



PRESS KIT



CHATEAU

MONTLABERT

GRAND CRU CLASSÉ
SAINT-ÉMILION

A LANDSCAPE,

of stone, light and vines
in the heart of the Saint-Emilion appellation.

A FAMILY PROPERTY,

an architectural and winegrowing heritage,
an uncompromising and convivial spirit

A HISTORY

rooted in Saint-Emilion and influenced by the 18th century
Age of Enlightenment

A NEW PAGE,

a new sustainable winemaking inspiration


A WAY OF LIFE,

an understated, elegant and open-hearted hospitality

THE RECOGNITION,

of the Saint-Émilion Wine Classification

L'ÉMOTION DU TEMPS ET DE LA TERRE



THE CASTEL FAMILY
AT MONTLABERT :
*THE STORY
OF AN
ENCOUNTER*

When the Castel family acquired Château Montlabert in 2008,
a convergence of affinities, history and vision took place.



Since 1750, when it first appeared under its current name, the Montlabert estate has always coupled winegrowing with family ownership. For nearly a century it belonged to the Decazes family, one of the oldest and most respected families in Libourne. Over the years, the Decazes family occupied the most important positions in the town and then worked as négociants while continuing to work their vineyards. Over the generations and seasons, the property has been witness to idyllic family summer holidays, along with work on the land and in the vineyards and the annual ritual of the Saint-Emilion grape harvest.

Due to this close historical combination of family and winegrowing property, the acquisition of Château Montlabert was a natural fit with the Castel family's history and businesses. Since 1957, the Castel family had been building up a collection of Châteaux and Family Properties. Whether in the heart of the Bordeaux region, in Provence, the Loire Valley or the Languedoc, each of the properties has been carefully selected for its character, originality and quality. The Castel family has always sought to reveal and promote the fruit of the properties' terroir with passion and sincerity. Located very close to its illustrious neighbours Figeac, to which it is historically linked, and Cheval Blanc, Montlabert instantly displays the charm and sophistication of this appellation which is unique for the prestige of its wines and its art of living. The Castel family's love for Saint-Emilion can be seen in its commitment to the local community, and particularly through its representation within the Jurade.

Acquiring
a wine estate
and a family home
is above all about
appreciating the passage
of time.

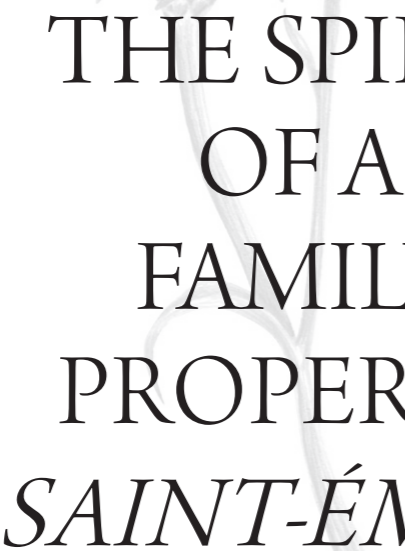
Between the purchase in 2008 and the inauguration in 2020, the Castel family invested time and resources into drawing up the outline of a new history and a new ambition. For 10 years, the focus has been on listening to and understanding the terroir in order to build a wine-making business based on a desire for sustainable excellence. The design and construction of the winery are the vehicle for achieving this vision of enhancing the value of the terroir and the property.

Hospitality is enshrined in the soul of Montlabert and the culture of the Family Estates. This is why the estate has decided to open its doors to wine lovers seeking to discover the soul of a property, a family and an appellation through its wines.



ALAIN AND PHILIPPE CASTEL

Château Montlabert is now writing a new page in its history in a spirit of continuity and humility. The time has come to share the emotion of land and time in the heart of Saint-Emilion.



THE SPIRIT
OF A
FAMILY
PROPERTY
IN SAINT-ÉMILION

Saint-Emilion has a unique history and landscape that is reflected in its finest properties.



In 1999, UNESCO included the vineyards and the eight villages that make up the Saint-Emilion “jurisdiction” on the World Heritage List as a “cultural landscape”, a first. This listing consecrates a 1,000-year-old history, a unique architectural and winegrowing heritage and an example of the virtuous interaction between land and people, nature and culture.

