



An exclusive Masterclass with Eight Grands Crus ClassÃ©s Wines at the Embassy of France in India

Description

As President of Winegitz India and The Wine Club, Mukul Manku was privileged to be invited by the Embassy of France in India, to an exclusive **Wine Masterclass of Grands Crus ClassÃ©s**. In this blog post, Mukul writes about his experience at this exceptional wine event.



The Winemakers

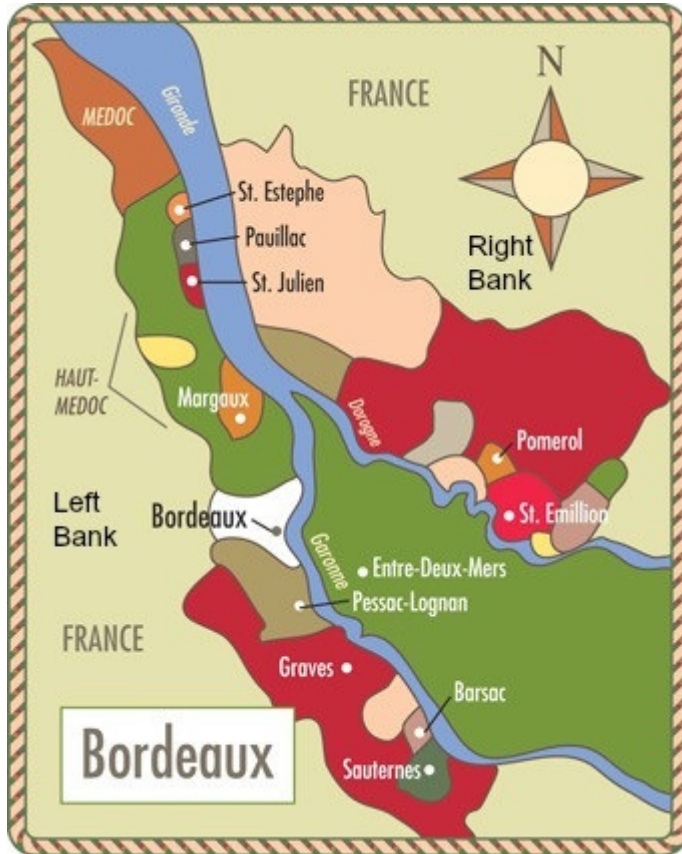
Conducted on 28th Nov 2025 at the **Hall of Honour** at **French Embassy**, the event was graced with his presence by **His Excellency Mr. Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to India**. This exceptional wine tasting celebrated Bordeaux's finest terroirs where representatives from eight legendary **Châteaux of the 1855 Grand Cru Classé classification** showcased their wines with the great sense of excitement and pride.

Opening Address by the Conseil President



Opening Address by Mr Philippe Casteja

The masterclass proceedings commenced on a **Welcome Note** by **Mr Vianney Meynier**, Head of Agrotec and Market Entry Strategy Departments for India and South Asia, Business France India and this was followed by an opening address by **Mr Philippe Casteja** – the **President of Conseil des Grand Cru Classe en 1855**, who introduced the audience to representatives from all the eight chateaus participating in the event. Giving an over view of masterclass, he brought out that all the wines fielded in the masterclass come from the **Bordeaux's Left Bank**.



Philippe mentioned that all wines in the masterclass were from Bordeaux's Left Bank Wine. Image by Mamablip

