

Château Ausone 2021

CSPC# 102920

750mlx3

12.8% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

65% Cabernet Franc, 35% Merlot

Appellation

Saint Emilion

Classification

Premier Grand Cru Classé "A"

Website

<http://chateau-ausone.fr/>

Analysis

pH: 3.72

Sustainability

In conversion to organic farming since 2020

General Info

Château Ausone is the smallest of Bordeaux's 'big eight' (first growths), and its location is as spectacular as its wines; perched on the limestone hillsides that harbour the walled town of Saint-Émilion. Production at Ausone is tiny.

Ausone has been under the inspirational Alain Vauthier since 1995, who has spared no expense in establishing benchmark Saint-Émilion that often ages for 50-100 years. A new cellar (retaining old oak vats) and renovation of the château has breathed new life into Ausone.

Although the château was built in the 19th century, the site shows evidence of the roman activity, which gives the wine its name, commemorating the 4th Century poet Ausonius. Ausone's recent history begins in 1718 with the Cantenat family, who passed it on to Mlle Challon, whose husband, Edouard Dubois, is credited with Ausone's rise in the 20th century.

Dubois-Challon's son Jean inherited Ausone post WWII, during a lean period in quality, and it wasn't until his widow took over in 1974 that Ausone improved. Mme Dubois-Challon shared ownership with the children of her stepdaughter Cecile and the Vauthier family, before relinquishing control to Alain Vauthier and his sister. Michel Rolland is consultant.

Winemaker

Philippe Baillarguet cellar master

Vintage

If 2021 was drier than previous years, two intense climatic episodes impacted the vintage. The first one is the April frost which mobilized our teams for 9 nights. The second is linked to the strong episodes of rain in June, with nearly 180 mm of precipitation. The trio August / September / October was accompanied by low rainfall, allowing to harvest in optimal conditions and preserving the qualitative potential of the vintage.

Vineyards

The 7-hectare St. Emilion vineyard is planted to a vine density of 6,500 to 12,600 plants per hectare. It is the stated goal of Chateau Ausone to eventually have all their plantings at closer to 12,600 vines per hectare. However, this is being done a few vines at a time. The entire process will take several decades. The steep, hillside terroir with its grades of 15% to 20% is clay with limestone and limestone over asteria limestone in the soil. This is what gives the wine of Chateau Ausone its intense mineral character. The vines are old, in fact the average age of the vines is 50 years. However, Chateau Ausone also has some of the oldest vines in St. Emilion. There are Cabernet Franc vines that are close to 100 years of age. The oldest was planted in 1906. Yields are low at Chateau Ausone. On average, they are close to 33 hectoliters per hectare. The St. Emilion vineyard of Chateau Ausone is planted to 55% Cabernet Franc and 45% Merlot. There is also a small portion of Cabernet Sauvignon planted at Ausone as well. Cabernet Sauvignon is only included in the second wine.

Harvest

The grapes are hand-harvested with great emphasis on careful sorting on the vines. The bunches are brought to the cellar in small crates that prevent any damaging to the fruit. Cabernet Franc harvested 4-6 October, and Merlot harvested on 30 September 2021. Yield: 35 hl/ha.

**Vinification/
Maturation**

The vinification is carried out in temperature-controlled oak vats with a vatting period of 4 to 5 weeks depending on the vintage. Malolactic fermentation is done in new oak barrels, then the wine is aged for 20 months in Ausone's limestone rock caves.

Tasting Notes

This 2021 is cool and balanced, with fine, savoury tannins. The palate is very concentrated with blackcurrant, raspberry, liquorice, and aniseed. The acid is cooling and fresh but in great balance and leaves you wanting to return for a second sip.



