

The
Good Life France
CHRISTMAS ISSUE Magazine

FREE

Bringing France to you this Christmas
100 pages of festive fun

Chateau de Chenonceau's Florists
share their Christmas bouquet
design

Visit Paris Virtually

*Megève, foodie and fabulous in
the French Alps*

Spotlight on Saint-Emilion and its wine

Festive recipes galore

Michelin Star Chef Lestienne's gingerbread recipe, Eiffel Tower biscuits, perfect party food, Parisian hot chocolate, irresistible cocktails, wine pairing at Christmas and more..

12 Giveaways -
a holiday, art,
textiles, books &
more



Merlot

QUEEN OF RIGHT-BANK BORDEAUX

Author Michael C Higgins, PhD explores Saint-Émilion's
Magical Wine Region



The Queen of Grapes

Merlot wines so often gets pushed aside into the shadows of Cabernet Sauvignon. The popular wine film *Sideways* told a similar tale. "Cabernet is King" is commonly the imposing mantra. And with the grand reputation of Bordeaux' Médoc Grand Cru Classés of 1855 that is filled with Cabernet Sauvignon excellence, Merlot is often overlooked as a beautiful wine.

And beautiful she is. "Merlot is Queen" being feminine, she is softer, with more rounded elegance, and a fruitiness that makes this wine so delicious. And drinkable much earlier than Bordeaux Big Cabernet Sauvignon, which generally needs at least ten years before it is ready. The Queen is more admirable than you might imagine. The most expensive wine in Bordeaux is a Merlot: Château Petrus, 100% Merlot, grown on the blue clay in Pomerol (Right Bank).

This story about Queen Merlot begins with terroir, the concept of soil influencing the wine. The Left Bank of Bordeaux grows Cabernet Sauvignon because it loves the gravel and sandy soils there, whereas the Right Bank grows Merlot because it loves the limestone and clay soils. The Right Bank's most notable region is Saint-Émilion where a medieval village sits on top of the limestone plateau. This wine region is as beautiful as its wines...

Saint-Émilion village

In Bordeaux, there are many historic towns, villages and hamlets. Saint-Émilion is a village you do not want to miss. It originates back to Medieval times with Romanesque architecture dating back to the 2nd century when the Romans planted wine grapes there. The history is deep and immense and the village itself became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999.



It was from the limestone quarries of this plateau in and around Saint-Émilion that stone blocks were excavated to build the entire village. Under most of the châteaux surrounding the village, and under the village itself, 124 miles of massive cave systems exist from cutting these very large blocks out of the ground and bringing them up to the surface for this construction.

The Monolithic Church's Bell Tower is the highest point in Saint-Émilion with views of the charming village and rolling countryside of vineyards for as far as the eyes can see. The church itself is dazzling, entirely carved out of one solid limestone formation. It's gigantic proportions and uniqueness make it Europe's widest monolithic church and famous worldwide.

“ The village is a beautiful place to explore, day or night. It is safe and peaceful. Enchanting, actually. ”

There are numerous great restaurants to be found. Try Logis de La Candène. Their atmosphere and creativity earned them a Michelin star. They also have beautiful accommodations in historic village buildings as well. Lard et Bouchon is a restaurant underground in the caves. Excellent cuisine, with a wine cavern and reasonable prices. Wine bars and wine shops are everywhere.

There are three châteaux in the village. I don't mean a retail outlet for their wines. These are actual wineries making their wine in the village. They are Château Guadet (Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé), Moulin Galhaud (Saint-Émilion Grand Cru), and Les Cordeliers (sparkling wines underground). All three wineries are open to the public and have underground caves that you can visit.



Châteaux, food and wine

A short walk from the village is [Château Soutard](#), a Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé, with a castle you can stay in overnight, and a winery rebuilt with the latest of technology and innovations. There are wonderful views into the valley around. Take one of their bicycles on a tour around the property, following the signs and explore many interesting features this property has to offer. Learn how Merlot becomes the queen of wines here. You will see a bygone era inside the historic castle of an aristocratic past and witness quality wine making in an ultra-modern winery. They also have a large wine shop and boutique.

Isolated on top of their own elevated plateau on the Saint-Émilion limestone, with their own forest, parks and gardens, [Château de Ferrand](#), a Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé, operate within their own isolated ecosystem with diversified soil characteristics and no herbicides. Inside, are fully renovated buildings filled with high-tech modern

elegance befitting of a queen. The tasting bar sits on a cool 360-degree rotating platform.

They have the greatest range of tours, tastings, workshops, activities and culinary opportunities of any château in Bordeaux. I lost count at 22! And they treat every visitor like a professional. Tours are sommelier-led and customized to your level of knowledge and interest. Owned by the Bic Pen family, the walls of the tasting room depict the four seasons of the vineyard drawn solely with eight Bic pens - it took the artist seven months to render this masterpiece.

