

Chateau Musar White 2003



Overview

After the rainiest winter in 15 years, no rain fell after April and it became very hot and sunny. In May, a 10-day heatwave affected flowering, reducing yields by around 30%, and concentrating sugar and acidity in the remaining grapes. July and August were cooler than usual. Harvesting began in October; picked by hand, the grapes arrived at the winery in excellent condition, with good maturity and ripeness.

Grape Varietals

2/3rd Obaideh and 1/3rd Merwah

Vineyard Region

Mount Lebanon slopes

Winemaking

After pressing, the resulting juice was fermented in French (Nevers) barriques, remaining in oak for up to 9 months. At the end of spring 2004, the separate Obaideh and Merwah wines were blended. The final wine was bottled in September 2004 and released in 2009.

Tasting Notes

Merwah was dominant in 2003, as if it were compensating for its absence due to a hailstorm in 2002, when no Musar White was produced. The defining characteristics are a deeper colour than usual, with greater intensity of aroma and flavour.

Beautiful straw gold in appearance, this mature Musar white displays aromas of orange peel, sweet spice and stewed pears. The palate is rich and generous with almond and citrus fruit flavours – Simon Hoggart, The Spectator, April 2009

Rich with roasted hazelnuts and a high-toned citrus aroma, this Lebanese white is deliberately oxidized to produce a dry, savoury wine that's intriguing on the nose and palate. While glimmers of poached pear and lemon peek through, fruit is clearly secondary to the layers of nutty, yeasty, oily flavours that dominate the palate – Anna Lee C. Iijima, Wine Enthusiast, September 2011

Mature-tasting, with fino Sherry flavours of sea salt, iodine and marzipan – Wine Spectator, 2011

Light orange colour; lightly oxidized, lanolin, wheaty, savoury nose; tart lemon oil, citron, mineral, lemon cream palate; medium-plus finish – Richard Jennings, May 2012

Clear glass. Pale golden amber. I would never have guessed this was 14 years younger than the 1989 tasted immediately before it. Again, that lively edge of green veginess on a broad palate with relatively low acidity and a lanolin quality that reminds me much more of Sémillon than Chardonnay. Very sprightly on the palate. It isn't remarkably persistent, still has a little light tannin, and I can quite see – not least on the basis of the 1989 – that there is no hurry to drink this. Obviously oak aged with real structure. No more than medium body – but what a lot of flavour... Quite a challenge to work out the right food for this, I would have thought – Jancis Robinson, March 2018

This shows class on the nose: dried apricots, wax, honey, cedar and caramel. The aromas might remind you of a Bordeaux Blanc but it is definitely more similar to old white Rioja on the palate. This is a jewel; a great wine with a deep and multilayered complexity of flavour and a refined mouthfeel; very balanced. My best mark – 96 – was given on the fourth day after opening the bottle. It started to fade only on the seventh day – Pedro Ballesteros MW, Decanter Magazine, June 2020

Alcohol

12% Alc./Vol.

