

1998 Château Lafleur, Pomerol

Château Lafleur, Bordeaux Wine Region, France

Product details

Vintage:	1998	Drinking:	Now 2040
Producer:	Château Lafleur	Alcohol:	
Region:	Bordeaux Wine Region	Variety:	Bordeaux blend
Country:	France		

About the producer

CHÂTEAU LAFLEUR WINES

When André Robin took over Château Lafleur in 1915, he established the motto, *Qualité passe quantité* ("quality surpasses quantity"), and, over a century later, the family-run winery maintains that philosophy. Château Lafleur's vines - almost exactly half Cabernet Franc, half Merlot cover a pocket handkerchief of land on the Right Bank in Bordeaux. Its next-door neighbour in Pomerol, Chateau Pétrus, is considered small and that has 11.4 hectares - Château Lafleur has just 4.5ha. The result is tiny production - 1,750 cases a year of Château Lafleur and Les Pensées de Lafleur combined - with an exceptionally personal and hands-on approach.

The current Château Lafleur owner and winemaker (in partnership with his wife Sylvie) Jacques Guinaudeau can trace his ancestry to Henri Greloud, who acquired the land in 1872 and wrote the earliest chapters of the Lafleur story. His granddaughter's husband André Robin acquired the domaine four decades later and their daughters, Thérèse and Marie Robin, took over after World War II. For years, the reclusive Robin sisters almost guarded Lafleur like a secret. It was a visit from Robert Parker in 1975 which brought Château Lafleur to wider attention. The American critic was absolutely bowled over by "one of the most distinctive, most exotic, and greatest wines - not only in Pomerol, but in the world."

When Thérèse Robin passed away in 1984, Jacques and Sylvie stepped in to lease the estate, taking full control after Marie's death in 2001. The same year, the family connection was ensured for another generation, when their son Baptiste Guinaudeau and his wife Julie joined the winery - in a smooth transition, they have gradually taken control of operations, under the watchful eye of Jacques and Sylvie. Despite the attentions of circling potential buyers, the family has managed to secure ownership of the vineyards. It is still as far from being a showy château as it is possible to be - there isn't even a sign.

Since the Guinaudeau family took control of production, an already highly regarded cru has reached greater heights, with greater precision of selection and timing of picking, as well as more nuanced use of barrels new and used. However, they are still working with the long-established vines.

Even in such a small, almost perfect square of land, Château Lafleur's terroir is remarkably diverse. Put simply, there is a hillock with a gravelly brown humus to the north-west; while the flatter south-east has more sandy, clay-rich soil; but there are variations in different corners. The eponymous wine is a pure bottling of this terroir. It's known for having a more mineralic expression of Merlot than its neighbour - with a strong structure more akin to Médoc to prop up the dark fruit richness. The perfume and complexity of Cabernet Franc enhances the opulence of the Merlot



even further and makes this one of the longest-ageing wines in the world.

As a “second wine”, Les Pensées de Lafleur breaks most of the rules - particularly the one that dictates that it is supposed to broaden the opportunity to drink an estate’s wine. Only around 750 cases of Les Pensées are produced each harvest - fewer than the grand vin! Thankfully, since Armit Wines has worked with the Guinaudeau family for over 25 years, we have access to some of those cases for connoisseurs in the UK.

Les Pensées de Lafleur is vinified from vines in a specific diagonal strip of land in the centre of the Lafleur vineyards with its own micro-variations in soil type from top to bottom and is lavished with as much personal attention from the family as the grand vin. The only slight differences are in blend and ageing (in less new oak) to make an earlier drinking wine.

Jacques and Sylvie actually live in Château Grand Village , the estate near Fronsac, on the Right Bank, where the family has owned land since the 1700s. The same winemaking team works here too, producing red (Cabernet Franc/Merlot) and white (Sauvignon Blanc/Sémillon) Bordeaux Supérieur from old vines grown on exceptional clay and chalk soils.

In 2009, Baptiste and Julie planted parcels in Fronsac (using massale selection) with cuttings from Château Lafleur to create a series of wines which are a modern take on that Cabernet Franc/Merlot blend. They are called G’Acte 1, G’Acte 2 etc and are intended to show the plot unfolding, as it progresses from Bordeaux Supérieur status to (they hope) Grand Cru.

The latest development is Baptiste and Julie’s project started in 2013: a Sauvignon Blanc from Château Grand Village called Les Champs Libres, which has been very well received and, like other wines in the portfolio, is produced in very small quantities and therefore very hard to come by.

Discover our full selection of Château Lafleur wines online today.