

Château Figeac 2013

CSPC# 749819

750mlx12

13.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

50% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation

St. Emilion

Classification

First Growth B. Premier Grand Cru Classe B in 2006

Website

<http://www.chateau-figeac.com/>

General Info

Figeac is a very ancient estate, going back at least as far as the 2nd century AD, during the Gallo-Roman period, when a certain Figeacus gave his name to a villa he built on this location. The site has been continually inhabited ever since then, as proved by vestiges: a water-supply system dating from the Gallo-Roman period, foundations of buildings from the Middle Ages with defensive walls, and the remains of a Renaissance chateau reflected in the present-day chateau's great door and tower. Figeac belonged to the same family for more than 500 years and was nearly 200 hectares by the late 18th century. Unfortunately, the estate was sold a number of times in the 19th century. Successive owners sold numerous plots, which explains the birth of various chateaux that appended the name Figeac to their own. However, Figeac continues to be the largest estate in the commune of Saint-Emilion, with 40 hectares of vines. The central part of the chateau, built in a very pure, classical architectural style, dates from the late 18th century.

Vintage

2013 saw probably the most challenging growing season on record, starting with a late, cold spring which put the vines on the back-foot right from the beginning. Budding and then flowering ran some three weeks behind schedule, with flowering occurring in the last half of June during very unsettled weather - a hot sunny day at 30°C would be followed by a stormy, wet one at just 14°C, the antithesis of perfect flowering weather. The result was substantial coulure and millerandage (fertilized flowers which then fail to develop or abort), particularly affecting old Merlot vines, and the vignerons knew already that they had a small harvest on the horizon, up to 30% smaller than average. July was very hot, around 3°C higher than the norm, and all seemed fine until the last weekend of July when the weather broke with a spectacular hail-infested storm which decimated the Entre Deux Mers and some outlying St Emilion properties like Château Puy Blanquet, in some cases destroying the entire crop.

Following the break in the weather, August proceeded cooler and slightly damper than usual, a few degrees below the norm, allowing grey rot, which had been hanging around the vineyards since flowering, to get a new foothold amongst the vines. Normally, the labour-intensive vineyard work starts to wind down in mid-August whereas in 2013 most producers stepped up their vineyard patrols at this time, excising rotten and under-ripe grapes as soon as they became apparent. This was clearly a vintage where the small producer had the edge over the larger estates as they could visit all their vines on a daily basis, keeping an eye on every small change and reacting accordingly. Every trick in the viticultural book was deployed - green harvesting, despite the small load on the vine, to ensure that the vines weren't carrying more than they could ripen given the late season; leaf-thinning to increase air circulation and inhibit rot; the removal of later-ripening grapes which would have been hard to spot come harvest time - not to mention preventative spraying against the rot. It was an all-out battle between the farmers and the elements.

Vineyards

Figeac is owned by Thierry Manoncourt and is located in the north-west of the appellation with its vineyards adjoining those of Cheval Blanc. Its 40 hectares of vineyards (Cabernet Sauvignon 35%, Merlot 30%, Cabernet Franc 35%) lie on a deep, Médoc-like gravel topsoil ('Graves') over a flinty, iron-rich subsoil. with the vines averaging about 35 years of age and sitting at a density of 6000 vines/ha. Evidence for this selection of varieties comes not from mere opinion, but from the work of Thierry Manoncourt who, for many decades, would bottle some of the Figeac wines



