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## Château Palmer 2018

CSPC# 791629

750mlx6

14.3% alc./vol.

### Grape Variety

53% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Petit Verdot

### Appellation

Margaux

### Classification

3ème Cru Classé

### Website

<https://www.chateau-palmer.com/en/millesimes/2018>

### Sustainability

Biodynamic, Organic

### General Info

3rd classified growth in 1855. Palmer could easily claim to the rank of a second. The vine stock of merlot occupies about half of the vineyard, what is odd in Margaux, and that explains in good part the round and smooth character of the high-class wine which sometimes makes it compare with a Pomerol. But do not think incorrect, Palmer has the depth and the complexity of the great Margaux.

The birth of Chateau Palmer dates back to 1814 when Colonel Charles Palmer arrived in France with the army of the future Duke of Wellington. The owner of the Margaux estate at that time was the recently divorced Madame de Gascq. She was trying to sell the Bordeaux wine producing property. When she met Palmer, she told him, "The Bordeaux wine we produce is as good as Château Lafite!" Palmer must have agreed as he quickly soon took over the Margaux estate and renamed it Chateau Palmer.

Palmer believed in the Bordeaux wine he was producing. He began expanding the vineyards of Chateau Palmer. Between 1816 and 1831, the estate acquired more land and buildings throughout the Cantenac, Issan and Margaux sectors.

In 1843, Palmer, now a Major General was forced to sell Chateau Palmer. Emile and Isaac Pereire, two brothers had always wanted to purchase Chateau Palmer. They did not come from the Bordeaux wine trade. They were involved in railroad lines and banking. In 1853, they became the new owners of Chateau Palmer.

The brothers replanted and restructured the vineyards. In 1856, they constructed the legendary château and the village outbuildings of Chateau Palmer. Due to the phylloxera epidemic, wars and the great depression, the Pereire brothers' descendants were forced to sell Chateau Palmer.

In 1938, four families of some of the wealthiest Bordeaux wine merchants joined forces to buy equal shares of Chateau Palmer: Ginestet, Miailhe, Mahler-Besse and the Sichels. Their direct descendants are the major current owners of Chateau Palmer today. Two of the families left the company, but, for the Mahler-Besses and the Sichels, it remains an important asset.

The two majority shareholders of Chateau Palmer are both négociants. The Mahler family comes from the Netherlands. Successful in the wine business, they were joined by the Sichel family from England. The Sichel family were also very successful wine merchants. After World War II and the deterioration of the château by German troops, the 1950s saw the regeneration of the vineyard under the management of Jean Bouteiller (1913-1962), the son-in-law of Frédéric Mähler, the majority shareholder at the time.

Having spent forty-two years as the director of Chateau Palmer, Bouteiller retired and was replaced by the young, energetic agronomist and oenologist Thomas Duroux in 2004. This allowed Duroux to return to Bordeaux after spending time managing estates in Italy.

### Winemaker

Thomas Duroux

### Vintage

A rainy winter accompanied the dormant vines thus dampening the soil and causing late budding. In spite of administering our best care, the rain that continued to fall through the spring months, combined with very mild temperatures for the season, led to the development of mildew of an impressive virulence. Jacques, our crop manager, did not recall ever having seen weather conditions so conducive to its development. Fortunately, the weather went on to improve dramatically with exceptional conditions. The summer was hot, dry and restorative. The véraison began over the first week of August and



