

Chateau Musar Red 1988

Overview

The political situation in 1988 was tense but there was no shelling, which gave the Lebanese people some respite from surrounding troubles.

The Winter had been colder than usual, but flowering came on time and there was no frost. Summer was warm with some rain in June, July and August which is a rare occurrence. The grapes began to ripen and reach maturity ahead of their expected date, so picking began on Friday 9th September, a little earlier than usual.

Whilst yields from old vines are always low, this year the crop was excellent; the first vineyard harvested gave high sugar content, good ripeness and acidity. Marvellous fruit! The expectation was that the wine should also be of exceptional quality.

Grape Varietals

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, Carignan

Winemaking

Separate vinification of the three varietals in concrete vats; natural yeasts and low sulphur additions. Racked into 225L French Nevers oak barrels and aged for 12 months. The wines were blended in the 3rd year and bottled without fining or filtration. Bottles aged in the winery cellars for 4 years before release.

Tasting Notes

The 1988 was a powerful wine when released, but this theme continues into its third decade, where the vibrancy of the year's fruit is shining through and the quality is evident in the glass.

It has a relatively youthful appearance and good colour. A very spicy aroma of liquorice and clove that is repeated on the palate with a vibrant dark fruit component. Fully resolved but lifted with a beautiful acidity. An excellent and wonderful wine that showcases evolution and development, whilst maintaining elegance and freshness.

Medium ruby with browning rim. Quite a volatile nose with baked plum and warm, tarry aromas. Lots of sweet, gamey perfume too. On the palate it is gripped by tannins that are mouth-puckering. There are flavours of brown sugar, and herbal, earthy fruit though quite rich and sweet. Very nice balance and a long, savoury and clearly defined finish. Very good – Tom Cannavan, May 2000

Five notes: first in 1996, a half bottle taken to my local Lebanese restaurant 'Mes' Amis' (sic), ruby, singed, mouthfilling (14% alcohol). Later that May served at the wedding rehearsal dinner at the Commonwealth Club, Richmond, Virginia, that I gave for my son and future daughter-in-law. It went down very well. Even better at Decanter magazine's millennium dinner: very Burgundian, perfect with duck. Sweet, soft and, yet again, delicious. An identical note made at my 75th birthday dinner at Vintners' Hall, London in May 2002 and three times since. The most perfectly mature red imaginable: à point. I am busily drinking it at its peak. Last tasted at home, June 2002 – Michael Broadbent

A powerful Musar, though (as always) graceful. Scents of rich, dusty plums initially; then a full, ripe, lazy lasso of liquorice and chocolate wobbles through the air to draw you in to this loose-knit yet compelling wine. The flavours, curranty-sweet at the end, refuse to get up and leave – Andrew Jefford, December 4, 2013

Alcohol

14% Alc./Vol.

