
Alter Ego de Palmer 2020

CSPC# 771453

750mlx6

13.7% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 46% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot.

Appellation

Margaux

Classification

3ème Cru Classé

Website

http://www.chateau-palmer.com/alter_ego.php?millesime=2012&langue=en

General Info

Château Palmer is named after a British officer, Major General Palmer, who settled in Bordeaux in 1814. It is the top estate of the Margaux appellation after Château Margaux. It is located in the centre of the Margaux appellation, and its vineyards (Cabernet Sauvignon 55%, Merlot 40%, Cabernet Franc 5%) lie on a sparse gravel plateau.

Palmer is classified as a 3ème Cru Classé and was established as a Super Second long before Léoville Las Cases, Ducru-Beaucaillou and Pichon-Lalande, and in some years (1961, 1966, and 1983) it is as good as any wine in Bordeaux.

Palmer's relatively high Merlot content makes Palmer the closest in style of any leading Médoc properties to the great wines of Pomerol and St-Emilion.

Winemaker

Thomas Duroux, Winemaker. Eric Boissenot consults.

Vintage

At the end of February, the onset of the vines' budburst almost two weeks ahead of schedule signaled the launch of what would be a very early vintage. March brought heavy rainfall, which made working the soil considerably more difficult, only to be followed by a damp spring with mild temperatures, conditions all too conducive to the spread of mildew.

Throughout April and May, the vineyard would require superlative care to keep us on course for a healthy harvest. In mid-May, a return to warm, dry weather would set the stage for an ideal flowering period, raising hopes of a lovely vintage indeed.

In June, the summer weather arrived and settled in to stay. By the end of July, the berries had begun their colour change under a bright and constant sun, allowing for an early synthesis of polyphenols. Although the heat waves of August subjected the vines to a good deal of hydric stress, intense thunderstorms brought a welcome breath of fresh air: the Merlot grapes gorged themselves while the Cabernet, which weren't as far along in their cycle, retained their small size. The return to dry weather at the end of August fostered the concentration of the tannins and marked a promising conclusion to the ripening process.

Over the course of 2020, a year like no other, it was as if time had been suspended, forcing us to place some of our activities on hold. But this parenthesis also gave us an opportunity to refocus our efforts on the essentials: cultivating our vines, genuinely observing, and listening to our environment, and striving to live wholly in rhythm with the life pulse of a thriving vineyard. In the wake of an extraordinary 2018 and a 2019 of profound elegance, the 2020 vintage of Château Palmer, with its class and sensuality, rounds off a truly exceptional trilogy.

The anecdote concerns the treatment of the vine. Biodynamic vineyard, it is very sensitive to the weather. While the rain was constantly falling on the vines, the tractors were no longer able to pass through the rows, the soil was so soaked. To carry out this essential treatment in preserving the harvest, all Palmer employees worked in the vineyard. This is how they treated the vines by hand, at the rate of 10 hectares per day. This saved a large part of the 2020 vintage.

Vineyards

The Palmer vineyards cover 55 hectares in the commune of Cantenac. Most of the plots are concentrated on a plateau of thin gravel from the Guntz period on the top of the rises of the Margaux appellation. The gravelly soil consists of stones with complicated, poetic names, like lydite, quartzite, and chalcedony, which come down to us from the distant past – from the Quaternary era, to be precise. Swept by the flow of the Garonne River, pieces of rock from the Pyrénées were deposited along the banks of the Gironde estuary.



