

CHATEAU CASTERA

Press kit





O Médoc, my wild and solitary country
There is nowhere more pleasant to my eyes
You are at the end of the world, and I love you better for it.
Etienne de La Boétie

On the gentle slope, behind imposing stone walls that safeguard the serenity of Saint Germain d'Esteuil, stands Château Castera.

The deer that come to drink at the edge of its woods, the cool of its gardens, still fresh with dew, its chapel that has heard a thousand pardons and its cedar trees that have overheard a thousand conversations, tell of the gentleness of life here in this tranquil corner of the Médoc.

The walls of this castle – for a castle it is – have seen the centuries go by. Put your hand on Castera's stones and they will tell you their stories.



Beyond Saint-Estèphe, the Médoc takes its ease as it flees northward. On passing an invisible border, another world begins. It is hard to imagine that for a long time this country was an archipelago, with islands emerging from the wet land outlined by marshes. When the Pyrenees took form, the Médoc yielded, breaking up to develop a muddled pattern of blocks. Later, the Garonne and Dordogne rivers left their alluvial deposits on this limestone plateau, with clays and rocks that would define the future terroir. With its ancient history and its ambitious cru bourgeois wines, Château Castéra chronicles the life of this northern Médoc, that of a wine estate exuding an art of living marked by serenity and the memory of Montaigne and La Boétie.

In 1986, two German wine lovers, Dieter Tondera and Carl E. Press, fulfilled their dream by acquiring this property steeped in history. The property was not in great shape, but the two men believed in its future and were to give it new life by making significant investments.



Thomas C. Press and Dieter Tondera



Philippe Grynfeldt and Jean-Pierre Darmuzey

The Men

Confirming their ambition, Carl E. Press and Dieter Tondera went on to renovate the vineyard, build new cellars, and call on the services of Jacques Boissenot, classed growth oenologist, to give guidelines on the design of the wine. Unable to be present at the property permanently, they took on two wine professionals to ensure the management of the estate.

For sales and administration, Jean-Pierre Darmuzey, who came from the Bordeaux wine merchant Alexis Lichine.

For the technical part and vineyard management, Philippe Grynfeldt, with an oenology diploma from Montpellier and trained at Château Margaux.

The two men are still there, the quality of the wine has not ceased to make progress and today the distribution of Château Castéra covers more than twenty-one countries on four continents.

Thomas C. Press

In 2008, Carl's son Thomas, who now heads the logistics company that his grand-father founded in Germany in 1924, acquired the shares from his father's associate Dieter Tondera to become the sole owner of Château Castéra. Having spent his holidays as a teenager running in the park and the vineyards, he is very attached to the property. He continues with passion the work started by his elders. His priority is focused on the quality of the wines. In the style of a grand cru, particular attention is paid to selection of the vineyard plots, meticulous sorting of the grapes and rigorous selection when blending. The range has been expanded with the creation of a premium micro cuvée (fewer than 10 barrels) and a rosé. Passionate about the history of the château, he has beautifully restored the medieval tower, the one known by Montaigne and La Boétie.



The Terroir

Located in the communes of Ordonnac and Saint Germain d'Esteuil, the property covers 200 hectares of vineyard, forest and fields. The vineyard area has been steadily increasing since 1984, going from 40 to 70 hectares in 2013 with the purchase of Château Moulin de Buscateau and very recently Château Moulin de Hontemieux, two properties located near the village of Potensac.

This part of the northern Médoc is at the border between gravel and clay-limestone soils. The vineyard, divided in three parts, illustrates this geological feature. The Merlot naturally finds its place on gently sloping soils which combine limestone and clay. In contrast, the Cabernet Sauvignon is planted on the sandy and gravelly hilltops, on warmer soils more suited to this late-ripening variety. As for the Cabernet Franc, according to tradition it thrives on limestone soils.



The majority of the terroir is compound of clay-limestone soils



The rest of the vineyard is compound of Pyrenees Gravels

Viticulture: respect for environment

The Germans have always been attentive to the environment and Thomas C. Press is confirmed as a true defender of nature. To ensure production while maintaining sustainable development, efforts have been undertaken to obtain HVE2 certification, for “high environmental value”. The culture of the vine meets this requirement: how to respond to the exact needs of the plants with precision. This commitment includes grass cover between the rows of vines, ploughing, and very fine tuning of the spraying program.