<b>Vintage</b>	allowed the budding process to catch up on its delay. In August and September, the sunshine was ideal, the nights were cool and there wasn't a drop of rain. All these conditions put together allowed for an exceptional degree of maturity. Due to the low yield, the vine concentrated all of its energy on the remaining clusters, leading to a tannic and aromatic concentration in the grapes that had rarely been seen before in the property's past.
<b>Vineyards</b>	Palmer, with its gravel, sand and dirt terroir has deep roots, which is one of the keys to the wine's unique quality and style. Most chateaux plant merlot in clay soils. At Palmer, the merlot is planted in gravel soils. This is part of the reason for the elegance in the wines of Palmer. Located next to Chateau Margaux, Palmer can produce a wine of equal quality in select vintages. The 55-hectare Bordeaux wine vineyard Chateau Palmer is located in Cantenac. Most of the plots are situated on the plateau with a terroir of thin gravel from the Guntz period along the water. The vineyard is planted to 47% Merlot, 47% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Petit Verdot with vines that average 38 years of age. The vines are planted to a density of 10,000 vines per hectare.
<b>Harvest</b>	<i>Harvested 13 September to 15 October.</i> Harvesting began on September 13th. Sorting was of the greatest importance this year. The daily tastings during the winemaking process confirmed the harvest's incredible qualitative potential. Each plot was extraordinarily powerful and concentrated, leading us to make an unprecedented decision: that they were all to become part of the final blend of Château Palmer. A 2018 vintage that will undoubtedly be part of Château Palmer's history.
<b>Vinification/ Maturation</b>	The vat rooms and Chai were entirely refurbished in 1995, its 42 temperature-controlled, conical, stainless steel vats were designed to provide optimal conditions for precision winemaking. Chateau Palmer is equipped with two cellars the so-called "first year <i>chai</i> ," holds the barrels containing the most recent vintage for the initial year of ageing before being replaced by a new harvest and moving on to the recently renovated "second year <i>chai</i> ." Work is once again taking place in the vat rooms. In 2010, Palmer began work on installing a new harvest reception area of 350 square meters which should be finished by 2012. The old pumping system will be replaced by gravity force. They will also build a small cellar devoted to experimental winemaking projects like producing white wine and even vin de paille. A new barrel cellar will allow a vintage to age without being moved. The Palmer village was also refurbished. The fruit is always hand harvested and sorted 3 times. In the vineyard and the vat room before and after destemming. Palmer vinifies using temperature-controlled, cone-shaped stainless-steel vats. This is done on a parcel-by-parcel basis and by grape variety. This vintage, for the first time, the estate used all native yeasts for the fermentations. The blending process took place before malolactic fermentation this year, which is not very common. Winemaker Thomas Duroux is also decreasing his sulfur additions, with his first addition of SO <sub>2</sub> occurring relatively late in the processing this year—not until the end of blending at the end of February. The wine is put into barrels immediately after malolactic fermentation, fining with egg whites, racking by gravity
<b>Tasting Notes</b>	Deep colour, intense dark cherry, blackcurrant fruits with mocha and espresso notes. Amazingly powerful and expressive wine with deep blackcurrant pastille fruit and richly concentrated graphite tannins. Incredible balance, deep intensity, and complexity.
<b>Serve with</b>	Chateau Palmer is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Chateau Palmer is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Palmer is also good when matched with Asian dishes, rich fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta.
<b>Production</b>	5,830 cases made.
<b>Cellaring</b>	Drink 2023-2038
<b>Scores/Awards</b>	<b>98 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - January 2021 <b>97-100 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - June 2019 <b>98 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021 <b>97-99 points</b> - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019 <b>98 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021

**94-95 points** - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019  
**99 points/Cellar Selection** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2021  
**97-99 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2019  
**18.5 points** - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - March 2019  
**100 points** - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - November 2020  
**98-100 points** - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2019  
**100 points** - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021  
**98-100 points** - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019  
**17+ points** - Farr Vintner - April 2019  
**100 points** - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2021  
**94-96 points** - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019  
**100 points** - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - March 2021  
**95-98 points** - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2019  
**99+ points** - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021  
**95-97+ points** - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2019  
**19.5+ points** - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019  
**100 points** - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - February 2021  
**94 points** - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com (score only) - March 2019  
**98 points** - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2019  
**18 points** - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2019

**Reviews**

*"Remarkably concentrated, this nearly oozes fruit, with waves of cassis, plum reduction and warmed cherry preserves on full display, all carried by a dense yet polished and seamlessly embedded structure. A backdrop of violet, lilac and pastis accents add to the nearly enveloping feel, and yet with all that depth and concentration, this is a vibrant, pure expression, thanks in part to a riveting iron spine through the finish. A standout in many ways in this vintage. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Best from 2028 through 2040. 5,830 cases made."*

- JM, Wine Spectator

*"A glycerin texture sets this apart, giving the cascade of plum, currant, blackberry and black cherry fruit extra oomph, while seeming to heighten the purity at the same time. Beautiful violet, incense, and juniper notes flash in the background. This is packed with iron-laced grip but remains seamless and extremely long. I suspect this will be one of the most talked-about wines of the vintage. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. 5,830 cases made. Score range: 97 – 100"*

- JM, Wine Spectator

*"The 2018 Palmer is composed of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot and 7% Petit Verdot. The wine has a 3.83 pH and 14.3% alcohol. Very deep garnet-purple in color, it explodes from the glass with atomic scents of blackberry preserves, crème de cassis and blueberry pie, plus suggestions of red roses, clove oil, dark chocolate, and cedar chest with hints of Chinese five spice and menthol. The full-bodied palate is decadently styled, offering layer upon layer of black fruit preserves and exotic spices, framed by exquisitely plush tannins and seamless freshness, finishing wonderfully fragrant and with epic length. It's an amazingly beautiful beast of a wine—one for the hedonists!"*