Vineyards	Moving inland, a number of geological folds form a series of parallel rises. The Palmer plateau is situated on these first gravely terraces along the edge of the estuary. As the saying goes in Bordeaux, the great terroirs overlook the river.
Harvest	The harvest began on September 15th, with the Merlot picked in the cool of dawn and the Cabernet gathered between the drops of thundershowers. The harvest ended two weeks later on September 29th. Yields were around 31 hL/Hectare, which is a low range for Palmer.
Vinification/ Maturation	In the vat room, the fermentations proceeded smoothly, and the blending was carried out over two sessions in mid-November, for the most part during the run-off. Marked by the year's eminently favourable climate, the 2020 vintage of Château Palmer is on par with 2018 in terms of structure, boasting sunny Merlot, fine and powerful Cabernet, and a terroir of brilliant clarity. The batches chosen for Alter Ego are then blended and put into barrels to age for 18 months. The fruitiness and aromatic intensity are preserved by the use of a moderate percentage of new oak barrels (25% to 40%).
Tasting Notes	Spontaneity. That sudden desire to indulge without delay, Château Palmer wished to gratify. Thus, while remaining true to its philosophy, another expression of its terroir came to be. Since the 1998 vintage, a new approach to selection and blending has yielded this supple and rounded wine, distinguished by its freshness of fruit, crisp intensity, and richness...from the moment out of barrel, it's all that's natural, bottled.
Serve with	Chateau Palmer is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Palmer is also good when matched with Asian dishes, rich fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta.
Production	7,000 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2026-2045
Scores/Awards	<p>93 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023</p> <p>91 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent (score only) - March 2023</p> <p>96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2023</p> <p>94-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021</p> <p>94 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2022</p> <p>17+ points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021</p> <p>94 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023</p> <p>93 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023</p> <p>90 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021</p> <p>93 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>94 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>94 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023</p> <p>93 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2023</p> <p>93-94 points - Yves Beck (score only) - June 2021</p> <p>94-95 points - Vert de Vin - May 2021</p> <p>91-93 points - Michael Schuster, The World of Fine Wine - May 2021</p> <p>93-94 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - January 2022</p> <p>94 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - July 2021</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"The 2020 Alter Ego de Palmer has turned out beautifully, bursting with aromas of violets and rose petals mingled with notions of sweet dark berries and baking chocolate. Medium to full-bodied, fleshy, and seamless, it's vibrant and perfumed, with a bright core of fruit, powdery tannins, and a long, expansive finish. It's a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 46% Merlot and 4% Petit Verdot.</i></p> <p><i>Thomas Duroux continues to produce singularly textural, powerful wines at this historic Margaux property, where he has introduced a new focus on parcel-by-parcel viticulture and vinification, as well as pioneering biodynamic methods, over the better part of the last two decades. Today, cover crops are the order of the day, much of the vineyard isn't hedged, and fruit trees are being planted in the rows as part of an agroforestry initiative. The core of Palmer derives from the plateau around the chateau, where soils consist of a millefeuille of sandy gravel, clay-rich gravel, sandy gravel again and then a meter of pure clay. It's old-vine Merlot, planted on these soils, that lends Palmer its richness and flesh. There are other parcels dotted around the appellation, of course, including a large block of coarser gravel surrounded by trees, not far from Bel Air Marquis d'Aligre."</i></p> <p><i>- WK, Wine Advocate</i></p> <p><i>"Gorgeous perfumes of plums, berries, light chocolate, and walnut follow through to a medium body, fine tannins, and crunchy finish. Bright and fresh. Precise tannins. Drinkable but better after 2027."</i></p> <p><i>- JS, JamesSuckling.com</i></p>

Reviews *“Savory black and salted-olive character with oyster shells and black licorice. Fine, almost powdery yet firm tannins. Medium body. Excellent density and structure for the vintage. Second wine of Palmer. From biodynamically grown grapes.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“In this wine, the initial acidity gives way to richness and ripe tannins. With freshness and ripe acidity. The wine is balanced and has a great future. Drink from 2025.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 46% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot. Cask sample. Very much in the Alter Ego mould – lively, fruit-driven with that vineyard-fresh feel but with a little more structure than previous years. Pure and appetising but will age. (JL) 13.7%. Drink 2026 – 2035.”

- JL, JancisRobinson.com

“Devilishly charming on the nose, deep and seductive, expressive, and richly scented. Juicy and succulent but with a richness in terms of texture and depth. Seductive, defined and refined with a chalky grip to the tannins. Feels rich and charming at the same time with blackcurrant, black cherry, blueberry, pomegranate, and a touch of balsamic with an undercurrent of crushed stones and liquorice. A lovely second wine with clear ageing potential.”

