

Château Ausone 2011

CSPC#763538

750mlx6

14.0% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

55% Cabernet Franc, 45% Merlot

Appellation

Saint Emilion

Website

<http://chateau-ausone.fr/>

General Info

Château Ausone is the smallest of Bordeaux's 'big eight' (first growths), and its location is as spectacular as its wines; perched on the limestone hillsides that harbour the walled town of Saint-Émilion. Production at Ausone is tiny.

Ausone has been under the inspirational Alain Vauthier since 1995, who has spared no expense in establishing benchmark Saint-Émilion that often ages for 50-100 years. A new cellar (retaining old oak vats) and renovation of the château has breathed new life into Ausone.

Although the château was built in the 19th century, the site shows evidence of the roman activity, which gives the wine its name, commemorating the 4th Century poet Ausonius. Ausone's recent history begins in 1718 with the Cantenat family, who passed it on to Mlle Challon, whose husband, Edouard Dubois, is credited with Ausone's rise in the 20th century.

Dubois-Challon's son Jean inherited Ausone post WWII, during a lean period in quality, and it wasn't until his widow took over in 1974 that Ausone improved. Mme Dubois-Challon shared ownership with the children of her stepdaughter Cecile and the Vauthier family, before relinquishing control to Alain Vauthier and his sister. Michel Rolland is consultant.

Vintage

It was not an easy growing season... 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.

Vineyards

The 7-hectare St. Emilion vineyard is planted to a vine density of 6,500 to 12,600 plants per hectare. It is the stated goal of Chateau Ausone to eventually have all their plantings at closer to 12,600 vines per hectare. However, this is being done a few vines at a time. The entire process will take several decades. The steep, hillside terroir with its grades of 15% to 20% is clay with limestone and limestone over asteria limestone in the soil. This is what gives the wine of Chateau Ausone its intense mineral character. The vines are old, in fact the average age of the vines are 50 years. However, Chateau Ausone also has some of the oldest vines in St. Emilion. There are Cabernet Franc vines that are close to 100 years of age. The oldest were planted in 1906. Yields are low at Chateau Ausone. On average, they are close to 33 hectoliters per hectare. The St. Emilion vineyard of Chateau Ausone is planted to 55% Cabernet Franc and 45% Merlot. There is also a small portion of Cabernet Sauvignon planted at Ausone as well. Cabernet Sauvignon is only included in the second wine.

Harvest

The grapes are hand-harvested with great emphasis on careful sorting on the vines. The bunches are brought to the cellar in small crates that prevent any damaging of the fruit.

**Vinification/
Maturation**

The vinification is carried out in temperature-controlled oak vats with a vatting period of 4 to 5 weeks depending on the vintage. Malolactic fermentation is done in new oak barrels, then the wine is aged for 20 months in Ausone's limestone rock caves.



Tasting Notes Extremely dense with a nose of black and blue fruit, mushrooms and a nice smoky undertone. The palate is very concentrated and a superb texture that is plush, round and full in the mouth. Wonderful example of power without weight and a study in finesse. Almost exotic flavors on the very long finish. Love the balance and mouthfeel. Outstanding.

Cellaring Scores/Awards Drink 2014-2054

- 95+ points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #212 - April 2014
- 96-100 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #200 - April 2012
- 93-95 points** - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2012
- 95-96 points** - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2012
- 97 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - June 1, 2014
- 92-94 points** - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - November 5, 2012
- 92-94 points** - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - April 2012
- 17 points** - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2012
- 18.5 points** - James Lawther, Decanter.com - April 2012
- 95+ points** - Jane Anson, The New Bordeaux - April 2012
- 90 points** - Jean Marc Quarin - March 2012 (score only)
- 94 points** - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2012
- 96-98 points** - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 24, 2012
- 92-94 points** - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2012
- 17 points** - Farr Vintner - March 2012
- 95-97 points** - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2012
- 15 points** - Vinum Wine Magazine - April 2012 (score only)
- 17-18 points** - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - March 2012

"It's bigger sibling, the 2011 Ausone increases the level of intensity, elegance, complexity, richness and length. Nearly a mirror image of the La Chapelle, just with more going on, the Ausone boasts a more saturated purple color, and the wine has everything in large, intense proportions. The finesse and delicacy of all its components are what make it such a remarkable wine. The quality of the tannins and purity of the fruit make this another legendary effort that should age for 30-40 years."

- RP, Wine Advocate

"Not surprisingly, Alain Vauthier's 2011 Ausone is one of the greatest wines he has produced. I know this sounds impossible, but it is the reason why I spend so much time tasting and reflecting on what is in front of me. The 2011 could turn out to be better than his 2009 – sacre bleu! Probably the wine of the vintage, the 2011 exhibits a murky, inky, blue/purple color as well as an extraordinary nose of creme de cassis, plum sauce, crushed rocks (primarily chalk), acacia flowers and hints of graphite, truffles and damp forest floor. The riveting aromatics are followed by a wine that does not let the taster down in the mouth. Full-bodied with extraordinary purity, oozing richness and well-integrated velvety tannins, acidity, oak and alcohol, this is another superb achievement by Vauthier from this phenomenal site on the decomposed limestone hillsides of St.-Emilion. Possibly the longest-lived wine of the vintage, it should evolve for 30-40 years. Since few of us can afford Ausone (or even find it, assuming we have the discretionary income necessary to purchase it), readers should seek out the second wine, which usually represents one-third of the entire production."

