

Chateau Musar Red 2003



Overview

The 2003 harvest was a unique experience and two words can aptly summarise it: Alcohol & Acidity – this vintage is rich in both. After a rainy winter (records show that it was the rainiest year in 15 years), from mid April onwards not a drop of rain fell and it became hot and sunny. In May when flowering started, a 10 day heat wave reduced the harvest quantity by about 30%. This phenomenon was responsible for the concentration of sugar and acidity in the grapes. July and August were not as hot as they used to be in years gone by and certainly not as hot as it was in Europe in 2003. The harvest started on the 4th September and the grapes were very healthy with good maturity and ripeness.

Grape Varietals

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, Carignan

Winemaking

The fermentation temperature was controlled between 27 and 30°C with 2 pump-overs per day to increase extraction, with a long maceration: about 3 weeks. Malolactic fermentation followed immediately and by the end of November, all the wines had finished their malolactic and had been racked. Even at the racking stage, we could tell that the wines were reflecting a great year, abundant in tannins, acidity and colour.

The wines spent 9 months in cement vats and then a year in French Nevers oak barriques. The three varietals - Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan - which up until then had been kept separately, were very fragrant, displaying highly contrasting aromas. Reflecting the superb ripeness of the grapes, and the concentration of sugar and acidity that make this harvest unique, they were well-balanced and richly-textured, with soft tannins. The final blend rested for another 6 months in vats before being bottled and transferred to the Chateau Musar cellars high in the mountains at Ghazir to begin its journey of maturation and development.

Tasting Notes

Deep ruby in colour, it has a complex, intriguing array of aromas: toasted bread, cigar box, fresh tea, plums and Eastern spices. On the palate, there are mature fruits: plums, figs and cherries with hints of tea leaves and dark chocolate. The wine is intense; the first taste releasing complex notes of currants, cherries and spice, with a hint of game and finishing with a cleansing acidity. Our first indications were that the 2003 vintage would be full-bodied, powerful with great length and 7 years later upon release in 2010, we were proven right: these are the defining characteristics of 2003.

I think of the 2003 red as classical Musar, a great vintage for Carignan - Gaston Hochar

...this is a ripe, sexy Musar. It retains its elegant mid-palate as well as lovely fruit and fine balance. There is a slightly sweet tinge to the finish, perhaps a touch of a high-toned demeanour. The lush texture and surprising richness make this a rather luscious wine by Musar standards. It is showing little but baby fat right now. Fresh and youthful, it is just a friendly puppy today. I'm not so sure it is in the winery's preferred style, but it should be a very enjoyable vintage for consumers. Showing not a trace of age, it has a lot of potential and a long life ahead - Neal Martin, Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

Mid-garnet. Quite a bit deeper and younger-looking than even the 2001. A little marine influence (oyster shells?) on the somewhat reticent nose. Rather different from many of these Musars. Sweet start and very vigorous and fun. If I had not tasted vintages back to 1961 I might have taken this for a fully mature wine. It already gives masses of pleasure with some milk-chocolate notes and quite a bit of light dry tannin on the end. Excellent drive. Long and dramatically big, but with good freshness on the end - Jancis Robinson, March 2018

Alcohol

14% Alc./Vol.