

## Vieux Château Certan 2017

CSPC# 814286

750mlx6

14.5% alc./vol.

### Grape Variety

80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon

### Appellation

Pomerol

### Classification

Bordeaux AOC (*Appellation d'origine contrôlée*)

### Website

[http://www.vieuxchateaucertan.com/vieux\\_chateau\\_certan\\_uk.html](http://www.vieuxchateaucertan.com/vieux_chateau_certan_uk.html)

### General Info

The Vieux Château Certan estate, which in 1745 already figured on Bellayme's famous map under the name of "Sertan", is located in the heart of the Pomerol plateau. Covering 14 hectares (35 acres) in one single block, the Vieux Château Certan vineyard is the fruit of a century of painstaking work and careful decision-making.

### Winemaker

Alexandre and Guillaume Thienpont

### Vintage

2017 began with a cool, dry winter, followed by a mild, rainy spring, which brought about an early, even budding. Summer-like temperatures around 20th May triggered the flowering process, which was completed very quickly. High temperatures continued throughout June, while the accompanying humidity led to vigorous vine growth. The good health enjoyed by the vines since the beginning of the cycle continued with the fine, hot and dry summer weather.

The grapes were picked in several stages, each of them at precise timing. Thanks to favourable weather in September, each grape variety was brought in at optimal ripeness.

The Merlot shows ripe fruit, freshness and a silky texture. While the colour is a deep, intense garnet, the nose reveals subtle red berry fruit aromas. On the palate, the wine is smooth, round and balanced. One of the five earliest vintages of the last twenty years, the 2017 promises to be a fine vintage.

Vieux Château Certan 2017, with its controlled power, has excellent ageing potential. The harmonious balance between its silky texture and its freshness of flavour has produced a wine with breed and great class that mirrors the outstanding terroir from which it was made.

"We're back to Bordeaux in 2017," Guillaume Thienpont declared. "2015 and 2016 were sunnier and more hedonistic. In 2017 we had an earlier vintage, but not an Indian summer. 2017 was lovely because the ripening cycle was long." "Of 800 hectares in Pomerol, only 200 were not affected by frosts," Alexandre Thienpont added, alluding to those vineyards situated on the plateau. All the Vieux Château Certan blocks are on the plateau and were unaffected by the frosts, enjoying an "early developing and early ripening vintage." Readers should note that there is quite a bit of clay in the soil profile here as well as a bit of Cabernet Sauvignon, both contributing to this firmer, more muscular style of Vieux Château Certan.

### Vineyards

The 13.5-hectare Vieux Chateau Certan vineyard is located in the center of Pomerol, on the plateau. When you arrive at the junction where the estate rests, you are truly at the cross streets that could easily be renamed to the center of the heart and soul of Pomerol. Directly across the street is Chateau Certan de May and just down the road you'll find Petrus. Vieux Chateau Certan has a terroir of clay and gravel soil. Vieux Chateau Certan is one of the largest vineyards in the Right Bank that are planted in one single block of vines. The Vieux Chateau Certan vineyard in total is divided into 23 separate parcels. The vineyards of Vieux Chateau Certan are planted to 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon with vines that average 50 years of age. However, there is one very old plot of Merlot that was planted all the way back in 1932, making it one of the oldest parcels in the Pomerol appellation. Alexandre Thienpont is responsible for changing the makeup of the vineyards as well. He removed the Malbec and reduced the amount of Cabernet Sauvignon in the vineyards, while adding more Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Unlike the vineyard farming practices used in the 1960's and 1970's, today, no pesticides of any type are used on the vines. Alexandre Thienpont vineyard farming practices



