

# Vieux Château Certan 2018

CSPC# 814286

750mlx6

14.5% alc./vol.

## Grape Variety

70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc

## 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

From winter to spring, the first half of 2018 was marked by mild temperatures and very heavy rainfall. At the end of May, after optimal flowering, a glorious hot and dry summer set in for a long period. The water reserves that had built up over the spring enabled the vines to cope well with the severe water stress that followed in the summer.

The old vines, their vigour favourably slowed by this drought, produced wonderfully deep-coloured, concentrated and balanced wines.

The fully ripe Merlot brought all its strength to the wine and ensured a stable base at the time of blending. The Cabernet Franc, present in its totality this year, enhanced the blend through its unctuous, velvety texture and excellent length of flavour. It contributed pedigree and complexity.

Vieux Château Certan 2018 exhibits a deep crimson hue of rare intensity, beautiful aromas of ripe fruit and violets. Its amazing balance between freshness and ripeness enable all the qualities of a great long-ageing vintage to shine through.

## 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 practices sustainable vineyard management techniques.

## Harvest

"It was a vintage of contrasts," began Guillaume Thienpont. "It was hard with the mildew at the beginning. There were some spots on the canopy, but fortunately the fruit was intact." Vieux Château Certan's Merlot was harvested September 24-26, and then they had to wait for the Cabernet Franc. "We waited and waited until early October," Guillaume said. "Then it rained a little on October 3. It was just enough to push the vines through. We finished picking on October 10. We were one of the last to pick! But we were so happy. The tannins are like cashmere this year. This year, Cabernet Franc was not just useful—it was necessary." As for the winemaking: "The extraction was very soft, just like flipping a piece of meat on a grill," Alexandre, Guillaume's father, added with a smile.



<b>Vinification/ Maturation</b>	The grapes are picked by hand and sorted meticulously at the end of each row of wines. 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 Cellaring</b>	Production quantity unknown. Drink 2027-2057
<b>Scores/Awards</b>	<p><b>99+ points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021</p> <p><b>97-100 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019</p> <p><b>99 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021</p> <p><b>99-100 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>98-100 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2019</p> <p><b>18.5 points</b> - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - November 2020</p> <p><b>98-100 points</b> - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>99 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021</p> <p><b>98-100 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019</p> <p><b>18.5+ points</b> - Farr Vintner - April 2019</p> <p><b>96 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2021</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019</p> <p><b>97+ points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - March 2021</p> <p><b>94-97 points</b> - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2019</p> <p><b>99 points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021</p> <p><b>96-98 points</b> - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2019</p> <p><b>19.5+ points</b> - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019</p> <p><b>98 points</b> - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - February 2021</p> <p><b>95 points</b> - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com (score only) - March 2019</p> <p><b>19 points</b> - La Revue du Vin France (score only) - April 2019 or January 2021</p> <p><b>19 points</b> - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2019</p>
<b>Reviews</b>	<p><i>"The 2018 Vieux Château Certan is composed of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc, weighing in with 14.4% alcohol and an IPT (total polyphenol index) of 77. Medium to deep garnet-purple colored, the nose is locked down tight at this youthful stage, requiring a lot of patient swirling to release a profound powerhouse of a perfume: preserved plums, blueberry compote, ripe black cherries, and boysenberries, leading to suggestions of Indian spices, lilacs, espresso and licorice, plus a waft of sandalwood. The medium to full-bodied palate has an amazing sense of cohesiveness. There are no edges to the seamless flow of exquisitely fine-grained tannins and perfectly knit acidity, beautifully framing the blue and black fruits, which are at once elegant and also so, so rich. It finishes with many slowly lapping waves of minerals and exotic spices, which just go on and on. It is a wine that is, simply put, an experience not to be missed. Give it a good 6-8 years in the cellar and drink it over the next 30 years or more. 2027 – 2057"</i></p> <p>- LPB, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The 2018 Vieux Château Certan is a blend of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc. Yields were 40 hectoliters per hectare. The wine has a pH of 3.78, 14.4% alcohol and an IPT (total polyphenol index) of 77. Medium to deep garnet-purple—it has a very vibrant color—it drifts effortlessly out of the glass with wonderfully intense, beautifully delineated scents of red roses, black raspberries, kirsch and Darjeeling tea before the powerful, profound black fruits kick in baked plums, wild blueberries, molten licorice and mulberries with touches of cigar box, cinnamon stick, tapenade and truffles. Full-bodied, rich, densely packed and revealing layer upon layer of</i></p>

**Reviews** *red and black fruits with an incredible array of floral and spicy sparks, it has a high level of super ripe, incredibly fine, velvety soft tannins and fantastic freshness (not just from acid but from bright, crunchy fruit). It finishes very long, marvelously layered and with such jaw-dropping brightness from the fruit, the end is almost electric. Incredible.”*

