

Château L'Eglise-Clinet 2019

CSPC# 866172

750mlx3

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc

Appellation

Pomerol

Website

<https://www.denis-durantou.com/leglise-clinet/>

Sustainability

In the vineyard of Chateau L'Eglise Clinet Bordelaise and Single, Guyot pruning techniques are used to tend the vines. Denis Durantou started a program using organic compost every 5 years. The vineyard is planted to a density of 6,500 vines per hectare for the old vines. However, the newer plantings are as high as 8,000 vines per hectare.

General Info

L'Eglise Clinet is considered by many to be one of the truly great offerings from Pomerol. The name of this producer is often brought up in conjunction with icons of the Right Bank like Château Pétrus and Château La Fleur. Yet despite the greatness of this estate, the wine is still among the less exorbitantly priced Pomerol producers out there today. Robert Parker Jr himself once referred to this estate as a "sleepier château of the century."

The history of this estate dates to 1803, when a gentleman named Jean Rouchut purchased some vines near a small cemetery. In 1882, the family purchased some plots from a neighboring vineyard, Domaine de Clinet. They decided to partner, and thus L'Eglise Clinet was born. The property's rise to stardom began when it was inherited by one of the legends in the wine industry, Denis Durantou.

The Durantou family was a family of farmers, and most of their income did not come from winemaking. Denis Durantou took over operations in 1983 and he certainly had his work cut out for him. There were no cellar floors, only dirt. The vats were old and unclean, and they were not temperature controlled. He made sweeping changes to the vat room and relined cement tanks with epoxy and replanted much of the 5.5-hectare vineyard. It took him only two years before he began to see the fruits of his labor. There's a mixture of opulence, concentration, and body in each bottle of L'Eglise Clinet and these traits began to evolve and shine during his tenure. During the 1990s, each vintage received mounting critical acclaim and today, this opulent and lush wine is now considered one of the true stars of Pomerol.

Denis Durantou was known as, "a winemaker's winemaker." He valued precision when approaching his wines and was a master at handling the Merlot grape. Durantou's authenticity was refreshing, and he was the epitome of a humble *vigneron* who did most of his winemaking in the vineyard. He was described by some as, "a man of the soil," whose purposes and motivation for crafting wine was simple: bringing integrity to *terroir*. There was no pretense or ego that came through in his winemaking. This is especially rare in a region where exorbitant prices continue to inflate, and a great wine is more and more difficult to purchase. Denis Durantou's contributions were important ones because he devoted a significant portion of his time to creating value oriented Pomerol that leveled the playing field. In an interview with Jane Anson, he said he wanted to translate *terroir*, "as honestly as possible." Unfortunately, he passed away in 2020 after a long illness. It was truly a great loss for the wine industry in all of Bordeaux.

Denis Durantou's legacy lives on in those thirty-seven vintages he produced. One can still always experience his technique, his precision, and his unique style in these wines. His daughters are now in charge of the property with the winemaking team headed by Olivier Gautrat who worked for Durantou family for the past 20 years.

Winemakers

Olivier Gautrat

Vintage

In 2019, early budding was followed by a sporadically wet and cool April, May, and June. This meant uneven flowering in early June, but from mid-June onwards the weather turned dry and hot, leading to successful fruit set.



July was mainly dry but with some storms. This meant the gravel terraces of the Médoc and limestone soils in general had no problems getting the right kind of hydric stress, but more water-logged soils found it tougher. August and September were hot and dry, so ripening and harvest were successful, except for certain cases of extreme water stress on the driest soils, which saw some bunches shrivel in early September.

June right through to October saw higher temperatures than average.

Rain from 20 September onwards allowed the Merlots to ripen, often with high alcohol, and Cabernet did particularly well because the rains meant their ripening could go on for longer, lowering alcohols and allowing for more 'normal' development after the hot weather.

Vineyards

The 4.4-hectare, cross-shaped, Pomerol vineyard of Chateau L'Eglise Clinet is planted to 85% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc and 1% Malbec. The Malbec is part of the grape field blend and not something the estate purposely planted. It is seldom added to the blend.

It is the goal of Chateau L'Eglise Clinet to slowly increase the amount of Cabernet Franc in the vineyard and remove more of the Malbec. This will be done by planting Cabernet Franc clones selected from the oldest Cabernet Franc vines planted in the vineyard using a massal selection program.

