

Château Cheval Blanc 2018

CSPC# 848122

750mlx3

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation

St. Emilion

Classification

Premier Grand Cru Classé A

Website

<http://www.chateau-cheval-blanc.com/#/en-WW/home>

General Info

Cheval Blanc (like its neighbour and parent, Figeac) stands out in St Emilion for two reasons: first, it is geographically removed from the principal concentration of great names that cluster around the town itself, neighbouring the vines of L'Evangile to the west, and in fact it shares more with the gravelly topography and terroir of the Pomerol plateau than that of St Emilion. Secondly, the vineyard is made up in large part of Cabernet Franc, compared to the predominantly Merlot plantings of the rest of this appellation. The property began life as a scion of the great Figeac estate, whose origins are among the oldest in Bordeaux. In more recent times, the property belonged to the Hebrard family but was sold in 1998, for want of an agreement between shareholders, to the LVMH fashion house. Pierre Lurton manages the estate, and it is his job also to run Ch d'Yquem in Sauternes. Classified as one of only two 1er Grand Cru Classe "A" (the other being Ausone), Cheval Blanc has produced many legendary vintages and a vertical tasting through the 20th century will prove how well these wines age: even the lighter vintages can maintain their balance for 50 years or more. As any wine lover will know, this property is also responsible for producing what many believe to be the most remarkable wine of the modern era, Cheval Blanc 1947. Though it was bottled in various places and can be volatile, the '47 is port-like in its richness and remains vibrant, youthful, and thrilling, 60 years after vintage.

Winemaker

Pierre-Olivier Clouet

Vintage

Without a doubt, 2018 is one of the great vintages of the domain. The heavy rainfall during the vines' growth period and the dry weather during the ripening process and harvest constituted nearly perfect conditions for producing rich complexity in the grapes. This was because the bunches were small and perfectly ripe. Smaller bunches result in concentrated berries with very complex aromatics. On a technical level, the sugar content was quite high but nicely balanced by the level of acidity.

After a very wet January, the weather in February was normal for the season. There was twice the usual rain in March whilst April was in line with the norm. May and June were very wet although not unusually so. Finally, dry weather set in from mid-June. The temperatures in the first half of the year were normal although February was exceptionally cold, and April was a couple of degrees warmer than average. Moderate temperatures were recorded in July and August. These months were fairly dry apart from some rainfall in the first week of July. September was quite dry with only 26 mm of rainfall. As a result, the grapes reached perfect maturity and the harvest was completed in October in glorious weather.

"The berries had a lot of tannins," commented Technical Director Pierre-Olivier Clouet. "It was a challenge to ripen all those tannins!" Cheval Blanc had a particularly long harvest, being among the last to bring in the final parcels of Cabernet Franc on October 11. "We had to wait for each plot to get the right maturity," added Clouet. "This gave us these wines with great drinkability—very silky and round." Yields were a very healthy 43 hectoliters per hectare this year. "Too small of a yield would have been detrimental," said Clouet. "We had to find the balance in the weather that followed." Pierre Lurton, the Director of Cheval Blanc and d'Yquem, joined us at this stage.

"This wine truly represents the whole vineyard," he was excited to add. "Seventy-four percent of our total production went into Cheval Blanc this year, including components of the whole vineyard. Young vines, old vines, clay, gravel and sand—all participated in the final blend."



