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Penfolds Expands Bordeaux Presence With Major Investment in Château Lanessan and Vineyard Renewal

Australian wine producer introduces innovative techniques, phases out historic labels, and plans new winery and tourism facilities in Médoc

Wednesday, September 17, 2025



Penfolds, the well-known Australian wine producer, is making a significant investment in the Médoc region of Bordeaux, France. Since 2022, Château Lanessan, a historic estate in the Haut-Médoc near Saint-Julien, has undergone major changes under Penfolds' ownership. The company has planted 20 hectares of new vines over three years and installed an irrigation system for young plants. There is also a comprehensive renewal plan for the vineyard to improve quality. A new winery, designed by Atelier Mazières Architectes et Associés, is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2028 harvest.

Penfolds' approach in Bordeaux stands out from traditional French winemaking. The company is known for its innovative blending techniques and brand-focused style, which often differ from the strict rules of French appellations. In 2021, Penfolds collaborated with Jaboulet to create a unique blend of two iconic syrahs—Hermitage La

Chapelle from France and Penfolds Grange from Australia. This wine was sold for €2,600 but had to be aged in Australia due to European regulations that prohibit blending wines from outside the European Union.

Penfolds has expanded its global presence beyond Australia. The group produces CWT wines in China and Bin 704 and Bin 149 in the United States. In the Médoc, Penfolds has repurposed its recently acquired properties to produce two distinct ranges of wine. Château Cambon La Pelouse now serves as a winemaking center for the FWT (French Winemaking Trial) series. FWT 585 is a Bordeaux-style blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, and petit verdot. FWT 543 is a pure syrah made from grapes sourced in Languedoc-Roussillon and the Rhône Valley. Both are produced at Cambon La Pelouse and sold as Vin de France.

As part of this shift, the brands Château Cambon La Pelouse and Bellevue will be phased out. Wine enthusiasts may see the last vintages of these labels released in 2023 and 2024, making them potential collector's items.

At Château Lanessan, Penfolds continues to invest heavily in vineyard improvements. Pablo Laborde, Lanessan's technical director, says that many vines needed replanting and soil amendments had not been done for decades. Since 2023, 40 hectares have been replanted, with plans to expand the vineyard to 95 hectares by 2028. Laborde notes that Lanessan's gravelly soils are similar to those found in Margaux and Saint-Julien. He also considers planting some malbec vines in the future.

The new winery at Lanessan will be fully integrated into the estate's traditional architecture, reflecting its English-inspired style from the mid-19th century. Audrey Pedezert from Atelier Mazières leads the design team. Steph Dutton, Director of Winemaking at Penfolds in Australia, says the facility will have a vinification capacity of 500 tons.

Penfolds also plans to develop wine tourism at Lanessan. The estate already features a horse museum and could eventually include a restaurant and guest rooms for visitors. While these additions are part of Penfolds' long-term vision for offering a complete wine tourism experience, no timeline has been announced for their completion.