



THE ART OF BLENDING IN THE BORDEAUX STYLE



Many new world wine regions have been blending red wines using the Bordeaux region of France as inspiration. The Okanagan Valley is no exception. Wineries here have been producing Bordeaux style blends for the last three decades since planting premium vinifera in the early 1990's. We are uniquely fortunate at Hester Creek to have vines that are over 50 years old. To understand the reasons we blend these particular varietals, it is helpful to start with what each varietal brings to a finished bottle of wine. Although opinions vary, there is a general consensus to the characteristics each of the five primary grape varietals contribute to a Bordeaux style blend. Once we touch on these, we will tell you a little bit about Bordeaux itself and how blends from differing regions compare and why. With the release of our 2016 Judge we'll go over the blend of this particular vintage and the area of Bordeaux which focuses on similar blends.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec are the predominant red grape varietals found in Bordeaux blends. The differing blends are an expression of the châteaux personality as well as the suitability of each of these varietals to the vineyard they are planted in. Generally speaking, Cabernet Sauvignon (later ripening) tends to bring the structural backbone to a blend, aiding in the age-ability and providing a framework for the wine. Merlot (earlier ripening), has been described as bringing richness and at times softer, more opulent textures to the blend. Cabernet Franc (earlier ripening than Cabernet Sauvignon), often brings attractive aromas and some herbal notes, while providing some potential insurance in cooler years when the later ripening Cabernet Sauvignon struggles to ripen. Petit Verdot (later to ripen), is a very black skinned grape and adds colour and a spiciness to the final blend. Malbec is known for its robust tannins and offers rich blue fruit components and colour. A hand full of Bordeaux châteaux still use a sixth permitted grape varietal, Carménère, known for its deep crimson foliage. It is now more commonly found in Chile, which has the world's largest planting of this grape.



Bordeaux blends are often spoken about as being "left bank" or "right bank", meaning that they are either grown on the left bank of the Gironde or grown on the right bank of the Gironde. The Gironde is known as a navigable estuary (often mistakenly referred to as a river) which is formed by the meeting of the Dordogne and Garonne rivers. It is important to note when comparing Bordeaux blends with similar blends from other new world wine regions that the laws of Bordeaux and its governing body strictly regulate factors like water, varietals and other winemaking practices. Bordeaux and the quality of its wines are predicated on what mother nature gives the farmer in any given year. In the Okanagan and other new world wine regions, we are able to mitigate the risk of a sub-par vintage by using different farming and winemaking techniques.

Left bank wines are produced largely from Cabernet Sauvignon and generally have a gravelly soil composition. Notable regions include Medoc, Haut-Medoc, Pessac-Leognan and Graves, as well as the sweet white regions of Sauterne and Barsac. These wines are also blended with Cabernet Franc, Merlot and at times Petit Verdot and Malbec. Right bank wines are made predominantly from Merlot and Cabernet Franc grapes grown in a much more sandy soil, at times enriched with clay. Notable right bank regions include Pomerol, Fronsac and St. Émilion. The two styles of Bordeaux blends offer equally intriguing characteristics when made from reputable producers and can fetch some of the highest prices in the world.

Our 2016 **Judge** would be described as being produced more in the "right bank" style with its composition being 37% Merlot, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec and 1% Petit Verdot. The 2016 The Judge elicits concentrated aromas of sagebrush, sandalwood, fig and blackberry with flavours of ripe cherry, plum, anise and a subtle hint of caramel. This wine will age gracefully for 7-10 years.

Our recently released 2016 **Garland** would be considered crafted in a "left bank" style with its composition being 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13.5% Merlot, 7.5% Petit Verdot, 5.5% Malbec and 3.5% Cabernet Franc. With only 350 cases made, this wine shows lifted aromas of cedar, coconut, leather, blackberry, sagebrush, cinnamon and nutmeg. The palate has focused notes of blackberry, currants and dark, black cherry. With a slightly tighter tannic structure this wine has a bright future in a collector's cellar, 8-14 years.

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