## CHATEAU HAUT-BAILLY

GRAND CRU CLASSÉ

## HAUT-BAILLY ON THE MOVE

### 25 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

A conversation with Véronique Sanders and Chris Wilmers

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The essence of life lies in the movement that transmits it.

Henri Bergson

Creative Evolution.

### FOREWORD

For Bergson, "intelligence is constituted by uninterrupted progress, along a continuous line that ascends (...) and shows us, in the faculty of understanding, an appendage to the faculty of acting, an adaptation that is more and more precise, more and more complex and flexible...".

Perpetual evolution and uninterrupted progress means to constantly move forward – something the Haut-Bailly estate has done for hundreds of years. In many ways, the continuous rise of Haut-Bailly over the last four hundred years embodies this vital ability to keep moving – purposefully and thoughtfully. This uninterrupted, continuous progress is exercised by inspired winemakers, driven by a shared desire to serve the iconic estate.

It can also be said that those who have presided over the destiny of the Haut-Bailly estate have an exceptional relationship with space and time:

With space, because the estate and its land have barely changed over the years – the limits of the château, the surface area, even the parcel distribution remain the same – conspiring to offer the ideal blend of the best Grands Crus Classés in the area.

With time, because the trajectory of this mythical estate is not experienced as a succession of sequences but as a single continuum: each decision of the present is the result of an intimate understanding of the past and integrates a clear and innovative vision for tomorrow.



From Firmin Le Bailly to Bob and then Chris Wilmers and Véronique Sanders, via Alcide Bellot des Minières, Daniel and Jean Sanders, Haut-Bailly has remained an exceptional estate looking at what is coming next. Whilst intimate knowledge of the past is invaluable for unlocking the estate's secrets, it is the future that guides today's decisions and that will bear fruit for the generations to come.

As explained during this passionate conversation between Véronique and Chris, the true value of Haut-Bailly is encapsulated in two key behaviors: a unique combination of constantly demanding the very best standards, and being balanced in its approach. Demanding the very best standards is an absolute necessity and is at the heart of everything the estate does. Being balanced is more of an attitude, an earthy sense of measure, sobriety, moderation, warding off any notions of exuberance, opulence, excess or haste. Gabriel Vialard, Technical Director of the estate and guardian of its vines and cellars, summed it up best when he said: "Of course, we are interested in everything. We like innovation but we approach everything with care. We don't rush anything."

This desire to resolutely but calmly progress, and reach even greater heights, is the hallmark of creative evolution. This unrelenting desire to keep moving the estate forward, never resting on its laurels or being satisfied with "good enough", or resorting to simple seduction. These are the fundamental characteristics of Haut-Bailly's identity, embodied by its dedicated and passionate team.

It's in this context that the idea naturally arose for Chris Wilmers, Chairman of the Supervisory Board, and Véronique Sanders, Executive President, to reflect on some of these themes and discuss the twenty-five years of outstanding achievements enjoyed since the Wilmers family acquired the estate in 1998.

A conversation I had the great pleasure of hosting.

Pascal Beucler, March 2023



1.



THE
STORY OF A
CONTINUAL
RENAISSANCE

Constant reinvention throughout the ages, uninterrupted and vigorous spiritual, moral, intellectual, regeneration new growth manifested by innovations and progress on all levels, continuous renewal and renovation: throughout its rich history, it is striking to see to what extent Haut-Bailly admirably embodies the various meanings of the word 'renaissance'.

## Renaissance



## Has this been the case since 1998?

### Véronique

Yes, and this year we are delighted to be celebrating the years 1998 to 2023, which mark a quarter of a century of evolution and accelerated transformation of the estate that I have had the privilege to lead with the Haut-Bailly team. It marks twenty-five years of achievements made possible by the full support of the Wilmers family, under the leadership of Bob and then Chris, at the head of the supervisory board.

Achievements which, once again in the multi-centenary history of our estate, have favored a new renaissance and lead us, in terms of quality, recognition, reputation and valuation, to heights not reached for a hundred and fifty years. Not since Château Haut-Bailly competed with the Premiers Crus Classés of 1855. It's this continuous reinvention that led us to choose "Haut-Bailly on the move" as our signature. It encapsulates the spirit that presides over the celebration of our twenty-five years together: we are constantly in motion, and thriving, just like our estate and our wines!

