

Chateau Musar Red 1984



Overview

1984 was a year of war in Lebanon. The summer was hot and harvest was only possible during a brief break in the shelling – beginning over a month after when picking would have normally finished. Because of this, only two truckloads were picked.

The usual passage to the winery was blocked, so one truck headed north, through the Cedars and towards Tripoli, then down to Ghazir. The second driver headed south to Jezzine, then on to Sidon at the coast. In order to avoid Beirut a ferry had to be taken into the Bay of Jounieh. Further delayed by a storm the ferry finally sailed through a break in the weather.

In April I met the Wall Street Journal correspondent who asked me to predict the year. I said, my nose predicts, no year. Six months later I understood why. We could not harvest it in time due to the War. The grapes that were so over-ripe and had travelled such long journeys to the winery that they were already hot and fermenting. The wine I made from them was like no other wine I have made before or after. I bottled it for the hell of it, and I trusted the 1984 to become whatever it decided to be. I used to call it my Madeira, then it became like a port, but now it has become a beautiful, elegant wine, a wine of the brain and a wine of the mind – Serge Hochar

Grape Varietals

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, Carignan

Winemaking

As a result of the detours from vineyard to winery, the last of the grapes didn't arrive until 20th October, 45 days later than usual, and 5 days after picking. As such they had already started fermenting. As only two vats were produced, the 1984 was never released as a "current vintage" but sold to private collectors and connoisseurs much later in 2013.

Tasting Notes

The 1984 vintage is a vintage like no other – a very mature style of wine, almost over mature like a fortified wine. The colour is a deep red brown colour and very dense. Bouquet of cigar box, smoke, leather, with very clear notes of mature fruits, figs and plums with an intense chocolate fragrance. On the palate, rich and concentrated, round and mellow, matured fruit dominates with very smooth tannins and a velvety finish of caramel, sweet chocolate combined with figs and dates.

Drank blind over dinner. This was a real privilege because Serge has never officially released this wine. It was hit by the exigencies of the civil war in 1984 and the grapes only reached the winery in October when they had already begun fermenting on the journey...so it's a late-harvest red other than by Amarone standards, I guess. Only recently has he felt it was worth re-visiting and he was keen to get our opinion. Slightly dusky, translucent jewelled colour. Nose is sweet, succulent, dusky and dusty red bricks and red earth, acetone, saddle leather, Arabian spice markets... this is really complex indeed. Palate is sharp, quite young, Barbaresco-like black cherry fruit, sharply cherried...almost candied. Still very young. Lightly resonant. Revisit in 5 – 10 years... I think it could continue to develop over an eternity – Hong Kong Wine Society, Spring 2013

Level mid-shoulder, cork totally absorbed with wine and beginning to crumble. Deep mahogany red with browning rim; a rare Musar looking older than its years. Yet its Mediterranean warmth is still there on the nose with a surprising richness that seems attractively 'fortified'. The same extra bit of concentration on the palate, finishing rather like a dry Banyuls with the typical Musar grip of acidity, good to be savoured with dry cheeses – Steven Spurrier, October 2019

Alcohol

14% Alc./Vol.