The terroir of Chateau L'Eglise Clinet is deep clay and gravel soils without excess water, thanks to the century-old drainage network and natural slopes which rise to 29 meters at their peak. However, in this unique case, perhaps plots are the wrong word to use as this Right Bank property abuts the Pomerol cemetery.

On average, the Chateau L'Eglise Clinet has old vines that are an impressive 40 years of age. But because a good portion of the Chateau L'Eglise Clinet vineyard was spared from the frost of 1956, the estate has old Cabernet Franc vines that date back to the 1930s.

The oldest vines are Cabernet Franc that are more than 80 years of age, as they were planted in 1935! Those old vines are located in two plots: La Buzette and Les Grands Vignes. Both those parcels are situated less than five hundred meters far from the cellar and close to the cemetery.

Chateau L'Eglise Clinet maintains a lot of old vines. In fact, 25% of the Chateau L'Eglise Clinet vineyard is more than 75 years old.

The vineyard can be divided into 4 sections for age. 25% of the vines are more than 75 years old, 25% of the vines are more than 50 years old, 25% are more than 20 years of age and the remaining 25% is more than 7 years old. In total, Chateau L'Eglise Clinet has one of the largest amounts of old vines in the entire Pomerol appellation! That old vine concentration can be tasted in the wines. Perhaps their best parcels are Clinet Bas and Chene, which were planted in 1935.

Harvest

For the harvest at Chateau L'Eglise Clinet, Denis Durantou employs a team of 30 pickers who manage this quickly, due to leaf-stripping and crop thinning done in August and September. Total destemming and gentle crushing are always done.

The Merlot was harvested from September 18 to 26, while the Franc came all in on the 26th.

Vinification/ Maturation

To produce the wine of L'Eglise Clinet, vinification takes place in 14 small, temperature-controlled, stainless-steel vats ranging in size from 20 hectoliters all the way up to 72 hectoliters.

This allows for very precise vinification on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Malolactic fermentation takes place in stainless steel vats. According to Denis Durantou, the reason is for better control of yeast and bacteria.

The 2019 Chateau L'Eglise Clinet is aged in 70% new, French oak barrels for between 15 to 18 months. The wines are racked every 3 to 5 months. On average, the property produces between 1,000 and 1,500 cases of Chateau L'Eglise Clinet every year.

Tasting Notes

Richly black-cherry ripe—sumptuous promise! Ample, generous, fresh, beautifully fine in tannin, a splendid balance; full of rich, black-fruit flavor, subtly mineral-etched, gently mouthcoating, long and graceful across the palate, close-grained, refined, richly satisfying and with great fruit-cored length. Impeccable oak handling here imperceptible, as it should be. A wine saturated with flavor, scent, sensation, all displayed with effortless harmony. Grand and poised and wonderful. Glorious Pomerol. A most fitting, memorable final tribute to you, Denis.

Serve with

Chateau L'Eglise Clinet is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Chateau L'Eglise Clinet is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes.

Production

Approx. 1000 cases made

Cellaring

Drink 2029-2065

Scores/Awards

98+ points - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2022

98-100 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - June 2020

98+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent - March 2022

100 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2022

99-100 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2020

17.5 points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - June 2020

Scores/Awards **98 points** - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - June 2020
100 points - Jane Anson, Insidebordeaux.com - January 2022
100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2022
96-98 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - June 2020
98-100 points - Farr Vintners - May 2020
98 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2022
97-99 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - June 2020
98 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2022
97-99 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2020
97+ points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - April 2022
98 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - January 2020
97-98 points - Terres de Vins (score only) - September 2021
97 points - Bettane & Desseauve (score only) - July 2020

Reviews *"Unquestionably one of the wines of the vintage on the right bank, the late Denis Durantou's swan-song 2019 L'Eglise Clinet is showing very well indeed in bottle. Unfurling in the glass with aromas of dark berry fruit mingled with notions of raw cocoa, violets, black truffle, orange rind, burning embers and loamy soil, it's full-bodied, layered and concentrated, its velvety attack segueing into a deep, multidimensional core that's framed by ripe, powdery tannins and lively balancing acids. Seamless but youthfully structured, this is a prodigious young Pomerol that will richly reward bottle age. 2029 – 2065."*
- WK, Wine Advocate

