

Château Cheval Blanc 2012

CSPC# 771454

750mlx6

13.9% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

54% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Franc

Appellation

St. Emilion

Classification

Premier Grand Cru Classé A

Website

<http://www.chateau-cheval-blanc.com/#/en-WW/home>

General Info

Cheval Blanc (like its neighbour and parent, Figeac) stands out in St Emilion for two reasons: first, it is geographically removed from the principal concentration of great names that cluster around the town itself, neighbouring the vines of L'Évangile to the west, and in fact it shares more with the gravelly topography and terroir of the Pomerol plateau than that of St Emilion. Secondly, the vineyard is made up in large part of Cabernet Franc, compared to the predominantly Merlot plantings of the rest of this appellation. The property began life as a scion of the great Figeac estate, whose origins are among the oldest in Bordeaux. In more recent times, the property belonged to the Hebrard family but was sold in 1998, for want of an agreement between shareholders, to the LVMH fashion house. Pierre Lurton manages the estate, and it is his job also to run Ch d'Yquem in Sauternes. Classified as one of only two 1er Grand Cru Classe "A" (the other being Ausone), Cheval Blanc has produced many legendary vintages and a vertical tasting through the 20th century will prove how well these wines age: even the lighter vintages can maintain their balance for 50 years or more. As any wine lover will know, this property is also responsible for producing what many believe to be the most remarkable wine of the modern era, Cheval Blanc 1947. Though it was bottled in various places and can be volatile, the '47 is port-like in its richness and remains vibrant, youthful and thrilling, 60 years after vintage.

Vintage

After the very cold and dry winter of 2011–2012, bud break lasted throughout April. The rains of April and May, coupled with mild temperatures, resulted insignificant mineralization and strong vegetative growth of the vines.

Flowering was late (29 May) and drawn out, with a delicate fruit set. The old Merlot plants have at times seen yields reduced due to coulure (shatter, a failure of the fruit to set) or millerandage (shot grapes, incomplete development).

There was settled summer weather from 15 July, with the hottest August since 2003, allowing partial recovery of the growth cycle. From mid-July onwards, 2012 was one of the driest vintages of recent years (along with 2005, 2009 and 2010), resulting in a significant water deficit (120mm lower than the thirty-year average). Ripening in early August was prolonged, with peaks of temperature from July to September and reduced rainfall. The biggest daily temperature difference recorded was 12.9°C, the highest in eight years, favoring a high level of anthocyanins and aromatic intensity. September and October were mild, close to the seasonal norm (27–28°C on 5 October).

Vineyards

The vineyards border the Pomerol appellation and the wine is marked by extraordinary balance which brings to mind, though in a different style, Château Margaux on the left bank. Cheval Blanc is also famous for the high percentage of Cabernet Franc typically used in the blend. 40 hectares planted with 58% Cabernet Franc and 42% Merlot on clay and gravel. Average age of vines is 40 years. Yields of 35-40 hl/ha. The vineyards are planted to 66% Cabernet Franc and 34% Merlot.

Harvest

26th September until the 13th October

**Vinification/
Maturation**

The wine is vinified in an organ of small concrete vats, with each vineyard parcel being harvested and vinified separately. After a light, pneumatic pressing, the free-run and press wines are aged separately before blending. The wine is aged in barrel for some 18 months. Barrels used for the Grand Vin are renewed every year.



