each plot and sub-plot can be vinified separately. The vat materials (oak, concrete and stainless steel) and the number of various-sized vats (from 40 to 200 hl) are tailored to the present layout of the vineyard, but also allow for evolution and change.
ALCOHOLIC FERMENTATION

The musts are homogenised and undergo a cold soak (a pre-fermentation maceration). This improves the release of anthocyanins and primary flavours. Some musts are concentrated using vacuum evaporation methods in order to increase the ratio of skins to juice if wet conditions have caused moisture to penetrate the skins. The alcoholic fermentation begins after carefully selected natural yeasts have been added. The process spans 7 to 10 days depending on the conditions of the vintage. Temperatures vary between 28 and 30°C.
Punching down was pioneered at Brane-Cantenac as far back as 1987 using the Guérin type vat. The aim was to push down on the ‘cap’ (skins, pulp and seeds that gather at the surface of the vat) so as to break it up and increase contact between solids and liquid. Since 2000, a completely new system has been used: the ‘Socma turbo pigeur’. This is a pump that is sunk into the vat and floods the cap with the fermenting must, causing it to break up within a few minutes. This results in a better extraction of the phenolic compounds in a gentle, selective manner.
PUMPING OVER AND RACKING OFF

To achieve good colour and tannin extraction, in harmony with the typicity of the wine, long and frequent pump-overs are performed. This involves pumping the liquid from the bottom of the vat over the solid cap. Delestages (racking off the must completely before pumping it back in with the skins) are also carried out regularly to improve colour and flavour extraction.
PRESSING

Depending on the vintage and the plot, the maceration lasts 20 to in excess of 28 days, at a temperature of between 25 and 28°C. The decision to run off the new wine is only taken after tasting from the vat. The skins are pressed using two Sutter pneumatic presses. The transfer of the skins to the presses is done in small bins, to keep the skins intact. They are then placed inside the presses to separate, vat by vat, the remainder of the free-run wine (juice extracted prior to pressing) from the press wine.
MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION

A process in which harsh malic acid is converted into more palatable lactic acid, malolactic fermentation takes place after, and to some extent during, primary fermentation. The conversion is begun by an inoculation of lactic acid bacteria, which reduce the production of biogenic amines, nitrous organic compounds that have undesirable characteristics and flavours and can lead to spoilage.
Research over recent years has shown malolactic fermentation to be a genuine winemaking technique that brings numerous benefits:

1. Improvement and stabilisation of the colour
2. Softening of the wines
3. Increased roundness and fatness
4. Lessening of harsh, oak characteristics and increased aromatics
The wines from the best plots are run off into new barrels for their malolactic fermentation. Since 1993, experiments have been held at Brane, in conjunction with the Gironde Chamber of Agriculture, to analyse the differences between malolactic fermentations carried out in vats and those done in barrels. Findings have shown that malolactic fermentation in barrels offers superior integration of oak flavours, producing wines with a creamier texture.
After several years of testing the quality of wine aged in different barrels, six cooperages were selected for the quality of their casks: Seguin-Moreau, Taransaud, Nadalié, Demptos, Radoux and Boutes. The barrels are made of fine-grained French oak from fully mature trees and with a stave width of 22 mm. Recent trials have enabled us to match better the degree of char, grain and oak types to the different wines.
The tastings for the blending are organised in January with highly reputed oenologists, such as Jacques and Eric Boissenot. These sessions take place over several days. The blending is then done early at the beginning of February, allowing time for the ageing process to have an equalising effect on the wines.
RACKING AND SEALING

From November to April, the barrels are placed with the bunghole of the barrel positioned at the top (using a glass bung) in a naturally ventilated cellar. Several times a week the barrels are topped up to prevent excess oxidation. This period allows the wine to rid itself of remaining carbon dioxide and at the same time oxygenates the wine. From April, the barrels are closed with an airtight bung and racked regularly. Racking enables the wines to spend time in barrels from all the different cooperages, providing the wine with an even overall blend as it ages.
FROM BARREL TO BOTTLE

