

Vieux Château Certan 2020

CSPC# 814286

750mlx6

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc

Appellation

Pomerol

Classification

Bordeaux AOC (*Appellation d'origine contrôlée*)

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.

Winemaker

Alexandre and Guillaume Thienpont

Vintage

The 2020 growing season was marked by the striking contrast between an incredibly rainy winter and a durably dry and often hot summer. A homogeneous and rather thin flowering began in mid-May and led to an early harvest that produced a low crop yield.

The old vines, their vigor favourably slowed by this drought, produced wonderfully deep colored, concentrated and balanced wines. Merlot is intensely aromatic, dense, full and with breed. It rolls over the tongue. It's the Merlot that marks this vintage. The Cabernet Franc, with its small, concentrated berries, produced a smooth-textured wine of amazing complexity; it is flavoursome and has good length of flavour.

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

From 14th to 24th September for the Merlot, then on 28th and 29th September for the Cabernet Franc. Yield: 30 hectoliters per hectare.

**Vinification/
Maturation**

The grapes are picked by hand and sorted meticulously at the end of each row of vines. 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 65% new French oak barrels and aged for 18 months.

Tasting Notes

The Vieux Chateau Certan 2020 is a radiant wine and displays a deep purple red hue of rare depth and beautiful aromas of ripe fruit. Its remarkable balance between freshness and concentration enables all the qualities of a great long-ageing wine to shine through.

Serve with

Vieux Chateau Certan is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Vieux Chateau Certan is also good when matched with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta

Production

Approx. 3,000 cases made

Cellaring

Drink 2025-2069



Scores/Awards **97 points** - William Kelley, Wine Advocate - April 2023
98-100 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - May 2021
100 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, The Wine Independent (score only) - March 2023
99 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - January 2023
98-99 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - May 2021
97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2023
95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 2021
18++ points - James Lawther, JancisRobinson.com - April 2021
98 points - Georgina Hindle, Decanter.com - January 2023
95 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - May 2021
96 points - Jane Anson, janeanson.com - January 2023
100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2023
98-100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - May 2021
98 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only) - April 2021
97 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - December 2022
96-98 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - April 2021
99 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - December 2022
96-98 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - June 2021
100 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2023
97-99 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2021
97-99 points - Peter Moser, Falstaff Magazine - May 2021
100 points - Andreas Larsson, Tasted (score only) - May 2021

Reviews *"A blend of 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc, the 2020 Vieux Château Certan bursts with aromas of blackberries, sweet spices, rose petals, orange zest, burning embers and violets framed by a deft application of creamy new oak. Medium to full-bodied, deep, and concentrated, it's rich and layered, with a more broad, unctuous profile than the pure and refined 2019, concluding with a long, resonant finish. This is more immediate out of the gates than the 2019, and I suspect it will not prove quite as long lived, but it is a terrific effort from the Thienpont family.*

This 14-hectare estate, divided into some 23 distinct parcels, has produced another compelling wine in 2020. Alexandre Thienpont (who took the reins in 1986) and his thoughtful son Guillaume (who is following in his father's footsteps) work simply but attentively; there's no smoke nor mirrors at this address, just a terrific terroir (composed of around one-third gravel soils, one-third clay-gravel soils and one-third clay soils), planted with some 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, and winemaking that brings out its best. After classical macerations, the new wines mature in 65% new oak from Séguin Moreau and Sylvain for 18 months. The second wine, La Gravette de Certan, is entirely Merlot, mostly from vines planted in 2010, along with a small plot dating back to 1998."
 - WK, Wine Advocate

"The pH is 3.77 and the alcohol is 14.5%. Deep purple-black colored, it needs considerable coaxing, swirling and a lot of patience before it finally lets rip an intoxicating perfume of ripe, juicy black plums, Morello cherries, candied violets, black truffles and crushed rocks, giving way to hints of black tea, molten licorice and Sichuan pepper, plus a waft of dusty red soil. The medium to full-bodied palate delivers achingly ripe, silt-like tannins and shimmering freshness that melds with the black fruits and earthy layers with jaw-dropping seamlessness, finishing with layer upon layer of mineral and savory suggestions and, finally, a gorgeous floral whisper. There are going to be two ways to approach this: 1) Just let the remarkably sensual, inexplicable beauty of it wash over you or 2) Try to unravel all those intricate layers and have it blow your mind. Either way, this is simply an incredible achievement—bravo Alexandre and Guillaume Thienpont!"
 - LPB, Wine Advocate