- LPB, Wine Advocate

*"The 2018 Palmer is composed of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot and 7% Petit Verdot. Grapes were harvested September 13 to October 15, and the wine has a 3.83 pH and 14.3% alcohol. Very deep purple-black in color, the nose is a little reticent to begin, but with coaxing, it slowly emerges to show fragrant violets, underbrush, mossy bark, and iron ore with exponentially growing notions of crème de cassis, Black Forest cake, plum preserves, hoisin, Christmas cake and red roses with wafts of dusty earth, Indian spices and cracked black pepper. Full-bodied, concentrated, and downright powerful in the mouth, it has a solid structure of firm, wonderfully plush tannins, and masses of fragrant accents, finishing very long and very spicy. By the time I finished tasting this, the nose had exploded in this fragrant bomb of fruit, earth, and floral notions. This is one of those 2018 wines that has a beguiling brightness that comes from the many floral, spice, and mineral accents among all that rich fruit. WOW!"*

- LPB, Wine Advocate

## Reviews

*“Complex nose of black cherries, blackberries, dark chocolate and floral undertones with perfume-like character. It’s full-bodied with firm tannins. Elegant on the palate with structure. Savory and balanced, complex, and layered. Long finish. Really lingers. This has really evolved into a beautiful white swan after a difficult debut from barrel! Tiny production. only 11 hectoliters per hectare. Try after 2024.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“It is the essence of cabernet fruit with density that is so thick that it has the texture of grape puree. Full body and melted tannins that give the wine a sense of velvet. Very soft and juicy. With air, it goes to bright, crushed black currants. Tar. Fresh tannins give it energy. I have never tasted anything like this in all my 38 years as a wine critic in Bordeaux.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“This dense wine is almost black in color. Offering tannins and luscious black fruits, it is ripe with both structure and richness. The concentration and thought-provoking intensity are impressive. Drink this wine from 2028.”*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*“Dense and concentrated, this is a powerfully rich wine. It has a velvet texture that masks the tannins, which are solid, precise and impressive in structure. It is a great wine that comes from a very low-yield crop and it will age quite well. Barrel Sample: 97-99.”*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*“Analytically the most powerful Palmer ever in terms of the tannins and the alcohol. Thanks to mildew, their yields were a measly 11 hl/ha and the total production about 6,000 cases. No Alter Ego this year. ‘A wine that will mark the history of the property’, according to technical director Thomas Duroux, like 1961. Black with barely a purple rim. Intense, concentrated cassis and blackberry, super-ripe but absolutely not overripe, a little bit of alcohol on the nose, lightly floral even with all this concentration. Very dark, almost a little tarry, black olive. Dark and rocky. On the palate, incredible concentration, and density but with no thickness or astringency. So dense but so clean-lined and precise. Tannins are dry and compact but smooth and there’s an amazing freshness that seems to come from the compact tannins. And your mouth feels clean on the finish. So moreish even though at the moment you would have to take small sips. Great finesse to the texture even in such a big wine. Dark, dark, and savoury on the finish. No sweetness even though the fruit is pure and ripe.”*

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

*“Possibly the most talked about estate in the vintage, with its mildew-induced 11hl/ha yields making waves all the way back at harvest time. They made it through though and have made an exceptional wine that will clearly be discussed and enjoyed for years to come. There’s no denying that the yields have had an impact - even in the colour you see a rich, velvety density with the violet edging that suggests a good pH (it’s 3.83, so a touch higher than usual). There is a stunning sweetness to the cassis and bilberry fruits, and it retains the finesse and floral aromatics of Palmer even with the concentration, complexity and depth on show here. It also has the signature of the vintage, and despite the volume of tannins it feels silky and seductive, and you wonder if it will close down at all. This certainly has a long life ahead of it. Sadly, there is no Alter Ego in 2018, for the first time since it was created in 1998, with the production of the grand vin down by about 50% on a normal year. Harvest ran from 13 September to 15 October, and 90% of production went into the grand vin due to the low yields. No sulphur was added to the fruit until after malo, and it is aged in 70% new oak, already barely discernible. Thomas Duroux said, by the way, that if mildew pressure happened again to this extent, he would treat despite his strong commitment to biodynamics. Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that. 98-100 points”*