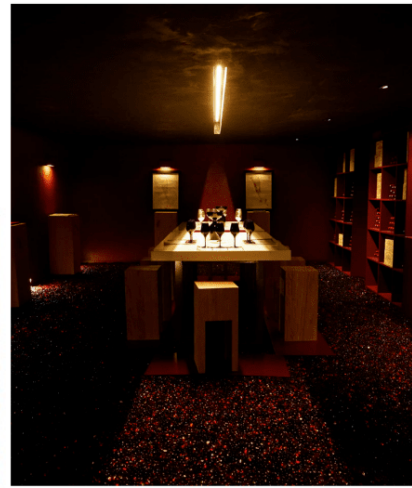


Above: Tasting room art created using 8 Bic pens, Chateau de Ferrand; below left, Chateau Soutard; below Chateau la Dominique

On the northwest edge of this appellation is the famed [Château Cheval Blanc](#), one of only four Premier Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé - A. They border Pomerol and share the blue clay vein that extends into their property, which produces Merlot of extraordinary quality. As one of the world's best-known wines, their property reflects the prestige captured in their bottles. Contrasted by traditional buildings, a futuristic structure was designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Christian de Portzamparc with the latest in winemaking technology and customized tanks designed for each and every individual vineyard plot.

Next door is [Château La Dominique](#), open to the public all year with creative ideas in tours and tastings. My favorite is their underground blind tasting experience taken to the extreme. They built an underground tasting room to neutralize all the senses.

First, the elevator ride down gets you in a quiet state. Then contrasted by walking on a noisy floor of loose stones. The room is extra dark, with minimal mood lighting. By the time you get to the table and sit down, your senses are heightened and confused at the same time. Now it is time to begin. Bottles of wine, all the exact same shape and size, are covered with black socks. Wine glasses are all black and of the same shape and size. Are you blinded yet? Then they dim the lights even further, and you hear the sound of wine being poured. This is truly blind wine tasting.



They have a gourmet rooftop restaurant [La Terrasse Rouge](#) both indoors and outdoors where you will find a large display of red glass stones covering most of the roof beyond the dining area and a view of magnificent vineyard landscapes.

Their menu oozes with temptations, including desserts to die for. You will not be able to go just once! And imagine this: they have all ten Bordeaux first-growths (crus) on the wine list.



Along the beautiful Southern Slope of the plateau, we find [Château de Candale](#) a property once belonging to the Count of Candale, a descendant of King Edward III of England.

Today this is the hub of four châteaux, two Saint Émilion Grand Crus (Château de Candale and Château Roc de Candale) and two Grand Cru Classés (Château La Commanderie and Clos des Jacobins), a restaurant, and a wine shop where you can taste and buy from all four of these properties. They also start and conclude tours and their tastings here for the other châteaux. This is a good food and wine center where you can spend the day and

discover how the Queen of Merlot expresses itself differently from four different properties.

It is a beautiful environment dining here at [L'Atelier de Candale](#). Inside is filled with window-lined walls allowing natural light to flow in and for the eyes to take in the views. Outside is spectacular, overlooking the vineyards, forest and valley, under a large designer canopy.

This is the place for the ultimate food and wine experience even more so because the owners make gastronomy a key focus of their business.



Exploring wine regions - Bordeaux, France

This is just scratching the surface of all there is to enjoy Saint-Émilion. Michael's book *Exploring Wine Regions - Bordeaux France* covers 100 pages on this region in its 494 pages on Bordeaux. It is not just a guide to some of the region's most extraordinary vineyards. His passion for Bordeaux and Saint-Émilion goes far beyond the vines.

Within the pages, you will learn why Cabernet is the King and Merlot is the

Queen of grapes, and which wines you love the most. There are nearly 1,000 color photographs captured over three years studying Bordeaux, giving you a spectacular visual experience of the region and its wineries. You will discover the inside stories and information, including names, addresses, emails, websites, and maps so you can plan an extraordinary experience for yourself. Find more information at ExploringWineRegions.com.





Cottages and Classics

ESTABLISHED SINCE 2005

LUXURY HOLIDAY COTTAGES ****, B & B ACCOMMODATION, CLASSIC CAR TOURS AND MORGAN CAR HIRE IN CHARENTE MARITIME, SW FRANCE






BOOKINGS NOW BEING TAKEN FOR CIRCUIT DES REMPARTS 2021
20% DISCOUNT ON BRITTANY FERRIES






All tours include full financial protection in accordance with the EC package travel directive and a no surcharge currency guarantee.

Lyn & Graham Peek 0033 5 46 33 36 09 | www.cottagesandclassics.com
 Email: thepeeks@wanadoo.fr | Members of MSCC, Morgan Club de France & AMOC

Link to magazine and article (pages76-81): view.joomag.com/christmas-special-issue-27-winter-2020/0942066001601815610