### Do you share the same sentiment, Chris?

#### Chris

Absolutely! And it's certainly a perspective my father had when he initiated his conversation with Jean Sanders prior to the acquisition of the estate. The continuous investments made by the family over the past twenty-five years have allowed Haut-Bailly to go faster and further: in scientific research to analyze our soils and vines, some of which are over a hundred years old, as well as in the most advanced technologies deployed in the new winery that help us further refine all stages of winemaking, while offering our teams unparalleled comfort at work. To make the best wines, refining and honing our skills, and always fully faithful to our terroir and our history, with teams that are at the top of their game and happy to come and work at the château, is for Véronique, myself and our family the most beautiful homage we can give to the common vision that Jean Sanders and my father developed twenty-five years ago.



2.



A SENSE OF DUTY



"Haut-Bailly is greater than those who serve it and who, over time, are there to ensure its continuity"

I heard this phrase and it struck a chord with me, especially because of the all encompassing Haut-Bailly "lineage" where everyone involved has a place whatever their skill-set or seniority. How many estates or companies can claim to have such a sense of belonging? The Haut-Bailly lineage comprises a group of people, from generation to generation, who feel that they belong to something special, that they are heirs to a common history, to a shared vision of an ancestral land that commands respect. Throughout the ages, the Haut-Bailly torch has been passed on with a set of values and a way of being that all the owners and their teams have honored.

Véronique, I've often heard you emphasize that running Haut-Bailly is more than a job or a profession: it's a sacred responsibility – or at least this is how it feels to you?

### Véronique

It's true, that's all I've known since day one. It is a torch that has been passed on to me, and I see it as a real duty, as demanding as it is rewarding. I also feel honored to be the third generation of the Sanders family that has been in charge for nearly 70 years, continuing the work that my great-grandfather, Daniel Sanders, and then my grandfather Jean Sanders took on. It is no small thing to feel responsible for this legendary Haut-Bailly estate, for this extraordinary treasure, which must be served, protected and honored day after day, and sometimes even at night, in all weathers, at all times, by giving the best of oneself, as has been done for 400 years by passionate winegrowers working together with highly committed teams. Haut-Bailly is a succession of committed, attentive and visionary professionals, entirely at the service of the terroir – from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from Firmin Le Bailly to Bob and Chris Wilmers, through Alcide Bellot des Minières and the Sanders family.



## A THIRST FOR EXCELLENCE





3.

"We are always chasing something that is not necessarily attainable but we are inspired and obsessed by this: the alchemy of the terroir and the knowledge of the men"

This sentence from a member of the team also struck me. The particular genius of Haut-Bailly, it is often said, is a deep connection that unites the terroir and the men and women who serve it, who never take it for granted and have no other ambition than to honor it.



Is this thirst for excellence something you felt when you took over as head of the supervisory board. Chris?

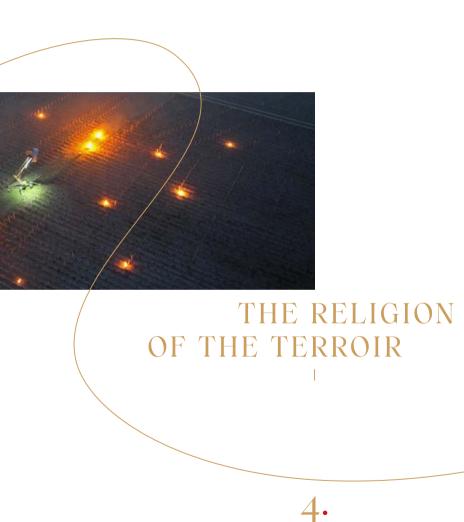
### Chris

Without a doubt, and this is also what seduced my father so much. The generations who have been involved with Haut-Bailly over the years are duty-bound and honored to serve it. It is something incredibly precious, and unique in the Bordeaux region where, in recent decades, so many great estates have had more eventful destinies. And if the alchemy between the Wilmers family and the Sanders family is so successful, it's because we share this philosophy of respect for the terroir, the sincerity of the wines, and the kindness and humanity of the team we form.

