

Château Cantenac Brown 2020

CSPC# 744982

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety
Appellation
Classification
Website
General Info

67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot
Margaux

Third Growth. Troisieme Grand Cru Classe in 1855.
<http://www.cantenacbrown.com/en/>

Cantenac-Brown estate once formed part of Boyd-Cantenac, founded by Irishman Jacques Boyd in 1754 and later passed on within the family to Scottish socialite John Lewis Brown - who unfortunately became bankrupt. Designed by Brown in a traditional Tudor style, the château was host to the grand parties the owner was renowned for, highlighting his love of good wines. Sold in 1843 to a banker (Gromard), the owner in 1855, when the estate was granted a Grand Cru classification. Cantenac-Brown, also building the striking brown-brick château. Hard times were around the corner (phylloxera, war, depression) and by 1968, the estate was quite ready for the overhaul the Du Vivier family gave it. Rejuvenation continued under AXA Millésimes (they bought in 1998) and is ongoing today under British businessman Simon Halabi. 150 years later the Simon Halabi family has given new impetus to the estate with the ambition of raising it to the highest echelons.

Winemaker
Vintage

Éric Boissenot

A new wind of enthusiasm blows across the team at Château Cantenac Brown with the arrival of "Familie Le Lous". We thought of everything, from the vine to the bottle, using all methods possible to create one of the best wines of Margaux. The vines awoke very early this year, in mid-March. After a beautiful beginning to Spring in the first weeks, even with some very heavy rain though June, the skies of the Médoc opened up to lovely periods of sunshine. The Merlot and Cabernet took advantage of these windows to rapidly flower in the best conditions.

Particularly dry weather with several very hot days continued into mid-August where little spurts of rain allowed the vine to suffer slightly, and to jump start the ripening with a restrained hydration. In September, the wind accompanied the new heat wave in this last ripening phase, bringing about a unique concentration of the fruit. Generous sun during the harvest did its work and therefore produced a beautiful vintage. With a rather unusual grape composition, we had to be extremely vigilant in the last phase of ripening. The fermentation was conducted at temperatures from 4-5 degrees Celsius, much lower than normal in order to preserve the most from these magnificent fruit aromatics without over extracting the tannins.

Vineyards

The 54-hectare Bordeaux wine vineyard of Cantenac Brown sits on gravel and sandy soils. Planted to 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot & 10% Cabernet Franc, the average age of the vines are 35 yrs of age. The terroir is gravel and sand. The vines are planted to a density of 8,500 vines per hectare. Yields are high, averaging 55 hectoliters per hectare. The estate takes a sustainable approach to their Left Bank vineyard farming techniques. This approach means only plant-based fertilizers are used.

Harvest

Merlot: Sept. 10 to 11, 14 to 18, 21. Cabernet Franc: Sept. 21. Cabernet Sauvignon: Sept. 24-25, 28 to 30

Maturation

French oak barrels 60% new oak barrels 40% one-year-old oak barrels for 18 months.

Tasting Notes

The ripeness is outstanding, dark in color, the aromas are refined, complex and spicy, the tannins are elegant and sexy, with the sensation of a balanced power. It stands up the challenge of the 2018 and 2019 vintages, with a pretty dash of supplementary freshness. 2020 is also an open window to the future.

Winemaker's
Notes

2020 is a winemaker's vintage. The ripeness is astounding, dark in color, the aromas are refined, complex and spicy, the tannins are elegant and sexy, with the sensation of a balanced power. It stands up to the challenge of the 2018 and 2019 vintages, with a pretty dash of supplementary freshness. 2020 is an open window to the future.

Serve with

Chateau Cantenac Brown is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Cantenac Brown is a perfect match with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta as well as cheese.



