



CHÂTEAU HAUT-BAGES LIBÉRAL PAUILLAC

Like most Bordeaux winemakers, Claire Villars Lurton is extremely concerned about the environment and climate change. Armed with doctoral studies in physics applied to archeology along with viticulture and oenology degrees, she made sustainable viticulture a priority from the moment she took over Haut-Bages Libéral in 1992.

After adopting organic and biodynamic practices, she decided to push the envelope even further by pursuing agroforestry, which involves planting trees among the vines. The idea was to encourage biodiversity—birds and insects as well as the network of nutrients that takes shape in the soil when trees, vines and other plants grow in proximity. Lurton Villars believes that together, these elements create natural defenses for the vines.

In 2020, she unveiled the fruit of her efforts: a 100 percent merlot wine made from an eight-hectare plot using these techniques. What's more, it was the first Pauillac grand cru that could claim to be a natural wine, entirely organic with no added sulphites.

How to communicate this disruptive milestone? First Villars Lurton named the wine CERES, after the Roman goddess of agriculture and fertility. Next she wanted a label as distinctive as the wine itself, one that would convey the very concept of agroforestry.

She approached an artist whose work she had long admired: printmaker François Houtin. His exquisitely detailed renderings of romantic forests look like they could be inhabited by fairies and gnomes yet are informed by his extensive background in landscaping and garden design. These enchanting black-and-white scenes have been featured on Hermès scarves as well as in intimate notebooks and dramatic murals.

Houtin enthusiastically embraced the label project, imagining a joyful tangle of grape-laden vines climbing up a majestic ash tree along with a peek at their roots mingling underground. It resembles no other Bordeaux label—an eloquent tribute to Villars-Lurton's viticultural vision and achievement.