Montlabert is an iconic property in Saint-Emilion and the Castel family wished to respect and reveal its uniqueness by creating an architectural ensemble inspired by the 18th-century. The search for balance and harmony that was characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment influenced both the general layout of the property and the interior fittings, reflecting an understated and elegant way of life.

The ensemble consists of various spaces and buildings serving both tourism and agricultural functions. The Maison de Bordier, once used by the vine workers, is now dedicated to hospitality.

Montlabert is one of the very few châteaux to have preserved its avenue of holm oaks which passes through the vineyards and opens onto English-style grounds replanted with specially selected trees, before leading up to the Chartreuse.

Behind its neo-classical dressed stone facade built at the end of the 18th century, the family home preserves some of the vestiges of its early history: original door frames, marquetry and old fireplaces showing the patina of time.



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THE CHARTREUSE

In the arrangement of its rooms «à la française» and its furnishings, the Chartreuse bears the characteristic stamp of the 18th century. The tapestries with their bright, ancient motifs, the period armchairs, the chandeliers and the engravings offer the elegance and comfort conducive to relaxed enjoyment of the château's cuisine and vintage wines. To make the most of the sunlight throughout the day, the large living room has preserved its traversant layout, still on the west of the Chartreuse's ground floor.

The château's agricultural and leisure functions are visible in the background, to the east, with the orangery and its greenhouse facing the setting sun, and to the west with the winemaking facilities. The orangery, which originally housed fruit trees in the winter, is now used for receptions and is extended by an 18th-century-inspired conservatory.

Behind the building lies a garden "à la française" with its immaculately designed paths around a central pond and the rose garden.

At one time, every Saint-Emilion property had its own white rose (distinct from the red roses at the end of each row of vines) which brightened up the gardens and adorned the family Sunday dining tables. Montlabert is reviving this tradition with the planting of a bespoke heirloom rose garden, bringing together the property's family heritage and the legacy of French horticulture.

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CHÂTEAU MONTLABERT





VINEYARDS
TENDED
LIKE
A GARDEN

Everything comes down to the work in the vineyards.
So that is naturally where the Castel family chose to start.



More than ten years passed between the acquisition of the property and the construction of the winery: the time needed to understand and listen to the soil in order to reveal the uniqueness of the terroir while respecting the eco-systems.

A UNIQUE SAINT-EMILION TERROIR

Château Montlabet has 21 hectares dedicated to producing its Grand Vin, Château Montlabet, and its second wine, La Croix de Montlabet. The plot of land adjoining the family home, used for the production of the Grand Vin, is planted with 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc, growing in deep sandy-gravel soil with a clay subsoil.

The soil cuts taken during the recent construction of the cellar reveal veins of blue clay on the surface similar to those found at the appellation's prestigious neighbours and which are typical of the great Merlot terroirs.

These features allow Montlabet to make wines that are in keeping with the Saint-Emilion appellation while expressing a unique personality.

This structure of the soils and subsoils requires "allowing the roots to dig down "deep" and above all to control the soil's water management. Several growing techniques have been put in place: drainage, grassing, leaf evapotranspiration management, plot selection, leaf thinning, green harvesting, as well as the reintroduction of under-row ploughing and intensive butting work. Ploughing loosens the soil, aerates it and facilitates the penetration of rainwater. It also naturally eliminates spontaneous vegetation. It is this expression of the terroir and its grape varieties that the winemaking process serves to magnify.



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THE MEASURE OF TIME AND THE COMMITMENT OF THE TEAM

The vine requires time. The quest for quality requires a long-term vision to ensure the right investments are made. This is why, as early as 2009, the Family decided to plant new Cabernet Franc vines which went into the 2011 vintage blends. It was only after that that the decision was taken to create a winery able to express and magnify the work carried out in the vineyards. The continuity of our team is a major asset. Ludovic Hérault has been the estate manager since 2009 and is virtually part of the family. He supervises, manages and assesses all the stages of the estate's evolution, in the vineyards and in the cellar, alongside the technical teams.