Véronique, is this also something you have experienced, as a third generation Sanders and the driving force behind this alliance that is hailed a success?

### Véronique

I have lived it deeply, every day for the past twenty-five years! The renaissance that we have collectively achieved could only happen because we upheld the fundamental values of Haut-Bailly. The estate has kept its soul, from the integrity of the wines to the quality and the warmth of the welcome at the chateau, we have remained true to form – we have respected all this while simultaneously driving it forward and making significant progress.





# "A terroir of exception expressed by the hand of man"

This phrase from one of the estate's winemakers captures the essence of what has underpinned Haut-Bailly for centuries, namely an eminently singular, spiritual, almost religious relationship with the land.

Without this terroir, its geographical location, the particularities of its hillside ("la croupe"), its exposure to the elements, the unique heritage of its oldest vines, the vineyard would not produce these delicate grapes that provide such unique character to the Haut-Bailly wines.

Nor would Haut-Bailly be Haut-Bailly without the passionate teams who embody and honor it. These women and men who are the artisans of a sincere, authentic style that remain scrupulously true to the terroir – unhindered by the passage of time: fashions come and go but at Haut-Bailly style remains constant, making the estate perfectly timeless.



Coherent, consistent, constant: do these words that everyone evokes when talking about this estate that you have been managing for twenty-five years, resonate with you Véronique?

### Véronique

As a child, I spent time in the vineyards with my grandfather, and I grew up with the image and the certainty that it was an exceptional estate. It is because we are coherent and consistent in our approach to viticulture and constant in the choices we make, that our wines continue to progress.

Over the past twenty-five years, thanks to the Wilmers family's investments, we have been able to implement a vast upgrading program: in-depth analysis of the soil and the vineyard, renovation of the vineyard buildings and the château, and the creation of new high-tech underground cellars, perfectly integrated into the environment.

This is what we celebrate with joy, gratitude and pride: a quarter of a century of hard work, passionate commitment and reasoned innovation in the service of Haut-Bailly. Twenty-five years of shared dreams, twenty-five years of proven achievements!



Chris, the challenges linked to climate change impact the future of the terroir: considering this environmental and social transition we're experiencing, how do you envisage the future?

### Chris

So far, our estate has adapted well to climate change. Bordeaux has been producing great, naturally ripe and full-bodied wines for the past 20 years. Cabernet Sauvignon is a resilient variety of grape and the current conditions suit it perfectly.

But the secret lies in being able to permanently adapt to the changing climatic conditions: the viticulture of this first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is nothing like the previous century's viticulture... The challenge ahead will be learning how to mitigate the increasingly extreme conditions that are looming, and we are working diligently to navigate them.

Finally, Haut-Bailly has been very thoughtful in its approach to viticulture for a very long time – we have always been respectful of its people, soils, vines and the environment, and have practiced, and continue to practice, a viticulture that is respectful of the vegetation and the terroir. We possess a taste for upstream thinking, practicing thoughtful and methodical experimentation. All our teams are involved in constantly optimizing our processes, using a method based on what the Japanese call, "Kaizen" a term meaning change for the better

or continuous improvement. For both Véronique and myself, it is our trademark and, today more than ever, the secret of our resilience: no ruthless disruptions or sudden change of course, but a formidable team effort aimed at collectively identifying, analyzing, qualifying, and improving every aspect of our operations. The latest example of this is our new winery, which incorporates current environmental requirements: rainwater collection and recycling, geothermal inertia for lower energy consumption, natural light at all levels. The idea was to apply the same ecological rules to viticulture, while integrating the highest standards of comfort and safety at work for our teams, who have been closely involved in the project.



## Véronique, was the 2022 vintage affected by the drought and the high summer temperatures?

### Véronique

Since 2015, every year has been warmer than the previous one. Everything leads us to believe that the 2022 vintage is a precursor to what we can expect to encounter in the coming decades. Grown in extremely sunny conditions, it is akin to the vintage lines from 1982, 1989, 1990, 2009, 2010 and even the trio 2018, 2019, 2020.

