

What is a Bordeaux? Bordeaux is a region in France known for its fine wines. The term *Bordeaux* is usually used to refer to any wines that come from this distinctive region. The red wines of Bordeaux are probably the most well known, though there are a number of sweet white wines that are quite popular as well.

Bordeaux produces more wine than any other region of the world. Bordeaux wine is made by 10,000 producers or *châteaux* from the grapes of 13,000 grape growers. There are 57 appellations of Bordeaux wine producing hundreds of millions of bottles of wine annually which make up about 25% of all French wines. The five main Bordeaux districts with individual appellations are Pomerol, Saint-Emilion, Graves, Sauternes and the Médoc. Until the 1970s, the majority of wine produced in Bordeaux was white; today, more than 88% of the wines produced are red (referred to as 'claret' in Britain and the US). The wide popularity of Bordeaux wines in Britain can be traced back to 1152 to 1453 when the English owned this region-acquired through a royal marriage then lost in the 100 Years' War.

Red Bordeaux is generally made from a blend of grapes. Permitted grapes are Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec. As a generalization, Cabernet Sauvignon (Bordeaux's 2nd most planted grape variety) dominates the blend in red wines produced in the Médoc and the left bank of the Gironde estuary. Typical top-quality Chateaux blends are 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc & 15% Merlot. This is typically referred to as the "Bordeaux Blend." Merlot (Bordeaux's most-planted grape variety) and to a lesser extent Cabernet Franc (3rd most planted variety) tend to predominate in Saint Emilion, Pomerol and the other right bank appellations which are typically 70% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc & 15% Cabernet Sauvignon.

White Bordeaux is predominantly made from Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle - Typical blends are usually 80% Sémillon, 20% Sauvignon Blanc. Like the reds, white Bordeaux wines are usually blends. Other permitted grape varieties are Ugni Blanc, Colombard, Merlot Blanc, Ondenc and Mauzac.

In the late 1960s Sémillon was the most planted grape in Bordeaux. Since then it has been in constant decline although it still is the most common of Bordeaux's white grapes. Sauvignon Blanc's popularity on the other hand has been rising and is now the 2nd most planted white Bordeaux.

Wineries all over the world aspire to making wines in a Bordeaux style. In 1988, a group of American vintners formed The Meritage Association to identify wines made in this way. Although most Meritage wines come from California, there are members of the Meritage Association in 18 states and five other countries, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Israel, and Mexico. For more information:
<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-bordeaux.htm>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bordeaux_wine
<http://www.bordeaux.com/>

Have a wine-related question?
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