TERRA VITIS: SUSTAINABLE VITICULTURE

Certified Terra Vitis since the 2011 vintage, Château Montlabert manages its vineyards using sustainable growing methods, like all the Castel family's properties. The property's different plots are tended like a garden, with the greatest of precision and care. Every autumn, cereal seedlings (barley, wheat, rye, etc.) are planted between the rows of vines. Taking advantage of the humidity of the Bordeaux climate, the seedlings grow throughout the winter and spring. This allows them to compete with the vigour of the vines, while adding nitrogen to the soil. At the end of spring, the soil is ploughed and the plant cover is destroyed using a mechanical de-earthing machine and without any chemical weedkillers.

The property's different plots are tended like a garden, with the greatest precision and care.



THE CELLAR *A WORKING TOOL*

The design and construction of the new winery were entrusted to the architect Olivier Chadebost, renowned for his work for some top Bordeaux châteaux as well as in the high tech worlds of defence and healthcare.



His architectural interpretation for the design of the high-level, sustainable winery came from a respectful understanding of the spirit of Saint-Emilion and the uniqueness of Montlabert.

THE PERFECT BALANCE OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION

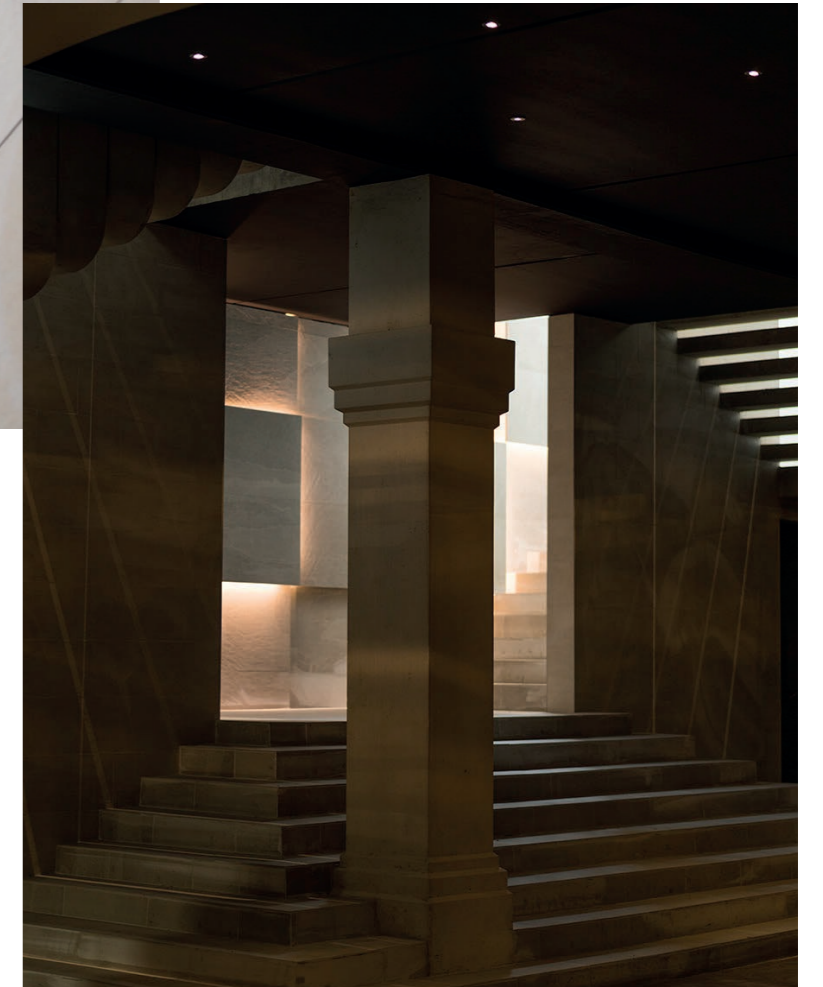
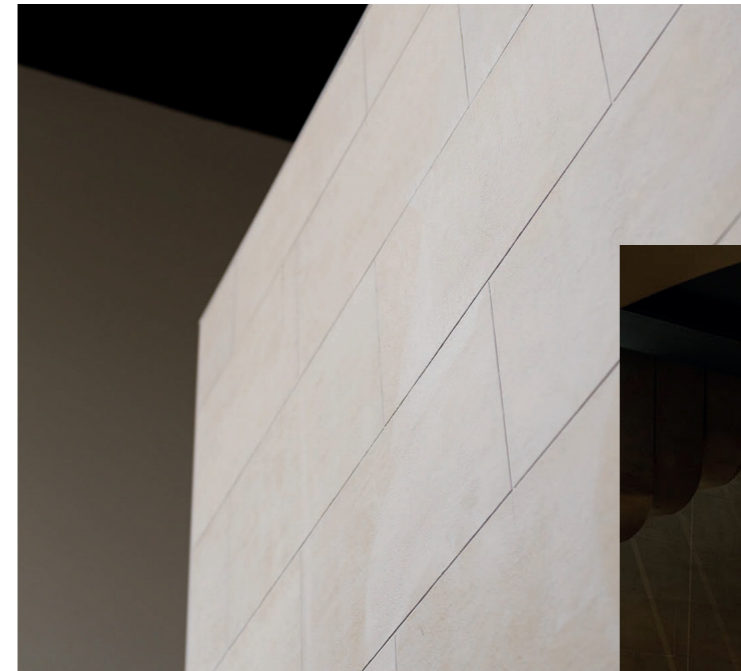
Viewed from the outside, the cellar is a traditional construction in terms of its proportions, shapes and materials, blending in with the rest of property and the Saint-Emilion setting. Like the rest of the property, it is designed to stand the test of time and facilitate a productive and natural dialogue between the property's winemaking and family vocations.

