

Vieux Château Certan 2011

CSPC# 763559

750mlx12

13.6% Alc./Vol.

CSPC# 757379

750mlx6

13.6% Alc./Vol.

Grape Variety

70% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Franc, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation

Pomerol

Website

http://www.vieuxchateaucertan.com/vieux_chateau_certan_uk.html

General Info

The Vieux Château Certan estate, which in 1745 already figured on Bellayme's famous map under the name of "Sertan", is located in the heart of the Pomerol plateau. Covering 14 hectares (35 acres) in one single block, the Vieux Château Certan vineyard is the fruit of a century of painstaking work and careful decision-making.

Vintage

Any assessment has to begin with the weather and what a curious year it was. The Spring was remarkably warm and dry and flowering took place early and in fine conditions. However, by late June the heat was becoming excessive and the lack of rain a real concern, with some vines actually in danger of shutting down. July was cool and fortunately saw some rain, while August was mixed, cooler than average overall but with some heat spikes and some storms. September was warm and dry enabling the grapes to ripen fully, but the relative lack of heat in the key months of July and August meant that the wines do not have the richness and flesh which is found in the truly great warm vintages like 2009.

There was uneven ripening within the bunches of grapes and this necessitated a huge amount of work in the vineyard and the cellar, sorting out and rejecting the less than perfect fruit. To give you an idea of the labour involved a top estate such as Haut-Bailly spent 3,800 man hours over the harvest compared to 2,800 last year, an increase of over 30 per cent.

Vineyards

The 13.5 hectare Vieux Chateau Certan vineyard is located in the center of Pomerol, on the plateau. When you arrive at the junction where the estate rests, you are truly at the cross streets that could easily be renamed to the center of the heart and soul of Pomerol. Directly across the street is Chateau Certan de May and just down the road you'll find Petrus. Vieux Chateau Certan has a terroir of clay and gravel soil. Vieux Chateau Certan is one of the largest vineyards in the Right Bank that are planted in one single block of vines. The Vieux Chateau Certan vineyard in total is divided into 23 separate parcels. The vineyards of Vieux Chateau Certan are planted to 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon with vines that average 50 years of age. However, there is one very old plot of Merlot that was planted all the way back in 1932, making it one of the oldest parcels in the Pomerol appellation. Alexandre Thienpont is responsible for changing the makeup of the vineyards as well. He removed the Malbec and reduced the amount of Cabernet Sauvignon in the vineyards, while adding more Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Unlike the vineyard farming practices used in the 1960's and 1970's, today, no pesticides of any type are used on the vines. Alexandre Thienpont practices sustainable vineyard management techniques.

Harvest

Harvest preparation & sorting on the vines took place from July 27 – August 4. Harvesting then was from September 6-7, and again from September 14-20, 2011. Tield was 37 hectolitres per hectare.

Vinification/ Maturation

The grapes are picked by hand and sorted meticulously at the end of each row of wines. After a gentle crushing they are put into oak vats, by variety. Those vats destined to make up the blend of the Grand Vin are run off into 100 % new French oak barrels and aged for 18 to 22 months.



