

27/02/2025 - by New Bordeaux - Jane Anson

News Digest: February 2025

Jane Anson, February 2025

by Valeria Tenison

According to data from the French customs authorities, Bordeaux recorded its smallest harvest since 1991 in 2024, with production dropping 14% to 3.3 million hectolitres. This decline was driven by vineyard uprooting and weather-related challenges, including frost, heavy spring rains leading to mildew, and poor flowering. The vineyard area shrank to 95,000 hectares, its lowest level since 1985. While this reduced harvest may help correct past overproduction and boost bulk wine prices, concerns persist over US exports. The potential reintroduction of 25% tariffs under Donald Trump's presidency could impact sales, adding another layer of uncertainty to an already volatile market.

Meanwhile, the Médoc peninsula, traditionally known for its red wines, has received approval for the new AOC Médoc Blanc, marking a revival of its historic white wine production. The INAO validated the appellation's specifications on February 6, 2025, paving the way for production to begin the same year. The permitted grape varieties include Sauvignon Blanc, Sauvignon Gris, Sémillon, and Muscadelle, with Chardonnay limited to 15% and six experimental varieties also allowed (Floréal, Sauvignac, Souvignier Gris, Alvarinho, Liliorila and Voltis). Médoc Blanc must undergo barrel ageing until at least March 31 following the harvest, with a minimum of 30% of the blend aged in wood. This initiative offers hope amid Médoc's ongoing red wine crisis, as white wine bottles are expected to sell at higher prices (€12-25) than reds. While vineyard restructuring will not fully compensate for losses in red wine production, Médoc Blanc could eventually reach 100 hectares under the new AOC.

Also new this month, the 2025 Médoc Crus Bourgeois classification has been released, now featuring 170 estates, a significant decline from 250 in 2020. The classification, structured into three tiers—Crus Bourgeois, Crus Bourgeois Supérieur, and Crus Bourgeois Exceptionnel—was determined using stricter criteria. These included environmental certifications, vineyard and winery management, and blind tastings of vintages from 2017 to 2021. Notably, the "Crus Bourgeois Exceptionnel" category retains 14 estates, with six newcomers, including Château Laffitte Carcasset, Château Castera, Château Paloumey, Château Laujac, Château Reysson, and Château Mongravey. This updated classification aims to enhance the wines' market value, providing a crucial sales advantage to the selected estates. [The next revision is scheduled for 2030 – you can read more here.](#)

On the fiscal front, the 2025 French budget includes a landmark tax exemption for family-run wine estates. A 75% exemption on vineyard land transfer taxes—up to €20 million—is now available to estates held for at least 18 years. This long-awaited measure, championed by the CNAOC

(Confédération nationale des producteurs de vins et eaux-de-vie de vin à appellations d'origine contrôlées), seeks to support generational vineyard transfers, particularly in high-value regions like Burgundy, Champagne, and Alsace. By easing financial pressures, this initiative aims to preserve the integrity of France's wine industry while facilitating access for younger generations.

Leadership changes are also shaping Bordeaux's wine scene. François-Xavier Maroteaux, owner of Château Branaire-Ducru in Saint-Julien, has been appointed as the new president of the Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux. The announcement, made at the association's annual meeting on February 15, sees Maroteaux, taking over from Ronan Laborde. Following in his father's footsteps, Patrick Maroteaux, who led the Union from 2000 to 2008, François-Xavier brings a background in banking and experience at LVMH before joining the family estate in 2015.

In the realm of fine dining, Le Taillevent in Paris has won the title of Best Bordeaux Wine List of France 2025, awarded by Star Wine List in partnership with Château de Pez. The restaurant's sommelier, newly certified Master Sommelier Paul Robineau, has been vocal against the ongoing "Bordeaux-bashing" trend. Meanwhile, a study by Wine Services, conducted in December 2024, highlights Bordeaux's continued dominance in its home city's restaurant scene. The survey of 220 Bordeaux restaurants found that 97% offer at least one Bordeaux reference, with regional wines accounting for 38% of the 36,091 wine references. Bordeaux's presence is further reinforced by the "Bordeaux Wines by the Glass" initiative, set to launch in Spring 2025, aiming to expand the availability of local wines in restaurants.

At Wine Paris 2025, held from February 9 to 11 at Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, a Bordeaux delegation led by Mayor Pierre Hurmic and Prefect Etienne Guyot showcased the region's diverse wine offerings. Beyond wine, Bordeaux's representation extended to The Source des Abatilles, which continued its partnership with Wine Paris, providing over 45,000 bottles of water throughout the event.

In executive appointments, Châteaux Beauregard and Petit-Village in Pomerol have named Lauren Laudrin as Managing Director, following the retirement of Vincent Priou after 35 years. Laudrin, an oenologist and former wine broker, brings extensive expertise in Bordeaux wines and a strong connection to Pomerol. Priou will remain a consultant in the coming months to ensure a seamless transition.

In the judiciary news, Bordeaux-based wine merchant Ginestet and its CEO were fined €130,000 for misleading labelling on 250,000 bottles intended for the Japanese market. The bottles featured a sticker falsely claiming 66 medals despite the wines having won no such awards. French law prohibits such misrepresentation unless the distinctions are legitimate. Having rejected a plea deal for a €65,000 fine, Ginestet now faces financial penalties and must publicly display the court ruling for two months at the Bordeaux Wine Council.

Turning to the media landscape, Bernard Arnault's LVMH-owned Les Echos-Le Parisien has decided not to proceed with a planned lawsuit against Elon Musk's X (formerly Twitter) over unpaid content compensation. Initially joining other French media in a lawsuit under EU copyright laws, Les Echos-Le Parisien has withdrawn without explanation.

Finally, Domaine Clarence Dillon will continue their prestigious partnership with the Oscars for the third consecutive year, serving their wines at the 97th Academy Awards ceremony on March 2, 2025 and the exclusive Governors Ball. Among the highlights are the exceptional Clarté de Haut-Brion 2021, a rare white wine, and Clarence de Haut-Brion 2015, alongside Clarendelle Bordeaux Blanc 2023 and Clarendelle Amberwine 2021.