

Chateau La Pointe



Measuring around 785 hectares, the Pomerol appellation is not only small, but it is also divided up more than anywhere else in Bordeaux, with the average vineyard holding just 5 hectares. In the whole appellation of around 170 properties, there are 50 properties under two hectares, and around 30 properties under one hectare; which makes La Pointe one of the largest estates at 22 hectares.

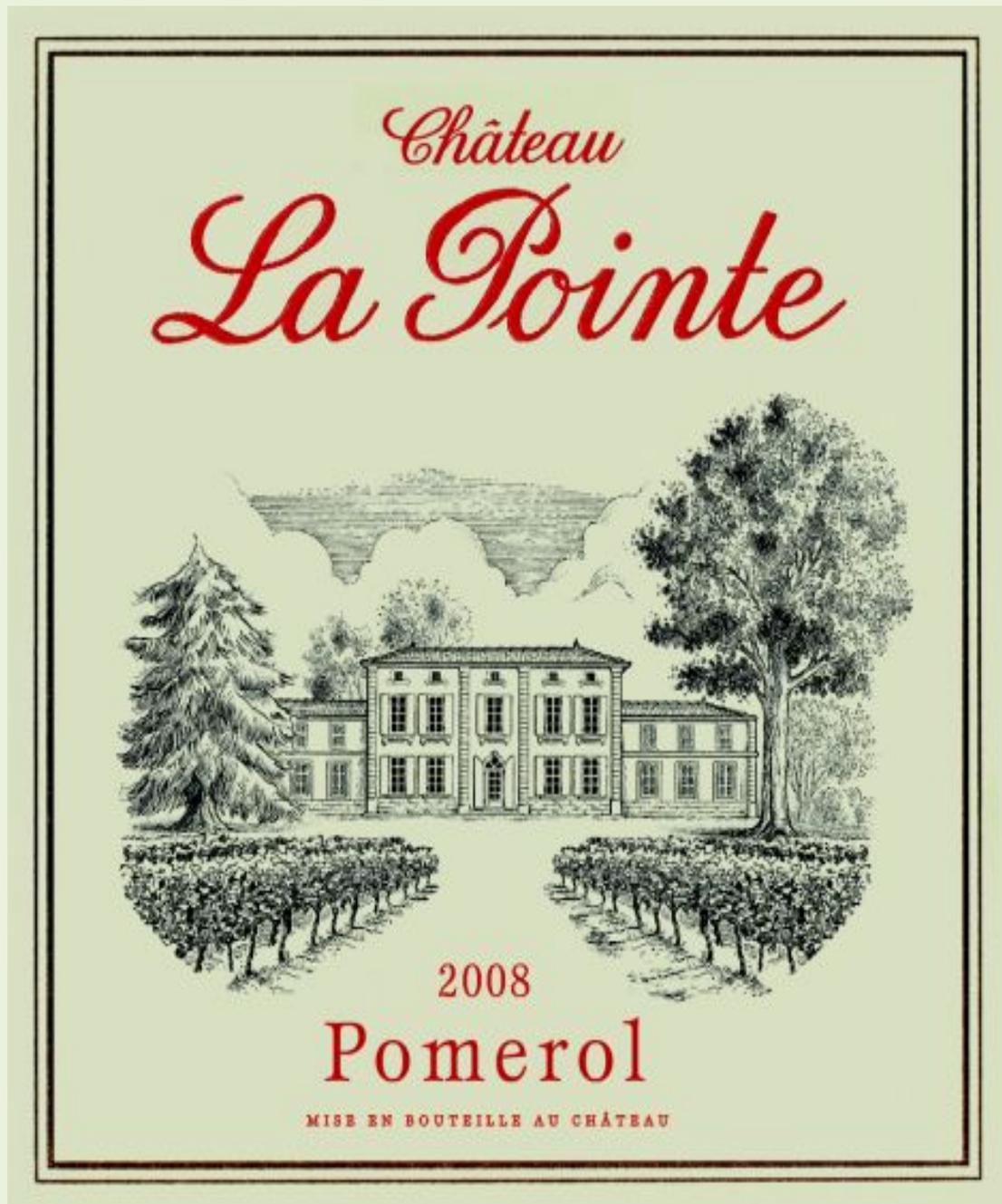
This has often been seen as a property that hasn't quite lived up to its potential. Much of the *terroir* is sandy, which is given by various

commentators as the reason for wines that are slightly lighter than the average Pomerol. This may be true, but La Pointe has always provided wines that not only have I enormously enjoyed, but also that I have bought regularly, because they are often very well priced for the appellation. However, things are changing fast at La Pointe, and it is today an estate to watch.

Chateau La Pointe's vineyards are located on the lower part of a terrace starting at Château Trotanoy, next to Château Nénin. It is now owned by Generali France, sold by the D'Arfeuille family in November 2007. Eric Monneret, 37, has been installed as Director, an agricultural engineer who has worked in Bordeaux for the past 12 years. He started his career in wine in Sauternes at Raymond-Lafon (belonging to the Meslier family), before joining Generali first at Chateau La France and now La Pointe. The new consultant is Hubert de Boüard de Laforest of Chateau Angelus.

One of the first things Generali did, understandably considering the negative press, was undertake a full survey of the *terroir*. The complete study of the soil and subsoil was conducted by Pierre Becheler, a well-known geologist who has done similar, in-depth studies for Châteaux Cos d'Estournel, Palmer, Montrose, and Branaire Ducru. The results show, they are at pains to point out, that it is far from just sandy – instead there is gravel soil with smooth, rounded stones from Isle River terraces (with slopes for drainage), clay-gravel soil, sandy soil on clay, and sandy soil on gravel. These last soils have suffered from excess water retention in the past.

Much of the vineyard had previously been planted without necessarily the best thought for the makeup of this varied *terroir*, and this is an area that they are taking steps to resolve. The grape varieties are 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc, and the estate is currently introducing a new plot-by-plot vineyard management programme, and improving the drainage system across the estate (particularly in the sandy-clay sections).



The vat rooms is also currently being renovated with smaller vats to keep fruit from specific plots separate in order to fine tune the final blend. To make room for these vats, optimise working conditions for the winemaking team, and facilitate operations during fermentation, they will raise the height of the vat room roof, and increasing the sorting capacity to allow more rows to be sorted at the same time. Ageing takes place 100% in oak barrels (50% new).

Average annual production: 100,000 bottles

Sales: via Bordeaux négociants

Member of the Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux

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