Tasting Notes	There are notes of boysenberry, bell pepper, white pepper and roses. It is not a profound Cheval, more a delicate, refined, red fruited style, but it possesses an impressive fruit core; bittersweet, with notes of blood orange, tayberry and sweet strawberries, this is all about precision, clarity and seductive fruit. There is hidden depth here. The flavours are quite long and are framed by polished tannins.
Production	7,665 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2018-2030
Scores/Awards	<p>95 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2015</p> <p>94-97 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2013</p> <p>94-96 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #206 - April 2013</p> <p>95-97 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2013</p> <p>93-94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2013</p> <p>95 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 1, 2015</p> <p>95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2013</p> <p>90-93 points - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - April 2013</p> <p>18.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2012</p> <p>18.75 points - James Lawther, Decanter.com - April 2013</p> <p>95 points - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2013</p> <p>96 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only)</p> <p>94-96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 18, 2013</p> <p>93-95+ points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2012</p> <p>94 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)</p> <p>18.5 points - Farr Vintner - March 2013</p> <p>94-97 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2013</p> <p>91 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 8, 2013</p> <p>96-98 points - Gilbert & Gaillard - April 16, 2013</p> <p>92-94 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p>19 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only)</p> <p>18.5 points - Gault & Millau (score only)</p> <p>18.5 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only)</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"This wine is gorgeous in all facets, offering a simultaneously loamy and creamy mouthfeel, seamless layers of red and black currant, cherry, raspberry and blackberry fruit, and a long, tobacco-fueled finish that features alluring hints of black tea and incense. The fruit and terroir shine in this broad, deep and defined style. Best from 2018 through 2030. 7,665 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"Tightly wound, with a core of red currant, red licorice and bergamot. The long, earth-driven finish shows a tug of clay and warm stone, while a backdrop of bittersweet cocoa and dark tea waits in reserve. Reveals a sinewy side, balanced by muscle and flesh. Impressively rendered for the vintage. Tasted non-blind. Score range: 94-97"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The final blend for the 2012 Cheval Blanc was 54% Merlot and 46% Cabernet Franc. Despite the use of 100% new oak, there is not a hint of vanillin, toast or espresso notes in the aromatic bouquet, which is filled with scents of black currants, sweet cherries, lavender, forest floor and a hint of underbrush. Concentrated with a surprisingly lofty alcohol level of 13.9% as well as a tannin level that equals their 2010 (a wine bestowed a three-digit score), this full-bodied, opulent 2012 has a pH of 3.8, which accounts for its suppleness, velvety texture and heady richness. It is a great success in this vintage. It will be approachable early given its silky structural aspects and should last for two decades. "</i></p> <p>- RP, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The Grand Vin is a blend of 54% Merlot and 46% Cabernet Franc, 26th September until the 13th October that comes from 35 different parcels. The picking is done in the vineyard for the first sorting by the pickers and then sorted by hand as they are sure delicate than using optical sorting machine. It has a dense, broody nose that has the looming presence of the Quinault L'Enclos. It veers towards a red fruit profile, with "rocky" aromas, perhaps a touch of marmalade and quince. The palate is medium-bodied but displays very good concentration for the vintages. It feels very harmonious – silky but with a citric acid edge that lends the finish the tension it needs to maintain the freshness. This will probably become a masculine Cheval Blanc that will need a decade in bottle. "</i></p> <p>- NM, Wine Journal</p>

Reviews *"This is really beautiful with blackberry, chocolate, and light nuts character. Full yet refined and beautiful. Seamless tannins. It goes on for minutes. This is so elegant and beautiful. The tannins are just right and not overdone for the vintage."*
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"With a wonderful 45% blending of fragrant Cabernet Franc, this is a sumptuous, perfumed wine. It's rich with a velvety texture that hides the dark tannins while bringing out the rich plum flavors. The dense texture is balanced by some fresh acidity and a fruity aftertaste. Drink this deceptively approachable wine from 2024."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"95–97. Barrel sample. An impressively dense wine with a serious structure. Dusty tannins go with a powerful structure and a wonderfully deep texture. Very solid and chunky."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"(54% merlot and 46% cabernet franc): Good full ruby-red. Expressive, nuanced nose offers red cherry, strawberry, minerals and a hint of violet. Sweet and round on entry, then increasingly austere toward the back, with peppery and minty elements lifting the dark cherry and cassis flavors. I noticed some bottle variation with my samples on the day I visited this chateau, so I am describing the best of the four samples I tried. My gut feeling is that there is plenty of stuffing and pretty cabernet franc refinement here but that the wine needs to smooth out and harmonize with further élevage."
- ST, International Wine Cellar

"54% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Franc. Deep dark crimson. Marked Cabernet nose. Smells pure and fresh and crunchy. Finest of fine tannins but they go deep, as does the fruit. It is not leafy but there that classic Cabernet Franc fresh aroma that tends that way. There's some grip but fine friction. Elegant, long; energy underneath a relatively gentle-seeming exterior. 'Power and sweetness of Merlot and finesse of Cabernet Franc. The true Cheval Blanc style we like', says Kees van Leeuwen. Very clean, complex aromatic profile. Delicious and I think you could drink it, with much pleasure, even earlier than I have suggested. Drink 2020-2035. 18.5/20 points."
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"Understated, fresh, elegant nose. Beautifully pure fruit on the palate - blueberry and blackberry notes. Plump mid-palate then lovely, silky tannins. A notch better than a very good 2011. The winemaker compares it to 2000."
- JL, Decanter.com

