



Precious 11 HECTARES OF PLOTS

Located within the historic perimeter of the Plateau and the Grande Côte where the majority of Saint-Emilion's Premiers Grands Crus Classés wines are located, the vineyards of Château Larcis Ducasse enjoy a terroir with exceptional natural qualities. Covering a total of 11 hectares of closely-grouped plots, it is situated to the west of Château Pavie and to the north of Château Troplong Mondot.

Larcis Ducasse occupies the tip of the famous Pavie hill ('Côte Pavie'). It enjoys a wonderful, fully south-facing position. The terrace terroir is worthy of a Premier Grand Cru.

Ridge ELEVATION

Beneath the ledges of the limestone plateau, the advance of the Côte Pavie molasses mass has created a ridge elevation with a drop of nearly 50 metres.

The reasons for cultivating vines on hillsides (rather than rumps or valleys) have been proven many times. Sunshine conditions are exceptional and the natural drainage is ideal. However, water circulates so quickly on slopes that there can be considerable damage caused if no attempt is made to combat erosion. Hedge preservation, work on soil permeability and the installation of surface water drainage within grassy avenues have enabled us to better regulate run-off water, which is abundant during storm rainfall.

A single piece of land, the Château Larcis Ducasse vineyard covers multiple, primarily sedimentary, geological formations, which explain the elevations. Moving down from the Côte there is an outcrop of tertiary soils, creating three types of prime winemaking terroirs:

The 'Plateau de Saint Emilion', a large slab of asteriated limestone

The 'Grande Côte de Saint-Emilion', known as the Côte Pavie, a long and steep slope descending towards the South (slopes of up to 25%)

The 'Pied de Côte de Saint-Emilion': a slope with a gentle incline (2-5%), made up of molasses and then fluvial sands and covered with sandy clay soil

The estate commissioned David Pernet (Sovivins) to perform a complete study of soil profiles, creating 85 zoning holes. This led to a better understanding of viticultural behaviour, and was valuable to us on the ground, as it has enabled us to optimise the terroir's potential by ensuring the most judicious choices for viticulture and winemaking.

This collection of high-quality terroirs, alongside the grape varieties used, creates a range of expressions as diverse as they are complementary. This nourishes the complexity and nobility of the wines produced by Château Larcis Ducasse.

Sunny YET FRESH

South-facing, located on the famous Côte Pavie, the Château Larcis Ducasse vineyards look towards the Dordogne Valley. This is a highly favourable position for perfect grape ripening, as it tempers

climatic extremes. Sheltered from northern winds and protected by the river, the vines are not at risk from frost or heatwaves. Grapes ripen fully, preserving their freshness and fruit thanks to alternating warm summer days and cool nights under the influence of the Dordogne river.

The winemaker's FIRST CHOICE

After the terroir, the first choice the winemaker has to make is the grape variety he will plant in his plot of land. The grape variety is not the sole determining factor of the wine's character: each variety, with its own particular characteristics, is merely a means of expression of the terroir. The art of winemaking lies in choosing the grape varieties best suited to the terroir in question and in understanding the wines produced. Then comes the moment of assembling these wines into the final blend.

Château Larcis Ducasse is currently planted with 78% Merlot and 22% Cabernet Franc at a density of 6000 vines per hectare and an average age of 35 years.

A programme of continuous vineyard renewal is in place with a rotation of around 50 to 60 years. Following uprooting and four years of intercrops to allow the soil to rest, we replant at higher densities, today approaching 7500 vines per hectare, using vine stock from high-quality clones or, more often, from massal selection. In fact, in order to preserve our diverse winemaking heritage we have implemented a major selection programme of the oldest vine stock using only qualitative criteria.

Merlot

Merlot occupies the majority of Château Larcis Ducasse's vineyards (78%), taking full advantage of the limestone-clay soils where it expresses its full roundness, generosity, suppleness and sophistication.

With a seductive richness from a very early stage, as a young plant it produces powerful yet silky, very fruity wines with spicy and floral notes.

As they age, the fruity notes of cherry and blackberry fade and give way to a developed, more complex bouquet combining truffle with undergrowth and other spicy elements.

