

tasting with the expert

Château Charmail, Haut-Médoc, Bordeaux Vertical
\$50 per wine flight + \$20 cheese pairing [*see last page*]

Château Charmail's history dates to 1520, with its reputation growing in the 1750s when its wines were served at the court of Louis XV. Its modern chapter began in 1982, when young agronomist Olivier Sèze took over the estate and devoted himself to improving the vineyard. He developed its four varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, recognizing the potential of Petit Verdot long before it became a larger part of Charmail's blends. In 2021, Bertille's mother, Valérie Liquard, entered a partnership with Bernard d'Halluin. Born in Bordeaux, Bertille and her brother Augustin spent much of their lives in the United States before reconnecting with their family's roots in the Médoc.

Tonight's vertical brings together the 2013, 2018, 2019 and 2020 vintages of Château Charmail's Haut-Médoc. Tasting the same wine across different years gives us a chance to explore how growing conditions, blending decisions and time in bottle shape its character. The more mature 2013 sits alongside 2018 through 2020, a trio the estate describes as remarkable vintages. Each draws on the same four varieties, with their proportions changing from year to year as the team tastes and assembles the individual lots.

The lineup also follows a change in the cellar. Charmail introduced its 17hL concrete eggs in 2017, beginning an experiment that now accounts for nearly 30% of production. Concrete allows the wine to develop without adding woody aromas, preserving the freshness and purity of its fruit alongside the structure and texture developed in barrel. Our four vintages move from entirely oak in 2013 to 5%, 10% and 15% concrete in 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively. The 2020 also introduces larger 500L barrels, giving us another detail to explore as we taste through the wines with Bertille.

2013

French oak [*25% new, 75% one-year-old*]

45% Cab Sauv • 30% Merlot • 15% Cab Franc • 10% Petit Verdot
~~\$28|\$400~~ \$20|\$70 [*additional 30% off this month*]



cassis • cedar • tobacco

A rainy spring, uneven ripening and storms made 2013 a demanding year in the vineyard. Fruit set was challenging for Merlot because of the wet spring, while Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot benefited from late sunshine that helped them ripen. The cooler conditions contributed to a fresher, more delicate style, setting this vintage apart from the warmer 2018 through 2020 wines alongside it.

Cassis and blackberry are layered with cedar, licorice and tobacco, bringing together fruit, savory detail and the influence of oak. Fine, integrated tannins support the palate without overwhelming its delicacy. With more time in bottle than the other wines in our tasting, the 2013 offers a chance to explore how fruit, wood and developing savory notes come together as Bordeaux matures.

Aging lasted 12 months entirely in 225L oak barrels [*25% new*]. This is our only vintage we are tasting this evening that was made before Charmail introduced concrete eggs in 2017. Cold maceration and gentle, controlled extraction helped develop color and texture while preserving freshness, followed by a barrel program intended to complement the character of the year.

2018

95% French oak [*30% new*] • 5% concrete eggs
41% Merlot • 33% Cab Sauv • 15% Cab Franc • 11% Petit Verdot
~~\$28|\$400~~ \$20|\$70 [*additional 30% off this month*]



blackberry • leather • graphite

Heavy spring rain followed by a long, hot and dry summer made 2018 a year of contrasting conditions. Summer warmth encouraged ripening and concentrated the fruit, while cool nights helped preserve freshness. Gentle extraction balanced that intensity with refined tannins. The first of the remarkable 2018 through 2020 trio, this vintage brings a richer, more concentrated expression than the cooler 2013 alongside it.

Cassis and blackberry are layered with cedar, wild herbs and graphite, bringing together ripe fruit, savory detail and the influence of oak. The palate is dense and structured, with silky tannins that build across a long, fruit-driven finish. Its concentration reflects the warm growing season, while fresh acidity keeps the richness lively and balanced.

Aging lasted 12 months, with 95% in 225L French oak barrels [*30% new*] and 5% in 17hL concrete eggs. Introduced in 2017, the eggs allowed a small portion of the wine to develop without adding wood aromas, preserving fruit purity alongside the texture and structure developed in barrel. This is the first wine in our lineup to include concrete, beginning the progression toward larger proportions in 2019 and 2020.

2019

90% French oak [*30% new*] • 10% concrete eggs
40% Merlot • 33% Cab Sauv • 15% Cab Franc • 12% Petit Verdot
~~\$28|\$400~~ \$20|\$70 [*additional 30% off this month*]



smoked cherry • licorice • eucalyptus

A hot, dry summer punctuated by welcome rain in July and early September helped shape 2019. The rain eased dry conditions, while sunny days and cool nights approaching harvest supported ripening and preserved freshness. The middle vintage of the remarkable 2018 through 2020 trio combines concentrated fruit with lively acidity and a polished texture.