However, the winery also incorporates innovative solutions, which are always justified by oenological and environmental requirements. Technologies from other cutting-edge industries have been adopted in both the processes and the materials.

A centralised technical management software system provides the winemaker with real-time decision support and a database to optimise temperature control for each soil-varietal pairing.

This technology enables the winemaker to carry out the high-precision work that is required to manage the complexity of all the stages leading up to the final blend. This approach allows for careful control of construction and maintenance expenditure, while also minimising the risk of building materials contaminating the winemaking area. This is why cork came to be used as wall cladding for the very first time in a winery.

Beyond its aesthetic properties, the cork lining insulates the vat room both thermally and acoustically, while its water resistant properties make it particularly easy to maintain.



The choice of materials is also based on their eventual position and usage, prioritising materials requiring no extra workmanship, and satisfying all technical and aesthetic requirements.

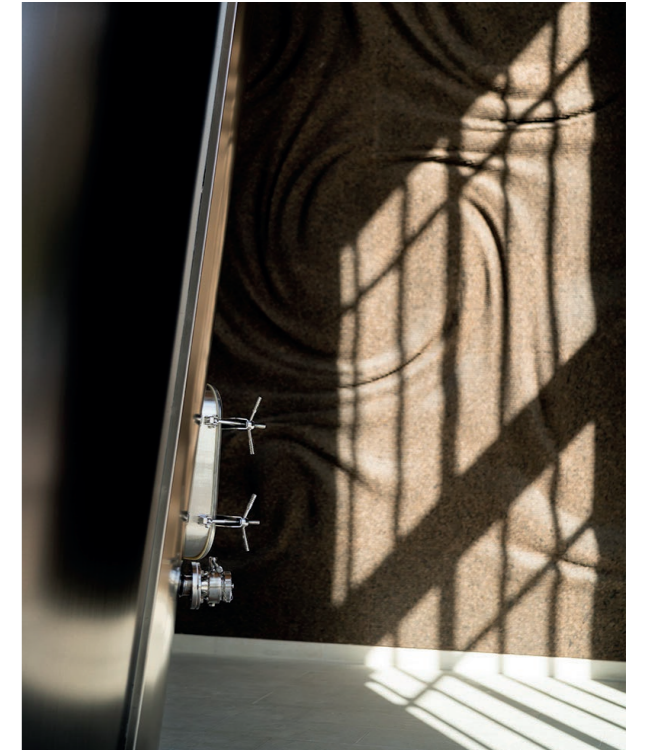
A HIGH-PRECISION FACILITY

Most of a wine's character comes from the terroir and the grapes. The winemaking process aspires to draw out the purest expression of the terroir. The choices made by the architect and the Castel family all reflect their ambition to create the most suitable, high-precision facilities to support a high-level, sustainable winemaking business. The entire process, from the reception of the grapes to the transfer into barrels, is gravity-fed in order to preserve the integrity and quality of the raw material as much as possible.