"Deep garnet-purple in color, the 2019 L'Eglise Clinet has a powerfully fragrant nose of violets, star anise, powdered cinnamon, and jasmine over a core of plum preserves, blackberry pie, Black Forest cake and camphor with wafts of crushed rocks and iron ore. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is an exercise in poise and precision, possessing remarkably well-defined, bright, energetic black fruit and mineral layers, supported by beautifully ripe, rounded tannins and seamless freshness, finishing with a long-lingering, mesmerizing array of earth, rock, and glittery fruit nuances. This is a wine that will stop you in your tracks and demand you to think, contemplate and reflect. And if all that isn't enough, it is also fantastically delicious. The blend this year is 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"A blend of 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc, aged in 70% new oak, the 2019 L'Eglise-Clinet is deep garnet-purple in color. It is a tad shy to begin, with coaxing revealing notes of black raspberries, kirsch, and preserved plums, leading to suggestions of cinnamon toast, charcoal, fertile loam, and iron ore with an exotic waft of cardamom. Medium to full-bodied, the palate already possesses incredible balance, giving up layer upon layer of black and red fruits with loads of mineral accents and a firm, grainy texture, with this stunning wine finishing very long and beautifully perfumed."
- LPB, Wine Independent

"This is amazingly perfumed with amazing aromas of fresh violets and pink roses. Blackberries and dark fruit. Black truffle and stone. It's full-bodied with fantastic structure and tannins. Yet, it's weightless and so beautiful. The length is ethereal and goes on for minutes. You taste it and it's so wonderful that you want to drink it. One for the cellar. Better in 2028, but already a joy."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"An exceptional Eglise-Clinet with density and richness, yet so racy and chewy. It harkens back to classic ECs, such as 1998 or 1989. Full-bodied with gorgeous, pure fruit. The tannins are so beautiful and intense. A wine with real soul. One of the greats."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"70% new oak. Barrel sample. Purple hue. Pure and engaging on the nose with a perfumed, Burgundian nuance to the fruit. Plenty of zest and freshness. Palate suave and refined, the tannins plentiful but fine and wrapped in layers of appealing fruit. Builds steadily to a long, persistent finish. Overall great balance. (JL) 14.5% Drink 2027 – 2042."
- JL, JancisRobinson.com

Reviews

"If great wine is about emotion, as we so often say it is, then this is a wine to savour. The last vintage under Denis Durantou, who passed away in May 2020, it will quite rightly be celebrated. But it also stands very much on its own, as a great Pomerol in a vintage where the plateau wines of this appellation have really stood out. A teasing mix of power and a feather-light touch, that trick that Durantou managed to pull off time and time again, one of a handful of winemakers to really get that right. A serious wine, more so than many in Pomerol this year, with tannins that pull you back and slow things down (a character that you see in Petite Eglise this year also), emphasising the slate and crushed stone character to the texture. Licorice and cassis, blackberry, and a cooler blueberry note, wrapped up in dark black chocolate. This deserves its high score, one that I have only given to handful in this vintage. Is it also given in tribute to Durantou? Honestly, I don't know, and if so, he deserves it. 70% new oak. Drinking Window 2029 – 2050."

- JA, Decanter.com

"Hard to beat this as an example of the beating heart of Pomerol, with juicy yet slow-delivered fruit, precisely carved and spiced plump cassis, and blackberry. The austerity on the first tannins hides depths of generous licorice, slate, pencil lead, with grated white radish and black pepper spice. Powerful, unyielding, not giving everything away yet, gets better and better, and in the glass as it opens you get a proudly fleshy and generous feel to the fruits. Has years ahead of it before it is ready to drink, but it already makes you smile. 70% new oak. A fittingly exceptional last vintage under Denis Durantou, who passed away in May 2020."

- JA, Inside Bordeaux

"The last vintage produced by Pomerol legend, Denis Durantou, (who sadly passed away May 2020), is one of his best. A testament to his devotion to his vineyards, the wine explodes with a gorgeous set of aromatics packed with flowers, chocolate, truffle, plums, black cherries, and wet earth. But it is on the palate where the magic takes place. Incredibly concentrated, rich, ostentations, silky and vibrant, the wine offers incredible purity to the fruit, which is a good thing because the finish is not something you want to lose sight of, as its showy display of chocolate-tinged, dark red fruits, licorice, spice, and black cherries lingers, builds, and expands. Built to age and evolve, give it some time in the cellar and enjoy it for 3 decades with ease. This is exactly the type of wine Denis Durantou truly loved making. Owners of this beauty should toast him and his years of work at L'Eglise Clinet. I know I will. Drink from 2033-2060."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Like walking into a rose garden, next you find dark cocoa, truffle, violets, licorice, and plums on the nose. On the palate the wine is sensuous, opulent, silky, and full-bodied. The length is just perfect, as it lets you linger over the layers of fruit, dusty cocoa and truffle nuances that accompany all those gorgeous, velvety plums and black cherries. The wine was made from blending 90% Merlot with 10% Cabernet Franc, reaching 14.5% alcohol, with a pH of 3.75. The harvest took place September 18-26 for the Merlot, with the Cabernet Franc being picked September 26. 2019 the final vintage for Denis Durantou is a testament to his love for his vineyard and wine. It is exactly the type of wine he truly loved making. Owners of this beauty should toast him and his years of work at L'Eglise Clinet. I know I will."