Three Factors shaping the Terroir by Philippe Carteja

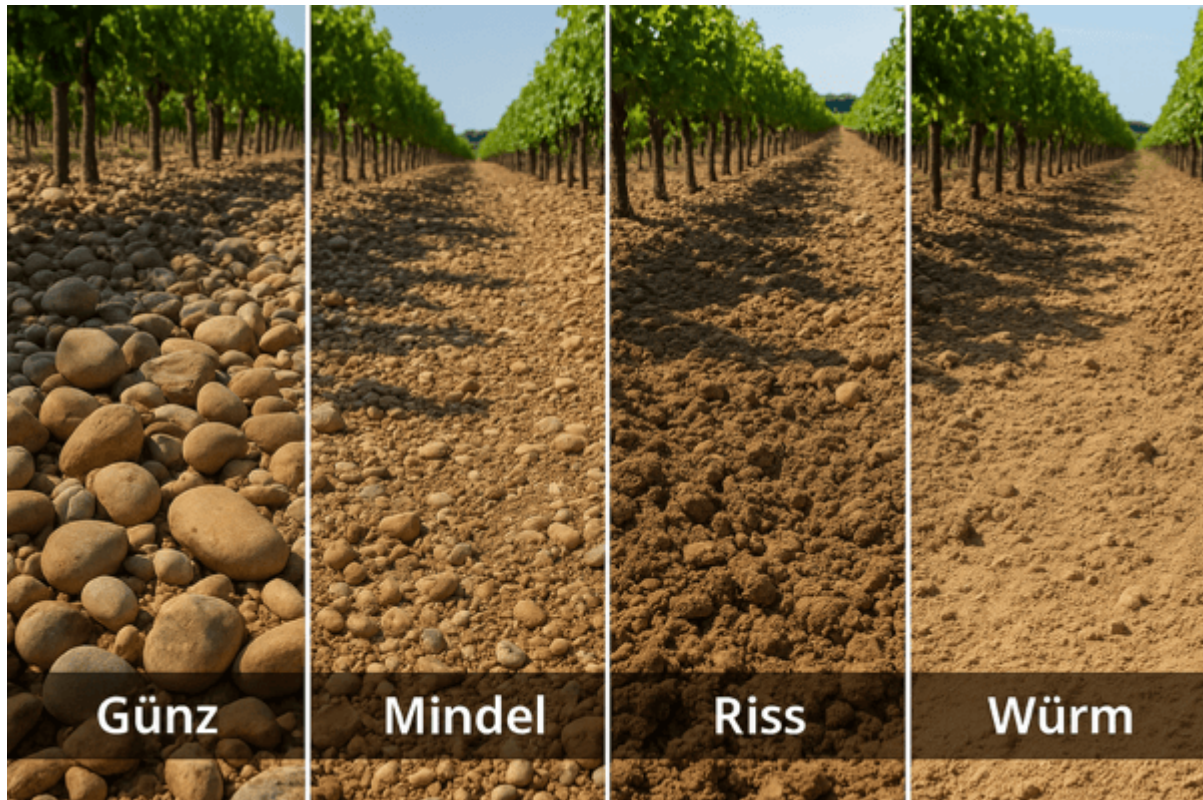
Mr Philippe Carteja went on to enumerate the three major influences which shape the terroir in the Bordeaux, and in particular the wine regions in Bordeaux's Left Bank, which are **Climate, Soil and People**.

Climate

He explained how Bordeaux enjoys a **Maritime Temperate** climate mainly due to the Atlantic Ocean which is located just towards west of the region as also by the major water bodies **Garonne and Dordogne rivers** which further flow into the **Gironde estuary**. These large water bodies acts as a large thermal mass, moderating the climate by making winters milder and summers cool, creating conditions favourable for viticulture.

Soil

Philippe mentioned that the soil in the Left Bank is primarily a mix of gravel, clay and sand in varying compositions in different wine sub regions. This soil which has evolved over million of years has a major influence on wine styles, for example the gravel rich soil of Pauillac gives sturdy and powerful Cabernet Sauvignon dominant wines whereas in Margaux, where the soil has a good amount of clay, produces wines of a softer elegance and finesse.



I created this representative picture on AI. It gives an idea of soils in Bordeaux's Left Bank varying from being predominantly gravel in Pauillac to Clay/ Sand in Margaux/ Graves.