Smoked cherry and blackberry are layered with licorice, eucalyptus and Provençal herbs, bringing together ripe fruit and fresh, savory detail. Silky tannins support a velvety palate, with red and black fruit carrying through a long finish. The richness reflects the warm growing season, while acidity and herbal notes give the wine freshness alongside its depth.

Aging lasted 12 months, with 90% in 225L French oak barrels [*30% new*] and 10% in 17hL concrete eggs. Concrete's share doubled from 2018, allowing more of the wine to develop without added wood aromas before blending with the barrel-aged lots. Cold maceration and gentle, controlled extraction helped preserve fruit expression while developing the refined tannins that support the wine's structure.

2020

60% Fr. oak [225L] • 25% Fr. oak [500L] • 15% concrete eggs
36% Merlot • 32% Cab Sauv • 16% Cab Franc • 16% Petit Verdot
~~\$28|\$400~~ \$20|\$70 *[additional 30% off this month]*



black plum • violet • cedar

A hot, dry summer followed by cooler conditions toward the end of the season shaped 2020. Warm days supported ripening and concentrated the fruit, while cool nights helped preserve freshness. The final vintage of the remarkable 2018 through 2020 trio combines the depth of a warm year with vibrant acidity, giving the wine energy alongside its richness.

Blackberry and ripe black plum are layered with violet, cedar and sage, bringing together dark fruit, floral lift and fresh herbal detail. Silky tannins support a creamy palate, while lively acidity carries the fruit through a long finish. That combination of concentration and freshness reflects the contrast between summer warmth and cooler conditions approaching harvest.

Aging lasted 12 months, with 60% in 225L French oak barrels, 25% in larger 500L demi-muids and 15% in 17hL concrete eggs. The introduction of larger barrels added another approach to aging, allowing a subtler influence of wood while developing texture and structure. Concrete's share increased again, preserving more fruit without added oak aromas. Gentle, controlled extraction complemented this combination of vessels, keeping freshness and refined tannins central to the finished wine.

cheese pairing

cheese

Saint-Nectaire • *Pasturized Cow's Milk* • Auvergne, France

In Auvergne, aging is central to Saint-Nectaire's character. The wheels are regularly turned, rubbed and washed with salt water as their mottled rind develops. Beneath that earthy, mushroomy rind is a supple paste with flavors of cream and hazelnut. Its gentle richness complements the 2013's cedar, tobacco and developing savory notes while leaving room for the wine's more delicate fruit.

Mimolette • *Pasturized Cow's Milk* • Lille, France

Also known as 'Boule de Lille,' Mimolette is recognizable by its rounded shape and deep orange interior, traditionally colored with annatto. Aging transforms the cheese from mild and supple to dense and firm, concentrating its nutty, caramel-like flavors. That intensity gives it the weight to accompany the powerful 2018, with a savory richness that balances the wine's concentrated black fruit and pronounced tannins.

Ossau-Iraty • *Raw Sheep's Milk* • Basque Country & Béarn, France

Ossau-Iraty brings together the sheep's milk cheesemaking traditions of the French Basque Country and neighboring Béarn in the western Pyrenees. Its protected designation ties production to local sheep breeds and the region's landscape. Aging develops a firm yet melting texture, with rich, nutty flavors and a gentle sweetness. That combination complements the 2019's velvety palate, ripe cherry and blackberry, and lingering herbal notes.

Marbré de Chèvre • *Unpasteurized Goat's Milk* • Ardèche, France

Marbré takes its name from the veins of vegetable ash running through its pale goat's milk paste, creating a marbled appearance in each slice. Made at the Vivarais dairy in Ardèche, this pressed cheese offers a mellow goat character with subtle floral notes and a clean finish. Its delicacy complements the 2020's violet and sage, while the wine's lively acidity brings freshness alongside the cheese's richness.

meat

Fra' Mani 'Sea Salt & Peppercorn' Salami • *Pork* • Berkeley, California

Founded by chef Paul Bertolli in Berkeley in 2006, Fra' Mani draws on Italy's traditional salumi techniques. This small-format salami combines prime cuts of pork with sea salt and mixed peppercorns, then dry ages for approximately 25 days in a natural casing. The result is a supple texture with clean, savory pork flavor and gentle peppercorn aromatics, adding a savory counterpoint to the French cheeses and Bordeaux wines.