- LPB, Wine Advocate

*“Blackberry and hints of plum with intense wet-earth and black-olive undertones. Bark and some iodine. Full-bodied with superb depth of fruit and structure. The palate is so broad with super tannins. This is a powerful and very structured VCC with fantastic depth and muscle. Down-to-earth style. You can taste the soil. 70% merlot and 30% cabernet franc. One for long cellar aging. Old-vine character. Try after 2027.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“This is a significant VCC with masses of fruit and juicy tannins. It’s fresh but impresses you with the rich and powerful fruit. A tower of a wine. Incredible depth and density. Thick and muscular. It is 30 per cent cabernet franc, the rest merlot.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“While the tannins give this wine a firm character, it is the perfumed, ripe Cabernet Franc that is so expressive and gives the wine its structured, complex character. Spice from the wood aging shines through, but the weight of the fruit is impressive and adds elegance. There’s long aging potential for this fabulous wine.”*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*“70% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 40 hl/ha. pH 3.78. Barrel sample. Darkest cherry red. Dark fruited and quite mineral on the nose, but fragrant with that dark, subtle fruit. Lively and with a dash of herbs for complexity. At the moment this is rather sober on the palate. That Cabernet freshness is there and bringing great finesse to the tannins. Opens up to more dark and subtle fragrance. Really refined and beautifully dry and elegant. Very long, very tender in texture even if there’s a charge of tannins hiding underneath. There is a subtle beauty. I need half an hour with this wine not five minutes because it unfurls on the palate. This is already a great wine, but it is going to be a very great wine. Alexandre Thienpont describes it as cashmere, but I think of it as the finest of cotton sheets, ironed smooth, with very high thread count. (JH)”*

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

*“Deep and richly spiced notes of cinnamon and smoked butterscotch along with Cabernet Franc-dominant savoury fruits. Expands in all directions, showing precision and delicately brushed tannins. They carried out extremely careful selection from their 23 plots to ensure nothing at all raisined or over-concentrated made it into the wine, and certainly there is not a trace of the drought in the flavours here, just a seductively rich texture to the body of the wine. A brilliant VCC - one to savour. Harvest from September 19 to October 9, with leisurely picking over three weeks. Drinking Window 2026 – 2048”*

- JA, Decanter.com

*“This is complex, precise and concentrated but tempered with stunning potential. There is so much flavour and juice here with crushed tobacco and liquorice root alongside richly textured raspberry and blueberry fruits - all extremely well balanced and yet reaching down into the depths promising great ageing. A VCC that is full of layers, with the beauty of this vintage making them all relatively discernible even at this early stage because the tannins are not balled together but allow the light in between.*

*An excellent year for Cabernet Franc, which always favours this estate - owner Alexandre Thienpont said that they weren’t just useful but essential this year, giving freshness and focus to the hedonism of the Merlots, and dampening down the alcohols. No press wine in the blend as yet, and not sure if they will use it. A yield of 40hl/ha. Drinking Window 2027 – 2044.”*

- JA, Decanter.com

*“There is no hotter wine in Pomerol these days than Vieux Chateau Certan. 2018 joins 2009, 2010, 2015, 2016 and 2019 in the pantheon of incredible vintages for VCC! The opaque colored wine explodes with dark red, black and blue fruits, dark cocoa, herbs, flowers, spice, wet earth and licorice in the nose. If that didn’t hook you, the incredible level of density, with its palate coating richness and seamless over 60 second finish with all its velvet*

**Reviews** *and silk textured fruits with their remarkable purity will. This is a future legend of Bordeaux. If decadent drinking is your thing, this belongs in your cellar. The wine blends 70% Merlot with 30% Cabernet Franc.”*  
- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*“With a dark hue, the initial scent you'll notice is the robust floral crux before discovering the truffle, spice, cocoa, black plum, red fruit and licorice. Elegant, polished, silky, refined with a gorgeous sense of purity in the fruit, the wine has density, but it also dances on tiptoe. The 2018 is a striking expression of Pomerol with a mix of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc. The wine reached 14.4% alcohol with a pH of 3.78. Picking took place September 19 to October 10 and 65% of the harvest was used to produce the Grand Vin.”*

- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*“Vivid purple colour in the glass with an expressive and expansive nose of violets, cherries and plums. The aromas are cool, flinty, somehow both sweet and savoury, and very enticing. The palate is creamy with vanilla, toast, and pure cassis. This has real sophistication due to the cool ripeness of fruit and refinement of tannin that gives a cashmere texture and superb poise. Despite the elegance there is great intensity, giving an almost ethereal weightless power on the finish. Effortlessly impressive and very pure. Certainly, a contender for wine of the vintage, in a style that sets it apart.”*

- Farr Vintners

*“The 2018 Vieux Château Certan is deeply impressive. It possesses one of the most intense aromatics that I can remember on a nascent VCC, bursting from the glass with intense black cherries, cassis and violets that are even more pronounced than when I first tasted this from barrel. The palate is exuberant, racing out of the blocks with precocious, intense black fruit wrapped up with a silky texture that makes it deceptively easy to drink. You would not pick this out as the subtlest VCC; instead, it is a long-term proposition, a comparatively opulent wine that may ultimately be feted as one of the appellation's finest wines. Chapeau, Alexandre et Guillaume Thienpont! 2025 – 2055.”*