People

Philippe also mentioned the **people of Bordeaux** as the third element shaping the terroir. These include the vigneron, winemakers, people working in vineyards and wineries, in all stages of winemaking who have upheld the ethos, traditions, skills and the technical know-how of winemaking over centuries and still continue to do so. ***So apt and pertinent.***

Wine Tasting in Hall of Fame



The opening address was followed by a brief by representatives of all the Châteaux, and thereafter everyone moved to the Hall of Fame for the wine tasting, the details of which are given in succeeding paragraphs.

1. Chateau Batailley Grand Cru Classe Pauillac

I first tasted the flagship wine from Chateau Batailley at the **Chateau Batailley Grand Cru Classe en 1855**.



Chateau Batailley Grand Cru Classe en 1855

A 5th Growth, Chateau Batailley is one of the oldest estates in the region. With roots tracing to the 15th century, it is known for producing classic, age-worthy Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant wines with rich, structured profiles.

In his briefing, Philippe brought out that the word “Batailley” in the name of the wine comes from the “Bataille” (Battle) that took place between the French and English on the same estate in 1453. The French won and went on to also recapture Chateau Latour this very same year, marking the end of the Hundred Years War.



Battle Memorabilia at Chateau Batailley

Pauillac soil is primarily made up of gravel with quite a lesser amount of clay. This gravel, which in this area can go as deep as 6 to 9 metres, does two things – firstly it provides a good drainage which prevents water logging in the vineyards (thereby preventing vine diseases), and secondly, since the gravel is heat retaining (it absorbs heat in daytime and releases it back slowly during the night), it facilitates slow and even ripening of the grapes. This phenomenon is best suited for growing of the thick skinned, late ripening Cabernet Sauvignon grapes and so that’s the primary grape varietal in Pauillac wines (65 to 70 %). A smaller amount of clay in the soils favours Merlot which too finds a place in the blend.



“The 2016 is singing” says Philippe Carteja

The 2016 tasted true to its style, displaying a Cabernet Sauvignon infused sturdiness, complexity and depth with the Merlot making it more approachable.

I asked Philippe about the lingering (and bit spicy) long finish of this wine on my palate, to which he said that it is due to the wine being young and at a right age to be savoured.

2. Chateau Lafon-Rochet Grand Cru Classé Saint-Estèphe

Next I tasted the first wine from Chateau Lafon-Rochet “Chateau Lafon-Rochet Grand Cru Classé”.



Château Lafon-Rochet Grand Cru Classé.

The Chateau was represented by their President **Mr Félix Pariente-Lorenzetti** (who's also the President at Chateau Pedesclaux).



Mr Félix Pariente-Lorenzetti – President Chateau Lafon Rochet

Classified as a Fourth Growth, Chateau Lafon Rochet in Saint-Est phe appellation is located at the northernmost end of the Left Bank.

During his brief, Mr Felix narrated an anecdote about how Chateau Lafon-Rochet famously changed its colour of its facade to golden yellow in the early 2000s, to recreate a bold and modern identity for the estate.



Chateau Lafon Rochet. Image ??? Lafon Rochet website.

Soil in Saint Estephe is again a mix of gravel and clay, however here the percentage of clay is higher than that of Pauillac. Accordingly, based on a strong backbone of Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine showed a lot of structure, while at same time it was full of elegance and softness infused by Merlot (35 ??? 40 %).

The Ch?teau Lafon Rochet 2018 regaled my palate with its firm yet rounded tannins, earthy notes, and black fruit flavors.

The next wine, also at the same station was the **Ch?teau Pedesclaux Grand Cru Classe** and was represented again by **Mr F?lix Pariente-Lorenzetti** as estate President.

3. Ch?teau Pedesclaux Grand Cru Classe Pauillac.



Château Pédessclaux Grand Cru Classe

From Pauillac again, this wine displayed the appellation's signature sturdy style powered by the Cabernet Sauvignon which is the main component in the blend.



Meeting with the Chateau President- Mr Félix Pariente-Lorenzetti

A Fifth Growth, the estate with its state of art modern glass and steel structure, is known for being one of the most modern wineries in the Médoc.