Vineyards	The vineyards border the Pomerol appellation, and the wine is marked by extraordinary balance which brings to mind, though in a different style, Château Margaux on the left bank. Cheval Blanc is also famous for the high percentage of Cabernet Franc typically used in the blend. Cheval Blanc is one of the great names of Bordeaux and the most famous Chateau in Saint Emilion. The 39 hectares of vines border Pomerol but the wine is different from Pomerol thanks to the high percentage of Cabernet Franc in the vineyard. A stunning new winery has recently been completed. There is no doubt that this is a great vineyard with an excellent wine-making team led by the talented Pierre-Olivier Clouet and overseen by Pierre Lurton. It is now planted with 49% Cabernet Franc, 45% Merlot and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2018 vintage reminds Pierre-Olivier of the 2016 and is dense and ripe but also fresh and vibrant - harking back to the great 1998 vintage.
Harvest	The yield was a healthy 43 hl/ha and the wine is being aged in 100% new oak.
Vinification/ Maturation	The wine is vinified in an organ of small concrete vats, with each vineyard parcel being harvested and vinified separately. After a light, pneumatic pressing, the free-run and press wines are aged separately before blending. The wine is aged in barrel for some 18 months. Barrels used for the Grand Vin are renewed every year.
Tasting Notes	<p>Deep, intense red colour. The nose is redolent of tremendously fruity and floral notes, with touches of raspberry and violet. Swirling in the glass reveals a more intense bouquet with black cherry, blackberry, and blackcurrant aromas. The ever-present floral notes go on to develop rose and lilac overtones. Spicy and balsamic nuances round off the already complex bouquet with cocoa beans and black pepper aromas. The nose is impressively fresh, complex, and well-defined. The wine starts out sumptuously rich and full-bodied on the palate. The powerful, rich tannins contribute to the deep, long, firm, well-balanced, and refined structure. Very elegant, it coats the palate and continues into a long, crunchy, fresh aftertaste. The finish marks a return to floral and fruity aromas with spicy overtones. The precision and balance of this wine are on par with the estate's greatest vintages.</p> <p>This vintage of Cheval Blanc is astonishingly beautiful. Even if the wine doesn't eventually wind up with a perfect score for this vintage, what I particularly love about the 2018 is that it is so true to the heart-and-soul signature of this amazing vineyard. And I'm just playing devil's advocate here, but maybe that is even more important than a perfect score?</p>
Serve with	Chateau Cheval Blanc is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Chateau Cheval Blanc is best paired with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, and grilled dishes. Chateau Cheval Blanc is also good when matched with Asian dishes, rich fish courses like tuna, mushrooms, and pasta.
Production	10,208 cases made.
Cellaring	Drink 2024-2038
Scores/Awards	<p>97 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2021</p> <p>98+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - March 2021</p> <p>97-99 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate - April 2019</p> <p>99 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2021</p> <p>98-99 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2019</p> <p>98 points/Cellar selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 2021</p> <p>96-98 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2019</p> <p>18.5 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2019</p> <p>100 points - Jane Anson, Decanter - March 2021</p> <p>98-100 points - Jane Anson, Decanter - April 2019</p> <p>100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - March 2021</p> <p>98-100 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2019</p> <p>100 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only) - March 2019</p> <p>18.5 points - Farr Vintner - April 2019</p> <p>96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - March 2021</p> <p>95-97 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - November 2019</p> <p>97-100 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2019</p>

Scores/Awards **98 points** - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com (score only) - March 2019

98 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - March 2021

97-100 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - May 2019

18.5+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2019

100 points - Falstaff Magazine (score only) - May 2019

19 points - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only) - June 2019

18.5 points - Gault & Millau (score only)

18.5 points - La Revue du Vin France (score only)

Reviews *"This has the vintage's profile, with a sleek and slightly austere frame holding a core of cassis, bitter cherry and raspberry coulis notes tightly together while flashes of bay, dried anise and savory add range and detail. Has a late tug of warm earth along with a very perfumy echo through the finish. A beauty. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2024 through 2038. 10,208 cases made."*
- JM, Wine Spectator

"The 2018 Cheval Blanc is a blend of 54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, with a 3.75 pH and 14.5% alcohol. Deep garnet-purple colored, it needs considerable swirling and air to releases fragrant notes of stewed plums, juicy black cherries, and ripe blackberries with underlying suggestions of damp soil, black truffles, rose oil and cardamom with wafts of underbrush and iron ore. The medium to full-bodied palate is densely packed with rich black fruits and loads of earthy accents, framed by super firm, grainy tannins, and seamless freshness to balance, finishing with amazing length and a beautiful array of floral and mineral sparks. Thirty-three plots contributed to this wine, out of the forty-three in production. Of the rest, five went into Petit Cheval and five into bulk. It will need a good 6-7 years at least to really start to strut its stuff and should cellar for a further 30 years or more."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Thirty-three plots contributed to this wine, out of the 43 in production. Five went into Petit Cheval and five into bulk. The 2018 Cheval Blanc is a blend of 54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, with a 3.75 pH and 14.5% alcohol. Deep purple black in color, the nose is more open at the core of the wine than the Le Petit Cheval, strutting out of the glass with bold, ripe black cherries, cassis, warm plums, and raspberry preserves notes. With coaxing, a whole array of fragrant spice, floral and earth notes emerge, followed by candied violets, star anise, powdered cinnamon, iron ore, tapenade, and truffles plus wafts of camphor and mocha. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is firm yet possesses a beautifully plush structure of velvety tannins wrapping round the densely packed, complex, fragrant fruit, with seamless freshness and a very long, layered finish."
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Love the floral character to the aromas of dark fruit, such as blueberries and black cherries. Red and black licorice, too. The full-bodied palate starts slowly and then expands with super polished, searing tannins that lead you up the palate into a place of grandeur. Lightly chewy at the end. Such great purity and presence here. 6% cabernet sauvignon in the blend with franc and merlot. Try after 2028."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