Grape varieties: the rise of Merlot

Over time and as tastes have changed, the varietal mix at Château Castéra has evolved. The Cabernet Sauvignon has declined, as it had too often been planted on unsuitable soils. The Merlot has triumphed over the past fifteen or so years, rising from 45 to 65% of the area planted, and Cabernet now represents no more than 25% of the blend, the remaining 10% being shared between Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

The harvest

Green harvesting to eliminate excess bunches and precise leaf removal allow the grapes to reach optimum maturity, closely monitored by the technical team, through tasting the grapes, and following Eric Boissenot's guidance. The cooler soils, and the influence of water on a property located between the Gironde and the ocean, are reflected in the harvest date. At Castéra the grapes are picked 5 to 6 days later than in Saint-Julien and Margaux.



Winemaking and ageing: respect for the terroirs

A new vat room, built in 2000, has already allowed quality to be improved. With 42 tanks of varying capacity, it became easy to separate the grape harvest depending on plots and hence to respect the sensitivity of the terroirs.

Avoiding over-extraction, which leads to aggressive tannins and overpowering wines, remains the basic rule for vinification. Fermentation takes place at reasonable temperatures (never more than 28/30°) accompanied by pumping over or rack-and-return depending on the nature of the vintage, followed by around ten days of maceration before running off. The malolactic fermentation takes place in tank and then, in January, the blending is done under the direction of Eric Boissenot. After this early blending, the wine is put in barrel for one year. The proportion of new oak varies from 30 to 35% depending on the nature of the vintage.

The wines: the Boissenot style

First Jacques, then Eric, the Boissenots have deeply marked the style of the wines of the Médoc and of Castéra in particular. A disciple of Emile Peynaud, Jacques, as discreet as he is competent, accompanied the success of some of the greatest wines of Bordeaux (he advised, among others, two of the First Growths). His son Eric has taken the helm while maintaining the paternal philosophy. The Boissenots support, with a radiant talent, a certain idea of classicism in Bordeaux wines. Satisfying the fickle tastes of clients by giving up traditions has never touched their thinking. The Boissenot style describes an idea of balance, a search for elegance and complexity by illustrating a deeply Médoc-style temperament. The wines that they offer to the connoisseur just require a little patience before they deliver the substance of their being.



Eric Boissenot



A long and rich history

Ancient origins

Is it any wonder that the Romans found this land to their liking? A short distance from the château, the inquisitive can discover the ruins of Brion, a Gallo-Roman town dating back to the first century. A temple and a theatre are evidence of its importance and Ptolemy talks about it under the name of Noviomagus. Could the soldiers of the empire, who never travelled without a vine in their bags, have created the vineyard of Castéra? The imagination runs wild . . .

In the year 900, the presence is recorded of a Gallic oppidum which defended the Ile de Meteuil, but the names of the founders of the property are not known. Historians mention the name of the family de Lilhan, the oldest surname used to designate the first lords of Castéra.

In the footsteps of La Boétie and Montaigne

During the Hundred Years War, the English roamed the Médoc and the Black Prince took Castéra by storm . . . Later, Henry IV of England confiscated it from the Arzac family, one of the largest exporters of Bordeaux wines of the time.

The marriage of Etienne de la Boétie and Marguerite de Carle, widow of Jean d'Arzac, was to shed a ray of light on Castéra. Jacquette, one of the two daughters of the poet's wife, married Thomas de Montaigne, brother of Michel. The friendship of the two great men has crossed the centuries. The philosopher often came to Castéra to annotate his Essais. The death of La Boétie at the age of 32 left him inconsolable: "because he was he, and I was I . . ."



Michel de Montaigne

The Verthamons

In the 18th century, the race to plant vines in the Médoc began in earnest. The aristocrats and bourgeois of Bordeaux bought properties and built themselves châteaux. In 1760, Marie-Anne de Verthamon, allied with the Ségurs, became owner of Castéra, "on her own money" according to reports. She had a domestic chapel built and her descendants, François-Martial and Maurice, built the modern viticultural estate. The phylloxera epidemic that devastated the vineyard put an end to the Verthamon dynasty.



Martial Maurice de Verthamon,

The fame of the château was already assured, cited in the first edition of "Bordeaux and its wines" by Charles Cocks, published in 1850. The owners who followed left the memories of men who had a love of the place, real winegrowers who had succumbed to the charms of Castéra. The château was admitted to the ranks of the Crus Bourgeois on the first classification in 1932.