Production 10,416 cases made.
Cellaring Drink 2028-2038
Scores/Awards **94 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2023
94+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023
91-93+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - May 2021
94 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent (score only) - March 2023
95 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023
96-97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021
95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2021
94 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023
93 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021
94 points - Jane Anson, Insidebordeaux.com - January 2023
96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023
94-96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2021
93 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021
94-96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - April 2021
97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023
94-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021
96 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023
92-94 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2021
93 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2023
93 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021
17.5 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2021

Reviews *"Ripe, rounded, and suave in feel, with alluring waves of cassis and dark cherry reduction laced with sandalwood, black tea and violet notes. Broad, velvety, and perfumed through the finish, with a subtle sanguine hint echoing late. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Best from 2028 through 2038. 10,416 cases made."*
- JM, Wine Spectator

*"A fine follow-up to the excellent 2019, the 2020 Cantenac Brown incorporates newly acquired holdings of Cabernet Sauvignon from the plateau of Margaux. Unwinding in the glass with aromas of cherries, cassis, burning embers and pencil shavings, it's medium to full-bodied, layered and concentrated, with good depth at the core, supple tannins and terrific purity of fruit. Concluding with a long, penetrating finish, it underlines the fact that this is the appellation's fastest-improving estate.
A property in the midst of a notable renaissance, this 60-hectare estate boasts some prime terroirs on the plateau of Margaux. It is in the midst of constructing a new, state-of-the-art winery under the auspices of technical director José Sanfins. In recent years, Cantenac Brown has regularly numbered among the sleepers of the vintage for classically styled Margaux."*
- WK, Wine Advocate

"Deep garnet-purple in color, the 2020 Cantenac Brown slides effortlessly out of the glass with pronounced notes of licorice, tar, tapenade, and fertile loam over a core of warm cassis and plum preserves, with a waft of charcuterie. The medium-bodied palate is refreshing, bursting with crunchy black fruit and herbal sparks with a well-managed, grainy texture, finishing long and earthy."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Plenty of blackberry, spice, iron, and crushed lead pencil aromas follow through to a full body with chewy, velvety tannins and a rather cool side to it. Crushed stone and slate undertones."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Fantastic depth of fruit with layers of firm, chewy tannins that are medium-grained and long in the mouth. Full and dynamic. One of the best ever."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This grand estate that recently changed hands has produced a seriously promising wine. Bold black fruits and dark tannins are just beginning a fine interplay, reinforced by the wine's acidity. Expect a good future for the wine. Barrel Sample: 95-97."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

Reviews *“Juicy, succulent, and supple, this has lovely bright energy and impact straight away. Tannins are on the chalky mineral side, mouthcoating, but with a salty tang so they don't appear too ripe, heavy, or rustic, but give width and structure. Feels quite powerful, with an underlying concentration and a tight clove and cedar tang to the tannins. Energetic, definitely more bright and pulsing right now. Purity of fruit is there, as is the acidity.”*
- GH, Decanter.com

“Silky with touches of caramel, chocolate, blueberry, raspberries, and boysenberries - all those autumnal fruits that have texture and acidity to them, with the signature gloss of Cantenac Brown. Clear peony, violet notes also. A linen texture that slows the passage of the wine through the mouth. Retasted at UGC and this is again good quality, the austerity on the tannins is marked right now, but there is plenty of life ahead here. New owner Tristan le Lous as of 2019, and this wine also includes the new 9.5ha vines of vines from Château Charmant and la Galiane (bought in July 2020). The fermentation was conducted at temperatures 4-5 °C lower than average to preserve fruit. 60% new oak. Harvest 10 to 30 September. Barrel Sample: 93.”
- JA, Decanter.com

“Consistently impressive Margaux estate, not the most exuberant of wines in this vintage, with a serious tannic structure that hides understated power. There is a lot to enjoy here, and a ton of ageing potential, with cassis and bilberry fruits, bitter chocolate, fennel, and spiced sandalwood, softened by crushed roses and peony as it opens. Good quality needs time. 60% new oak. New owner Tristan le Lous as of 2019, and this wine also includes the new 9.5ha vines of vines from Château Charmant and la Galiane (bought in July 2020), harvest September 10 to 30, José Sanfins director.”
- JA, Inside Bordeaux

