

# French Wine News

## Tariquet, a Gascony success story

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Château de Tariquet, the veritable driving force behind Côtes de Gascogne wines, is celebrating its one-hundredth birthday this year, as well as the thirtieth birthday of its “Classic” cuvee, the Château’s emblematic white wine. Let’s take a look back through the remarkable history of the Grassa family.

1912, 1982, 2012. Three dates, three key moments in the history of a modest Gers estate that, over time, established itself as [one of the most spectacular success stories in the South-West winemaking region](#). And it has been exactly one-hundred years since Château de Tariquet entered into the Artaud family – later becoming the Grassa family – and thirty years since the birth of the “Classic” cuvee, which symbolizes the estate’s commercial success. 2012 thus marks a double anniversary and a great one as well! But Château de Tariquet’s roots go even deeper: its vines have been producing Armagnac since at least the end of the 17th century.

It was in 1912 that Pierre Artaud, a bear trainer from Ariège who made his fortune in the United States, bought Château de Tariquet in the Gers region of France. At the time, [the estate only produced Armagnac](#). During the 1920s, his son, Jean-Pierre, who worked as a bartender in New York and was seriously injured during the war, returned to France permanently in order to allow the estate to remain within the family fold. In 1946, Héléne, Jean-Pierre Artaud’s daughter, married Pierre Grassa from the Béarn province, who distinguished himself in the Resistance during the German occupation. Pierre and Héléne vastly developed the Tariquet estate in the years to come, starting with the purchase of the very first tractor (of the entire region!) in the 1950s, the acquisition of new land in the 1960s, as well as with their rapidly growing family. In 1972, Yves and Maïté Grassa, two of Pierre and Héléne’s children, took the reins of Château de Tariquet.

### Master stroke

Maïté and Yves’s “master stroke” came in 1982 when they decided to produce their first white wine: a wine which is made of 100% Ugni blanc, the iconic grape variety of Armagnac. This “Classic” cuvee, PGI Côtes de Gascogne (formerly Vin de Pays), is a fresh, fruity, and seductive white wine. It encountered immediate success. It was exported to the United States and England, and was voted “Best white wine of 1987” in London. It could be found in the best wine shops. Even though the profile of the “Classic” cuvee has changed over years (Ugni blanc was first blended with Colombard, and afterwards, since 2011, with Sauvignon and Gros Manseng, resulting in a style which is “rounder”, but remains very fresh and pleasant), its success hasn’t budged. This wine, at 4,50 € a bottle (approximate price), is a commercial success – the forerunner of “pleasure” wines, trendy ahead of its time, showing the way for its fellow Côtes de Gascogne producers. Strengthened by their success, the Grassa family broadened their range of white wines in the 1990s [by launching two sweet late-harvest wines](#) made with Petit Manseng and Gros Manseng grape varieties: “Premières Grives” and “Dernières Grives”.

Over the years, the estate has continued to expand. Today, it covers 900 hectares, a hundred of which are devoted to producing Armagnac. The Tariquet range includes nine white wines (of which a few are quite original, such as their Chardonnay, “Tête de Cuvée”, and a special Chenin/Chardonnay blend), two rosé wines, and a dozen brandies (under the appellation Bas-Armagnac). 8 million bottles of wine and 120,000 bottles of Armagnac are sold every year throughout close to fifty countries.

In 2005, Rémy and Armin Grassa took over for their father, Yves, running the estate with their aunt, Maïté. Four generations of the same family perpetuate the tradition of Château de Tariquet: thanks to them, this one-hundred-year-old estate has remained young at heart! Could it perhaps be an example of the famous Gascon Paradox?

[www.tariquet.com](http://www.tariquet.com)

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