- JH, JancisRobinson.com

*“Beautifully rich even on the nose, this makes you smile from the first moment. On the palate things are intense and concentrated, as you might expect with an 11hl/ha yield (mildew-related). Upfront flavours major on big bitter chocolate with touches of smoke and grilled cedar, lots of savoury fruits and touches of reduction. Extremely impressive how layered and textured it is, though it really needs decades to reveal itself. There is the seductive floral edge of Palmer as it opens in the glass, but this is a muscular wine that needs time. 79% new oak. No Alter Ego in 2018. Bottled July 2020 after one year in barrel and a second year in larger Stockinger barrels for 20% of the crop to soften the oak influence. It’s extremely hard for top estates to deliver consistency and innovation over decades; it really is like a sports team in that way, and this is a standout success in what was an extremely challenging year for Palmer.”*

- JA, Decanter.com

## Reviews

*"Inky dark in color, the wine is fully opaque. On the palate you find an incredibly concentrated, fresh, vibrant, lively, opulent and refined, wine, which is a rare combination. Texturally, this is all silk and velvet hitting every nook and cranny of your taste receptors. The violet infused, earthy, deep perfume along with the layers of decadently ripe, sweet, lush fruits is impossible to resist. There is a gorgeous sense of purity that shines through on the finish making this even better. The finish with all its plum, dark cherry, cocoa and boysenberry exceeds the 60 second mark. This is a legendary vintage for Palmer. But give it time. It is easy to enjoy this in its youth, but its best days are in the future, so give it 12-15 years of age and enjoy it for at least 2 decades or more after that. Blended from 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot and 7% Petit Verdot, 14.3% ABV. The yields were shockingly low at only 11 hectoliters per hectare -- conceding only one cluster per vine --the exact same yield Palmer experienced in 1961!"*  
- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*"The color of a dark, almost opaque ruby gemstone, this is the densest vintage Palmer has ever produced. However, the wine is not heavy, it is light on its feet. Opulently styled, this is velvet instead of silk. There is more darkness in the fruit than you usually encounter here, along with a chalky minerality in the finish. The end note with its ocean of boysenberry, dark cocoa and black plum liqueur, vibrantly coats your mouth, palate, teeth and gums and stays there for over 60 seconds! The wine was made from 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot and 7% Petit Verdot. The harvest took place September 13 to October 15 and the wine reached 14.3% with a pH 3.83. Due to severe attacks of downy mildew in 2018, the yields were shockingly low at only 11 hectoliters per hectare -- conceding only one cluster per vine --the exact same yield Palmer experienced in 1961! No Alter Ego was produced in 2018. If you have the disposable income, this is one of the great vintages of Chateau Palmer."*  
- JL, [thewinecellarinsider.com](http://thewinecellarinsider.com)

*"A deep purple in the glass, this has a perfumed nose of violets and roses, with undertones of more redolent blackberry fruit that are bolstered by creamy, toasty new oak. The palate is dense and concentrated in fruit, with the tannins very polished and refined, giving a seamless texture and added creaminess. This pairs beautifully with the floral tones of the wine, adding weight and sweetness. The finish is long and lifted by acidity to give a supple and hedonistic yet freshly balanced wine."*  
- Farr Vintners

*"The 2018 Palmer is a legend in the making. I had an inkling out of barrel, but such was its intensity that I wanted to assess it in bottle before I felt confident in saying so, because this could have gone either way. It storms from the glass with black fruit and floral scents, crushed violet and incense that knock your senses sideways while retaining brilliant delineation and focus. The palate is not quite as bold and brassy as when I tasted it from barrel, though I can vouchsafe that among over 20 vintages of Palmer that I have tasted at this stage, this is easily the most extroverted and powerful, displaying a kind of millefeuille of intense black fruit counterpoised by a razor-sharp line of acidity. This audacious Palmer was still revving its engines 48 hours after opening. There will never be another Palmer like this, sui generis. It was a massive risk. But by throwing caution to the wind, something extraordinary was born."*  
- NM, Vinous

*"The 2018 Palmer was affected by mildew, losing two-thirds of the crop, equating to 11hl/ha – in other words, one bunch per vine. It was picked between September 13 and October 15. The intense bouquet offers multilayered black fruit laced with pressed iris, incense and even a touch of lavender. This Palmer explodes from the glass unlike any other that I have tasted over the last two decades. The palate is full-bodied, but I would not describe it as "exotic" but rather a Palmer of larger "dimension" than normal. It has a slightly chalky texture, very good structure and a fine bead of acidity keeping everything in check. The alcohol is just below 14% so there is no warmth toward the finish, but I suspect this Margaux will close down for a few years before really showing what it can do. Pretty awesome. 2028-2065"*  
- NM, Vinous