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|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Vineyards</b>                    | practices used in the 1960's and 1970's, today, no pesticides of any type are used on the vines. Alexandre Thienpont practices sustainable vineyard management techniques.  |
| <b>Harvest</b>                      | In 3 stages...12 and 13/09 then 18 and 19/09 and finally from 25/09 to 2/10/2017.   |
| <b>Vinification/<br/>Maturation</b> | The grapes are picked by hand and sorted meticulously at the end of each row of vines. After a gentle crushing, they are put into oak vats, by variety. Those vats destined to make up the blend of the Grand Vin are run off into 100 % new French oak barrels and aged for 18 to 22 months.   |
| <b>Tasting Notes</b>                | Vieux Château Certan combines savoir-faire with exceptional soils. Coming mainly from the vineyard's oldest vines, Vieux Château Certan is every year a blend of the most excellent lots produced at the estate. The brilliance of the wine's hue, the richness of its aromas and the subtlety of its flavor bring it inimitable style. The wines of Vieux Château Certan possess natural concentration and require a few years' cellaring before the first bottles can be opened. As with the greatest Bordeaux wines, they can be enjoyed after 10 to 15 years of age   |
| <b>Serve with</b>                   | Vieux Chateau Certan is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised and grilled dishes. Vieux Chateau Certan is also good when matched with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms and pasta.  |
| <b>Production</b>                   | 3,666 cases made.   |
| <b>Cellaring</b>                    | Drink 2022-2040   |
| <b>Scores/Awards</b>                | <p><b>98 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2020</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2020</p> <p><b>96-98 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate #236 - April 2018</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2020</p> <p><b>97-98 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2018</p> <p><b>96 points/Cellar Selection</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2020</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2018</p> <p><b>18.5 points</b> - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2018</p> <p><b>93 points</b> - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2018</p> <p><b>97 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2018</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2018</p> <p><b>17+ points</b> - Farr Vintner - April 2018</p> <p><b>93-96 points</b> - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2018</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p><b>94-96 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2018</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p><b>95-98 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2018</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2020</p> <p><b>19+ points</b> - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2018</p>  |
| <b>Reviews</b>                      | <p><i>"This delivers a terrific rush of raspberry ganache and steeped plum fruit that holds center stage throughout, flanked by singed apple wood and dried anise notes and backed on the finish by hints of Lapsang souchong tea, warm fruitcake and mineral. A step ahead of the pack in this vintage. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2022 through 2040. 3,666 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Composed of 80% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2017 Vieux Château Certan sports a deep garnet-purple color. No mincing about, the bouquet absolutely prances out of the glass with stunning scents of candied violets, chocolate-covered cherries, roses and eucalyptus over a core of black plum preserves, mulberries, black raspberries and blueberry pie plus wafts of licorice, iron ore and truffles. Medium to full-bodied, the palate has fantastic balance and expression, with very fine-grained, silt-like tannins and well-knit freshness, finishing with epic length and perfume."</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"Composed of 81% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, the deep garnet-purple colored 2017 Vieux Château Certan gives up gorgeous black raspberries, crushed black currants and warm black berries on the nose with chocolate-covered cherries, violets and star anise suggestions plus black truffles and wood</i></p> |

**Reviews** *smoke. The palate is medium to full-bodied with wonderful concentration in the mid-palate and firm, very finely pixelated tannins, with seamless freshness and fantastic length."*

- LPB, Wine Advocate

*"The purity and complexity are so mesmerizing for 2017. Raspberries and black fruit with sweet-tobacco and blood-orange undertones. Medium to full body. The tannins are so polished and pure and push out the edges on the wine. Fresh and pretty. Deep. Needs two or three years to perfect it."*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"This is a dense and compact center palate with a solid and pointed intensity. Full body, firm and silky tannins and an energetic finish. Complete. Harmonious."*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*"With a small percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend, this wine is solidly tannic, with intense acidity to balance the ripe berry flavors and structure. The wine is destined for long aging with its structure and powerful tannins. At the same time, juicy acidity gives vibrancy. Drink from 2024."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"95–97. Barrel Sample. Rich yet fresh, this is a beautifully balanced wine. Its tannins act as a support to the great fruit and juicy acidity. Ripe, classic and sophisticatedly rich, it will certainly age well and shouldn't be opened before 2025."*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*"Deepest crimson with black core. Not much aroma at first because the sample is cool. Rich, firm, dark and more savoury than usual, darker-fruited. Great freshness. Has impressive depth without weight. Very fine shape, great refinement even now. Feels like it is coiled tightly for the future. Dark beauty with just a very slight char on the finish and a long graphite aftertaste. Cool nights kept the freshness. (JH) 18.5/20"*

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

*"Extremely bright, dark fruit aromas are joined by hints of gooseberry and redcurrant in the mouth, but a deeper, richer cassis comes through on the mid-palate. The high level of acidity emphasises a floral note, yet this has an austerity that is more pronounced than in recent vintages, which should settle in over time. This is a fairly concentrated vintage at VCC, more than at many properties, and was their fifth earliest harvest in the past 20 years, similar to 2011 in terms of dates, although this time it was in three stages, from 12 September to 2 October. This is different in profile to the 2016, with more Cabernet Sauvignon (planted in 2012). It's an elegant style with pure fruit; an extremely focused and linear wine that's far from exuberant. No frost here, so a final yield of 37hl/ha. 3.75pH. IPT 73.*

*Drinking Window 2025 – 2038"*

- JA, Decanter.com

*"Deep in color, the wine pops with the perfume of cocoa, flowers, black plums, truffle and licorice. From there you'll find depth and concentration of flavor. The fruit is dark, polished, sensuous, velvety and long. There is vibrancy, florality, old vine intensity and chocolate coated cherries in the finish -- a denouement that goes on for 50 seconds or more. Blending 81% Merlot with 14% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine reached 14.2% alcohol with a pH of 3.75. Picking took place September 12, September 17, September 18 and October 2. It is interesting to note the picking dates and blends are quite similar to 2016. Sixty-seven percent of the harvest was included in the Grand Vin, which is much higher than usual."*

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*"Very deep ruby purple colour. Spices and rich red fruit. Inviting and intense aroma. Deep flavours of red and black fruits with plenty of sweet herbs and cocoa. Liquorice and violet. Intense and full flavoured, with good balancing acidity and great structure. Full but ripe tannins. Very good indeed. Barrel Sample: 95-97"*