After 12 months ageing in barrels for Baron de Brane and 18 for Brane-Cantenac, the wine is fined with fresh egg white in oak vats, to remove suspended solids. Two months before the bottling, a final blending ensures a perfect homogeneity of each of the estate’s wines. The wines are bottled in July, after the empty bottles are made inert with nitrogen so as to preserve the aromas. Laser marking of the glass enables complete traceability.
THE WINES
THE WINES

Unique terroir, modern winemaking techniques and a talented team enable us to produce elegant and aromatic wines year after year. Complex and well balanced, they are destined to evolve and transform as they age and reach maturity.
Since Henri Lurton took over in 1992, he has made it his mission to produce the best possible wine, reinforcing Brane’s position as a second classified growth in 1855. The result is a fine wine that perfectly expresses its remarkable terroir.
CARMENERE
2011
176 BHles
10 1/2 BHles
The name of our second wine honours Baron Hector de Brane, who owned the estate in the 19th century. Blended from vats carefully selected for their suppleness, it is aged just like the First Wine, but for a 12-month period.
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
At Brane-Cantenac, we recognize the need to continually evolve and improve while at the same time preserving elements of our tradition and heritage that make us who we are today. Every aspect of our wine-growing and winemaking method is constantly being re-evaluated as we strive to meet and exceed our own demanding expectations through forward thinking, experimentation, and the adoption of new technology at the winery.
THE NEW WINERY

Built in 1999, our new winery facilities conform to strict environmental and energy criteria. Wood and some of its by-products have been used for most of the roof structure, insulation and walls. Natural ventilation of the cellars using Canadian wells enables the inside temperature to be regulated without consuming energy. Shutter-style wood panels, placed on the southwest façade, limit the warming of the walls of the building and contribute some natural air conditioning. Large bay windows allow sunlight to enter. Other improvement plans are in the works.
In 2012, an integrated environmental management system was set up so as to reduce the impact of our activity on the environment. The whole of our wine production process conforms to a policy of preservation of natural resources and sustainability. This includes the development of organic vine growing, significant investment in new machinery that consumes less fuel, and improved treatment and recycling of waste products.
In 2010, Henri Lurton decided to move to a Delta Vistalys optical sorting system at Brane. The grapes are filmed by camera and an ultra-fast computer analyses the picture obtained. Air jets then systematically eliminate all the impurities, meaning that sorting can be done not only according to the colour but also to the shape of the grapes. This revolutionary process enables a sorting of extremely high quality, which is reliable, fast, consistent and upgradable.
Since 2010, every bottle of Brane-Cantenac and Baron de Brane has been equipped with a QR code. We have teamed up with Bordeaux creative agency, Taylor Yandell, to link the codes to a web application that provides customers and professionals with crucial information about the bottle they are about to open (and which there is not space to include on the label): recommended serving temperatures, ageing potential, exclusive recipe pairings, tasting notes, vintage summaries and more.
EXPERIMENTATION

Since the 1960s, Brane-Cantenac has always been a field for numerous experiments. The replanting of a small plot of Camenere vines in 2007 is demonstrative of our pioneering spirit. We have now successfully integrated it into our first wine (0.5%). Unsuccessful in the 1990s, the varietal had previously been pulled up, but recent climate change and global warming now suit this grape variety perfectly. Given the necessary care, the Carmenere grape can offer excellent color, exotic fruit aromas, and corduroy-like tannins.
THE TEAM

HENRI LURTON
Owner

CHRISTOPHE CAPDEVILLE
Estate Manager

HUGUES DE LESTRANGE
Financial Director

MARIE-HÉLÈNE DUSSECH
Commercial Director

MARIA DE LOURDES MARTINEZ OJEDA
Quality Control Manager

FLORENT CILERO
Cellarmaster

PIERRE AUCHÉ
Vineyard Manager

VÉRONIQUE GARCIA
Executive and Sales Assistant

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