



# POMEROL AOC

## About Pomerol

Pomerol is a French wine-growing commune and Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC) within the Libournais ("Right Bank") in Bordeaux. The wine produced here is predominately from Merlot with Cabernet Franc playing a supporting role. Unlike most other Bordeaux communes, there is no real village of Pomerol, although there is a church. The houses are set among the vineyards.

The region was recognized as a distinct wine region apart from Saint-Émilion and the greater Libournais region by the French government in 1923 and was granted AOC status in 1936 as part of the first wave of AOC establishments by the Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité (INAO). While it is now one of the most prestigious of the Bordeaux AOCs, this situation is relatively recent, dating to the second half of the twentieth century, which is often given as one of the reasons why Pomerol is not included in any of the Bordeaux classifications.

Pomerol is the smallest of the major fine wine regions in Bordeaux, covering an area that is roughly three kilometers wide by 4 kilometers long. It is roughly one-seventh of the size of its much larger Right Bank neighbor Saint-Émilion AOC and is on par with the smallest Left Bank commune of Saint-Julien AOC in the Médoc.

While many Pomerol wines now fetch very high prices at wine auctions and in the private market on a par with the most highly rated classified growths of Bordeaux, there is no official classification of Pomerol wine. However, the region does contain one property widely held to be equivalent to premier cru: Château Pétrus.

## Transition From White Wines to Red

Since 1936, the planting of white grape varieties has been strictly prohibited in Pomerol with Merlot (pictured) being the dominant grape in the AOC, however, the transition to red grape varieties was slow. Plantings of Cabernet Franc in the Pomerol area were recorded, under the names Vidure and Bidure, as early as the 16th century but Merlot does not appear to have been introduced to the area until a couple of hundred years later. In 1760, Louis-Léonard Fontémong, a Libournais négociant, planted what appears to be the first documented instance of Merlot in the region, in a vineyard that is now part of Château Rouget. However, white wine grapes continued to dominate the vineyards of Pomerol until the late 19th century when the higher prices of red clarets and the waning Dutch influence made red wine production more enticing. When the region received its full AOC status in 1936, the AOC regulation specifically outlawed the plantings of any white grape varieties in Pomerol.

Even after its complete transformation into a red wine region, the reputation of Pomerol still lagged far behind that of the Médoc. A 1943 comparative price list commissioned by the Vichy government listed Pétrus only at the level of a mid-tier Second Growth from the Médoc with the next highest rated Pomerol estates, Vieux Château Certan and Château La Conseillante commanding prices in line with Third Growth estates like Château Giscours and Château La Lagune.

## **Wine**

Pomerol now produces exclusively red wine. Merlot is the most important grape here, accounting for 80% of the vineyard area. Although it is almost invariably blended, the proportion of Merlot can reach as high as 95%, though it is more usually in the range 70–80%. The next most important grape is Cabernet Franc, locally known as le Bouchet, accounting for around 15% of the vineyard area and usually accounting for 5–20% of the blend. Malbec, known locally as Pressac, and not much planted in the rest of Bordeaux, is also used. The remaining permitted grapes, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, are barely planted and rarely used in the grand vin though, like Malbec, they may appear in an estate's second wine.