"Cheval Blanc is not organic, but uses sustainable agriculture, with several weather stations within the vineyard to accurately track what treatments need to be carried out. '2012 made us less willing to convert to full organic winemaking,' they tell me very honestly. Blend this vintage is 46% cab franc, 54% merlot, with a full 71% of harvest going in to the First Wine. In the cellar, they carry out malolactic immediately after ecoulage (ie not co-inoculation, but no waiting between alcoholic and malolactic fermentation, with cultivated yeasts to ensure nothing stuck), then the wine goes straight into 100% new oak afterwards. This has some lovely fleshy fruits, well-ripened but not overripe (the vineyard is laid out in all north-south rows, so makes it easier to deleaf just on the west side). Classic balance to this wine, 13,9% alcohol, oak barely perceptible, and beautiful aromatic purity for such a young sample. Delicate and elegant, but with complexity and power, very enjoyable, a wine I'd like to own. Soft tannins. 95 / 18.5. Outstanding. Drink 2020-2040."
- JA, The New Bordeaux

Reviews *"With 54% Merlot and 46% Cabernet Franc, the wine reached 13.9% alcohol with a pH of 3.78. One of the keys to the vintage at Cheval Blanc was the extensive green harvesting needed, due to the extended time needed for flowering. In the perfume, the wine pops with flowers, licorice, earth, caramel and ripe, sweet blackberries. On the palate, the wine displays sweet black and red fruits, spice and a fresh purity of sweet fruit. The tannins are silky, the wine is fresh and long in the finish, complicated by an herbal, tapenade note buried in the fresh, ripe fruit. 94-96 Pts (18-Apr-2013)"*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Deep and dense; vibrant at the edge; healthy looking; nice delicacy to the nose; not a blockbuster, feels intellectual and mannered; elegant and well balanced palate, very fine with good purity; pretty structured and still quite tight; fine tannin and very much in the manner of near-neighbour Figeac. Quite tight on the finish. Very precise, linear and polished. Expect this to fill out. 54% Merlot and 46% Cabernet Franc. 93-95+"
- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

"Cheval Blanc's yields were unusually low in 2012 because of a difficult flowering that lasted a month and a green harvest in August. The proportion of Merlot was slightly lower than normal, but otherwise this is a typically impressive performance from Pierre Lurton and his team: focused, polished, yet quite closed, with plenty of tannin and minerality, good density of fruit and the sense that the wine needs at least a decade to show at its best. Drink: 2015-40"
- TA, timatkin.com

"Cheval Blanc is one of the great names of Bordeaux and the most famous Chateau in Saint Emilion. Cheval can be a difficult wine to evaluate when young but rarely disappoints when mature. The 37 hectares of vines border Pomerol but the wine is different from Pomerol thanks to the high percentage of Cabernet Franc in the vineyard (52% Cabernet Franc and 48% Merlot). The 2012 was made from a low crop with 31 hl/ha and is a blend of 54% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Franc. This is a wine of great density, yet it is light on its feet with a sumptuous palate of creamy milk chocolate and a hint of figs and raisins. Plump, round, fleshy and seductive. A really lovely example of Cheval Blanc at its opulent best. Silky and finely balanced with a long finish. Pure class. A great achievement and they've even suggested that they might get the price right this year!"
- Farr Vintners

"The nose has a lovely mix of fruits bramble, black cherry and a touch of mulberry all backed by a hint of spice. The mid palate is deep with rich flavours but towards the back it is fresher giving the finish an elegant charm. 2018-35."
- Derek Smedley MW

"Subtle nose of violets and cedar - this year the flavours are closed on the palate which is often the case for young Cheval Blanc. There is good density and velvety tannins with a texture that is pure cashmere. The harvest was completed by 13th October, before the very heavy rains. This Cheval Blanc is classic, not as intense as in previous years but balanced and fresh with very good length. The blend is 54% Merlot and the rest Cabernet Franc. Tasted in: Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young. (08-Apr-2013)"
- JCL, asianpalate.com

"Still muted on the nose with wonderful lush ripe fruits and toasted oak after swirling. Supple palate with silky tannins and beautiful fruit presence. Huge potential. (16-Apr-2013)"
- en.gilbertgaillard.com