Chateau Pedesclaux. Image ??? Bellapart.

Felix also highlighted the Chateau???s shift toward organic, precision-driven viticulture.

4. ChÃ¢teau Branaire-Ducru Grand Cru Classe Pauillac

The next wine was the **ChÃ¢teau Branaire-Ducru Grand Cru Classe**.



Château Branaire-Ducru Grand Cru Classe

A Fourth Growth, Chateau Branaire-Ducru is a prestigious estate located in the Saint-Julien appellation. The Chateau was represented by **François-Xavier Maroteaux**, who besides being the co-owner of Chateau Branaire-Ducru, also is the newly elected President of the **Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux (UGCB)**.

“If Pauillac is power and Saint-Julien is balance, Margaux is perfume.” a sommelier’s quote.

During his brief, Francois brought out that if you start from Bordeaux and drive northwards, then first you shall cross the Margaux wine region and then hit **Saint Julien**, where his estate is located and from where his wines come from. Further north to this estate are the Pauillac and Saint Estephe appellations.



Fran ois-Xavier Maroteau

Accordingly, he rightly feels that the style of wines from his estate Saint Julien, can be considered as a mix that represent both the elegance and finesse of Margaux and the strength and power of Pauillac and Saint Estephe.

Focus on Freshness : Francois also shared his considered view regarding the necessity for freshness in wines. He reiterated that it  s the freshness of the wine itself which translates into a pleasurable wine experience for those who shall savour it, and all that follows is attributed to it.

Personally for me, it was certainly a pleasure to taste this Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant blend known for its elegant, balanced, and age-worthy style. The tasting displayed notes of dark fruit, cassis, and cedar with a silky texture with a fresh, long finish.

5. Ch teau d  Issan Grand Cru Classe Margaux

Château d'Issan Grand Cru Classe was the next wine which I savoured.



Château d'Issan Grand Cru Classe Margaux

The Chateau was represented by its commercial manager, **Edgard Kappelhoff Lancon**, who in his briefing talked about the ancient origins of the wine house dating back to the 12th century, with its wine being served at the wedding of Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152. The illustrious history of the estate is also revealed in its Motto as below:

Motto: The estate's motto is "for the table of kings and the altar of gods".

Edgard briefed that the estate has had 70 ha under sustainable viticulture since 1955 and also mentioned about their ongoing efforts towards organic farming (details in the slide below).



Château d'Issan is a Third Growth Margaux wine which is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The wine spends between 16 and 18 months in oak (around 50 percent new).



Edgard Kappelhoff Lancon at the tasting station

Merlot, which forms a considerable part of the blend, adds a lot of elegance and finesse to this wine which was applied revealed on the palate while I tasted it.

6. Châteaux Marquis d'Alesme Grand Cru Classe Margaux

Now I tasted the 6th wine - Châteaux Marquis d'Alesme Grand Cru Classe.



Château Marquis d'Alesme Grand Cru Classe

A Third Growth, Château Marquis d'Alesme is a winery in the Margaux appellation. The estate was purchased by the Perrodo family in 2006 after which it has undergone significant renewal in a unique architectural style.

The estate was represented by **Marjolaine Maurice de Coninck**, who has been instrumental in effecting the modernisation of Château, reshaping it with a blend of tradition and innovation



Marjolaine Maurice de Coninck

In her briefing, Marjolaine introduced herself as the being the Manager with the Family Perrado, which acquired Chateau Marquis d'Alèsme in 2006. Talking about Chateau Marquis d'Alèsme, she mentioned that with only 15 hectares under plantation, the Chateau is considered more as a garden by them. A garden which produces exceptional wines all the same.

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In the quintessential Margaux style, the wine impressed the palate with its Merlot driven finesse and elegance alongwith a firmness coming from the Cabernet Sauvignon.

7. Chateau Giscours Grand Cru Classe Margaux

The next wine which I tasted was the **Chateau Giscours Grand Cru Classe**.



