

Château Larcis-Ducasse 2020

CSPC# 888349

750mlx6

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

Appellation

Saint Emilion

Classification

First Growth B. Premier Grand Cru Classe B.

Website

<http://www.larcis-ducasse.com/en/saint-emilion/actualites/#>

Analysis

TA: 3.30 g/L pH: 3.60

General Info

Chateau Larcis Ducasse had its birth during the days of the ancient Romans. The modern era for Larcis Ducasse begins in 1893, when Henri Raba bought the St. Emilion vineyard. After Henri Raba passed away in 1925, his wife and son Andre Raba continued managing Larcis Ducasse. Andre died during World War 2. His niece, Helene Gratiot Alphantery, inherited the property in 1941. She managed Larcis Ducasse until 1990. Her son, Jacques-Olivier Gratiot took control of the property after she passed away and he remains in charge today.

Larcis Ducasse remains the property of the Gratiot Alphantery family. Prior to 2003, it had been years since the wines of Larcis Ducasse were prized by Bordeaux wine lovers. The wine had fallen out of favor. That changed in 2002 when they hired the team of well-known St. Emilion consultants, Nicolas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt to turn things around and manage the estate. One of the first improvements to the property suggested by Nicolas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt was to create a new drainage system. The next step was to change harvesting practices. Now, the harvest takes place when the fruit is ripe, and the picking can take as long as 2 to 3 weeks to complete.

Winemakers

Nicolas Thienpont and Stephane Derenoncourt

Vintage

2020 was a highly contrasted vintage that got off to a difficult start. The year began with an exceptionally rainy winter followed by a very mild spring. In this context, protecting the vines against mildew and managing the soil was a real struggle. The first miracle appeared in mid-May, with dry and warm conditions during one of the earliest flowerings we have seen, two weeks ahead of schedule. The second miracle was on 19 June when the rain stopped, and the weather turned dry and cool until the beginning of the grape colour-change in mid-July. It is at this point in time that summer settled in for good, with some spells of heat through to mid-August when thunderstorms provided some relief and allowed the Merlot grapes to swell. The later-ripening Cabernets remained the size of blueberries until harvest, and the Merlots will ripe slowly until mid-September. The result was a vintage harvested about ten days early, mostly in sunny conditions. Both the Merlot and Cabernet were tannic, colourful and perfectly balanced. The grapes quickly expressed an intense aromatic expression in the vats.

Vineyards

The 10.85 hectare St. Emilion vineyard of Larcis Ducasse is located just around the bend in the road from Chateau Pavie . In fact, their vines abut each other. The terroir of Chateau Larcis Ducasse is a mixture of soils with vines on the plateau and the slopes with a south facing exposure. At the higher elevations on the plateau, the terroir is limestone and clay soil. As you travel further down the slopes the terroir is a blend of chalky limestone, marl, sand, and clay soil. The vineyard is planted to 78% Merlot and 22% Cabernet Franc . This shows a change in the vineyard, as more Cabernet Franc has been added to the plantings since 2003. On average the vines are 35 years of age. While the older plantings were done at a vine density of 6,600 vines per hectare, as the vineyard continues to be slowly replanted, the vine density is increasing. The new plantings are being done at 7,500 vines per hectare. They are also using budwood obtained through selection massale. The yields are kept low at Larcis Ducasse.

Harvest

Merlot from September 15 to 29. Cabernet Francs on September 29. Yield: 38.8 hl/ha (72% great wine)

Winemaking

To produce the wine of Chateau Larcis Ducasse, the grapes are whole berry fermented. The fruit is transported by gravity flow into traditional cement tanks for fermentation. Cuvasion takes between 25-28 days. There are no pump overs. Pigeages are conducted during fermentation. Malolactic fermentation takes place in the