Vineyards	unblended so that he could assess how wines from different grape varieties and different portions of the vineyard matured in bottle.
Harvest	The harvest took place October 1, with the Cabernet harvested during the week of October 9-15.
Vinification/ Maturation	Come harvest time the fruit is collected manually, pressed using hydraulic equipment, and vinified in the <i>chai</i> which includes both the original wooden and the new, stainless steel fermenters. The oak vats are open-topped, and the cap is submerged using a grid which pushes the floating matter below the surface of the wine. Aged 15 to 18 months 100% new barrels
Tasting Notes	Dark purple red with violet hues. Expressive and complex nose of blackberries and blackcurrants. Elegant balanced toasted oak aromas, with hints of graphite and spices. On the palate it shows excellent length, complex flavour and balanced tannins.
Production	7,983 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2018-2029
Scores/Awards	<p>93 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2016</p> <p>91-94 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2014</p> <p>89-91 points - Robert M. Parker Jr., Wine Advocate #214 - August 2014</p> <p>91-93 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2014</p> <p>90-91 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com (score only)</p> <p>94 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2016</p> <p>94-96 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - September 4, 2014</p> <p>87-90 points - Stephen Tanzer, ST's International Wine Cellar - Aug 2014</p> <p>16 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2014</p> <p>16 points - Richard Hemming, JancisRobinson.com - April 2014</p> <p>17.25 (91) points - James Lawther, Decanter.com - April 2014</p> <p>92 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com – April 2014</p> <p>90-92 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 28, 2014</p> <p>89-91 points - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2, 2014</p> <p>89 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)</p> <p>89-92 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2014</p> <p>16+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2014</p> <p>90 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2014</p> <p>90-93 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2014</p> <p>90+ points - Lea & Sandeman Wine Merchants - April 2013</p> <p>90-92 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p>17 points - Gault & Millau (score only)</p> <p>94 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only)</p> <p>17 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only)</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"This packs a serious core of fig, blackberry and black currant fruit, along with dark tea, ganache and smoldering tobacco leaf notes. The finish is carried by loamy, well-embedded tannins, with a great tug of warm earth providing the final seduction. In many ways the wine of the vintage. Best from 2018 through 2028. 7,983 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"This delivers a very solid core of plum, cassis and blackberry fruit, with polished edges and a good underpinning of iron and violet notes through the finish. Long and solidly built without overreaching. One of the top surprises of the vintage. Score range: 91-94."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The final blend, from yields of 36 hectoliters per hectare, is 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc. With an average alcohol of 13%, the wine is outstanding and probably, for me, the best Figeac in many a year - even though it is from a difficult vintage. A tribute to not only Madame Manoncourt, but to Jean-Valmy Nicolas and Michel Rolland. The wine is a dense ruby/purple with a beautiful nose of creme de cassis, cedar wood and a touch of tobacco leaf. The wine is medium-bodied and has opulence on the attack, after which tannins kick in. This exhibits good purity and far more texture and depth than about any recent Figeac has possessed. A wine that was over-cropped, picked underripe and simply a major underperformer for such a great terroir. It should drink well for 10-15 years.</i></p> <p><i>With 100-plus acres, Figeac is St.-Emilion-s largest single vineyard and is situated on an outcropping of graves,</i></p>

Reviews *hence the decision decades ago to plant a good bit of Cabernet Sauvignon. Fortunately, Madame Manoncourt, who took control of the family estate after her husband died, has had the foresight to bring in Jean-Valmy Nicolas of La Conseillante and also hire Michel Rolland to look after the wine. For the first full vintage, he-s had to work with this 2013, and while some people in Bordeaux thought this was the wine of the vintage, I-m not prepared to go that far. It certainly is a huge improvement (and keep in mind the raw materials had to be far less impressive than, for example, what would have been available in 2009 or 2010). The harvest took place October 1, with the Cabernet harvested during the week of October 9-15.”*

- RP, Wine Advocate

“Picked between 1 and 15 October, it is a blend of 30% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, a high percentage of the latter, which might surprise a few naysayers. Cropped at 36hl/ha, the Figeac 2013 is being matured in 100% new oak. The bouquet is clean and fresh, the Cabernet offering a touch of fresh mint to the dark berry fruit, the oak nicely assimilated. The palate is medium bodied with fine tannins. There is clearly a fine bead of acidity; a harmonious and silky smooth Figeac with shimmering black fruit segueing into an understated charming finish. I have read a lot about Michel Rolland supposedly creating a blockbuster wine when in fact the truth is that Frederic Faye, with Michel as consultant, has created a classic Figeac that will give great pleasure over the next 15 to 20 years. Tasted April 2014.”

- NM, Wine Journal

“A balanced, silky wine for the vintage, with mineral, currant, licorice and light spice. Medium body, fine tannins and a fresh finish. I like the hints of sweet tobacco, too. Very different blend: 50% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot and 20% cabernet franc; in a normal year, it’s one third of each. 90 - 91/100”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This wine is a success for the vintage with its ripe Cabernet flavors and dark, dense tannins. It is fruity certainly, with a juicy, perfumed background. However, the structure and texture show best firm and dry, indicating a good potential. This concentrated wine will not be ready to drink before 2024.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“94–96. Barrel Sample. Here’s a solidly tannic wine, with a smoky wood character that lies over the juicy fruit layers. It will need time to coalesce, but it shows the potential to be able to age well. “