Serve with	Chateau Ausone is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Ausone is a perfect match with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta as well as cheese.
Production	18,000 bottles (1,200 cases)
Cellaring	Drink 2030-2055
Scores/Awards	<p>94+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - February 2024</p> <p>97-100 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022</p> <p>95-97 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - May 2022</p> <p>96-97 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2022</p> <p>17.5 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - May 2022</p> <p>95 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - March 2022</p> <p>95 points - Jane Anson, Inside Bordeaux - May 2022</p> <p>96-98 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2022</p> <p>96 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2022</p> <p>96-98 points - Thomas Parker, Farr Vintners - April 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>93-95 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - May 2022</p> <p>19+ points - Matthew Jukes - August 2022</p> <p>97 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - April 2022</p> <p>97 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2022</p>
Reviews	<p><i>“The 2021 Ausone was the fruit of a challenging growing season, the estate's second year in organic conversion coinciding with notable diseases pressure, but the resulting blend of 65% Cabernet Franc and 35% Merlot (featuring a touch more Cabernet Franc than normal) was one of the most seductive wines of the en primeur campaign, its exotic perfume and crystalline purity evoking the great Ausone vintages of yesteryear and offering an unvarnished representation of this superb limestone terroir. In bottle, the 2021 remains an excellent wine, but at least out of the gates, its élevage (in 90% new oak, predominantly from Demptos and Taransaud, with four rackings) has taken the lead, intermingling aromas of vanilla, spices, and toast with discreet notes of minty dark berries, cherries, petals and pencil shavings. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, layered and fleshy, with an ample and enveloping core of fruit that retains its energy and purity, but which gives way to a finish marked by somewhat assertive barrel tannins. Given the inherent quality of the wine and the terroir, I'm sure time will be kind to it, but I'm not quite sure it will ever realize the magical potential it showed in April 2022.”</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>“A blend of 65% Cabernet Franc and 35% Merlot, the 2021 Ausone is a strong candidate for the title of wine of the vintage. Wafting from the glass with aromas of wild blueberries and raspberries mingled with rose petals, violets, exotic spices, vine smoke and blood orange, it's full-bodied, seamless and sensual, with a satiny attack that segues into a deep, layered mid-palate of breathtaking precision and intensity without weight. Built around bright acids and ultra-refined tannins and concluding with a resonant, perfumed finish, this profound young Ausone represents the essence of this great limestone terroir. I am not in the habit of drinking six-month-old Bordeaux cask samples, but this is one wine that would have sorely tempted me to make an exception to that rule if my appointment at the estate hadn't been one of the first of the day!</i></p> <p><i>One of Bordeaux's greatest terroirs, perched on the edge of Saint-Émilion's limestone escarpment, Ausone comprises vineyards on the slopes (of which one, "Le Poirier," situated directly below the château, supplies the core of the assemblage) and on the walled terraces that cling to the top of the plateau. It's a sheltered mesoclimate, planted predominantly with Cabernet Franc, with at most 1.2 meters of clay above the rock. The vineyards are old, and when missing vines have been replaced, the replacements are tagged and harvested separately. In the winery, the fruit ferments in wooden vats with twice-daily délestages (rack-and-return) until alcoholic fermentation begins to subside, at which point the cap is simply moistened until the moment of décuve and pressing. Maturation follows, in a cool former quarry hewn from the limestone, in entirely new barrels (mainly from Taransaud and Demptos) and lasts for some 20 months. The result is one of the region's most characterful and long-lived wines, endowed with striking intensity, precision, and persistence.”</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>“A blend of 65% Cabernet Franc harvested 4-6 October, and 35% Merlot, harvested on 30 September, the 2021 Ausone is deep purple-black colored. The nose absolutely pops with bright, super-fresh notes of redcurrants, juicy raspberries, blackberries, and violets, plus suggestions of plums, baking spices, lavender, and tar with a touch of pencil shavings. Medium-bodied, the palate has a concentrated, well-sustained mid-palate of</i></p>