Sixteen bespoke temperature-controlled tronconic vats, tailored to the individual vineyard plots, have been produced in order to respect the identity of each individual plot right through to the blending. The decision to combine inverted truncated cone-shaped stainless-steel vats with concrete tanks enables the winemaker to optimize the depth and density of the marc cap, bringing out the individual expression of each plot.

The barrel cellar has two areas separated by a thermal buffer zone - one for even years and one for odd years - to bring the malolactic fermentation stage and the 18-month ageing process closer together without moving the barrels which can upset the wines.

There are no rules here, just total freedom to listen carefully to each vintage, plot and grape variety in order to replicate the intricate complexity of the terroir and the weather. The rigour of the engineer here reveals a goldsmith's precision.



Per the family's request, the winemaking spaces all preserve a visual relationship with nature through openings, vistas, and graphic metaphors that are all evocations and escapes to the vineyards, gardens or the Chartreuse.



INSPIRATION FROM LAND AND LIGHT

In addition to its technical vocation, the winery also transmits all the emotion associated with the wine in the making, the passage from nature to time, from light to dark. Per the family's request, the winemaking spaces all preserve a visual relationship with nature through openings, vistas, and graphic metaphors that are all evocations and escapes to the vineyards, gardens or the Chartreuse. The route the visitor follows, like that of the grapes, passes from light into darkness until the final reveal of the tasting.

The development of the vine and the wine is governed by the rhythms of the land and the heavens, the terroir and the weather. The architect takes this metaphor forward in all the spaces, sculpting the light through unexpected openings, bold views and an original play of materials, making use of the verticality of the lines and the patina of the surfaces. Justified for thermal reasons, the cork oak panels also create dark swirls evoking the movement of the wine in the glass and the waves of the vineyards over the Saint-Emilion hill.

In the barrel cellar, the ceramic chandeliers resemble barrel staves, the concrete staircase leading to the cellar rests on an inverted structure dematerialising the space: all of these touches and symbols compose the technical score of the winemaking process in a poetic and aesthetic arrangement.

Montlabert is
the first winery
with an energy impact
measured by PUE
(power usage
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close to 1, thanks to its
data center technology.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHOICES

The technology transfers adopted at Montlabert, thanks to Olivier Chadebost's expertise in the field, have enabled a remarkable ecological and energy efficiency. The electricity consumed per hectolitre of wine produced is 60% less than that of a conventional winery, making Montlabert the first winery with an energy impact measured by PUE (power usage effectiveness) that is close to 1, thanks to its data center technology.

In addition, the winemaking facility is designed as a pressure cascade system. This technique, inspired by the aeraulic systems used in operating rooms, naturally protects the winery's most sensitive areas, most notably the barrel cellar.

Bioclimatic inputs have enabled a further reduction in energy consumption by burying the barrel cellar in clay soil, turning them into perfect thermic conductors. From a depth of one metre, the soil maintains a natural temperature of 15°C.



CHATEAU
MONTLABERT
WINES

A quest for balance and elegance.



Crafting fine wines requires both hard work and humility.

For over 10 years, the Castel family and the Montlabert team have worked patiently and diligently to define the personality and style of its wines, inspired by balance and elegance.

EXPRESSING THE UNIQUENESS OF THE TERROIR

The attention lavished on the soil and the grapes continues throughout the vinification and blending processes and results in wines that are the true expression of the terroir, shaped by the expression of the vintage. All the processes and materials used in the winery are intended to optimise each stage in the life of the grapes and the wine: temperature control that respects the grape varieties and the plots, the selection of five coopers with two different toasts and ten different styles of barrel according to the wine profiles allowing the team to craft ultra-precise blends, and an increase in the length of the ageing to 14 months.

Since 2011, Hubert de Boüard has been supporting and advising Château Montlabert in its search for an ever more precise and high-quality definition of its wines. Today, when you taste the different vintages, you can detect the signs of a better-managed vineyard and tailored vinification.



THE QUEST FOR ELEGANCE AND BALANCE

The wines of Château Montlabert play on elegance rather than power. Throughout this complex and precise score that the blending work represents, the characteristic notes of the Cabernet Franc and Merlot gracefully intertwine.

The Cabernet Franc builds the tannic structure of the wine and gives it its aromatic colours with the notes of graphite that impart minerality. The Merlot displays a silky texture, an aromatic elegance lent by the plump, delicate red fruit.