Tasting Notes	The wine is deep-flavoured, deep coloured and concentrated. Merlot provided great finesse, body & pedigree, but the Cabernet franc, with its wonderful complexity, ripeness, density and lovely length, gave the character to this vintage. With the nature of its blend and its tannic balance, the Vieux Chateau certain puts us in mind of the excellent 1983 and 1988 vintages, which were renowned for their long-ageing character.
Production	3,500 cases made
Cellaring	Drink 2017-2032
Scores/Awards	<p>94 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2014</p> <p>93-96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2012</p> <p>91 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #212 - April 2014</p> <p>94-96 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #200 - April 2012</p> <p>96-98 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - March 2014</p> <p>96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2014</p> <p>95-96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2012</p> <p>95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - May 11, 2014</p> <p>92-95 points - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - April 2012</p> <p>18 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2012</p> <p>19 points/5 stars - James Lawther, Decanter.com - April 2012</p> <p>93-95 points - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2012</p> <p>96 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2012</p> <p>95 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)</p> <p>92 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 21, 2014</p> <p>94-96 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 23, 2012</p> <p>17.5 points - Farr Vintner - April 2012</p> <p>91-96 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2012</p> <p>18.5 points - Adam Bilbey, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants - April 2012</p> <p>96 points - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2012</p> <p>18-19 points - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - April 2012</p> <p>95 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p>18.5 points - Gault & Millau (score only)</p> <p>Review only - Justerini & Brooks Wine Merchants - April 2012</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"Very deep and broad for the vintage, this sports ample toast and loam notes, showing remarkable polish and heft. A core of ganache, fig, boysenberry preserves and melted licorice waits in reserve. Offers a fleshy feel through the finish, with lingering loam and maduro tobacco details. Best from 2017 through 2032. 3,500 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"This has a dark ganache and loamy profile that belies the vintage's lighter, fresher profile, and the wine cuts a broad swath but stays well-defined, with dense tobacco and fig on the finish. An impressive effort and an early challenger for one of the wines of the vintage. Tasted non-blind. Score range: 93-96"</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The dense ruby/purple-tinged 2011 Vieux Chateau Certan offers a beautiful bouquet of plums, black cherries, cassis and hints of graphite as well as spice, an excellent texture and medium body. A success in this difficult vintage, it should age easily for 10-15 years. Yet after the trilogy of great wines in 2008, 2009 and 2010, few consumers are likely to pay much attention to this 2011."</i></p> <p>- RP, Wine Advocate</p>

Reviews *“Made in a big, bold style with 13.6% natural alcohol, it reveals a stunning perfume of graphite, mulberries, black currants, kirsch, licorice and forest floor. This full-bodied, dense Pomerol transcends the overall vintage character. Thienpont compared the style of the 2011 with their 2000, but with more density to its core because of the extremely low yields. Only 60% of the crop made it into this cuvee. It will need 5-8 years of cellaring, and should still be intact and drinking beautifully at age 30.*

A candidate for the top wine of Pomerol, Alexandre Thienpont calls the 2011 a return to the more classic style of Vieux Chateau Certan after the exotic, over-the-top 2009 and 2010. A blend of 70% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Franc (the highest in a number of years) and 1% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2011 was harvested between September 7-20.”

- RP, Wine Advocate

“The Vieux Chateau Certan was cropped between 6th and 7th of September and from 14th until 20th September. That's what you'll read everywhere, although I was filming Alexandre when he was picking the final Cabernet around the 29th September! Cropped at 37hl/ha, it is a blend of 70% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon and (yay!) 29% Cabernet Franc. It delivers 13.6 degrees alcohol with a total acidity of 3.5gms/L and an IPT of 83. After the Cabernet Francless 2009 and 2010, this is more what I consider to be a classic VCC nose and as Alexandre, unlike those previous vintages that gives you everything up front, this is far more intellectual and enigmatic with hints of mineral laden fruit, limestone and small dark cherries. It is beautifully defined yet distant. The palate is succinctly balanced with crisp acidity, exceptional balance and superb backbone. There is an undercurrent of masculinity, a saline tincture, crushed stone and a touch of dried herbs and yet these are just fleeting hints. It has enormous length and it is one of the very few that could be on the same ethereal plateau as the 2009 and 2010 and perhaps one day...even better. Tasted April 2012.”