- RP, Wine Advocate

"The Grand Vin is a blend of 55% Cabernet Franc and 45% Merlot, cropped at 29hl/ha. It has a comparatively luscious bouquet for the vintage with layers of ripe dark cherry and cassis fruit on the nose that are cloaked in vanillary new oak. It possesses an almost Burgundy-like purity. The palate is medium bodied with velvety tannins, perfect balance and wonderful composure. The acidity is nigh on perfect, the focus and delineation beguiling. There is no explosion on the finish, just unbridled finesse. Outstanding. Tasted April 2012."

- NM, Wine Journal

"This is a wonderful young red with orange peel, mineral, spice and berry. Full and super fine. Great length. A gorgeous wine. The old vines of Cabernet Franc make the difference here. Great harmony."

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Combining power with great elegance, this wine displays super ripe, rich fruits that are restrained by velvet tannins and the delicious perfumed character from Cabernet Franc in the blend. Juicy, rich, structured, it's a beautiful wine with a great future. Drink from 2020."

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

Reviews *"92-94. Barrel sample. A big wine that's packed with ripe dark-plum flavors, smoky tannins and richness. It shows a powerful, balanced structure."*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"(55% cabernet franc and 45% merlot; 29 h/h; 100% new oak): Fully saturated purple-ruby. Intense, rich aromas of cassis, ripe blackberry and violet, with a whiff of aromatic oak. Creamy, dense and full on entry, then tannic and oaky, with a peppery chocolate character complementing ripe cassis fruit. Finishes very long, but with slightly tough tannins today."

- ST, International Wine Cellar

"55% Cabernet Franc, 45% Merlot. Dark and coaly but opens up to some pure dark fruit. Restrained, dry and finely built. Richer in the mouth than some. Fresh and balanced and fruit more expressive on the finish with the Cabernet Franc showing through."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"The yield was 29 hl/ha, the blend the now familiar Cabernet France 55%, Merlot 45%, with the grand vin taking 69% of what was bottled. A really dark fruit character to it here. Dark, reserved, a little reductive this sample (as were a number of other wines poured at Ausone) making judgements difficult. Very reserved fruit, with a little cashew element from the oak, some black cherry fruit after a while, and increasingly some floral notes too. The palate is polished, clean, the fruit showing a very rich and lightly grainy character. The style of the structure is reserved, but very fine and precise, with the substance of the wine well reined in, and this fine-boned and stylish character carries through the finish. This is very tight and linear, with massive intensity but it is all very tightly packed in. Less flattering than expected right now, but I suspect in the long run a remarkable wine. 17-18/20"

- CK, The Wine Doctor

"As usual, a precise and elegant offering from this consistent estate. The limestone plateau and 55% Cabernet Franc provide line, length and finesse. It has plenty of dark, crunchy fruit and a deceptively strong tannic frame. Drink 2020-2040"

- JL, Decanter.com

"55% cabernet franc, 45% merlot. Michel Rolland consultant. No delestage (rack and return) or pumping over, just pigeage, punching down. Maceration fairly normal, just two or three days less than last year. So fragrant from the first nose. Tanks changed to tronconic in 2010. Here there is this sense of restraint that Ausone does so well, that beautiful mix of rich, firm blueberry fruit, with delicate violet and lilac aromas. Gravity only in the cellar. But it does not quite reach the heights of the past few vintages. 100% new oak. 15%ABV. 95+"

- JA, The New Bordeaux

"If ever a wine was difficult to judge en primeur in 2011, this was it. The sample I tasted was marked by reduction and was very closed as a result. The tannins are on the firm side, but there's no denying that there's a lot of fruit to balance it. Minerally and slightly minty, this is undoubtedly a fine wine, but needs time to come together. 12+ years."

- TA, timatkin.com

"From a blend of 55% Cabernet Franc and 45% Merlot, the wine goes through fermentation and maceration in thermoregulated wood vats and is aged in 100% new oak for about 20 months. Inky, dark and opaque with blue and purple accents in the color, this wine shows intense mineral, blackberry liqueur, blueberry, smoke, truffle and ripe, sweet essence of black cherry. Rich, concentrated, lush and mouth filling, the wine is graceful, elegant and balanced. This is a definite candidate for wine of the vintage. Jeff Leve, TheWineCellarInsider.com"

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

Reviews *“There is a lot of sweet fruit on the nose with a mix of flavours first black fruits then slightly fresher red. The tannins are quite structured ripe but tending to over dominate the mid palate. Towards the back there is freshness that brings out the herbal spiciness.”*
- Derek Smedley MW

“Alain Vauthier has made massive improvements at Ausone in the past few years, since taking full control of the winemaking and management of his family property in 1997. The wines made here are now in a totally different league from those produced in the 1970's and 1980's. Ausone has returned to First Growth form and vies with Petrus and Lafleur as the right bank's top Chateau. With production levels even less than those of Petrus, Ausone has become one of the most in demand and hard-to-find wines of Bordeaux. The 7-hectare vineyard is planted with 55% Cabernet Franc, 45% Merlot. The 100% new oak is easily absorbed by the fruit. With just 1500 cases available for the world, this is always as rare as it is great. This wine has a deep red/black colour and intense concentration for the vintage with impressive glycerol and viscosity. There is expressive sweet fruit, bright acidity and fabulous purity. Some firm tannins at the finish suggest that it will need time to come together but excellent potential here.”
- Farr Vintners

*“This is a wonderful Ausone that is among the contenders as the wine of the vintage. The style is seductive and voluptuous, showing generosity and opulence that is not often found in this vintage. It is a style that can be enjoyed fairly young but will age for decades given its amazing intensity and long length. The palate profile is amazing with great depth and subtle flavours that are round and seductive with great length. There is always the same blend of 55% Cabernet Franc and 45% Merlot. Yields were 29 hl/ha with average vine age of 50 years. Jeannie Cho Lee MW, AsianPalate.com
Drink 2021-2046”*
- JCL, asianpalate.com