The most iconic vintages, 2015, 2016, 2018, show a refined structure, a controlled natural acidity, a lovely texture on the mid-palate, an aromatic and tannic elegance. In these wines, the Merlot often reveals an almost Pomerolian softness, its roots drawing deep down into the veins of blue clay. The notes of black cherry and violet imprint on a velvety mouthfeel that shows the hallmark and promise of a great wine.


THE TASTE OF PLEASURE

After the work undertaken to ensure the quality and respect for the raw material and after the complexity of the decisions that lead to the final blend, it is at the time of the tasting that the truth of the work accomplished is revealed. At this point, pleasure takes over.

Montlabert strives to craft wines that provide true tasting pleasure from an early age. The balance of fruit and oak and the aromatic elegance of the grape varieties all contribute to creating this pleasure with radiance and finesse. For the greatest vintages and for those willing to wait for them, Montlabert delivers on its promise of time and harmony.



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HOSPITALITY
AT MONTLABERT
*CULTURE
AND
EXPERIENCE*

With family and winemaking roots dating back to 1850, Montlabert is naturally suited to hospitality and entertaining, which is why the Castel family has decided to revive this tradition.



Not only
has it opened
the property to trade
and private guests,
but it has also offered
them a unique, rich
and convivial
experience.

EXPERIENCE THE MONTLABERT WAY OF LIFE

The majestic avenue of holm oaks greeting the vineyards, the golden light on the walls of the Chartreuse, the mauve glow of the wisteria above the high, open windows, the scent of roses and the radiance of the magnolias, the light streaming over the books in the library, caressing a curve of an armchair and fleetingly illuminating an interrupted game of billiards, an evening that lingers in the illuminated glass roof of the orangery... These images and emotions reflect a way of life unique to Saint-Emilion and Montlabert.

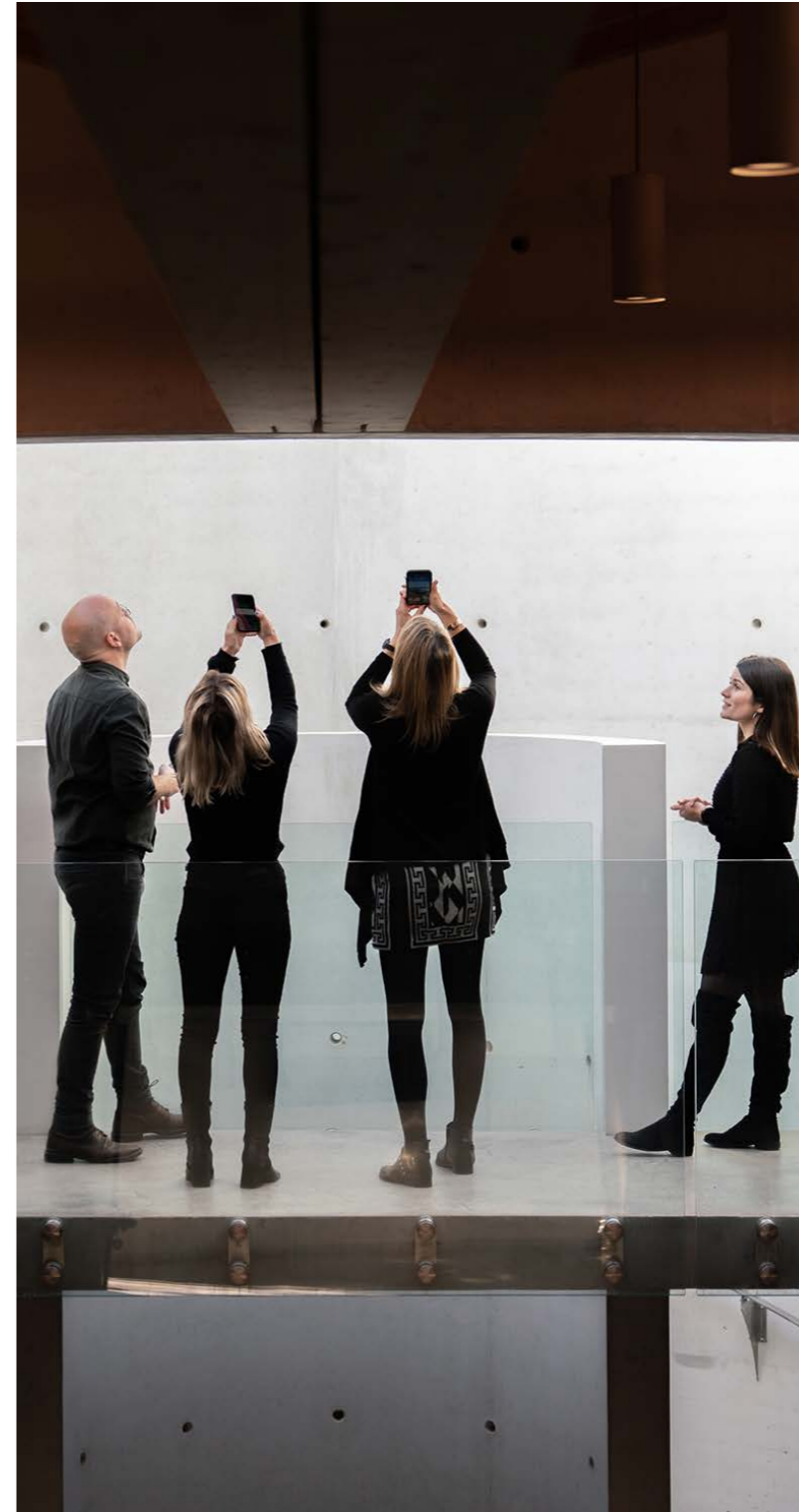
The family has been hosting visits from its special trade partners from around the world for several years now. In future, it will also cater to a seminar audience seeking a venue conducive to reflection, discussion and enjoyment. The traditional Orangery, extended by a glass conservatory, has been fitted out to serve this purpose. Since 2021, Montlabert has received private guests seeking to discover the personality of a wine through the property that gives it its soul and identity.