Winemaking	barrel. The wine of Chateau Larcis Ducasse is aged in 50% new, 50% 1-year old, French oak barrels for an average of 16-18 months.
Tasting Notes	In this 2020 vintage, the Cote of Larcis-Ducasse hillside was revealing all its Premier Grand Cru Classe quality. With a striking contrast between a spring marked by the rain and a dry summer, the vines of Larcis enjoyed all the right conditions to temper and balance the excesses of the climate. And in this sun-drenched terroir, the dense, fresh dynamic character of the wine really came into its own.
Serve with	Chateau Larcis Ducasse is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted braised and grilled dishes.
Production	2,850 cases made.
Cellaring	Drink 2026-2046
Scores/Awards	<p>92 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2023</p> <p>96 points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023</p> <p>96-98 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - May 2021</p> <p>99 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - March 2023</p> <p>98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023</p> <p>97-98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021</p> <p>91 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2023</p> <p>94-96 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2021</p> <p>16+ points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021</p> <p>17 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021</p> <p>98 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023</p> <p>97 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021</p> <p>97 points - Jane Anson, janeanson.com - January 2023</p> <p>98 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023</p> <p>98-100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2021</p> <p>94 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021</p> <p>90-92 points - Farr Vintners - May 2021</p> <p>94-96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - April 2021</p> <p>98 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2023</p> <p>95-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021</p> <p>99 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023</p> <p>96-99 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2021</p> <p>93 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2023</p> <p>94-96 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021</p> <p>95-96 points - Vert de Vin - May 2021</p> <p>92-93 points - Michael Schuster, The World of Fine Wine - May 2021</p> <p>16 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - September 2021</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Ripe, polished, and direct, with cassis and black cherry puree forming the core, while light black licorice, violet and sweet tobacco details fill in steadily through the finish. A poised, understated style. Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2025 through 2038. 2,850 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"A beautiful effort that's more sensual and seamless than Thienpont's more structured, brooding Pavie Macquin, the 2020 Larcis Ducasse unwinds in the glass with aromas of cherries, blackberries, bay leaf, rose petals and licorice. Medium to full-bodied, layered and concentrated, with refined tannins, lively acids and a suave, fleshy profile, it concludes with a long, expansive finish. This is a particular success in 2020. Managed by Nicolas Thienpont and David Suire since 2002, Larcis Ducasse occupies an 11-hectare block adjacent to Pavie. Some 15% of the vineyard sits on the plateau at the top of the slope, but these holdings are being restructured and contribute only a small percentage to the blend for the time being, so this is truly a "vin de coteaux"—a wine from the slopes. Soils are mainly molasses du Fronsadais clays over limestone, but a diversity of expositions and strata means this is an inherently complex terroir. As is the case along the whole Côte de Pavie, springs percolate throughout the vineyard, so Larcis Ducasse combines cool, hydrated soils with a warm meso-climate and a sunny exposition. Supple and seamless, Larcis is less tensile and incisive than Pavie Macquin from the plateau above, tending to develop complex aromas of black truffle with bottle age and typically concluding with a mouth-wateringly saline finish. New plantings are at a density of 8,800 vines per hectare, using massal selections of Cabernet Franc, and winemaking emphasizes whole berries and long macerations with punch-downs."</i></p> <p>- WK, Wine Advocate</p>

Reviews *“The 2020 Larcis Ducasse has a deep purple-black color, leaping from the glass with bold notions of redcurrant jelly, plum preserves, kirsch, and red roses, followed by hints of licorice, fragrant earth and spice cake, with a touch of woodsmoke. The medium to full-bodied palate is laden with fragrant red berries and profound black fruit preserves, supported by ripe, rounded tannins and lovely tension, finishing very long and fantastically layered. Absolutely, stunningly singular.”*
- LPB, Wine Advocate

“The 2020 Larcis Ducasse is a blend of 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple in color, it is a little reticent to begin, needing considerable swirling to unlock notes of preserved plums, blueberry compote, and black cherry pie, plus hints of candied violets, dark chocolate, and licorice with a waft of crushed rocks. The full-bodied palate is laden with black fruit and earthy layers, supported by firm yet velvety tannins and impressive tension, finishing with epic length.”
- LPB, Wine Independent