"Deep purple-black in color, the 2020 Vieux Chateau Certan is composed of 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc, the youngest vines being 41 years old and the oldest 80 years old. The nose is shut tight to begin, needing a lot of air to call forth beguiling scents of rose oil, sandalwood, star anise, and black truffles - to begin - giving way to a profound core of plum preserves, blueberry compote, boysenberries, and molten chocolate with a fleeting waft of vanilla pod and saffras. The full-bodied palate is fantastically structured, with very firm yet very fine, smooth tannins and amazing tension supporting the dense, multilayered fruit, finishing with epic length and a whole firework display of mineral and floral notes. This is superb."
 - LPB, Wine Independent

Reviews *“Real Pomerol here with black berry, chocolate, hazelnut and walnut aromas and flavors. Dark fruits. Crushed stone. It’s full and intense with great focus. Powerful yet so balanced and intense. Juicy center palate. Fantastic length. Great clarity. Drink after 2028.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“Extraordinary clarity and brilliance on the nose with ink and iodine, blackberry, and blueberry. Really perfumed already. Full-bodied with fine tannins and superb depth and length. I love the complexity and the great texture. Energetic finish.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“This wine has a surprising amount of Merlot in the blend for the estate. That gives richness and density to a wine that is already structured and stylish. The dense texture promises long-term aging. Drink from 2027.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“With a higher percentage of Merlot than usual, the wine is open, packed with rich fruits as well as very fine tannins. The concentrated structure gives a core that is velvet, rich and impressively perfumed. A very fine wine that will surely age well.”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. Cask sample. Deep, intense colour. Lovely open expression of fruit on the nose with floral notes and plenty of lift and relief. The palate is ripe but vinous and sappy, the tannins finely honed offering a velvety texture. Contained power and concentration behind. Slight glow but remains digeste. Another top year. (JL) 14.5%. Drink 2030 – 2055.”

- JL, JancisRobinson.com

“A pure, classy, understated VCC that manages to be elegant and delicate while hinting its potential for glamour and star power. Coiled and tightly knitted with rich and ripe black fruit flavours, currants, plums, figs and blackcurrants with a scintillating energy and grip. Effortlessly stylish yet beguiling, more of a sleeping beauty right now, concentration is clear with such detail to the fruit, well integrated tannins, and thrilling acidity, but delivered sleekly. Confident winemaking on show, a wine that has been 'crafted for our children and grandchildren' says Alexandre Thienpont.”

- GH, Decanter.com

“Concentrated and complex flavours with a silky, velvety, and supremely seductive texture, alongside a ton of energy, freshness, and juice. It has dense muscular tannins and is going to age beautifully. As it opens you get the aromatics coming out, and the Merlot fleshy fruits become generous and welcoming, opulent without being tiring. A little less Cabernet Franc in the blend than normal because one of the three plots has currently been pulled up before replanting. Harvest September 14 to 29. 3.77pH. A yield of 30hl/ha because of the dry weather through the summer followed by the flashes of heat in September, among lowest ever (similar to 2010). Drinking Window 2027 – 2042.”

- JA, Decanter.com

“Tension, structure, complexity, waves of violet, rose petals and slate A serious VCC with tension and poise, this inches open to show graphite, pencil lead and sweet raspberry, blueberry, and savoury cassis bud, almost an edge of petrol, elegant and balanced, and with a personality that is going to power through the decades. 50% new oak.”