We are nevertheless pleasantly surprised this year by the balance and freshness of these wines, that are still in the process of maturing. Our vines are exceptionally adaptable: even when the surrounding gardens and forests suffered from the heat and the drought, our vines were green and beautiful! This is due to several factors. First of all, the quality of the soil, but also the careful decisions made year after year in the management of the vineyard.

The decision to practice sustainable viticulture at Haut-Bailly and preserving an old vineyard takes on its full meaning in extreme conditions. The deep roots of our vines – due to their age and the work of the soil – make them remarkably resistant. Irrigation for the young vines will nevertheless need to be considered in the future, in order to allow them to come to life fully and to take root.

The vine is a heritage that we continue to cultivate for the generations to come. For us, as in all things, just good is not good enough, and thoughtful experimentation is a key component of our DNA. This is how we approach the question of environmental transition: for more than a decade now, we have been testing all the possible ways of 'green' viticulture on a few hectares, and we continue to research, test, analyze because we have not yet found the ideal formula for our soils, our vines and our wines, our teams, the communities that surround us, and the environment in general.

Our approach to environmental issues is first and foremost pragmatic. It's guided by common sense and the patient search for effective and sustainable solutions; secondly, it is scientific, inspired not by belief or ideology but by the reality of the facts and objective data available to us, resulting from in-depth research; and thirdly, it is human-centric: with the health and well-being of our teams, our neighbors and, of course, our customers at the heart of everything we do.



## THE ETHICS OF BALANCE





"Haut-Bailly is about balance, the rejection of 'too much', of any excess whatsoever, in order to remain true to itself, to respect and protect the elegance of our wines"

This is what distinguishes the estate – it's what makes it distinct – in every sense of the word. From its individuality, to the unique cachet it possesses, which is reflected in the renowned elegance of its wines.

The sincerity and authenticity revealed and enhanced with every vintage, each in its own unique way, are the hallmarks of Haut-Bailly. Whilst others court trends to be flavor of the month, Haut-Bailly doesn't conform or compromise. The etymology of the Latin word *sinceritas* refers to notions of purity and integrity, both literally and figuratively - notions that resonate closely with the values of Haut-Bailly: it's the quality of a craftsman/artist (the winemaker) sincere in his expression, and the pure character of the work (the wine) obtained.

Is this what inspires you, Véronique?

### Véronique

It is indeed. It's the estate's exacting but balanced nature that is at the heart of our DNA. It underpins the elegance of our wines and beyond, touching everything we stand for – from the warm welcome and how you see and experience Haut-Bailly: it's our 'art de vivre', our art of living in the deepest sense of this French expression.

Balance is our trademark, the fruit of our

thoughtful approach, which we cultivate in everything we do, whilst constantly demanding the very best of everything and everyone, and always being scrupulous.

This of course could have been detrimental to us when the fashion in viticulture was for opulence, for too much of everything, from more wood to over extraction, but we have not wavered and the tide is turning, as it inevitably does. Today, the values of precision and balance, the foundations of true and lasting elegance, which Bordeaux, and particularly Haut-Bailly are renowned for, are back in fashion. Fashion has never been able to define style in the noble sense of the term. Only true style is timeless,

as Gabrielle Chanel has demonstrated so well.

Chris, does it give you satisfaction to know that the classic Bordeaux qualities embodied by Haut-Bailly are now much sought after in the United States, after years of excess and opulence?

### Chris

Yes, and that's exactly what my father was attracted to 25 years ago: the exceptional terroir of Haut-Bailly, with its unique heritage comprising ancient vines and fine grapes, whose quality has been praised for centuries.

The magnificent soils, vines and grapes from which our winemaking team manages to produce 'haute couture' wines, as Robert Parker put it when he described the 100/100 awarded to our 2009 vintage: therein lies the uniqueness and cachet that underscores the timeless elegance of Haut-Bailly. Michel Bettane, French wine critic, summed it up when he said: "There are encounters that cannot be attributed to mere chance. Haut-Bailly in Bordeaux embodies to the highest degree the timeless classicism of flavor that makes its wines indispensable to the wine lover. It can be defined by the combination of balance, discretion, consistency and resilience over time."