“Transparent and pure with crushed stone and flowers such as violets, as well as minerals and blackcurrants. Bramble berries as well. Medium to full body. Tight and very fine tannins that run the length of the wine. Kicks off at the end. So fresh and energetic. Tannic in the finish with fine texture. Drink after 2028.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“Blackberry and asphalt with cool minerals and a hint of mint. It’s full-bodied and chewy with intense flavors and a long, flavorful finish. Lots of chalk and an almost salty undertone.”
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This wine is in a classic style. Tannins and structure are as important at this stage as the vibrant black fruits. It’s good for long-term aging. Drink from 2027.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“This estate shows the density of the vintage in Saint-Emilion. At the same time, it shows the surprising freshness of many of the wines. Power and density combine with floating black currant flavors in a wine that is sure to age well. Barrel Sample: 94-96.”
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Full bottle 1,320 g. Cask sample taken 6 April. 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. Dark purplish crimson. Black fruit flavours – mulberries? – on the nose. Rich, sweet and almost buttery in texture. Then a whack of dry tannins kick in. Very youthful with zestiness on the end. 14.5%. Drink 2028 – 2044.”
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Heady nose. Lots there in decent balance on the palate – in fact it’s reasonably restrained while showing the opulence and ripeness of the appellation. Appetising and quite long.”
- JL, JancisRobinson.com

“Perfumed nose, heady and seductive, the aromas shining out of the glass. Full, rich, and vibrant tones of blackcurrant and black cherry. Ripe and chewy, the tannins really are present and grippy but have a plushness and a bounce to them, they coat the entire mouth, seriously wide and expansive but are gentle even in their fillingness. A powdery blueberry juiciness with intense liquorice touches walks the line between freshness and power so well. Really a step up in quality, still tight, strong, and not exactly charming at this point but there’s no faulting the winemaking here, this is direct, powerful and firm but so long with great acidity. Packed and charged, ripe and rich, yet round and balanced. I adore it.”
- GH, Decanter.com

Reviews

“Great consistency over the past few years at this property but this is really stepping things up a level. With poise and depth of flavour, we are digging down through the layers. Extremely elegant, a wine that is precise and pared back and totally delicious. You can almost feel the points of minerality poking into your tongue, but then they melt into a softer more luxurious whole, with blackberry, cassis, and black chocolate. Great stuff. Tasted several times, and every time it shows itself to be something out of the ordinary. A brilliant wine that I thoroughly recommend getting hold of. 50% new oak. A yield of 38.5hl/ha. Owned by Famille Gratiot-Attmane, but with the Nicolas Thienpont team overseeing winemaking. Drinking Window 2028 – 2046.”

- JA, Decanter.com

“Just such a brilliant wine, with finesse and balance. Joyful, with dark chocolate, blueberry and cassis fruits, salted crackers, wet stone minerality, violet aromatics. Supple tannins, this is both complex and simply easy to enjoy, with layers that grip and delight. Love it, holds on tight and keeps you engaged.”

- JA, janeanson.com

“If you are seeking a masterclass in minerality, taste this wine! The nose screams crushed rocks, stones, and oceanic influences before moving to its flowers, licorice, black cherries, plums, and espresso nose. Concentrated, full-bodied and intense, with layers of mineral-infused black and red fruits, the wine builds, lingers and expands, finishing with vibrancy, refinement, and elegant, sweet, ripe, luscious red fruits with a touch of salt in the tannins. Drink from 2026-2055.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Pungent aromas of flowers, licorice, crushed rocks, oak, dark cocoa, black, red, and blue fruits focus your attention. The wine offers a mineral-driven, full-bodied blast of silky, flamboyant, luscious red fruits with salty tannins. The fruit coats your palate, lingers and seamlessly expands, finishing with licorice, sensuously textured red and black fruits, espresso, and oyster shell. This is on the way to developing into one of the best vintages ever produced by Larcis Ducasse.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The 2020 is 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc. 14.5% abv. Deep purple in colour. This has a sweet, jammy nose of damson and bramble fruit, layered with tarry spice and dark, brooding smoke. The palate is pithy and very crunchy. The tannins are chunky and chewy, coating the mouth. Notes of dried fruits and heady spices push through to the finish in this extracted and rich style.”

