

Château Fleur Cardinale 2018

CSPC# 848993

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

CSPC# 891877

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

74% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 4% Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation

Saint Emilion

Classification

Grande Cru Classe in 2006

Website

<http://www.fleurcardinale.com/en/>

General Info

The estate was bought in 2001 by Florence and Dominique Decoster, and it has benefited from major investments which have made Château Fleur Cardinale one of the top names of the appellation. It is located to the east of the village of Saint-Émilion, on one of the high points of the appellation and it extends over 20 hectares. With its great value for money, and showing great consistency in its quality, Château Fleur Cardinale was promoted to "Saint-Emilion Grand cru classé" in 2006.

Winemaker

Jean-Philippe Fort. Michel Rolland consults.

Vintage

The 2018 growing season was marked by excess rainfall up till the end of June, followed by hot weather at the end. Favoured by ideal weather conditions at the end of the season, we were able to perform "haute-couture" harvesting work.

Vineyards

The vineyard is planted in a clay-limestone soil in the middle of the plateau on a pleasant late producing terroir. The two properties owned by Florence and Dominique Decoster extend across a 23.5-hectare area for the Château Fleur Cardinale, and a 4-hectare area for the Château Croix Cardinale. The two vineyards are planted on clay-limestone soil in the middle of the hillsides, and they enjoy an identical harvest, notable for its 75% dominance of Merlot together with 20% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Surface area in production: 44.46 acres (18 ha); Density of plantation: 6000 vines/hectare Average age of vines: 35 years old; Yield after sorting: 30 hl/ha The vineyard is farmed using organic, self-sustainable farming techniques. In 2013, Fleur Cardinale was awarded their certification by the Environmental Management System (S.M.E.).

Harvest

Picked from 27 September to 24 October with a yield of 45 hl/ha. In the vineyard, de-leafing and crop thinning are handled with no chemical products or pesticides of any kind. Only organic fertilizers are used. After a first selection in the vineyard, the grapes are harvested manually and placed into small boxes so that the ripe grapes are not crushed. The grapes are sorted twice by hand, before and after the destemmer. To aid in the sorting process, the estate uses the Tribaie sorting machine, which sorts the grapes by the desired level of density.

Vinification & Maturation

To produce the wine of Chateau Fleur Cardinale, it is a very labor-intensive process. For the vinification, the juice undergoes a cold maceration at 5 degrees Celsius for 5 or 6 days. This is followed by alcoholic fermentation and a warm maceration for 2 to 3 weeks. All the pumping over is done by gravity, which avoids stirring the musts. Vinification takes place in 25 small, thermo regulated, stainless steel vats. The number of vats is equal to the various parcels of vines. This allows the vinification to be done by on a parcel-by-parcel basis. The vats range in size from 25 hectoliters up to 90 hectoliters. However, most of the vats are 70 hectoliters. Made in a mix of tanks and wooden vats. Malolactic fermentation takes place in 100% new oak barrels and in tank. Aged for 13 months in all-new barrels

Tasting Notes

A racy style and an unprecedented freshness of fruit flavor. The tasting of the first samples confirmed what the lab analyses had already indicated: well-controlled ripeness underpinned by unparalleled acidity levels. Château Fleur Cardinale 2018 is particularly notable for its magnificent Cabernets Francs, well adapted to the climatology of the vintage. They give a very beautiful structure to the wine, in a racy style, while perpetuating the signature of Château Fleur Cardinale thanks to velvety



tannins.

Serve with Chateau Fleur Cardinale is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Fleur Cardinale is also good when matched with Asian dishes, rich fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta.

Production 120,000 bottles made.

Cellaring Drink 2022-2042.

Scores/Awards **93 points** - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2021
93-96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - April 2019
94+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021
91-93 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019
94 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2021
94-95 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019
93 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2021
92-94 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2019
16.5+ points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - January 2021
16.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2019
17 points - Tamlyn Currin, JancisRobinson.com - January 2021
94 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - November 2020
94 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2019
94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021
93-95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019
91+ points - Neal Martin, Vinous - January 2021
90-92 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019
91-94 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2019
94 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021
92-94+ points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - April 2019
90 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2019
92 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - January 2021
90 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - May 2019
94-95 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - April 2019
93-95 points - Gault & Millau (score only) - June 2019
16 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2019