Harvests in 1923



Château Castéra 1930

The modern period

The difficult years of the 1960s . . . The Bordeaux wine crisis at the beginning of the 1970s . . . The Médoc was going through one of the most serious crises in its history: the entire vineyard was on the auction block. In 1973, the company Alexis Lichine bought Château Castéra. The man was well known in Bordeaux, as a wine merchant and owner of Château Prieuré Lichine in Margaux.

Thirteen years later, in 1986, he sold the estate to Dieter Tondera and Carl Press, father of the current owner.

Wine tourism

How can one fail to succumb to the indescribable charm of Château de Castéra? With its medieval tower, its château illustrating the lexicon of French architecture, its 18th century domestic chapel, its landscaped garden, the estate recalls 1000 years of history with a rare elegance. It is surrounded by a fabulous park with centuries-old trees. Cedars, chestnuts, yews, pines . . .

Following in the footsteps of Montaigne and La Boétie, discovering the life of a Médoc estate and penetrating the secrets of the wine remains a unique experience.

Several times rewarded by the Best of Wine Tourism for the Quality of its hospitality, in October 2017 Château Castera won the Gold Best of Wine Tourism in the Arts and Culture category. It is the commitment of the property in arts and culture that allowed the Château to take the first place in this category.



Château Castera also earned Vignobles & Découvertes certification in 2016 upon recommendation from the Conseil Supérieur de l'Enotourisme.

This proves that Château Castera is firmly committed to quality wine tourism. Furthermore, the estate is part of the new Route du Vin de Bordeaux en Médoc created by Gironde Tourisme.



It offers a wide choice of visits and pays special attention to tourists in the region and visitors from around the world. Its offer, in close collaboration with other local tourism providers, is particularly rich.

Château Castéra is also a member of "Wine Inn Tour". This tourism association, created in 2011, offers a program that gives the possibility, in addition to visiting the various châteaux, of staying in top-of-the-range guest houses, taking boat trips on the estuary, or even being entertained at the most famous cabaret of the Médoc.

Château Castéra offers a wide choice for history lovers and wine lovers alike.



Technical sheet

APPELLATION : AOC Médoc

LOCATION : Saint Germain d'Esteuil & Ordonnac

SURFACE AREA : 200 hectares of which 63 ha of vines

GRAPE VARIETIES : 65 % Merlot, 25 % Cabernet Sauvignon, 5 % Cabernet Franc, 5 % Petit Verdot

SOIL TYPE: 60 % clay-limestone 40 % Pyrenees gravels

VINEYARD WORK: Disbudding, leaf removal and green harvesting

Ploughing under the vines, grass cover between the rows

DENSITY : 7500 vines per hectare

HARVESTING: 90 % mechanical, 10% by hand

VINIFICATION : Temperature-controlled fermentation, on skins for 18 to 22 days

AGEING : 100 % French oak barrels, 20 to 30 % new, medium toast

12 months with quarterly racking

SECOND WINE: Marquis de Castera

OWNER : Thomas C. Press

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR : Jean-Pierre Darmuzey

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: Philippe Grynfeldt

OENOLOGIST : Eric Boissenot

Castera's history in few dates...



900

The first written historical reference dates back to 900 in the book *Méteuil* by Louis Raby where he writes "The early chieftains, lords of Castera, who built the stately church of St. Germain in the year 900, married into the old family of Lilhan." Despite this first reference, none of the owners of Castera are known until the 12th century.»

1121

As per a recorded deed, Amanieu of Lilhan held the lordship of Castera (G.O 'Gilvy archives of the Tower of London). The castle is still being described as a fortress: "It is on a hill surrounded by woods, it would need cannons to take it... The main building of this castle is very high and strongly fortified»

1355

Edward of Woodstock, better known as the "Black Prince", plunders the rich Abbey of Lisle, taking Castera by storm and partly destroying it.

1409

Henry IV, King of England, confiscates Castera by special charter. The family of Arzac, who had owned Castera and were amongst the major exporters of wine of the time, decide to defend their rights and begins a court case to regain Castera which lasts several centuries.

1559

Etienne de La Boétie, the famous humanist and advisor to the Parliament of Bordeaux, marries the widow of Jean d'Arzac thus becoming linked to Castera.