- NM, Wine Journal

“The aromas of this are so gorgeous, with blackberries, black cherries and wet earth. Full body with super-fine tannins and bright acidity. A firm, tightly structured young red with orange peel and other citrus fruit. This is so focused and straight. Try in 2018.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“What a nose. Such beautiful aromas of Cabernet Franc here with licorice and tea and dark fruits. Wet earth too. Full body, with firm and racy tannins and a beautiful finish of chocolate and berries. Intense. Cashmere texture. 29% Cabernet Franc in this with the rest in Merlot with a touch of Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cabernet Franc comes mostly from a parcel planted in 1958.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“95-97. Barrel sample. A beautifully-perfumed wine with ripe, soft tannins and sweet fruit. It has density yet the tannins are so velvety and ripe. “

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“(70% merlot, 29% cabernet franc and 1% cabernet sauvignon, 3.6 pH, 3.5 g/l total acidity; 83 IPT; 37 h/h; 13.6% alcohol): Purple-ruby. Perfumed, cabernet franc-dominated aromas of strawberry, violet and bitter cocoa. Very refined on the palate, with vibrant acidity framing and lifting the very pure red fruit and mineral flavors. This beautiful Pomerol will develop slowly and gracefully. Alexandre Thienpont believes that the cabernet franc, which seemed to suffer from the heat of 200 and 2010, has given a cashmere feel to what he thinks is a classic wine that will age well. I couldn't agree more, as this is probably my wine of the vintage.”

- ST, International Wine Cellar

“Alexandre Thienpont says happily, 'De retour a Bordeaux' - back to Bordeaux after the last two atypical vintages, clearly delighted with the way Cabernet Franc has performed this year. He has included 28% in 2011 compared with 5-6% in 2009 and 2010. It's a variety that copes quite well with lack of water but not with extreme heat. Rich purple crimson. Camomile (though I am not sure I would have spotted this if Alexandre hadn't mentioned it) plus fine dark fruit and graphite freshness. Closed on the nose but scented on the palate. Very fine tannins. Crunchy. Fresh and long. Great purity and line and length. Absolutely lovely. (JH) 13.6%”

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

Reviews *"The 'grand retour' of Cabernet Franc with 29% in the blend. Less opulence than 2009 and 2010 but this is a wine that really sings. It has a vital, floral, dark fruit nose, a silky texture and tannins. Succulent, fresh and long. A classic VCC. The Right Bank wine of the vintage."*
-JL, Decanter.com

"Really back to a more classic Bordeaux year, and a wonderful aberfent franc year for Alexandre Thienpont. The final blend here is 29% cab franc, 1% cab sauv, 70% merlot. Recet changes include replanting two plots of cabernet sauvignon to replant with different rootstock - not relevant yet of course, as it will be a good 18-20 years before it is first wine quality. The cab sauvignon in this is planted among the other rows of grapes. The aroma is open, with some oak marking the nose. Wonderful texture, cashmere and silk. This has an" energy to it that comes through immediately. Alexandre is aware that the last two years too hot for his cab franc, they were planted in 1958, so the drought of 2011 didn't bother them like the heat of 09 and 10, when they get stuck. 13.6%Abv, 70% new oak, blended around three weeks ago. 2nd wine this year has young vines and vigorous vines. The length is impressive. Vinoux, seveux, means it has length, gout, all good thing w a slight restraint. This has overall a lot of potential. Can see it needs time. Really a classic, enjoyable vintage, but one you need to look for, and take your time over. 93-95."
- JA, The New Bordeaux

"Licorice, coffee bean, cocoa, earth, spearmint and black raspberries, with good concentration and a sweet, supple character for the vintage. The wine is long, fresh and sweet, with the structure to age and develop. This is a very nice, stylish wine, but I wish it showed the same level of concentration it displayed in barrel."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Blending 70% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Franc and a drop of Cabernet Sauvignon, the wine reached 13.6% alcohol. At 37 hectoliters per hectare, the Grand Vin represents 70% of the harvest. With rich aromas of licorice, black plum jam, espresso, truffle, spice and incense, the wine is intense, fresh, chocolaty, sensuous, powerful, long, silky and packed with sweet, ripe, pure and concentrated layers of plum, black cherry and spice. 94-96 Pts"
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"It takes a lot to put a smile on the face of the normally rather reserved Alexandre Thienpont, but he was grinning when I visited the château. And no wonder, given the quality of his wine, showing that, after its near absence last year, Cabernet Franc is "back with a bang", as he puts it. This is a very elegant, silky wine, with notes of green pepper and cassis, supple tannins and a lift of refreshing acidity. 15+ years."
- TA, timatkin.com

