

Château Bichon Cassignols

Grands Vins de Graves

Marie et Jean-François Lespinasse
Viticulteurs à La Brède (Gironde)



The vineyard of Château Bichon Cassignols is located twenty kilometers south-east from Bordeaux, on a deep gravel plateau in the village of La Brède in the appellation Graves. Adjacent to the Pessac-Léognan appellation, the vineyard is 12.5 hectares wide: 4 hectares for white wines and 8.5 hectares for red wines.

We worked under an environment-friendly label until 2008, and work now in Agrobiology. All our wines are certified "Organic Wine" since the 2011 vintage.



The Soil, the Vineyard and its work

The Graves soil is a mixture of pebbles, sand and clay deposited by the Garonne during the Ice Ages, with the presence of a ferruginous layer called *alios*, characteristic of the left side of the Gironde river.

In organic farming, the soil determines the entire life of the plant: there must be a living ecosystem in the soil so it can feed the plants.

We promote this by a surface work which ventilates the superficial parts of the soil without destroying the grass. We use organic composts and, sometime, calcareous sands. We also plant progressively cereals between the rows, as you can see in the picture on the right. They host insects and promote soil life.



Our mechanical interventions aim to maintain this presence without harming the vine growth. Cultivate in organic farming requires many cautious manual interventions. These works in the vineyard are carried aboard an invention of our own, the "vitimobile", a motorized platform that allows us to work sitting and in a team, improving comfort and efficiency.



All these works aims to enable the development of the plant and its grapes and to limit its parasites. The vine is a fragile and complex ecosystem, so we use natural products in very small amounts: copper, sulfur, minerals and herbal extracts.

The cellar, the vinification and livestock

The essence of a great wine is based on the harvest of beautiful grapes. Harvesting is done mechanically allowing us to reap the different varieties at the most opportune moment.

Vinification is a long term work. It is neither passive before the natural evolution of the fruit, nor is it making a wine according to the current fashion. Vinification means working and respecting, sharing a pleasure in close link with the terroir Bichon Cassignols. For this:

- compliance with the European specifications 'Organic Wine'
- decision to favor native yeast fermentations,
- use of thermal procedures (hot and cold), use of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and sulfur in low doses to facilitate optimal course of fermentation operations and ecologically preserve wines in the best conditions.
- wine aging in stainless steel tanks and oak barrels
- clarifications of the wine with organic vegetable or mineral fining agents (without allergens) and filtration before bottling
- refusal to use technical flavoring by adding oak chips
- no chemical correction of the taste



Marketing of wines

The work of the winemaker does not end with the bottling of its wines. The traditional market became largely speculative and is now hostile for the small traditional winemakers.

Marketing is now a separate activity, fully integrated into our business. Our winemaker challenge is to meet the combined requirements of the soil, the plants and the consumers, whatever the sudden changes of weather or finance...

This is only possible by working with people who share values of respect for nature and people. For this we prefer direct selling and commercial actors that can convey these values.



Les Vins de Bichon Cassignols

Château Bichon Cassignols

Graves blanc

Density: 5250 plants/ha

Exposure: SW / NE

Average age of the plants: 25y

Average production: 35hL/ha

Grape varieties:

70 % Sémillon

30 % Sauvignon

Mechanical harvest, pressing, settling, fermentation in new oak barrels and stainless steel tanks, aging on lees during 6 months

Fruity, fresh and silky with a slight flavor of vanilla, this wine is ideal with seafood and white meats.

Serve fresh but not icy at a temperature around 13°C



Château Bichon Cassignols

Graves rouge

Density: 5250 plants/ha

Exposure: S-SW / N-NE

Average age of the plants: 28y

Average production: 45hL/ha

Grape varieties:

55% Merlot

45% Cabernet-Sauvignon

Mechanical harvest, destemming, sorting table, pumping-over, vatting during 3 and 5 weeks, malolactic, aging in barrels and in stainless steel of 16 months

Slightly oaky with a red berries taste, soft, spicy and long, drink it at room temperature (16-18°C) with meat or cheese. To keep up to 8 to 10 years.

Depending on the year, we produce two other ranges of wine:

- *Le Petit Bichon*: 70%merlot 30%Cabernet sauvignon (maturing only in stainless steel tanks)
- *La Grande Réserve*: 50%merlot 50%Cabernet sauvignon (maturing only in oak barrels)