



Eight new estates upgraded to top of Cru Bourgeois classification as 2025 results revealed

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The latest Cru Bourgeois classification has been unveiled, reaffirming the three-tier system introduced in 2020 while implementing more rigorous selection criteria for the three levels. Taking effect from the 2025 vintage, there are now 170 estates that made it into the 2025 classification down from 249 in 2020 – a decrease of 37.7%. They include 14 Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel, 36 Cru Bourgeois Supérieur and 120 Cru Bourgeois.

More demanding selection criteria

The decrease in overall numbers could be accounted for by the difficult market conditions currently facing many wineries in the region, as well as the introduction of stricter requirements across all tiers.

As before, estates were assessed through blind tastings of five vintages to gauge consistency of quality and potential for ageing. However, the standards for Cru Bourgeois Supérieur and Exceptionnel have been elevated to assess the various technical, viticultural and commercial investments estates make throughout the year.

To qualify, estates had to provide extensive dossiers detailing their vineyard management, sustainability initiatives, and sales strategies. Visitor facilities, brand development, and market presence was also taken into consideration. Furthermore, the classification placed increased emphasis on environmental certification with every property visited to ensure they met the eligibility criteria.

Cru Bourgeois estates needed a minimum level two environmental certification (e.g. AREA, Bee Friendly, TerraVitis), while Supérieur and Exceptionnel properties had to achieve Levels two and three HVE (Haute Valeur Environnementale) certification.

A total of 10 experts studied each dossier to award points before a six-member jury, chaired by Philippe Faure-Brac, 1992 World's Best Sommelier, determined the final distinctions. For the highest



classification of Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel, estates had to receive a two-thirds majority vote from the jury in a secret ballot.

There are the same number of Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnels this year as in 2020. Six estates have retained their ranking, eight have been upgraded and eight have disappeared from the classification altogether. They include d'Agassac, Arnauld, Belle-Vue, Cambon la Pelouse, Charmail (Haut-Médoc), Lestage (Listrac-Médoc), Le Boscq and Lilian Ladoulys (St-Éstephe).

Médoc map Cru Bourgeois

The new 'Exceptionnel' estates are;

AOC MÉDOC

Château la Cardonne – new, previously Supérieur

Château Castera – new, previously Supérieur

Château Laujac – new, previously Supérieur

AOC HAUT-MÉDOC

Château Malescasse

Château de Malleret

Château Paloumey – new, previously Supérieur

Château Reysson – new, previously Supérieur

Château du Taillan

AOC LISTRAC-MÉDOC

Château Reverdi – new, previously Supérieur

AOC MARGAUX

Château d'Arsac

Château Mongravey – new, previously Supérieur

Château Paveil de Luze

AOC SAINT-ESTÈPHE

Château le Crock

Château Lafitte Carcasset – new, previously Supérieur

A classification with consumer confidence in mind

With the return of a structured ranking in 2020, the Cru Bourgeois system aims to offer greater clarity for consumers while allowing top-performing estates to differentiate themselves. The latest update



strengthens this approach by ensuring consistency and quality across all levels.

'We have chosen to raise the selection criteria for the 2025 classification to help the entire Cru Bourgeois family produce wines that are varied, consistent, and of the highest quality,' said Armelle Cruse, vice-president of the Alliance des Crus Bourgeois.

While the ranking sees fewer estates classified than before, perhaps a small number, that has been more rigorously assessed, will make the offer more honed for consumers. Previous classification updates sparked debate, particularly around the role of marketing and tourism in the rankings. However, the increased scrutiny of sustainability credentials is likely to be a step welcomed by many in the industry.

'It's a constructive classification that reflects a particular period. The candidate estates wanted to be recognised for all the steps they have taken and the efforts they have made in recent years to produce better wines by adapting to changes in the market and the climate,' said Faure-Brac.

'There are fewer applicants, which is no surprise given the economic climate. On the other hand, we felt that the applicants were highly motivated,' he added. 'Two points stood out in their applications: the quality of their vineyards and the steps they have taken to move towards organic production or production that is as environmentally responsible as possible.'

This shift underscores the growing emphasis on sustainability within the Bordeaux wine industry, addressing past criticisms and aligning with modern consumer expectations. As Faure-Brac highlighted, 'The Classification is primarily established for the consumer. It provides guarantees in terms of tasting and production quality. It's an important point of reference when it comes to finding your way around the abundance of products on offer.'

