

Château Gilette & Les Justices

Sauternes

Some 30 years ago, Martine participated in a tasting of Gilette – vintages of the 40s, 50s & 60s. It was a truly hedonistic experience. Although Gilette was not included in the 1855 classification, its wines can compete with the best.

A Family Tradition

The Médeville family has been in the wine business since the 18th century, and continues the tradition today near the village of Preignac in Bordeaux, about 5 miles north of Yquem. Unlike her two older sisters, Julie always wanted to be a winemaker. After studying law, she worked alongside her parents, Christian and Andrée Médeville, for seven years and, in 2004, officially took over her family's properties: Gilette & Les Justices (a more traditional Sauternes).

Chance Leads to Great Discovery

Julie Gonet-Médeville is often called "l'Antiquaire du Sauternes." What does this lively young woman have to do with antiques? The answer lies in her family history: For more than half a century, the Médevilles have let their Sauternes age for decades in concrete vats. The wines never see the inside of a wooden barrel—they go directly from vat to bottle. In the 1930s, Julie's grandfather, René de Médeville, was feeling the effects of the economic slump that had hit the whole area. He

decided to build concrete vats to replace the barrels that were both costly and hard to come by. After a few years, he observed that the wines were breathing well, maturing more slowly and developing more complex aromas. Unique in the world and therefore unique in the Bordeaux region, the Médevilles do not sell their wines until they have been aged for more than 20 years. And even then, it is worth waiting another ten years before drinking them. It is not surprising that Château Gilette, a Sauternes petit cru, has become legendary for its old vintages.



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The very old vineyard of Gilette is planted on sandy soil with subsoil of rock and clay. Grape varieties are Sémillon 94%, Sauvignon blanc 4%, and Muscadelle 2%. Les Justices is located to the west of the Gironde River, produces plump, intensely concentrated, powerful wines. This more traditional Sauternes is a blend of Semillon 88%, Sauvignon blanc 8%, and Muscadelle 4%.

Does Julie ever get confused, what with producing wines that are so different from one another? "In a profession like winemaking, which can be tough and repetitive, diversity's a good thing," she insists. However, it's hands off at Château Gilette: "You have to get used to the idea that wine put in a vat today won't be sold for another 20 years," she says. "It's a whole different relationship with time."