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*"The first thing that strikes about this wine is its massive density. The second is the richness of the structured Cabernet Franc that is such an important element in the blend. Weight is balanced by the intense fruits and amazing freshness of a wine that has such concentration. This wine will age for years. Don't touch it before 2027. *Cellar Selection* (RV)."*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"This wine is densely textured in great tannins and wonderful perfumed fruits. It shows an elegant side, with bright shots of acidity and a black currant flavor. Topped with a pinch of Cabernet Sauvignon that adds to the

Reviews *structure, it is a ripe wine but with intense freshness. The tannins hold the key to the aging.”*
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Deepest cherry red. Pure cassis, with a more savoury mineral aspect and opening to become more scented. Very, very fresh. Dark and mineral on the palate. Extremely fine tannic texture. More savoury, with that dark finesse on the finish. Long, chalky finish, so dry and yet so elegant. (JH)”
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

“A great Cheval Blanc that stands up to the potential that I found during en primeur. Extremely restrained and classic in its construction, shot through with points of mint, liquorice, raspberry, and eucalyptus. The fresh aromatics mean you could almost think that it is from a cool year, except for the huge density that runs through the palate, along with a creamy texture. Extremely good quality. Something that you are going to want to put away for a good few decades. I get big, chewy tannins on the finish. Exceptionally good and extremely elegant. Drinking Window 2028 – 2055.”
- JA, Decanter.com

“This is a wonderful, fairly classic Cheval Blanc, less exuberant than some of the wines that you're going to find in 2018. It's full of intense red and black berries, floral notes, and a ton of menthol, eucalyptus and liquorice which underpins the entire concentrated fruit expression. Silky tannins slowly layer up over the palate. It's full of focus and extremely elegant but it accelerates through the mid-palate, gathering strength as it goes. I love this wine in so many vintages, and they have done it again in 2018. There's no press wine, as ever, with 74% of the crop making it into this wine. 98-100 points. Drinking Window 2028 – 2042.”
- JA, Decanter.com

“If awards were given out for sensuality, this gem would take the trophy. Incredibly sexy, with its velvet drenched textures, silky tannins and opulent personality, this wine stands out in a crowd. The nose, with its aromatic display of flowers, plums, cherries, espresso, licorice, dark cocoa, and oyster shell is compelling. The seamless finish crosses the 60 second mark with its non-stop display of concentrated, perfectly ripe, dark sweet, red fruits, chocolate, licorice, and spice. This wine is a legend in the making.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Resembling the color of a dark ruby gemstone, this outstanding experience begins with roses, violets, roasted plum, oyster shell, fennel and spice. From there you'll move to the velvet drenched, decadent, opulent, silky palate. The depth of fruit is off the charts. The sensual, sexy feel on the palate is unique. The over 60 second finish is too short because you'll never want it to end. This is bottled decadence. If you can afford it, it is a wine you should have in your cellar, and you'll want to age this for at least 15 years before popping a bottle. The wine was made using 54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, reaching 14.5% alcohol with a pH of 3.75. The Merlot was harvested September 10-October 1, Cabernet Franc was picked September 24-October 10 and the Cabernet Sauvignon was picked October 11.”
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Deep ruby in the glass, this has a wonderful fragrance on the nose, with cloves, nutmeg, white pepper, blood orange and pure black cherry all in harmony. The palate is just as complex, with darker fruits, graphite and lightly sweet spices lifted by refreshing acidity. This gives a feeling of weightless intensity, and lifts the fruit core into floral, redolent red fruits. The tannins are seamless, with a cocoa-like texture giving the impression of milk chocolate and mocha from the judicious use of new oak. Pristine, crystalline fruit still dominates through to a long, enduring finish that is deceptively powerful given the elegance and harmony to the wine. A superb Cheval Blanc.”
- Farr Vintners