Each time, actions, decisions, adjustments, tastings, some visible and some invisible, intuition guided by experience. Two transformations, two transcendences from matter to spirit, from nature to time.

FROM THE ART OF ENTERTAINMENT TO THE ART OF TASTING

First and foremost, the Castel family wanted each visitor to share its fondness for and commitment to this estate and its terroir. This is why it has opened up the whole space, offering visitors a tour that allows them to understand, as well as to feel, the spirit and vocation of the place. Wine is, of course, at the heart of the experience. The tour of the winery retraces the path taken by the grapes and finishes with a tasting. It allows visitors to understand the ongoing and informed dialogue that takes place between manual work and technology, made necessary by the complexity of the blending work and the diverse character of each vintage. There are two highlights along this journey, curated by Eric Le Collen: the journey from the vine to the vat and then from the vat to the barrel.

Each time, actions, decisions, adjustments, tastings, some visible and some invisible, intuition guided by experience. Two transformations, two transcendences from matter to spirit, from nature to time. Inspired by the ribbed vaulting of the church in Saint-Emilion for the ceiling, the architect's sculpting of light in the winery reflects the sacred and emotional nature of wine. The high point of the tour, the wine tasting, leads the visitor back into the natural light. It is here that the typicity of the terroir and the winemaking process are brought to life and revealed. It is an educational and emotional experience to which the Castel family wanted to restore a ritualistic, convivial dimension.



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THE RECOGNITION OF THE *SAINTEMILION* WINE CLASSIFICATION

The latest Saint-Émilion Wine Classification was revealed in September 2022.



The latest Saint-Émilion Wine Classification was revealed in September 2022. Château Montlabert was promoted to the status of Grand Cru Classé.

It joins the 85 properties that make up the prestigious Classification, the members of which are considered among the elite of the appellation, enjoying global recognition.

The Classification is a reward for many years of hard work to reveal the singularity of the Montlabert terroir, with the utmost respect for its ecosystems.

The 2022 vintage will be the first to display “Grand Cru Classé” on its label.





HARVEST 2022



Château Montlabert is one of the jewels in the Castel Family Estates crown. The Family Estates are an expression of the family's expertise, passion for terroir, and commitment to sustainability.

The Castel Family has always specialized in the Bordeaux region. Today, the family's fine wine expertise, as both winemakers and wine merchants, continues to develop under the Castel Châteaux & Grands Crus banner

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