- TA, timatkin.com

## Reviews

*"Deep ruby with an unctuous, opulent, exotic nose of black cherry and sweet plums. The palate is extremely refined, with supple, silky tannins gently framing creamy vanilla from new oak. Through the mid palate the fruit drives through the spiciness, giving a pure note of cassis and graphite. This continues through to a long finish, which is accented with exotic spices and a little toasty wood."*

- Farr Vintners

*"The fruit on the nose is fragrant and fresh smoky the palate has mid generosity rich ripe black plums supple sumptuous. Brighter at the back some fresh black fruits the finish has depth sweet rich ripe fruit. 2026-37"*

- Derek Smedley MW

*"The 2017 Vieux Château Certan was bottled at the end of May. It has a perfumed, slightly tertiary bouquet with blackberry, wild heather and just a touch of menthol. The palate is medium bodied with fleshy ripe tannins on the entry, mainly dark black fruit, rather introverted at the moment that just needs bottle age to show what it can be. Veins of dark chocolate towards the finish, I appreciate the structure of this VCC and the freshness it shows towards the overtly saline, Japanese nori tinged finish. Alexandre and Guillaume Thienpont have overseen a very assured and captivating Pomerol that will age gracefully over many years. Drink 2024-2050."*

- NM, Vinous

*"The 2017 Vieux Château Certan was picked in three passages through the vineyard, 12 and 13 September, 18 and 19 September and finally 25 September to 2 October. The yields are 37hl/ha with 14.2° alcohol and a 3.75 pH. It is the first vintage to contain Cabernet Sauvignon for several years. It has a very pure, Merlot-driven bouquet with black cherries, redcurrant and wild strawberry scents, just a hint of iris and incense in the background. The 70% new oak is nicely integrated here. The palate is medium bodied with edgy tannin, a deep well of black and red fruit interwoven with allspice, truffle, white pepper and a little sage. This Vieux Château Certan manifests more complexity and profundity as it aerates, delivering genuine, spine-tingling mineralité on the persistent finish. It gains even more precision when I return to the property to re-taste it again. Tasted twice, ten days apart at the property. Drink 2023-2050."*

- NM, Vinous

*"Just as it was en primeur, the 2017 Vieux Château Certan is regal and soaring right out of the glass. Inky blue and purplish fruit, chocolate, licorice, lavender, spice and mint come together in a dense, dark and powerful Pomerol. The 2017 is an explosive, vivid wine of monastic beauty. In this vintage, VCC is especially dark and somber, which adds to a real feeling of mysterious beauty. It is a towering achievement from Alexandre and Guillaume Thienpont. 2027 – 2047"*

- AG, Vinous

*"The 2017 Vieux Château Certan is a rapturously beautiful wine. Dark, sumptuous and seamless in the glass, the 2017 is going to tempt readers early. This is the first vintage that includes a bit of young vine Cabernet Sauvignon planted in 2012 to complement the old-vine Merlot and Franc that are the core of Vieux Certan. A wine of exceptional balance and purity, the 2017 dazzles from start to finish. There is an element of tension in the 2017 that is incredibly appealing. "We are back to Bordeaux," adds Alexandre Thienpont in reference to the personality of the year as compared to both 2016 and 2015. The blend is 81% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, aging in 70% new oak. (AG)"*

- AG, Vinous

*"Possibly the wine of the vintage, the 2017 Vieux Chateau Certan is a blend of 81% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon from the highest point on the Pomerol plateau. Deep purple, with a heavenly bouquet of creme de cassis, blueberries, scorched earth, crushed violets, tobacco, and earth, this beauty is full-bodied, has incredible depth of fruit, ripe, present tannins, integrated acidity, and a great finish. This estate has been on fire of late, and this is undoubtedly a worthy follow-on to the otherworldly 2015 and 2016. It has the depth of fruit and texture to offer pleasure even today, yet a solid 7-8 years of cellaring are warranted, and it should be long-lived. Bravo!"*

- Jeb Dunnuck

**Reviews**

*“They started harvesting in mid-September and then they waited a week and picked the ‘important stuff’ from 25th September until the 2nd October. This was important to get the tannins right in the skins. This is a much fresher, cleaner and less opulent wine than the last two vintages and Guillaume Thienpont describes it as an ‘intellectual’ vintage. The nose is incredibly bright with very direct black cherry notes and some mineral, stony tones, too. The previous few vintages have been later harvested but this wine retains the freshness. This wine is born of a dry summer and they luckily escaped the frosts by half a degree. Apparently, 300ha in Pomerol were ‘frozen’. Their situation on the dome of Pomerol helped them. According to Alexandre Thienpont, ‘finesse means weak in English’, so he doesn’t use this word about the 2017 vintage. He prefers the word ‘classic’. The perfume is amazing, and the silkiness and tenderness is evident. While the wine is not a heavyweight the colour is intense and this is thanks to particularly small berries. The old vines (in both varieties) and accuracy of work in the vineyards helped amazingly. The young vines had decent yields and the second wine is a success, too (80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc). Two thirds of the yield went into the Grand Vin. The brightness of fruit is the overriding theme here and there is a gloss and freshness ratio which makes this a vitally compelling wine. ‘Academic’ was the last word I heard when I walked out of the cellar. They must have been talking about me!”*  
- MJ, matthewjukes.com

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