- Farr Vintners

“The 2020 Larcis Ducasse has a ripe, exotic bouquet lavished with blueberries, cassis, touches of date and crushed violets. The aromatics are rich and powerful. The palate is medium-bodied with rounded tannins and a fine bead of acidity, displaying more puppy fat than its peers. The precocious finish offers crushed strawberry, maraschino, and faint dark chocolate scents. This is a typical Larcis Ducasse in many ways, perhaps not one for those seeking a more traditional Saint-Émilion, but very sensual and ravishing.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Larcis Ducasse is a real showstopper. Bright and vertical in feel, the 2020 possesses tremendous energy to match its super-classic build. Beams of tannin and acid give the wine its shape. Dark cherry and pomegranate fruit are pushed forward, with a kick of blood orange acidity that lends freshness. Graphite, dried herbs, menthol, spice, and cedar emerge with some coaxing, but the 2020 is very young and very primary. That of course bodes so well for its future. The 2020 is quite simply a thrilling Larcis and one of the very finest values in all of Bordeaux.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2020 Larcis Ducasse captures all the pedigree of the year in its savory, mineral-driven personality. Graphite, dried herbs, lavender, spice, and menthol lend striking aromatic intensity. The 2020 is a rich, deep wine, yet it retains the classic midweight sense of structure that is a signature of the estate. The 2020 is quite simply a dazzling Larcis.”

- AG, Vinous

Reviews

“The Grand Vin comes from a tiny 11.15-hectare vineyard that has been in the Gratiot family since 1893. Located on the south-facing Côte Pavie, between Château Pavie and Château Bellefont-Belcier and consisting of clay on top of limestone soils, the vineyard has recently been going through a replanted phase using a selection massale and a higher density planting. The grapes are hand-sorted, vinification occurs all in concrete and spans four weeks, with the élevage in 50% new French oak. A normal blend of 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc, the 2020 Château Larcis Ducasse reminds me of the 2005 and is up with the top handful of wines on the Right Bank. It has a brilliant perfume of red and black fruits, white truffle, leafy tobacco, and Asian spices. This carries to a full-bodied, concentrated, powerful Larcis-Ducasse with ultra-fine yet building tannins, perfect balance, a stacked mid-palate, and one heck of a great finish. It's going to flirt with perfection in 7-8 years (I'm probably underrating it a point) and have 30 years of overall longevity. Tasted numerous times with consistent results.”
- Jeb Dunnuck

“A wine that's going to flirt with perfection is the 2020 Château Larcis Ducasse. It's a Saint-Emilion with an almost Pomerol-like depth and power paired with classic Saint-Emilion aromatics and minerality. Incredibly pure notes of black cherries, blackberries, white flowers, truffle, and leafy herb notes all emerge on the nose and it's full-bodied, with a layered, multi-dimensional texture, thrilling tannins, and a finish that won't quit. If you get a chance, buy it. The blend is 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc, aging in 55% new French oak.”
- Jeb Dunnuck

“Deep dark ruby, purple reflections, bright rim. Fresh black and red berry fruit, light floral notes, a hint of fine oak, mineral bouquet. Juicy, elegant, fresh ripe cherry fruit, lively structure, salty touch, lively style marked by the terroir, very well-balanced, red berry finish, full of finesse.”
- PM, Falstaff Magazine

“On the nose, fruity and offers a nice fineness of texture, elegance as well as some depth and a very nice texture. It reveals notes of wild blackberry, wild black berry and more lightly of bursting cherry associated with small touches of blueberry, rosehip, and very discreet hints of caramelisation. On the palate, fruity, distinguished and offers juiciness, minerality, good definition, a certain gourmandise, a juicy/acidic frame, roundness, suavity, a nice fine/elegant texture, a nice work of bitters/balance, airy power, and an airy side. The wine expresses juicy/pulpy black currant, juicy/ripe blackberry and more lightly violet notes combined with hints of lily, lilac, cardamom as well as fine hints of caramelisation, vanilla, toasted hazelnut. Good length. A very discreet touch of coffee on the finish/persistence.”
- Vert de Vin

“(90% M, 10% CF; 38.8hl/ha; 14.5% ABV; 50% new). Dense, but fine, black-fruit ripe and minerally; full and vigorous, and firm but fairly fine in tannin; deep and vital and ripe in flavor, quite strong, but not coarse, long and juicy and sapid within the overall gentle force, aromatic and minerally behind this, and with fine length. Tasty above all, and probably needing a good decade to soften its sinews. 2030–50+.”
- MS, The World of Fine Wine