- NM, *Vinous*

*“The 2018 Vieux Château Certan was picked from 19 September on the younger blocks, the heart of the crop picked around 24 and 25 September, finishing on 9 October at 40hL/ha. It has a very pure and charming bouquet with dark cherries, bilberry, hints of cassis and pressed violet aromas. The palate is medium-bodied with very pure fruit. This is classic VCC with that Cabernet Sauvignon imparting subtle pencil lead notes. The oak is nicely integrated, with a silky-smooth finish. Alexander Thienpont mentioned that this is tasting much better than at en primeur. Outstanding. 2025 – 2055”*

- NM, *Vinous*

*“The 2018 Vieux Château Certan is delicate, silky and understated, just as it was in barrel. Inky blue/purplish berry fruit, mint, lavender, spice, and wildflowers all open in the glass. The 30% Cabernet Franc, which is high for present-day standards, adds tons of aromatic lift as well as freshness, while bright, saline-infused notes extend the finish. Fine tannins and mid-weight structure give the 2018 an air of finesse that is impossible to miss. If I had to bet on one 2018 that could very well surprise 10-20 years out, it might very well be VCC. 2026 – 205”*

- AG, *Vinous*

*“The 2018 Vieux Château Certan is a very pretty wine built more on elegance, finesse and aromatic nuance. Relative to the recent past, the 2018 shows a much more mid-weight structure and less of the creaminess of either 2015 or 2016. Much of that is attributable to a blend that includes 30% Cabernet Franc. Lavender, rose petal, mint and blueberry fruit all grace the 2018. Far from an obvious wine, the 2018 is going to need a number of years to be at its best, as it is a wine of total understatement and class. Fine beads of tannin support the understated finish. In 2018, VCC is a wine of refinement and subtlety more than anything else. I don't see the same visceral thrill as in a number of vintages of the recent past. Perhaps that will come in bottle.”*

- AG, *Vinous*

*“The flagship 2018 Vieux Château Certan is based on 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc and was brought up in (I suspect) roughly 50% new French oak. It tips the scale at 14.5% natural alcohol, which is the same as the 2010 (slightly higher than the 2009) and has a pH of 3.78, which is also very close to the 2010. This rock star of a Pomerol offers a kaleidoscopic array of red, black, and blue fruits, white truffle, spring flowers, tobacco, and crushed rock-like minerality on the nose. It has perfectly integrated oak, gorgeous concentration, building yet ultra-fine tannins, and not a hard edge to be found. I was able to follow this bottle for multiple days, and the*

**Reviews** *large Cabernet Franc component became more and dominant, yet it never truly shut down and was always a joy to drink. Nevertheless, a good 7-8 years of bottle age are warranted, and it should evolve for 30-40 years in cold cellars. Again, the Thienpont family produces a heavenly wine that wine lovers should all have in their cellar. Along with Petrus, Conseillante, Lafleur, and a handful of others, it's one of the appellation's most singular wines."*  
- Jeb Dunnuck

*"Liquid violets, cassis, blueberries, and beautiful floral notes all emerge from the 2018 Vieux Château Certan, which is deep, profound, and layered on the palate, with ultra-fine tannins. Full-bodied, with thrilling purity, it builds on the palate, with beautiful tannins, and notable freshness. It's showing its Cabernet Franc component today, with beautiful purity, elegance, and balance, as well as tons of structure. The 2018 is a blend of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc that hit 14.4% natural alcohol with an IPT of 77 and a pH of 3.78. It's another brilliant wine from Thienpont family that's going to evolve for decades."*  
- Jeb Dunnuck

*"(70 Merlot, 30 Cabernet Franc) | 70% new oak and 30% one-year-old oak | 14.4% alc (the Merlot was 15% and the Cabernet Franc was 13.5%) | 40 hl/ha | 77 IPT. In spite of the tropical spring and dry summer they were not affected by mildew at VCC. Alexandre and his son Guillaume Thienpont anticipated the rhythm of the downy mildew and tackled it perfectly. They had the same sort of attack in 2000 and they survived this, too. The summer was not excessively warm at VCC and they had cool nights which is superb for Cabernet Franc and this offset the power and intensity of the Merlot. 'Cashmere' was Alexandre's expression for the texture of his wine, and this is better than any word I can come up with, so it will do. Unlike many of the other Pomerols, this wine leads with red fruit. The oldest vines in this wine were planted in 1932 and this goes some way to explaining the superb intensity on display. It is said that you cannot smell texture, but this wine smells incredibly silky. The nose shows exquisite complexity, and, on the palate, there is considerable volume and length. The finish is crisp, tart, and dry and it pinches the palate and this further alerts the senses. The layers of red fruit are positively kaleidoscopic flavours and with the never-ending finish the overall feeling is of a densely flavoured wine but one with a medium-bodied framework and this sleight of hand is thrilling. I wish I could have tasted this wine every day such was its appeal. It is yet another ridiculously brilliant wine from this magnificent estate."*  
- MJ, matthewjukes.com

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