Cabernet Franc

Planted in its favourite type of soil at Larcis Ducasse (sandy clay with varying levels of limestone), the Cabernet Franc produces very elegant, aromatic wines with firm yet fine tannins. Marked in its youth by red fruit aromas, in particular strawberry, raspberry and blackcurrant, it also develops tobacco and violet notes.

Premier Grand Cru CLASSÉ WINE

With the advice of Stéphane Derenoncourt and Julien Lavenue, and assisted since 2002 by his right-hand man David Suire, the trained Bordeaux oenologist Nicolas Thienpont is continuing the efforts made thus far to further increase the quality of the estate's wines. Well aware of the exceptional potential of the Larcis Ducasse terroir, together they lead an in-depth study of the terroirs available, invest considerable amounts of resources into vineyard and cellar renovations, and combine traditional methods with innovative techniques to enhance the flavours of the land. All of this is with a view to producing great wines: delicious, pure, mineral, long, powerful and fine 'terroir wines' that bear the mark of the land. In September 2012, just 10 years after the new team's arrival, Château Larcis Ducasse was made a Premier Grand Cru Classé wine in the 2012 Saint-Emilion wine classification, thus being acknowledged by its peers and rewarded for the quality of its wines and its exceptional terroir.

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Small, FAMILY-RUN AND HIGH-RANKING

In the 16th century Larcis Ducasse's wines were extremely popular and already highly sought-after. Records show that in 1777 they were purchased at a very high price by Pierre Beylot. Then, in 1841, Lecoutre de Beauvais mentions Larcis as being one of the best Saint-Emilion crus. A few years later in 1867, a first gold medal from the International Exposition in Paris was awarded for the quality of the wines produced in this exceptional terroir.

In 1893, Château Larcis Ducasse was purchased by Henry Raba – a direct descendant of a major Bordeaux ship-owning and merchant family based in Bordeaux from the 18th century. His passion led him to invest a significant portion of his fortune in maintaining this terraced vineyard and equipping the chateau with state-of-the art winery equipment. His son André took over upon his death in 1925. André then died during the war. He was childless, so his niece Hélène Gratiot Alphanbéry inherited the property in 1941.

Also under threat, she took refuge in the free zone with her two children. She returned to the château after its liberation and, alongside teaching psychology at the Sorbonne, she ran the estate with the help of the Director Pharaon Roche.

She was succeeded in 1990 by her son Jacques-Olivier Gratiot, a Saint-Emilion Jurade and also L'Oréal's development and creativity director. Under his leadership and with the help of the Director Philippe Dubois, the long tradition of quality that is characteristic of Château Larcis Ducasse wines was continued. Château Larcis Ducasse is still a family-run estate, with Jeanne Attmane and her brother Jacques-Olivier Gratiot as co-managers, alongside their children. The family has entrusted supervision of the estate to Nicolas Thienpont since 2002.

Humans AND THE VINE

When the sole objective is to produce great wine, the quality of the terroir and a perfect match between the grape variety and soils are prerequisites for success. However, winemakers know that this is not all... You also need to know how to cultivate the vines!

This is why every effort is made at Larcis Ducasse to enhance the qualities of this exceptional yet truly demanding terroir, combining traditional methods with innovative techniques, where these meet the primary objective of quality and the ever-increasing environmental challenge.

Preserving the terroir

Fascinated by the quality of the terroirs available to us at Larcis Ducasse, we are working to maintain this land in a range of ways that is as diverse as the estate's terroirs are nuanced.

The man and the vine plant

In order to do that, we think we can produce the best grapes only by respecting the balance between a living soil and perfectly deep-rooted and not very vigorous vines.

We do precisely that when combining grass growing with soil mechanical maintenance. Of course, we prohibit the use of fertilizers and chemical herbicides!

In practice, from spring to harvest time, even though most of our vine plants remain grassy, we maintain the soils much cared for by scraping or light ploughing with non animated tools that are soils structure-friendly. In autumn, vine plants are ploughed in order to oxygenate the soils with winter rainfalls. Then, on certain soils, we sow cereal-leguminous-crucifer mixes in order to limit erosion,

stimulate microbial life and look after the structure of soils. Elsewhere, we maintain a diversified grass growing technique in order to healthily compete with vine plants, while respecting its balance.



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