"Alexandre Thienpont has been making sensational VCCs for several years from the venerable old vines of this exceptionally well situated vineyard. The youngest Merlots were planted in 1959 and the youngest Cabernet Francs in 1948. This is one of the great properties of Pomerol and it normally has a high percentage of Cabernet in the blend. The 2011 is made from 70% Merlot, 29% Cabernet Franc and only 1% Cabernet Sauvignon. The quality this year reminds Alexandre of 2000, 1988 and 1983. There is an opulent nose with exceptional perfume. On the palate it is concentrated and powerful but with great purity, precision and complexity. Savory, sophisticated and stylish. This is a serious Pomerol with wonderful balance and class."
- Farr Vintners

"There is a lovely depth of fruit on the nose ripe and sweet. Black plum enriches the palate the sweetness of the fruit giving a fleshy suppleness but under all of the richness there is the freshness of bilberry and bramble that gives a lighter feel to the back palate elegant and more classic."
- Derek Smedley MW

"What a nose. Supple and elegant with extraordinary perfume, plum, violets and raspberry fruit come through with wonderful floral lift. The palate is liquid velvet. A sweet, sappy front, followed by a focused darker core of plump, rounded fruit. There is a cashmere like texture that builds up in waves and the freshness of the vintage again works perfectly with the clean precise finish that just stays with you for minutes. I am not sure that there is a better wine in 2011. 2016 - 2026."
- AB, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants

Reviews *“This is a fleshy, generous, full bodied Pomerol with a detailed fruit profile and great depth. Flavours range from violets, plums, black berries with hints of mocha and cedar. The fruit was obviously perfectly ripe with polished, generous tannins and a very long finish. The quantity produced this year is the same as in 2010 with 29% of Cabernet Franc used in the blend. A phenomenal wine and my top wine from Pomerol.”*
- JCL, asianpalate.com

“The Cabernet Franc returns, with 29% in this vintage, a 1% seasoning of Cabernet Sauvignon and 70% Merlot. Yield 37 hl/ha, alcohol 13.6%, acidity 3.5 g/l, IPT 83. Harvest was September 6-7th, and September 14th-20th. Reserved dark cherry fruit here. Violet perfume, precise character, very delineated nose. Light white stone minerality to it which adds a sense of elegance and form to it aromatically. Beautifully polished character on the palate, very complete, elegant but with a stony substance to it that gives it finesse and shape. The tannic backbone is rich but well reined in, ripe, elegant and precise, with a rich harmonious integration with the fruit and the acids. Nothing out of balance here. Beautifully textured, showing great freshness, in the finish restrained potential for the future seems apparent, harmony of tannins and the fruit within the wine. Superbly elegant style of Vieux Château Certan, with a return for Cabernet Franc freshness. I can see this is going to be an absolute stunner.”

- CK, The Wine Doctor

“Alexandre Thienpont says that 'Cabernet Franc is back with a bang in 2011'. After two vintages where Vieux Chateau Certan's wonderful old vine Cabernets were barely used, 29% of the blend is Cabernet Franc, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon and 70% Merlot this year. Analytically impressive with an IPT of 83 and a pH of 3.6, the real proof is in the tasting, and this is a real beauty. Intensely perfumed, with hints of demure bramble fruit, violets, herbs and cool berries, this is as seductive as it gets. Noble flavours abound; the Cabernet certainly gives this definition, poise and savoury charm that sets it apart from the other top wines in the appellation. Alexandre likens this exquisite VCC to his 2000 vintage for its tannic balance and age-worthiness. A wonderful effort and one of our selections from the right bank.”

- Justerini & Brooks Wine Merchants