*"The 2018 Palmer is even more impressive from bottle than it was from barrel, and that is saying something. Rich, exotic and beautifully layered, Palmer is a real head-turner in 2018. Inky dark fruit, chocolate, licorice, espresso and sweet floral notes build over time, but it is the wine's stunning depth and textural voluptuousness*

## Reviews

*that elevate it into the realm of the truly sublime. As I wrote in my initial review, the 2018 Palmer is a freak of nature from yields of just 11 hectoliters per hectare harvested over an entire month. Mildew was especially punishing. There is no Alter Ego, just the Grand Vin. Kudos to CEO Thomas Duroux and his team for what I can only describe as a truly magical wine." (3/2021) \*biodynamic, organic\*\**

- AG, Vinous

*"The 2018 Palmer is a freak of nature from yields of just 11 hectoliters per hectare harvested over an entire month by CEO Thomas Duroux and his team. Rich, unctuous and flamboyant in its ripeness, the 2018 possesses off the charts intensity from start to finish. Blackberry jam, espresso, crème de cassis, licorice, menthol, lavender and cloves develop in a palate-staining, hedonistic Palmer that oozes with personality. This extravagantly ripe Margaux won't be for everyone, but it is a stunning, head-spinning wine that may, in time, very well join the ranks of the truly epic Palmers. A wine of pure and total pleasure, the 2018 is nearly impossible to resist. The blend is 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot and 7% Petit Verdot. In 2018, Palmer bottled just their Grand Vin and no Alter Ego."*

- AG, Vinous

*"While there's not much to go around, the 2018 Château Palmer is unquestionably a stunning bottle of wine. I certainly can't think of another Palmer coming close to this level of concentration (maybe the 2010 comes closest?). This blockbuster boasts a dense purple hue as well as a primordial bouquet of black cherries, mulberries, and blackberries intermixed with freshly crushed rocks, smoke tobacco, gravelly earth, lead pencil shavings, and burning embers. With full-bodied richness, a dense, stacked mid-palate, mouthcoating tannins, and a blockbuster of a finish, it's going to need 10-15 years to hit maturity, and as I wrote last year, will live for just about forever. 99+"*

- Jeb Dunnuck

*"A massive beast of a wine, the 2018 Palmer checks in as a blend of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 7% Petit Verdot that comes from mildew decimated yields of 11 hectoliters per hectare. The vineyard manager commented that he had never seen conditions so favorable for mildew during the spring, and with the estate holding fast to their biodynamic viticulture, the result was a loss of over 70% of the normal production. Unsurprisingly, with barely any grapes to go around, no Alter Ego was produced. The 2018 reveals a saturated plum/purple color as well as a dense, full-bodied style that carries loads of plum, blackberry, and currant fruits as well as notes of scorched earth and graphite. The tiny yields certainly resulted in a massive, concentrated wine (it has the highest IPT ever recorded at the domaine), yet it lacks the purity and precision as well as weightless style of both the 2015 and 2016 at this point. Regardless, it's one thrilling, singular mouthful of a Palmer that has masses of ripe tannins, terrific balance, and a blockbuster finish. It's going to require upwards of a decade of bottle age and should live for just about forever."*

- Jeb Dunnuck

*"65% new oak | 14.3% alc | 11 hl/ha | 3.83 pH | 85 IPT There was no Alter Ego made in 2018 and with only 11hl/ha yields, winemaker Thomas Duroux was lucky that he had any fruit at all to make his beloved Grand Vin. Thomas explained that it was his job to keep the Palmer DNA in this wine, at all costs. It therefore took his team a month to harvest just 60 hl of wine – they were most likely picking berry by berry! It certainly tastes like this wine was made using kid gloves though because it is every inch a remarkable creation. By trying to avoid concentration but to remain relaxed enough to harvest every single vine at the right time Palmer have made a triumphant wine in 2018. Had there been any pressure to rush out and pick this would not have been possible, but this vintage is unlike any other. Winemaking was all about following the pointers of the vintage while trying to maintain some semblance of control. What a revelation this wine is. It is super-fresh on the nose, palate and finish. There is amazing buoyancy of fruit with an eye-popping crunch of acidity underneath the extraordinary papal purple colour. Mega-precise, focused and all-enveloping this is one of the most fascinating and mesmerising wines of the year. Thomas thinks it is a milestone wine at Palmer as he has never made any like this before. Like some of the other great vintages from this Château it was born of accident if you like. I simply allowed the ridiculously decadent fruit to wash over my palate while the Asian spices, liquorice root, violet and espresso details tweaked the synapses in my brain. The finish was still going half an hour after I left the property. This is a sublime wine."*

- MJ, matthewjukes.com

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