Chateau Giscours Grand Cru Classe Margaux.

Chateau Giscours is a Third Growth wine estate in the **Margaux** appellation. In the Masterclass the Chateau was represented by their General Manager **Alexander Van Beek**.

Talking about the estate, Alexander mentioned about its large size. Spread over 400 acres Chateau Giscours also has a large chunk of forest land within its premises which adds to its diversity. Highlighting the human element in the terroir, he brought out the estate is not just a area of land in Margaux, but it is essentially a living infrastructure where 82 workers and 20 families reside and work, welcoming around 25000 to 30000 visitors each year.



Alexander Van Beek

The estate has seen a resurgence in quality since its acquisition in 1995, with improvements including biodynamic farming and hand-harvesting.

Tasting the wine revealed that it is a classic Margaux with a strong personality and the characteristic finesse. On my palate it displayed rounded tannins, rich mouthfeel and a lingering finish.

Do you like Cricket and good wine ?

If yes, then read on. Surprising as it may seem, Bordeaux has a cricket ground too. **Cricket is played regularly at Chateau Giscours Cricket Pitch.** The estate has a long sporting tradition and hosts various cricket matches, including an annual match between French and international wine merchants.



Cricket at Chateau Giscours

The Bordeaux Giscours Cricket Club is based there, and the pitch is part of the unique attractions available to visitors at the chateau.

8. Châteaux d'Arche Grand Cru Classe Sauternes

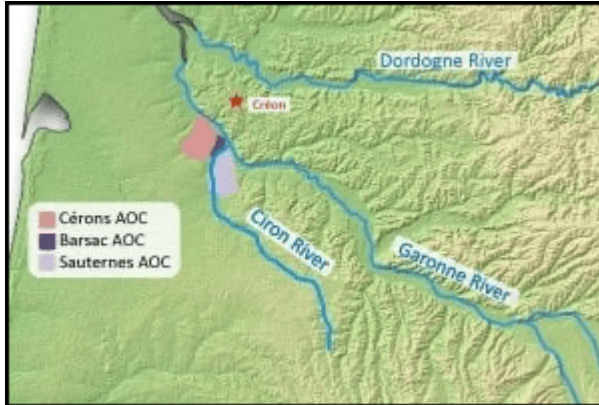
The last wine which I tasted was the Châteaux d'Arche Grand Cru Classe.



Château d'Arche Grand Cru Classé Sauternes

Château d'Arche is a wine estate in Sauternes, southern Bordeaux. The estate, founded in 1580 by Henry d'Arche, is classified as a Second Growth in the 1855 classification of Sauternes.

The details about the estate were covered by the Conseil President Mr Philippe Casteja himself. He explained the process of making of this sweet wine wherein the vigneron wait for extended period of time before harvesting, to allow the Noble Rot or the Botrytis to affect the grapes.



In Sauternes region, the confluence of the Garonne and Ciron rivers, create au

Botrytis lead to concentration of sugars in the grapes. Philippe highlighted that unlike Port wines, in making of Sauternes the high sugar content in the grapes naturally halt the fermentation process to give these sweet wines. Sauternes is made primarily with Semilion grape, and a smaller amount of Sauvignon Blanc is added, which, because of its high acidity balances the excess sweetness in the wine.

â??Indian market is ready for the fine Grand Cru Bordeaux winesâ?• â?? Phillipe Casteja

Mr Philippe Casteja himself who as the President Conseil des Grand Cru Classe En 1855, mentioned the above quote, in a short interview which he consented to give me towards the end of the tastings, as shared below.

He further expressed that thereâ??s a need to spread more awareness in India about the wines of Bordeaux by means of wine tastings and masterclasses.

Thus culminated the exclusive masterclass and tasting of Bordeauxâ??s Left Bank Grand Crus Classes. I hope you like reading about it in this blog post.

Till next time, itâ??s Cheers, from my side.

Mukul Manku, President Wineglitz India ð??@ð??³