The new Cru Bourgeois promotional campaign: 'More than just a label'

Château Paloumey: A case study

One of this year's winners is the 37ha family owned and run property, Château Paloumey. Helmed by Pierre Cazeneuve, who also owns and manages Château La Garricq (Moulis) and Château la Bessane (Margaux), Paloumey is a blend of two distinct terroirs in the Haut-Médoc appellation. The estate has been certified organic since 2019.

Speaking to Decanter.com about the new rankings, Cazeneuve said the classification 'makes sense' to him on two main themes – 'shared values and collective tools'.

'I'm a wine grower and I've got my personal values in terms of how I can adapt my vineyards – both for climate change and for the environment – and also when it comes to thinking about wine production for consumers. But being challenged by something external pushes me to question even more what I'm doing and to search for improvements where I can.

'Secondly, viticulture is going through a crisis and I believe that collective tools are the right way for us all to achieve more. I can share with people who might be facing similar kinds of issues.'

He added that the rules force him to focus on the tasting aspect 'first of all', then how he produces and promotes his wines.

Since joining the estate full time in 2016, he has transitioned the vineyards to organic with certification in 2019 and replanted 12% to agroforestry between 2020 and 2021. He has also installed 400m² of solar panels on the roof of the harvest reception area.



Cazeneuve was pleased that Palourmey became Supérieur five years ago but that it also helped him see what he had to do to improve further.

‘Having a goal and setting actions to achieve those goals is important’ he said, adding ‘I might have done [the work] anyway, but it pushed me.’

Cazeneuve has some experimental plantings with later-ripening varieties and works with different rootstocks that are more adapted to both the current soils and future conditions given climate change.

‘A lot of work has been done in five years. I’ve changed and modified a lot of things, the terroir is still the terroir’ he said but added that he works on incentivising his workforce to not lose continuity in the vineyards and has create apprentice programmes for next generation workers to learn agro-ecological techniques.

‘Being a Cru Bourgeois is important – it’s a historic certification and geographic to the Médoc, and it’s a brand that has worked for a long time. It’s an important asset.

‘I challenge myself every day and I want to do the best for my consumers – at the end of the day this is what we all do’.

Whether becoming an Exceptionnel will have a material benefit remains to be seen although Cazeneuve is hopeful. ‘It’s an achievement and I have a strong conviction that this new endorsement will help sales but ultimately the market will decide’.

The evolution of the Crus Bourgeois classification

The Crus Bourgeois du Médoc classification has long been a hallmark of quality in Bordeaux, tracing its origins back several centuries. During the time of English rule in Bordeaux, merchants benefited from tax exemptions, allowing them to amass wealth and acquire the best vineyard plots. By the 15th century, these estates were known as ‘Crus des Bourgeois,’ marking the early foundations of what would become a recognised category of Médoc wines.

The first recorded price list for these wines appeared in 1740, drawn up by the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce, and by 1858, a hierarchy of Crus Bourgeois was formally documented. However, it wasn’t until 1932 that a structured classification emerged, listing 444 Crus Bourgeois du Médoc, though this system lacked official ministerial approval.

Over the decades, the classification evolved significantly. In 1962, the Syndicat des Crus Bourgeois du Médoc was founded to protect and promote these wines. Recognition of the Crus Bourgeois label gained legal footing in 1979, ensuring its continued use under regulatory oversight. The first official classification, sanctioned by a ministerial decree, arrived in 2003, introducing three tiers: Crus Bourgeois, Crus Bourgeois Supérieurs, and Crus Bourgeois Exceptionnels. However, this classification faced legal challenges, culminating in its annulment in 2007 over concerns of impartiality in the selection process.

To preserve the integrity of the Crus Bourgeois designation, the Syndicat restructured its approach, implementing a quality-focused selection process. This led to the annual publication of an official selection starting in 2010.

By 2016, a new five-year classification system was approved, restoring the three-tier ranking and offering a more stable and transparent recognition process. The inaugural edition of this new



classification debuted in 2020, covering the 2018 vintage and reaffirming the commitment to quality within the category.

The new 2025 update sees 170 estates classified over the next five years.

The future

Looking ahead, the Crus Bourgeois classification continues to serve as a beacon of quality and innovation. 'Any classification provides visibility,' said Faure-Brac. 'Given the current economic climate and changing consumer habits, this visibility will help châteaux with the label to stand out from the crowd. As well as being a guarantee of quality, membership of the Cru Bourgeois classification means you can benefit from collective promotional initiatives that are essential for development.'

The Crus Bourgeois classification is a dynamic and forward-looking system, ensuring that Médoc estates consistently strive for excellence while offering consumers reliable guidance in selecting high-quality Bordeaux wines.

To see the full list visit: cru-bourgeois.com.