

Le Petit Cheval Blanc 2018

CSPC# 845039

750mlx3

13.0% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

74% Sauvignon Blanc, 26% Semillon

Appellation

St. Emilion

Classification

Bordeaux Blanc

Website

<https://www.chateau-cheval-blanc.com/en/vintages/>

General Info

The story of Petit Cheval Blanc began in 2006, when Château Cheval Blanc acquired Château La Tour du Pin, an eight-hectare vineyard producing red wine under the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru appellation. Part of the terroir offered fine potential for white wine, and so the decision was taken to convert it: this would become the birthplace of a white Bordeaux.

The former La Tour du Pin vineyard underwent a profound restructuring. Implementing such an ambitious project was lengthy and complex, in order to answer the question: if Cheval Blanc were a white wine, what would it be? The ultimate goal was to create a wine respecting the six fundamental qualities of Cheval Blanc: freshness, complexity, potential for aging, depth, length and purity. Five vintages were produced yet never released, constituting necessary steps along the path to excellence.

Le Petit Cheval will be sold as a generic AOC white Bordeaux Blanc because AOC law does not allow white wine grapes in Saint Emilion. According to Pierre-Olivier Clouet, the Technical Director of Cheval Blanc who spearheaded the project, the wine reminds him in some ways of a great Sancerre from the Loire Valley.

Cheval Blanc also maintains an interest in the Mendoza region of Argentina where they produce the wine Cheval des Andes.

Winemakers

Pierre-Olivier Clouet – technical director

Vintage

The 2018 vintage will stick in people's memories because of the extensive presence of mildew in the vineyards. Fortunately, the weather took an about-turn in August, September and October resulting in a harvest of exceptional quality.

After a very wet January, the weather in February was normal for the season. There was twice the usual rain in March whilst April was in line with the norm. May and June were very wet although not unusually so. Finally, dry weather set in from mid-June. The temperatures in the first half of the year were normal although February was exceptionally cold, and April was a couple of degrees warmer than average. Moderate temperatures were recorded in July and August. These months were fairly dry apart from some rainfall in the first week of July. September was quite dry with only 26 mm of rainfall. As a result, the grapes reached perfect maturity and the harvest was completed in October in glorious weather.

Vineyards

Located on the edge of Pomerol, the vineyard has a very particular terroir. The vineyard is characterized by a combination of clay and sandy soils planted with Sauvignon and Sémillon grapes, which give the wine its Bordeaux identity. Each plot is tended with meticulous attention and is vinified separately. Unusually for a white wine, barrel aging lasts between 16 and 18 months – a lengthy period which allows the wine to evolve towards greater purity.

Starting with the 2018 vintage, the wine comes from a blend representing the vineyard plantings of 80% Sauvignon Blanc and 20% Semillon planted on a 1.4 hectare parcel of vines. The grapes are planted in the vineyard located just across the road from Cheval Blanc in the vineyards previously used by La Tour du Pin.

Harvest

The harvest was drawn out, lasting from 10 September to 11 October. The grapes reached optimum ripeness thanks to the dry summer weather and the good weather conditions at the end of the season. This meant that each plot could be picked just as it reached perfect maturity. Overall, the harvest was extremely healthy.



Vinification/ Maturation	To produce the wine, the grapes are entirely barrel fermented. There is no malolactic fermentation. The wine is aged in 3, large 400 liter oak barrels. The wine is going to be hard to find as not much is produced. The initial release will be about 400 cases and by 2020, the production should increase to an average of 1,250 cases.
Tasting Notes	The first nose is discreet, dominated by citrus fruits. By airing it, floral notes take over (lime blossom, lilac, white flowers). The “new-born” Semillon in the blend opens up a new aromatic register, made up of white-fleshed fruits, and a delicate note of acacia honey and beeswax. The wood, remarkably discreet, brings a mineral and smoky touch. The fresh and precise attack continues in the mid-palate with impressive amplitude and volume. The balance between fat and acidity brings great depth in the mouth, and the long finish is slightly enhanced by a nice bitterness.
Serve with	Goes well with appetizer course of shellfish, oysters (especially), or cheese and fruit. Chateau Cheval Blanc is also good when matched with Asian dishes, rich fish courses like tuna, mushrooms and pasta.
Production	~3000 bottles
Cellaring	Drink now till 2026
Scores/Awards	92 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2021 98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2021
Reviews	<i>“This shows a juicy edge, with a very focused mix of white peach, ginger, fennel and mandarin notes racing through. Chiseled finish. Drink now through 2026.”</i> - JM, Wine Spectator <i>“A wonderful and rather exotic white with aromas of pears, lychees, lemons and some green apples that follow through to the palate and show layers of dreamy texture and a long, flavorful finish. The texture is more like a red than a white. Fermented and aged in slightly larger oak barrels. This is a special wine and the best release so far. Very intense. 74% sauvignon blanc and 26% semillon. One for the cellar.”</i> - JS, JamesSuckling.com