“When I tasted the 2018 Cheval Blanc from barrel, I felt that it deserved a very good score, though not one that implied potential perfection. The bottle was tasted upon opening, but I only began to pen my tasting note after 3–4 hours' decanting. I still find the bouquet more open than many recent vintages, the ripe brambly red fruit intermingling with clove, sage and light graphite notes originating from the Cabernet components (46% of the final blend). It is a really seductive bouquet, though not as complex or as nuanced as, say, the astonishing 2016 or the impressive 2015. The palate is medium bodied with refined tannins. A harmonious and elegant Cheval Blanc that has retained the linearity I remarked upon in barrel. So, it is not a flamboyant Cheval Blanc like the Cabernet-dominated 2017, but it is a far better wine thanks to the Merlot imparting flesh and rondeur. The finish

Reviews *is extremely precise but never powerful, almost Burgundy-like in weight, with a lightly spiced aftertaste. As the hours pass in the decanter, it gains depth and a little more precision on the finish. This does not possess the otherworldly profundity to equal legends such as the 1934, 1964 or 2016; it is simply a wonderful Cheval Blanc to sit back and savor as a Saint-Émilion par excellence. 2026 - 2050."*

- NM, Vinous

"The 2018 Cheval Blanc was harvested from 10 September to 11 October, with only 14 days of picking. The yield was 44.8hL/ha, which they believe moderated the level of alcohol and pH. It has a ripe and more open bouquet compared to the Le Petit Cheval with pixelated black cherries, wild strawberry, and subtle orange pith aromas. The palate is medium bodied with supple tannins and very good acidity that maintains freshness. This is quite compact and linear at the moment, gentle in terms of grip with an underlying spiciness that develops towards the finish. It is not a flamboyant Cheval Blanc, stricter than expected and in some ways overriding the excessive tendencies of the growing season. 2026 – 2050."

- NM, Vinous

"The 2018 Cheval Blanc is dazzling. Creamy, supple, and inviting, the 2018 is endowed with phenomenal balance. The tannins and overall structure are imposing, and yet the richness of the fruit and perfect ripeness of the tannin really stand out. In 2018, Cheval is a bit richer than is often the case, but that is not at all a bad thing. I am struck by how much freshness and energy the 2018 has. Hints of lavender, spice and licorice add shades of nuance, but it is the wine's overall sense of harmony that leaves the strongest impression. A precise counterpoint of fruit richness and finesse makes for a truly unforgettable Cheval Blanc."

- AG, Vinous

"Showing beautifully from barrel and now from bottle, the 2018 Château Cheval Blanc is a final blend of 54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc, and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon. It's a pure, classic Cheval Blanc in that it relies more on complexity and elegance than power, offering a beautiful perfume of red and blackcurrants, spring flowers, spice, forest floor, incense, and tobacco. This carries to a medium to full-bodied Cheval Blanc offering wonderful purity of fruit, a seamless, layered texture, incredible tannins, and a lengthy, focused finish. It shows less of the sunny style of the vintage now than it did from barrel, and it's a wonderfully complete wine that delivers awesome freshness in its aromatics, plenty of ripe, sweet fruit, and the tannins and structure that seem to come from a long, cooler season. Reminding me slightly of the 2016, with a touch of the 2001, give this gorgeous wine 5-7 years of bottle age, count yourself lucky, and enjoy over the following 2-3 decades."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"The 2018 Cheval Blanc is another magical wine from this estate and is certainly in the same league as the 1998, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2010, and 2015. A blend of 54% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc, and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon, its deep purple color is followed by a thrillingly complex bouquet of red and black fruits, smoked herbs, liquid flowers, and incense. Possessing medium to full body, flawless integration of its fruit, tannins, and acidity, a terrific mid-palate, and a great finish, it shows the sunny, sexy style of the vintage yet has incredible purity and precision at the same time. It will be accessible with just short-term cellaring yet evolve for 30-40 years."

- Jeb Dunnuck

"(54 Merlot, 30 Cabernet Franc, 6 Cabernet Sauvignon) | 100% new oak for 18 months | 43 hl/ha | 14.5% alc | 74% of production went into this wine This is a much more structured and intense wine than expected and it has a dark core and a stern mineral edge which runs all of the way to the finish. There is great freshness and lift on the finish and the tannins are firm but not dry. Tense and introverted, the Cabernet Franc element takes control, and it forces the Merlot to stand firm. It was the cool nights in the autumn that fixed the perfume and majesty of the Cabernet Franc and this in turn has made this wine what it is. This is a superbly suave and commanding Cheval Blanc and I like its restraint and control."

- MJ, matthewjukes.com