“Deep, dark, and rich, the wine is packed from start to finish with layers of lush, polished, ripe, sweet, pure, black, and dark red fruits, flowers, espresso, hints of chocolate and oceanic influences. There is a beautiful sense of symmetry, purity, freshness, length, and lift that already expresses its essence. The finish continues with its layers of ripe, opulent, yet refined fruits. This is a top vintage for Cantenac Brown that will age gracefully for 2-3 decades. Drink from 2026-2055.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Inky in color, the wine hits all the right notes with its floral, camphor, blackberry, incense, espresso, and black currant aromatics. There is serious intensity here with layers of ripe, sweet, dark fruits, toasty oak, and polished tannins on the mid-palate and in the finish. Long, and deep, give this at least 7-8 in the cellar and this is going to really start to show well.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The 2020 Cantenac Brown, cropped at 36hl/ha, has quite a precocious bouquet of macerated small black cherries, blueberry, touches of cassis and violet, all very generous and seductive in style. The palate is beautifully balanced and extremely pure, offering succulent ripe tannins, perfectly judged acidity and layers of blueberry, Dorset plum, crushed stone, and light graphite notes toward the finish, which has just the right amount of salinity. This is a sophisticated and quite cerebral Margaux in a series of excellent recent releases from the estate. Highly recommended.”
- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Cantenac Brown is a knock-out. A Margaux of towering intensity, the 2020 is dense and vertical at the same time. It's a combination that works so well. Dark cherry, plum, chocolate, new leather, licorice, and cloves all saturate the palate. There's real depth and concentration here from the summer heat and small size of the berries, but at the same time the 2020 has more freshness and energy than some recent years. There have been quite a few changes here in recent years, starting with a new parcel on the Margaux plateau that entered the blend in 2019 and moved towards lower toast levels in the barrels. Cantenac Brown remains a potent, opulent Margaux, but 2020 has a measure of classicism as well. Superb.”
- AG, Vinous

Reviews *"The 2020 Cantenac Brown is an outrageously beautiful wine. Ample, vertical and soaring in its intensity, the 2020 is shaping up to be a jewel of a wine. Punchy red berry fruit, lavender, spice, mint and rose petal abound. What I like most about the 2020 is the way it balances fruit intensity with vibrancy and energy. Cantenac Brown is shaping up to be one of the wines of the vintage."*

- AG, Vinous

"The 2020 Chateau Cantenac Brown showed beautifully and is a serious, concentrated, powerful Margaux that's going to need bottle age. Ripe blackcurrants, toasty oak, ripe tobacco, and dried flower notes all define the aromatics, and it hits the palate with medium to full-bodied richness, a layered, balanced mouthfeel, beautiful tannins, and a great finish. It shows the more focused, slightly understated style of the vintage, yet everything is in the right place, it has terrific purity, and it's just a brilliant Margaux. I followed this bottle for multiple days, and it never put a foot wrong. It will hit its prime drinking window in 7-8 years and evolve for two decades. Best After 2030

- Jeb Dunnuck

"I loved the 2020 Château Cantenac Brown, a pure, medium to full-bodied, beautifully textured Margaux that shines in the vintage. Offering up lots of classy cassis fruits as well as spicy oak, violets, and flowers, it has plenty of mid-palate depth, outstanding balance, and a great finish. There's no trace of the often firm chewy tannins found in this appellation in 2020, and it's unquestionably a beautiful wine."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"Deep ruby, opaque core, purple reflections. Delicate noble wood nuances, fragrant black berry, liquorice, red berry fruit nuances, a touch of herbal savouriness. Juicy, red cherries, freshly structured, vivid tannins, salty-mineral finish, red berry aftertaste, long finish."

- PM, Falstaff Magazine

"On the nose, fruit forward offering juiciness, fruit vibrancy, lovely racy elegance, complexity, fine grain, intensity, breadth as well as depth. Notes of bright boysenberry, bright cassis and more lightly violet combined with touches of bright red berries, iris, pepper, small blue fruits/blueberry and hints of cornflower, zan, saffron, toast, discrete hints of vanilla bean, racy minerality (almost iodized), bergamot and a very discreet hint of Sichuan pepper (which brings "liveliness"). The palate is fruity, elegant, with precision / delicacy and offers juiciness, a nice minerality, a tangy frame, fat, a good definition, a certain gourmandize, precision, tension, an airy side, dynamism (with subtlety). Power with freshness, balance and delicacy! The wine expresses the notes of bright blackberry, bright red berries and slightly juicy red plum combined with hints of juicy/fresh/acidic strawberry, violet, zan, fresh/juicy blueberry, camphor, black tea as well as a discreet hint of saffron, racy minerality (fresh gravel), toasted almond and a very discreet hint of dark chocolate (in the background). The tannins are elegant, racy, mellow, and very discreetly tight. A fine chew on the finish/persistence."

- Vert de Vin