1563

Thomas de Montaigne, brother of the philosopher by his wife Jacquette, becomes administrator of Castera. His concern and passion regarding the land and leases leads him to forget about the construction needs of the buildings. During this long period Michel de Montaigne visits him several times

1584

Michel de Montaigne liked to retreat to Castera to write some of his essays. On April 23, 1584 he wrote a letter from Castera to Sieur Dupuy, Advisor to the King, asking to pardon one of his friends imprisoned in Paris.

1616

Anthoinette of Montaigne signed, in presence of a solicitor in the city of Bordeaux, a sales contract of wines and wheat which were in the Château Castéra.

1695

Castera is seized and entrusted to a farmer imposed by the existing government, named Jean Casenave, who was a merchant at Bordeaux.

1696

The Protestant Thomas de Montaigne succeeds the Catholic Etienne Joly. In March of that year, following heavy frost, Casenave is forced to replant one third of the vineyard..

1737

After the death of her husband, Marie-Anne de Verthamon inherited Château Caster. She renovated and administered marvelously the estate.

1760

Marie-Anne de Verthamon requests an authorization by the church to establish a small chapel on the grounds, "considering the remoteness of it to the parish church and that there are bad roads to get there." The permission to build and therefore celebrate mass is granted by the Archbishop Jacques Audibert Lussan on October 5, 1760.

1769

After the death of his aunt Marie-Anne, François-Martial of Verthamon takes stock of his new lands of Castera. Out of 175 hectares of property, approximately 15 hectares are cultivated with vines. The main parts of this culture are close to the castle, near the river Garenne.

1829

Maurice de Verthamon, the new heir should be considered as the creator of the "modern" castle and vineyard of Castera, whose head he remained until his death in 1893.

Passionate about viticulture, he continues in the 1830s to 1860s, to buy, sell and exchange parcels of vines in order to regroup his property.

1850

In his first edition of the famous "Bordeaux and its wines", Charles Cocks attributes an annual production of 75 barrels to Castera. The selling price of the barrel reaches the respectable sum of 200 francs, which puts it at the same level of fine wines as "Graves" and the "Haut Médoc".

1868

Under the Second Empire the wine production takes a strong rise and reaches 100 to 150 barrels in 1868.

1890-1899

In 1892 Marquis Maurice donates Castera to his son Déodat, dying at the castle a short time later on April 5, 1893.

As the economic conditions become more and more difficult, the outbreak of the phylloxera crisis hits the Verthamon family very hard, and the vineyards of Saint-Germain no longer produce more than 20 and 25 twenty tons in 1893. The decedent's estate is liquidated and sold in 1899 in agreement with the children of Déodat de Verthamon by selling the property to Mr. Destanque

1908

Emilien Destanque and his son worked very hard to put the wine back to its former glory. They are able to take advantage of the weak economic recovery in the early 20th century by investing in an anti-cyclical fashion. In 1908 the now expanded sixty acres of vineyard of Castera produce 250 tons and the total surface approaches 200 acres. At the end of WWI, Madame Destanque however sells her property.

1922-1970

Mr. Degonde purchases the property. He and his heirs will keep it during a period often difficult for Bordeaux wine. At the time of selling the property in 1970, the vineyard has been reduced to 45 hectares.

1973

Many investors are interested in the vineyard until it is acquired by the company Alexis Lichine in 1973.

1986

The new owners Dieter G. Tondera and Carl E. Press, both wine enthusiasts, purchase the property and begin massive renewal work both in the vineyard and in the winery as well as the long neglected Chateau, which is in ruins. . MJ Boissenot, a recognized oenologist for the Médoc, advises Chateau Castera to improve the quality of the wines

2010

Thomas C. Press becomes the sole owner of the castle. He breathes new life into all aspects of the operations, focusing especially on quality and continually trying to build the reputation of the Château.

2011

Finally renovation works that began in 1986 are completed as the last building is renovated. The iconic Tower of Chateau Castera, which features prominently on the label of the wine, is finally fully restored and available for private visits.

CONTACTS

Château Castera

Jean-Pierre Darmuzey

Rue du Bourg - 33340 Saint-Germain d'Esteuil

Tél : +33 (0)5 56 73 20 60 - Fax : +33 (0)5 56 73 20 61

chateau@castera.fr

www.chateau-castera.com

Press contact France

Lettres de Châteaux

Marie-Stéphane Malbec

Tél. : +33 (0)5 56 44 63 50

ms.malbec@lettres-de-chateaux.com

Press contact UK

Accent Communications

Janet Burns

+ 44 (0)208 661 2061

janet@accent-comunications.com