

Chateau Musar Red 1983



Overview

The harvest started much later than usual on the 23rd September. Serge Hochar had been in the U.S. and had assumed that picking would not be possible due to intense fighting in the mountains above the Bekaa Valley. Once word came that the situation had improved, he made his way back, via Paris and Cyprus.

The grapes were very ripe, almost over-mature, but picking was completed without problems from the weather. With the usual route back to the winery blocked, trucks of grapes were forced to cross the Bekaa and Israeli occupied lines north of the vineyard holdings, during which journey one truckload was hit by gunfire, thankfully without loss. Despite all these troubles, a great vintage was produced.

I'd never miss a tasting of old vintages from Lebanon's Chateau Musar with owner Serge Hochar, one of the world's wine heroes. During decades of conflict, with bombs exploding, he still managed to harvest grapes and make his thought-provoking wines. At New York's Hearth restaurant he poured six reds, his grand vin cabernet and Rhone grapes blend. My pick was the great spice-and-rose-petal-scented 1983. As battles raged, Hochar had to be smuggled into the winery to make it – Elin McCoy, Bloomberg Business Week, December 13, 2011

The first vintage where I fell in love with our wines. I started drinking this wine in my early 20s – Marc Hochar

Grape Varietals

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, Carignan

Winemaking

Initial fermentations had stopped over winter and resumed in April of the following spring, when remaining sugars were completed by June. Due to the advanced maturity of the grapes, 1983 was one of our highest alcohol wines to date, with some components averaging between 14% to 15% Alc./Vol., though at the same time a higher residual sugar level. The vintage was bottled in 1987.

Tasting Notes

The fruit was super ripe, sweet and raisiny which resulted in a wine richly spiced, complex and fragrant. Full bodied yet supple with an elegant finish. Now showing some maturity and ripeness with excellent condition and balance. The wine is developing increasingly complex flavours, richly spiced and fragrant, full bodied yet supple with an elegant finish.

The 1983 now presents itself with a good, strong, sweet, malty, rich smell. It is a delicious, rich, heavy wine, unmistakably grand vin – Auberon Waugh, The Spectator, 16th May 1992

Good colour; warm, harmonious nose and palate. Very sweet, very agreeable – Michael Broadbent, December 1999

A doubly memorable 1983 whose harvest was delayed because of heavy fighting in the Bekaa. It had survived the shelling and was delicious to drink – Michael Broadbent, April 2000

(High shoulder) Full mahogany red, still vibrant and rich looking and good for its age. Rich red fruits on the nose with lots of vigour and warmth, not heavy, just the richness of a Châteauneuf-du-Pape with perhaps an extra layer of fruit from a hot year. The Musar acidity is there to refresh the finish, still extraordinarily vigorous for it 36 years. A richly satisfying wine – Steven Spurrier, October 2019

Alcohol

14% Alc./Vol.