Reviews *"Ripe and focused, with tasty red and black currant fruit flavors that have a racy edge, mixed with hints of anise, bramble and steeped dark tea developing through the finish. Very solid. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2022 through 2034. 10,000 cases made."*
- JM, Wine Spectator

"Ripe and focused, with tasty red and black currant fruit flavors that have a racy edge, mixed with hints of anise, bramble and steeped dark tea developing through the finish. Very solid. Best from 2022 through 2034."
- JM, Wine Spectator

"Offers lovely fruit, with exotic plum and boysenberry notes gliding along, carried by a very velvety structure. The long finish has a nice flow, showing a latent anise echo. Seems to be holding back a bit, but there's some serious depth of fruit here. Barrel Sample: 93-96."
- JM, Wine Spectator

"Deep garnet-purple in color, the 2018 Fleur Cardinale leaps from the glass with vibrant notes of wild blueberries, crushed blackberries and ripe, juicy plums, plus hints of sandalwood, unsmoked cigars, menthol and licorice. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is chock-full of ripe black and blue fruits, framed by velvety tannins and beautiful freshness, finishing long with lots of mineral and exotic spice layers. A very stylish Saint-Émilion!"
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2018 Fleur Cardinale features pronounced baked blueberries, stewed black plums and blackberry preserves scents with touches of bay leaves, moss-covered bark and forest floor. Full-bodied and laden with black fruit preserves sparked by earth and dried herbs, it has a solid backbone of ripe, rounded tannins and just enough freshness, finishing long. Barrel aging is expected to be for 12-14 months in 100% new oak barrels."

Reviews

- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Blackcurrant, clove, walnut-husk, tobacco and pine-cone aromas. Dried flowers and mocha, too. It's medium-to full-bodied with firm, tight-grained tannins. Polished layers of dark fruit and wood notes with a long, chewy finish. Focused. Very fine. Try from 2025."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"This is really linear and tight for this winery and shows seriousness and polish. Medium-to full-bodied and a tight, compact palate. Very fresh and long, too. I can see a change to more linear and precise wines here."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"The Decoster family, formerly producers of porcelain in Limoges, have given this estate considerable luster. This latest release shows a solid character, powered by dark tannins, hints of licorice and rich fruit. Cabernet Franc aromas shine through the jammy Merlot. Drink from 2025."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Ripe and juicy, this is a delicious wine with its fine tannins and acidity already in harmony. The structure of the wine is powerful with a dry core that will broaden out as the wine matures."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Picked from 27 September to 24 October with a yield of 45 hl/ha. Made in a mix of tanks and wooden vats. Aged for 13 months in all-new barrels, like its sister wine Ch Croix Cardinale. Deep and luscious dark crimson. Much less expressive nose at this point than the Croix Cardinale but ripe and round on the palate until it all tightens up on the finish with its ambitious tannic charge. Definitely not for now but it should make pretty delicious, quite savoury (not sweet) old bones. Quite persistent (not a quality I have remarked on for many of these Grand Cercle 2018s). Crisp and well defined."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"First tasting: Barrel sample. Black core, purple rim. Ripe, dark and a little chappy. Slightly stewed fruit and just a touch bitter on the finish, though – to my surprise – there is some freshness even though the fruit is pretty ripe. Sweet/sour finish, rounded tannins but the smoothness of the tannins seems to be at the expense of freshness of fruit."

Second tasting 20/5/19: I tasted this again in London because I was concerned that the sample was not in perfect condition, though I was not sure at the time. This time – still a barrel sample but sent directly from the producer and clearly fresher – the wine was more like earlier vintages and my score, and drink dates are for this second sample: Black core with purple rim. Ripe blackcurrant and blackberry fruit, rich but not excessively sweet in aroma though there is a youthful oaky, chappy sweetness that is not out of place in a barrel sample. A dark, oaky intensity on the palate packed with sweet black fruit. The deep-pile tannins are smooth and compact to begin and build to a more chewy finish. Attractively dry texture at the very end even though it is full in the mouth with lots of everything. Surprisingly juicy on the finish. Just enough freshness – typical for 2018. Chewy and full bodied with power but no aggression. The way the wine stayed fresh over several days after opening, even though it is a cask sample, suggests it will age well. (JH)"

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"Dark, intense nose – blackcurrants in black velvet. Blackberries and box leaf and some charred chocolate undertones. Dry, polished, disciplined tannins. Every flavour component is carried by and testament to balance of fruit concentration, tannic structure, and freshness. Has a dark gleam and focus. (TC)"

- TC, JancisRobinson.com

"An estate that is just doing such good work right now. This was delicious en primeur and for me a little better in bottle. Has that slow slate-textured finish that makes things inch along slowly, giving time to appreciate the rich berry fruits and floral edge to the aromatics. An interesting initiative in the packaging also, with a wooden cask that has instructions for being turned into a bird box afterwards, encouraging recycling. 100% new oak. Drinking Window 2025 – 2045."

