



## CHÂTEAU GUIRAUD: NATURAL PRIVILEGE

Château Guiraud, a Sauternes Premier Grand Cru Classé in the 1855 classification, has just obtained organic farming certification. It is the first and the only one of the Premiers Grands Crus Classés in the 1855 Bordeaux classification to obtain such certification, which was initiated by director, Xavier Planty, in 1995. Guiraud's decision to adopt organic viticultural methods is shaping the new style of the property's wines, putting greater emphasis on purity, intensity and elegance...

### VINE GROWING PHILOSOPHY AT CHÂTEAU GUIRAUD

The implementation of such growing methods and an alternative approach to the vineyard have resulted in a new awareness and a different wine aesthetic. The search for maximum sugar is over and the vocabulary has changed, it is no longer a question of power but of purity of flavour, finesse and producing finely-constructed, balanced wines.

Fifteen years have passed since a simple observation was made at Château Guiraud. At the time everything was focused on guaranteeing and protecting the grape harvest without thinking about nature or the future. Over the years, profound imbalances had developed and the vines had become weakened as a result of using drastic treatments in the vineyard. At the turn of the century, a new alternative approach was launched with a view to re-establishing nature's diversity... Ignoring prevalent thinking and fashion, Château Guiraud began to chart its own course.



The encouragement of floral diversity quickly emerged as an important stage in this renewal process. This was achieved with grassed tracks that extended between the rows of vines. There has been one rule: let nature take its course. Each cubic metre of earth contains a natural stock of seeds and only those that are most suited to the conditions will grow in the spring and autumn. These crops of wild flowers are indicators of the soil's diversity and health.

In the same spirit, six kilometres of hedges were replanted with ivy, laurustinus, chestnut, hazel etc. All of these initiatives provide the perfect habitats for new insect populations; during the summer of 2010, one expert counted 675 species of insects and spiders in the Château Guiraud vineyards including seven species of bumblebee. Nesting boxes for birds have also been installed as well as «insect hotels» for new residents such as mason wasps, bee beetles and earwigs which play a benign role as predators of undesirable larvae. The result: Château Guiraud stopped using pesticide treatments in 2004 and in 2010, 30 kilos of morel mushrooms were picked, something never seen before on the estate! Château Guiraud's growing methods are accompanied by traditional practices such as ploughing four times a year, which aerates the soil and encourages the vines to develop deeper root systems.



### THE VINE CONSERVATORY

The 1956 frost devastated the vineyards of Sauternes, meaning everything had to be replanted. At that time it was difficult to find good plant stock, with nurseries tending to sell 'a bit of everything'. These memories combined with a new approach to stock management, resulted in an initiative by Xavier Planty and a group of Sauternes and Barsac wine producers. They shared an ambition to preserve the genetic diversity of native grape varieties and ensure their renewal. In 2001, Château Guiraud created a Vine Conservatory. One hundred mother vines of Sémillon and Sauvignon (resulting from mass selection, with a selection of the most representative plants) were collected in this unique nursery. It enables stock to be produced that will guarantee the vineyard's future, creating exceptional biodiversity. A tremendous asset to further developing the infinite complexity of the wines, the Vine Conservatory is also an excellent research resource and a wonderful educational tool.



### THE SAUVIGNON STYLE

Sauvignon has a long history at Château Guiraud, representing 35% of the vineyard. This is rare in Sauternes, where the proportion tends to be closer to 15%. Guiraud's terroir is perfectly suited to the Sauvignon grape. When picked at the peak of botrytis development, Sauvignon gives the wines their very complex aromas: a blend of sweet spices with citrus fruit and white flowers. It is a grape variety of exceptional class and the product of ten years of selection from mother vines grown at Château Guiraud, now preserved in the Vine Conservatory. Replanted and vinified separately, this Sauvignon is Château Guiraud's hallmark.

## HAUTE-COUTURE HARVESTS

The ripeness of the grapes is almost of secondary interest in Sauternes; what counts is noble rot, which is part of the region's cultural heritage. Noble rot appears in the autumn thanks to a somewhat fickle fungus called *botrytis cinerea*. The grapes change colour from yellow to chocolate, becoming violet before turning to a darker tone. At the same time, the fungus breaks down some of the sugar in the grapes and increases their acidity. It brings a rich smoothness and, most importantly, serves as a catalyst for flavours and aromas. The fungus does not develop uniformly and the pickers therefore have to pass among the vines several times in a series of *tries* (literally «*sortings*» or selective pickings).