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"The harvest here took place earlier than at neighbouring vineyards, with the Merlot picked 18th-26th September, and the Cabernet Franc on 26th September. The 2019 is a blend of 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc, aged in 70% new French oak, and is 14.5% abv. Very deep purple in the glass. The nose is extremely pure and finely etched - fleshy black cherries accented with subtle toasted spices and a fresher, floral cherry blossom notes in the background. The palate follows, with superb delineation of fruit and spice, building layer upon layer of intense and vibrant flavour. The tannins are mouthcoating and grippy but very fine and ripe, providing ample structure for this wine to age for decades. The fruit core is still tightly wound there is superb density here. The intensity builds to an extremely long and driven finish in what is an extremely refined and powerful Eglise Clinet. A contender for Wine of the Vintage, absolutely stunning!"

- Farr Vintners

"The 2019 l'Eglise-Clinet has a brilliantly defined bouquet with echoes of the equally showstopping Trotanoy that I tasted just a couple of hours before. Crystalline red fruit and hints of blood orange intermingle with crushed stone and truffle. The palate is medium-bodied with an immediately seductive, satin-like texture belying the backbone of this Pomerol. Lightly spiced and fanning out with intention on the finish, this will, as I wrote before, stand as the perfect testament to Denis Durantou as his daughters carry on his legacy."

- NM, Vinous

Reviews

“The 2019 L'Eglise-Clinet is destined to be remembered as Denis Durantou's last vintage before he passed away in May 2020. It is a fitting testament to the late winemaker. It is blessed with a bewitching bouquet laden with intense, vivid red berry fruit suffused with liquorice, black pepper, and clove scents. Extremely complex. The palate is wonderfully proportioned with fine tannins that frame the layered black and red fruit, lightly spiced with hints of tobacco, and cracked black pepper on the finish imparted by that seasoning of Cabernet Franc. Quintessential L'Eglise-Clinet, it will give half a century of drinking pleasure and the perfect way to remember and raise a toast to one of Pomerol's finest vigneronns.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2019 L'Eglise-Clinet is a stunning, drop-dead gorgeous beauty. Finesse and power come together in a Pomerol that towers with dazzling intensity. Gravel, dried herbs, flowers, mocha, and licorice soar out of the glass. In 2019 L'Eglise-Clinet is a vertical wine, a wine of stature, class and pedigree that will reward those lucky enough to own it with many years of very fine drinking. It's impossible to taste the 2019 and not think about the late Denis Durantou and what he achieved in his last vintage. Daughters Constance and Noémi Durantou seem to really understand the legacy they have been entrusted to honor and then build on themselves.”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2019 L'Eglise-Clinet, Denis Durantou's last vintage, is also very clearly one of the wines of the year. A Pomerol of soaring, majestic intensity L'Eglise-Clinet dazzles from start to finish. Layers of dark fruit, gravel, spice, and dried flowers unfold over time. I followed this sample for several days and it never lost any intensity over that time. I find the 2019 incredibly elegant and polished, but then again, I also tasted it a few months later than normal because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Merlot was harvested from September 18 to 26, while the Franc came all in on the 26th. Readers who can find the 2019 should not hesitate, as it is a true masterpiece.”

- AG, Vinous

“The flagship 2019 Château L'Eglise Clinet is brilliant, unquestionably ranking with the top wines in the appellation. Giving up loads of ripe darker cherries, currants, tobacco, cedarwood, and spring flowers, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a plush, layered, opulent mouthfeel, impressive tannins, and a great finish. I love its mid-palate, and it's one of the bigger, richer, sexier wines in the vintage. I'd be thrilled with bottles in the cellar. It offers pleasure even today yet should hit maturity in 7-8 years and have a drinking window stretching over the following two to three decades.”

- Jeb Dunnuck