- JA, Decanter.com

Reviews

"After a tough 2017 in terms of frost, Fleur Cardinale returns to a more normal blend this year and has produced a very beautiful wine. This is, as ever with this cooler terroir over to the west of St-Emilion, a little bigger than some, with well-defined tannins and a fairly masculine feel. Give it time in the glass and the rich, ripe brambly fruits come spilling over, full of juice and promise. The tannins are equally full of life and overall, this is extremely appealing. It has settled in already at this early stage and will age well."

- JA, Decanter.com

"Full-bodied, round, lush and polished, this richly textured wine is filled with espresso, dark chocolate, licorice, and dark red fruits. The wine is round, full of flesh and flash with an endless supply of dark chocolate and ripe fruits."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Loaded with licorice, chocolate, coffee bean and black fruits, the wine is fleshy, round, fruit-filled and finishes with lusciously textured, espresso, dark plums, licorice and even darker cocoa."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"The 2018 Fleur Cardinale replicates the bouquet that I found out of barrel, offering copious and quite precocious black fruit and hints of iodine and vanilla (the latter receding with aeration). The cohesive palate is medium bodied with sappy black fruit, touches of tar and cedar and sufficient freshness on the peppery finish. A composed Saint-Émilion that just needs to develop more personality with bottle age."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2018 Fleur Cardinale has a tightly wound bouquet that is much more reserved than I expected. Blackberry, boysenberry, and wild strawberry aromas laced with vanilla pod and iodine. The palate is ripe and rounded with good acidity, a little chewy in the mouth and then it just lacks a little definition and tension on the finish. Starts well, could have ended better, but overall, it has an undercurrent of spiciness that I find appealing. One to watch once bottled."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2018 Fleur Cardinale is gorgeous. Supple, racy, and wonderfully persistent, the 2018 is shaping up to be a jewel of a wine. Blackberry jam, cloves, chocolate, new leather, licorice, and sweet spice all build in a sumptuous, voluptuous Saint-Émilion loaded with class and potential. The question now is really how the 2018 will develop in élevage. Past vintages have been impressive en primeur but then suffered from too much oak during aging. Hopefully, that won't be the case here, as the 2018 is really terrific. In the early going, the 2018 does feel a bit less extracted than in the past, and that is certainly a positive development."

- AG, Vinous

"The Grand Vin 2018 Château Fleur Cardinale ... has integrated its oak élevage beautifully and while it has a kiss of modern character and polish, it still has loads of classic Saint-Emilion character, as well as minerality. Deep ruby/plum hued with a gorgeous bouquet of black cherries, white truffles, camphor, lead pencil, and exotic spices, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a beautifully balanced, layered texture, building, firm tannins, and a great finish. It's certainly in the same class as the 2015 and 2016, but the cellar is going to be your friend. Hide bottles for at least 4-6 years and it should cruise for 20 years or more."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"The 2018 Château Fleur Cardinale shows the subtle change in style at this estate, offering slightly more elegance and finesse while still packing plenty of fruit and texture. Coming from a 23.5-hectare vineyard consisting mostly of older vines, the 2018 ...was harvested starting on September 27th, which is a record early date for this estate. It hit 14.5% alcohol and will spend 12-14 months in new French oak. Perfumed notes of cassis, black raspberries, violets, and spring flowers all emerge from the glass, and it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a layered, elegant texture, terrific ripeness, and sweet tannins. It's an elegant yet still sexy wine that shows the vintage beautifully. Barrel Sample: 92-94+."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"Sumptuous and velvety with ripe suave tannins and layers of dark berry fruit. Beautifully crafted and polished with no rough edges - the 14.5% alcohol is well integrated into the wine as is the oak. Lingering finish."

- JCL, asianpalate.com