- JA, janeanson.com

“Inky dark in color, it takes no time to discover the truffle, violets, black plum liqueur, Valrhona chocolate, spice, espresso bean, black raspberry, and hints of blue fruit on the nose. Full-bodied, and incredibly concentrated, the wine feels like polished velvet as it caresses your palate. Dense, rich, and powerful, yet weightless, balanced, and fresh, the finish crosses the 60 second mark and keeps on going! The level of purity, concentration and depth of flavor here is matched by its sensuality. If Caligula were serving wine, this would be his choice. This is better than the 2009, 2016 and probably 2018. This will be one of the legendary vintages for Vieux Chateau Certan. It is a serious contender for wine of the vintage! The wine blends 85% Merlot

Reviews *with 15% Cabernet Franc, 14.5% ABV. The harvest took place September 14-September 24 for the Merlot. Cabernet Franc was picked September 28-September 30. Yields were low at only 30 hectoliters per hectare.”*
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“The 2020 Vieux Chateau Certan was show-stopping from barrel sample and, now, in bottle? The nose is exquisitely delineated with perfumed black fruit, crushed rock, hints of pencil box, and a very faint licorice scent in the background. Wonderful focus. The palate has marvelous definition, surfeited with tension from the start. It is a little granular in texture, reminiscent of the 2010 at this same early juncture, magnificent, life-affirming salinity and pepperiness fanning out beautifully on the lace-like finish. It's a profound Pomerol that will age effortlessly over many years. Super-bon. Alexandre Thienpont compared it to the 1945. This is cheaper and easier to find.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Vieux Château Certan is a blend of 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc (no Cabernet Sauvignon this year). Drought retarded vigor, particularly with respect to the older vines, and picking was carried out September 14–24 for the Merlot and September 28–29 for the Cabernet Franc. Examined over a couple of hours, it delivers intense and quite opulent black cherries, blueberry and shavings of black truffle and iodine, becoming increasingly floral with aeration. The palate is medium-bodied with impressive structure and bags of freshness. There is plenty of sappy black fruit, lip-smacking underlying salinity and a finish that is a doppelgänger for Lafleur (despite containing less Cabernet Franc). A gorgeous VCC that exudes both density and refinement.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2020 Vieux Château Certan is a wine of total harmony and finesse. Absolutely nothing is out of place. Supple and seamless, the 2020 is an infant, but it is so impressive. Crème de cassis, lavender, mocha and licorice are some of the many notes that emerge from the glass, but more than anything else, the 2020 is a majestic Pomerol that will thrill those lucky enough to own it. There's not much else to say. The 2020 spent 18 months in barrel, 65% new.”

- AG, Vinous

“A powerful, vertical wine, the 2020 Vieux Château Certan is endowed with tremendous intensity right out of the gate. Everything about the 2020 is dialed up. The fruit is huge, as are the tannins. Black cherry, licorice, new leather, spice, and bittersweet chocolate saturate the palate in a wine that conveys opulence from start to finish. Yields were just 30 hectoliters per hectare, well below the norm of 40-42. The blend is 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc, in other words a high percentage of Franc. There is no Cabernet Sauvignon in the final blend this year, the result of dehydration on the vine. The 2020 is fabulous. I can't wait to taste it from bottle.”

- AG, Vinous

“Moving to the Grand Vin, the 2020 Vieux Château Certan is another legendary wine from this vintage, ranking with the best Bordeaux ever produced. Based on 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc that spent 18 months in 65% new French oak, it has a deep, powerful, full-bodied style as well as incredible purity and precision in its darker cassis, graphite, gravelly earth, and tobacco-driven aromatics. With perfectly integrated oak, again, incredible purity, and perfect, ultra-fine tannins, it deserves 8-10 years of bottle age and will be a 40- to 50-year wine.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“Always one of my favorite wines in just about every vintage, the 2020 Vieux Château Certan is another magical wine in the making, revealing a dense purple hue as well as stunning notes of cassis, bright cherries, chocolate, and flowers. It hits the palate with full-bodied richness, perfect tannins, a dense, layered mid-palate, and one blockbuster of a finish. This is unquestionably one of the biggest, richest, sexiest wines in the vintage, and my money is on it flirting with perfection and delivering 30-40 years of prime drinking.”

- Jeb Dunnuck