- GH, Decanter.com

“Chocolate shavings and smoked coffee bean on the nose, it's a vintage where you can't get away from the tannins, but here they have sinew and juice, like the best translation of the tannins in the year. This has real purity of fruit (very low SO2 addition at Palmer), together with the gourmet touch that you want in Alter Ego. 45% of overall production. 3.73pH. Survived mildew better than in 2018 because of experience in dealing with the conditions. August 15 to 29 for the harvest. A yield of 31hl/ha. Drinking Window 2024 – 2038.”

- JA, Decanter.com

“Just a superb wine that showcases its elegant style with ease. Initially you find a floral bouquet of purple, white and red flowers before moving on to its wealth of ripe, deep, dark red fruits, spice, earth, and kirsch. Refined, silky, fresh, and long, the graceful finish is already a treat in your glass. If a reclassification were ever considered, this would rank quite high. You can enjoy this just about on release, or age it for 2 decades. Drink from 2024-2044.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The 2020 Alter Ego de Palmer has a tightly-wound bouquet that demands a little more coaxing than other Margaux's that I tasted. Quite refined with black cherries, blackcurrant, iris flower and light iodine scents. Lovely definition. The palate is medium-bodied with supple tannins, fresh on the entry and quite saline, not as flamboyant as you might expect with a pleasant strictness towards the tannic finish (this is the most tannic Alter Ego ever produced.) Very fine, but serious.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Alter Ego is phenomenal. Bright acids and lifted floral top notes give the Alter Ego terrific brilliance. The combination of the growing season and a move towards the second year of élevage yields an Alter Ego that is decidedly linear in construction. The 2020 is going to need a number of years to come around. It's a gorgeous wine, but readers will have to get used to a style that is quite different from the more exuberant wines of the past. It's a very classic Alter Ego and very classic Margaux.”

- AG, Vinous

Reviews *“Palmer's second wine, the 2020 Chateau Palmer Ego, is a beauty. Based on 56% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the rest Petit Verdot, this ripe, sexy Margaux offers up a dense purple hue, impressive notes of ripe black cherry and currant fruits, full-bodied richness, and a layered, sweetly fruited, textured, already impossible to resist style. Given its density, structure, and length, you would certainly be excused for mistaking this for the Grand Vin. Give bottles 2-4 years and enjoy over the following two decades. Best After 2025”*
- Jeb Dunnuck

“The nose is fruity, elegant and offers deepness, complexity as well as a nice concentration (in freshness). It reveals notes of small quite ripe black berries, strawberry, small notes of black plum associated with touches of camphor, violet, graphite as well as fine hints of small flower, tabaco and a subtle hint of sage. The mouth is fruity, balanced, all-in finesse and offers a juicy/acidulous frame, a good definition, a certain gourmandize as well as a juicy/acidulous frame, density (all in balance), roundness, a good definition, aerial/controlled richness, and subtlety. On the palate this wine expresses notes of pulpy/juicy blackberry, small bright black currants, notes of black plum associated with touches of violet, blond tabaco, almond, fine hints of camphor, a discreet hint of graphite, fresh/pulpy cherry, small notes of vanilla pod. Good length. The tannins are precise, fresh, and polished. A fine chew at the end of the palate/persistence.”
- Vert de Vin

“Ripe, pure, and intense showing a great deal of nuance and complexity, dense yet rounded palate with a finely rounded tannic texture, sapid and mouth filling with good harmony and very impressive length. By far one of the best second wines ever tasted.”
- AL, Tasted.com

“(50% CS, 46% M, 4% PV; 45% harvest; 13.7% ABV; 25% new) A density to smell that is typical of many wines in the year, very Merlot blackberry, and very mineral, too; full and fresh and finely tannic; an immediately showy, ample, fruit-bomb style: generously ripe, amply juicy, fleshy, mouth filling, spicy, but with fine length to taste, plus the necessary defining freshness, and excellent persistence. A particularly succulent, satisfying Margaux. 2026–40. 91–93.”
- MS, The World of Fine Wine