- Reviews** *electrically charged red berry layers with loads of mineral accents and fine-grained tannins, delivering incredible tension and energy on the long, energetic vintage. This is an absolute triumph in this vintage. 2029-2059.”*
- LPB, Wine Independent
- “Full-bodied, but so elegant and fresh, with a silky, elegant tannin texture. Very deep and expansive. Lots going on already with plenty of perfume. Blueberries, cloves, lavender, and some wild-berry notes. Dark cocoa, too. Some espresso characters at the end. Wonderful interplay of spices and fruit. Long. It keeps going.”*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com
- “65% Cabernet Franc, 35% Merlot. Cask sample. Deep crimson hue. Fragrant and floral on both nose and palate. More aromatic than usual at this stage. Density and freshness through the mid palate, the fruit juicy, the tannins plentiful but very fine. Plenty of elegance and charm but there is power as well.”*
- JL, JancisRobinson.com
- “Vibrant red berry notes on the nose, fragranced damson, blueberry, plum, some wildflower and dried flower touches. Smooth and so silky on the palate, round and gently mouth filling with graphite edges that appear almost straight away. You get that nuance of wet stone and chalk but so well balanced with charming, juicy cherry and blackcurrant fruit on the palate. So perfectly smooth and balanced, silky tannins give the powdery finish while the well-balanced acidity gives the energy underneath. It’s incredibly captivating because you get these waves of flavour and a gentle lick of stone that reminds you, you’re in St-Emilion on pure limestone. Such verticality and an aerial quality to this with flavours that continue to lift the entire way through. Sustained but graceful with a shy sense of power. Brilliant winemaking for the vintage. Drinking Window: 2028 - 2050.”*
- GH, Decanter.com
- “Violet edging, jewel red depths. There is austerity on the tannins here, but also great depths through the palate, with controlled but juicy loganberry and raspberry fruits, and waves of saffron, creamy red-fruit puree, crushed rock, cold ash, and salt-cracker salinity. Subdued, with hidden power and complexity. A tough year for this stable of wines - or rather proof of their exceptionally high standards, making a half production of Simard, no Haut Simard, tiny amounts of Fonbel and almost certainly no Moulin St Georges. The last year that Ausone will be recorded as a Premier Grand Cru Classé A, before publication of the new ranking in September 2022. Harvest September 30 to October 6, 100% new oak. In conversion to organic farming since 2020, Philippe Baillarguet cellar master. Average vine age 55 years.”*
- JA, janeanson.com
- “Underbrush, smoke, cigar wrapper, espresso, spice, dark cocoa, flowers, and the strong sensation of crushed rocks and stones tossed into the Atlantic ocean create the enticing bouquet. On the palate, the wine is medium/full-bodied, elegant, polished, and chalky with layers of sweet, ripe, earthy, red pit fruits, salty tannins, herbs dark chocolate. There is length, minerality, and complexity on the mid-palate and a vibrancy to the red fruits with a strong crushed rock influence in the finish. This is a serious candidate for the wine of the vintage. Made from a blend of 65% Cabernet Franc and 35% Merlot, 12.8% ABV, pH 3.6. The harvest took place from September 30 - October 6. The yields were 30 hectoliters per hectare. Only 1,200 cases were produced this year. Drink from 2028-2065.”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- “The 2021 was harvested from 30th September to 6th October. The blend is 65% Cabernet Franc and 35% Merlot. The wine was fermented in wooden vats ahead of 20 months maturation in French oak. Conversion to organics began in 2020. Deep ruby purple in colour. Fleshy red and black fruit on the nose is layered with hints of incense, liquorice, cedar, and dark chocolate. This is very seductive and intense aromatically. The palate follows in the same vein, bursting with dark and powerful black fruit that is set against vibrant acidity. A wine of tension and intensity, there is an almost vintage-defying ripeness and a full mid-palate that so many lack. Building focus through to the finish, this is a highly refined Ausone. The tannins remain velveteen but are deceptively persistent, always in balance and almost cloaked by the fruit. This has outstanding potential, and is one of the wines of the vintage.”*
- TP, Farr Vintners

Reviews

“The 2021 Ausone was picked on September 30 for the Merlot and October 4–6 for the Cabernet Franc, with a higher percentage of Cabernet Franc because some of the Merlot was deselected into the Chapelle. Matured in 90% new oak, this has a fragrant and floral bouquet, more iris than violet, revealing a hint of seaweed in the background. The palate is well-defined, quite strict and focused, certainly one of the more mineral-driven Ausone’s that I have encountered at this stage. The limestone terroir is evident on the finish.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2021 Ausone could turn out to be one of the wines of the vintage on the Right Bank. It shows terrific balance, with just enough mid-palate sweetness and texture to fill out the layers. To be sure the 2021 is an understated Ausone, but all the elements are so nicely balanced. Red/purplish berry fruit, pomegranate, spice and mocha are pushed forward. The blend is 60% Cabernet Franc and 40% Merlot, with the Merlot more in evidence today while the Franc is felt mostly in the wine's finish. Rose petal, cinnamon and blood orange add an exotic flourish.”

- AG, Vinous

“This is a wonderfully suave and cultured Ausone with a quietness and composure that is compelling. The nose is floral and slightly spicy over a core of classic Ausone wild red and black fruit and it is delivered sotto voce with the palate following in a similar vein. The finish is as civilized as it gets with discreet levels of tannins hidden beneath the flowing crimson gown of fruit. It seems so calm and restrained that you wonder where the classic Ausone power and majesty is to be found and the answer is on the nose. If you don’t spend some time on the perfume, you will miss everything – the whole story, the plot line, the set-up, the truth. While the finale will happen in a couple of decades time, the cast is complete. If you read the statistics above, just as in any situation then you might conclude that this is a powerful, oaky, concentrated wine. This could not be further from the truth – it is sensational and as considered, calm and sophisticated as any the very finest in vintage.”

- Matthew Jukes

“Dark garnet, intense core, purple tinges to the narrow rim. Herbal savouriness, tobacco, red berry nuances, hints of black currant and cherries, subtle hints of orange zest. Medium-bodied, fine red fruit, integrated tannins, lean, redcurrants on the finish, delicately saline, has some length, bright acidity on the finish.”

- PM, Falstaff Magazine