It's the winemakers' accuracy of the vision that allows Haut-Bailly to achieve the level of balance sought after and celebrated, the 'signature' so highly praised by experts, sommeliers, connoisseurs and collectors who speak of the property with unbounded passion. As Gabriel Vialard, Technical Director and architect of the Haut-Bailly style, perfectly points out, from the vine to the cellar, the objective is to achieve "the ideal, perfect balance between power, freshness and softness, without any aggressiveness, with a silky, smooth texture".



6.

TIMELESS EMOTION



"Haut-Bailly triggers deep emotion, something unparalleled: it makes your hairs stand on end, it's the thrill, the adrenaline"

This description, from a young winemaker who recently arrived at the estate, highlights the ultimate effect sought by the wines, as well as by the hospitality extended at the estate.

More than ever, a key word used to describe Haut-Bailly, its seal of identity, is elegance: from the wine, with its incomparable finesse, its balance, discreet refinement, the grace, harmony and nobility that characterize it, to its very soul. There is a level of individual and collective behavior specific to the people of Haut-Bailly, defined by delicacy and good taste.

Véronique, does this sum up Haut-Bailly for you?

The wines, as well as the chateau, offer an experience that evoke strong emotions, a place of sharing, a promise of pleasure, reaching the level of happiness that only real elegance can offer?

### Véronique

Yes, because in a nutshell, it holds true to our values, which have always been about balance, healthy restraint, seeking true harmony and, as dear Jean Sanders liked to say, "nothing in excess" or 'rien de trop' in French. All this with one single objective: to ensure the pure expression of the terroir as we lead our wines from the soil and the vines to the glass – which is full of promise – a delicious expression of its genius, which we honor and court, as inspired spectators.

This, quite simply, is our compass, and our mantra. And therein lies our pride, as well as our greatest reward when, during a tasting or a dinner, Haut-Bailly's guests recognize and understand the depth of our intention as winemakers, and when the emotion of this sharing overwhelms them.

This is what makes us happy and drives us every day to the terroir, to the foot of the vines, to our cellar and to the four corners of the world to make our wines known! Chris, is it true to say that through the emotion and sensitivity of Haut-Bailly, Bob and Elisabeth, have been able to forge strong links with the artistic circles of Bordeaux?

### Chris

Yes, and nowhere is this more evident than when my father and Elisabeth teamed with Alain Juppé to give new impetus to the Bordeaux Opera, the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, the CAPC, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux, and the Museum of Fine Arts.

And then thanks to Elisabeth, and her impeccable taste and talent, the Château Haut-Bailly has undergone a beautiful renovation and redecoration, making it one of the most of renowned places on the Rive Gauche, with a highly sought after private table! The same goes for Château Le Pape, magnificently restored, an exceptional place where family and guests from all over the world come to stay.



### Any final words, Chris and Véronique?

The story of Haut-Bailly has not only gathered pace since the Wilmers family acquired the property – it has intensified.

The vineyard has reconnected with its creative authenticity.

The wine has crossed every border. Experts and collectors around the world consider it to be one of the greatest Grands Crus Classés from Bordeaux. In expanding its global footprint, Haut-Bailly has remained true to itself. It hasn't renounced its historical roots, or compromised its reputation. It has thoughtfully maintained a deep respect for the terroir, exceptional vineyards, a balanced and precise viticulture, and a warm welcome at the château.

At the heart of our philosophy, there is more than ever the desire to do better, to continue to work relentlessly to optimize processes, with a fierce obsession to protect the Haut-Bailly style, while continuing to refine it without disguising or betraying its true nature.

As Bob Wilmers used to say, 'Life is a question of attitude.' An attitude, a mindset, determined by experience, which shapes you and which leads you to action in one way or another. The Haut-Bailly attitude is that of an artisan winemaker imbued with the value of the heritage he protects, who is passionate about innovation.

To be and to remain ourselves, faithful to the soul of this legendary terroir, to work tirelessly to preserve it, to express it, to honor it by producing wines of today, which faithfully reflect the timeless style of Haut-Bailly and serve to delight of our customers. This is why we continue to innovate constantly, to maintain this culture of being one step ahead and this desire to progress, while preserving the warmth of our welcome and our benevolent team spirit: this is our objective for the next twenty-five years!

Véronique, Chris



### CHATEAU HAUT-BAILLY

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A conversation with

Véronique Sanders & Chris Wilmers

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