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Deep red-ruby. Aromas of black cherry, smoke, chocolate mint and underbrush show a caramel nuance; gained sweetness and focus with aeration. Juicy, floral dark fruit and licorice flavors show moderate hang time on the back end, which features dusty tannins and a repeating floral quality. 87-90”

- ID, International Wine Cellar

“30% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon. Light cassis nose that does not seem a huge step up from the Petit-Figeac’s. Rather sweet oak on the edge, a lack of concentration on the mid palate. Very embryonic indeed. Jagged and a little less austere than the Petit-Figeac in structure. Falls away on the finish though. This may take on interest and weight. I went back to taste this after the 2007 and found it difficult to imagine that this would bloom into anything more exciting, and very possibly less.”

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Well-formed blackcurrant fruit, slight spiciness – there’s some nice oak here. The tannins protrude from the structure though, in a way that interferes with the drinkability. (RH) Drink 2020-2026. 16”

- RH, JancisRobinson.com

- Reviews** *"First vintage with Michel Rolland as consultant. Lovely blueberry aromas and Cabernet notes. Palate smooth and persistent. Has freshness and length. Drink: 2019-2035. 17.25"*
- JL, Decanter.com
- "Ruby in color, with a nose of chocolate, coffee bean and raspberries, the wine is medium bodied, soft, bright and completed by sweet, fresh cherries. From a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, (The highest percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon used in over 30 years!) 30% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc, the wine reached 13% alcohol with a pH of 3.7. The wine is aging in 100% new French oak. I am not sure why there is so much muss, fuss and fear over bringing in Michel Rolland. The team of Rolland and Frederic Faye are clearly helping the estate as this is a very successful wine for the vintage. Far too many writers and consumers should not live in the past. They should actually taste the wines before deciding on if they like a wine, or not. It will be interesting to see what happens at Figeac when the next great vintage arrives. 90-92 Pts"*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com
- "Deep and dark; earthy purple at rim; cool blackcurrant aromatics; attractive; no green qualities here; palate has elegance and finesse; needs to fill out – which it will. [50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc]. Tasted April 2, 2014 UGC. Drink 2018-2030. 89-91+"*
- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com
- "The arrival of a new winemaking team at Figeac (including Michel Rolland) has been controversial, especially for those who loved the "old" ways. This is an oakier, more modern wine than its predecessors, but it's extremely well made, with fine tannins, more noticeable Cabernet Sauvignon and a savoury flourish. Promising. 2018-26"*
- TA, timatkin.com
- "The nose has depth of fruit yet lots of oak and the palate starts with fleshiness and sweetness. The mid palate has some red fruits slightly fresher and lighter, but the ripe fruit is there at the back giving flesh on the finish."*
- Derek Smedley MW
- "More complete and harmonious than the sample I tasted in April 2014, but this vintage is still not one of Figeac's best vintages. Young, earthy and medium-bodied with good potential to age. Tasted in: Bordeaux, France."*
- JCL, asianpalate.com
- "There was a lot of talk about Figeac this year, new regime here, still Manoncourt-owned but there has been a putsch as far as the management is concerned. As usual the high Cabernet Sauvignon content on their gravel soils (which are rare at the top end of the Saint Emilion classification) make it hard to judge amongst its peers. Attractively dry, it still seems a little blocky, and although harmonious one can for the moment see this being fine but not amazing. 89-90"*
- Lea & Sandeman Wine Merchants
- "Heady and spicy with some odd vegetal notes like celery salt and chicory! A little too hard and tannic and the oak is absurd. There must have been some fruit in there once."*
- MJ, matthewjukes.com
- "A true success from the right bank. Figeac is expressive, with notes of anise, aromas of undergrowth and a delicate toasty note. A wine marked by the famous Figeac terroir. Like its neighbour Cheval Blanc, Figeac's vineyard is spread over gravelly soil where Cabernet holds sway here while Merlot plays second fiddle. At the start of 2013, Jean-Valmy Nicolas became head of sales and financial business. Immediately afterwards, Frédéric Faye, barely 32 years old but already with 10 years of experience at the estate, inherited the position of managing director. These recent appointments will revitalize Figeac and transfer the experience of Mr. Nicolas to the Manoncourt family and ensuring the future of the family patrimony. "*
- SAQ (Quebec Liquor Stores)
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