Each year, the harvest at Château Guiraud starts at «zero botrytis point». This involves a thorough examination of the vines and a removal of any undesirable grapes. This step ensures a more homogeneous development of botrytis and enables the Château Guiraud's team to manage the picking process with as much precision as possible. Depending on the vintage, two to five *tries* or pickings may be necessary to harvest the grapes. Yields are tiny. Each hectare at Château Guiraud only produces an average of 12 hectolitres of the Grand Vin per year! - a figure that reflects the estate's rigorous standards and its desire for exceptional quality.



## THE NEW CHÂTEAU GUIRAUD

Since 2000, there has been a gradual but clear change in the style of Château Guiraud's wines. Today, they have grip and structure, but are cleaner, lighter and more elegant. The nose offers well-defined aromas while, on the palate, the wines have a seductive fullness and discreet opulence. There is a seamless harmony in the new style of wines at Château Guiraud, with greater finesse and a mineral finish that enhances the complexity. As for aromas, there is added intensity and complexity. The nose is an explosion of menthol notes, white flowers, apricots, candied citrus fruit and angelica, overlaid with rare fragrances such as white truffle in the sumptuous 2001. Above all, comments Château Guiraud's winemaker, "no botrytis notes", that would overpower the flavours and detract from the purity of the aromas.

## AB CERTIFICATION



The AB standard (agriculture biologique - organic farming) is a voluntary, collective certification, awarded by the French Ministry of Agriculture. It guarantees a quality-standard of production that comes from the use environmentally-friendly methods. These methods must meet certain specifications, the main principle of which is not to use synthetic molecules in any form, particularly fertilisers, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides. It is thus an obligation to use methods that respect nature. The label identifies agricultural products for human or animal consumption that respect organic controls and regulations, as applied in France. It includes stringent traceability requirements from the producer to the consumer.

In France, five certification bodies are accredited by the authorities to approve AB certification. They meet various criteria for independence, impartiality, efficiency and competence. For Château Guiraud, the certification body is Qualité France. Château Guiraud has completed its three-year conversion period, meaning that the 2011 vintage will receive its «product of organic farming» certification and will be able, on a voluntary basis, to display the corresponding logos. Château Guiraud's license number is 43902.

At Château Guiraud, the application of organic farming translates into the following practices:

- the use of organic fertiliser: products used for this operation all comply with Nature & Progrès specifications and NOP standards.
- carefully planned use of copper-based treatments in the form of Bordeaux mixture, copper hydroxide, copper oxide and sulphur.
- the use of natural pyrethrum extracts and vegetable oil (NOP standards and EU regulation 2092/91) to eliminate parasites.
- the regular use of infusions of nettles and horsetail to lower doses of the substances mentioned above.

**Nature & Progrès:** An association of consumers and professionals that advocates organic farming incorporating biodiversity and respect for people, animals, plants and the planet.

**NOP:** National Organic Program. The American National Organic Program was developed by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2002. Its organic standards for plant-based products are of major importance for international trade.

**EU Regulation 2092/91:** European regulation covering the labelling of organic foods, adopted in 1991.





## TECHNICAL SHEET

**Appellation:** Sauternes

**Area:** 85 ha

**Soil:** 80% sandy gravel and clayey gravel for the remainder

**Sub-soil:** deep translucent sand, pure gravel with some banks of red clay and limestone marl, bands of limestone with oyster shells or red and white clays

**Density:** 6,600 vines/ha

**Rootstock:** Riparia, 33 09, 101 14, 161 49

**Average age of vines:** 35-40 years

**Harvests:** uniquely by hand, with successive selective pickings (2-6 pickings) of botrytised grapes. A minimum potential alcohol level of 20° is required to begin harvesting

**Fermentation:** 90% in new barrels, 10% in barrels that have already aged one wine, for a period of three weeks to two months

**Maturation:** in barrels, on fine lees, for 18 to 24 months depending on the year, with racking every three months

**Production:** 100,000 bottles of Château Guiraud  
30,000 bottles of Dauphin de Guiraud, Château Guiraud's second wine  
50,000 bottles of G de Château Guiraud, dry white Bordeaux

**Owners:** Robert Peugeot for FFP, Stephan von Neipperg, Olivier Bernard and Xavier Planty

Press contact:

Lettres de Châteaux - Marie-Stéphane Malbec

E-mail: [marie-stephane.malbec@wanadoo.fr](mailto:marie-stephane.malbec@wanadoo.fr)

Tel: 05 56 44 63 50