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## Château de Valandraud 2012

CSPC# 771455

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

**Grape Variety**

100% Merlot

**Appellation**

St. Emilion

**Classification**

Promoted 1st Grand Cru Classé B in 2012

**Website**

<http://www.thunevin.com/146/chateau-valandraud.html>

**General Info**

In 1989, Jean-Luc Thunevin and his wife Murielle bought a tiny 1.5 acre plot in Saint-Émilion near Châteaux Pavie-Macquin, Ausone, and La Clotte. Without the capital to build a full winery, a nearby garage was used...

The resulting wine, Château de Valandraud, was first released in 1991 (the name “Valandraud” is an amalgam of “Vallon de Fongaban” –where its vines grow– and “Andraud” –Murielle’s maiden name). By 1995, it was rated 95 by Robert Parker. Thus was born the “garage wine” movement, so influential in the 1990s, and earning Thunevin the nickname of “Bad Boy”.

**Vintage**

After the very cold and dry winter of 2011–2012, bud break lasted throughout April. The rains of April and May, coupled with mild temperatures, resulted insignificant mineralization and strong vegetative growth of the vines.

Flowering was late (29 May) and drawn out, with a delicate fruit set. The old Merlot plants have at times seen yields reduced due to coulure (shatter, a failure of the fruit to set) or millerandage (shot grapes, incomplete development).

There was settled summer weather from 15 July, with the hottest August since 2003, allowing partial recovery of the growth cycle. From mid-July onwards, 2012 was one of the driest vintages of recent years (along with 2005, 2009 and 2010), resulting in a significant water deficit (120mm lower than the thirty-year average). Ripening in early August was prolonged, with peaks of temperature from July to September and reduced rainfall. The biggest daily temperature difference recorded was 12.9°C, the highest in eight years, favoring a high level of anthocyanins and aromatic intensity. September and October were mild, close to the seasonal norm (27–28°C on 5 October).

**Vineyards**

While Valandraud started off as a small St. Emilion property, over the years, Jean Luc and Murielle have increased holdings due to continued purchases of vineyard land. Today, the property is 10 hectares. The vines are located in various areas in St. Emilion. Valandraud produces red and white wine. For the red wine, the terroir varies, but the best soils consist of clay and limestone. At Valandraud, they are one of the few St. Emilion estates to include some plantings of all five, Bordeaux grape varieties; Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Carmenere. For the white wines, they have plantings of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Sauvignon Gris.

In all, Valandraud is produced from 10 hectares of vines. 8 hectares are devoted to plantings for the red varieties. the vineyards are planted to 70 % Merlot, 20% Cabernets Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon and small portions of Malbec and Carmenere. 2 hectares are devoted to the production of white wine, which is split evenly between Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Sauvignon Gris.

**Harvest**

October 3<sup>rd</sup>-9th

**Vinification/  
Maturation**

A combination of traditional and modern techniques are used at every step of the production: double Guyot pruning, de-suckering, thinning, green harvesting... The harvest is done manually and lasts only a few days. A first grape sorting is done directly in the vineyard in order to pick only the ripest bunches. Once brought to the “organic” spirited cellar of Mr. Thunevin, the grapes are sorted one more time, before being de-stemmed. The following step consists in bursting the grapes. The very rich and pure must produce is run into the fermenting vats (wood, stainless steel or concrete). The winemaking of Château Valandraud takes place with regular



<b>Vinification/ Maturation</b>	pumping over and punching down of the cap. At the end of the alcoholic fermentation, the new Valandraud cuvee is poured into 100% new French oak.
<b>Tasting Notes</b>	Very dark vibrant purple to black. 'This is much better than the 1998,' says owner Jean-Luc Thunevin, 'it is arguable that 1998 was a better vintage, but our techniques are much better now.' And, one should, add, the terroir, because in 1998 Valandraud was a 'garage' wine produced on the plain, whereas the 2012 is produced of a fine vineyard on the calcaire plateau between La Fleur Cardinale and de Pressac. Very intense and yet retains gracefulness. Big curranty plummy flavour is still building on the finish. It is a dark, big, modern, oaky style, but done with panache and energy.
<b>Production</b>	1,250 cases made.
<b>Cellaring</b>	Drink 2020-2035
<b>Scores/Awards</b>	<p><b>94 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2015</p> <p><b>93-96 points</b> - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2013</p> <p><b>95+ points</b> - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #218 - April 2015</p> <p><b>90-93 points</b> - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #206 - April 2013</p> <p><b>93-95 points</b> - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - May 2013</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 9, 2013</p> <p><b>91-92 points</b> - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>91-94 points</b> - Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar - May/June 2013</p> <p><b>18 points</b> - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>17.5 points</b> - James Lawther, Decanter.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>93 points</b> - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com (score only)</p> <p><b>94 points</b> - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)</p> <p><b>94-96 points</b> - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 18, 2013</p> <p><b>94-96+ points</b> - Jeremy Williams, winewordsandvideotape.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>90-93 points</b> - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2013</p> <p><b>16 points</b> - Farr Vintner - April 2013</p> <p><b>90 points</b> - Jeannie Cho Lee MW, asianpalate.com - April 2013</p> <p><b>95-97 points</b> - Gilbert &amp; Gaillard - April 24, 2013</p> <p><b>92-94 points</b> - Falstaff Magazine (score only)</p> <p><b>17 points</b> - Vinum Wine Magazine (score only)</p> <p><b>16 points</b> - La Revue du Vin France (score only)</p>
<b>Reviews</b>	<p><i>"This is well-endowed, with thick, velvety layers of crushed fig, boysenberry and blackberry fruit that meld with racy graphite notes. Lots of licorice root and alder accents line the finish, giving the fruit a textural contrast. The length lets everything sail on. A beauty. Best from 2017 through 2030. 1,250 cases made."</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"This is beautiful, with gorgeous linzer torte, blackberry confiture and anise notes gliding along, infused with black tea, singed spice and perfectly integrated apple wood notes. The long, suave finish drips with fruit. A great showing. Score range: 93-96 "</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"A tribute to the partnership of Jean-Luc Thunevin and Murielle Andraud, the 2012 Valandraud is a magnificent wine and one of the superstars of the vintage. Inky purple, with notes of white chocolate, crème de cassis, blackberry fruit and lively background minerality, it has great precision, acidity, sweet tannin and a voluptuous full-bodied mouthfeel. It is very vigorous, young and backward, but bursting with unbelievable potential. This is a fabulous effort from perfectionists Andraud and Thunevin. Thunevin, the father of the "garagiste" movement in St.-Emilion, usually fashions this wine from a blend of 65% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, and the balance Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon, from 11 acres sprinkled throughout the appellation. Drink it between 2020-2035."</i></p> <p>- RP, Wine Advocate</p>
<b>Reviews</b>	<p><i>"The flagship wine from Jean-Luc Thunevin and his partner, Murielle, the 2012 Valandraud is a classic St.-Emilion. Its opaque ruby/purple color is accompanied by notes of camphor, charcoal, black currants, black raspberries, chocolate and espresso. The oak, acidity and ripe tannin are all well-integrated. Another over-performer from this couple, it should drink nicely for 12-15 years."</i></p> <p>- RP, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"Now sporting its Premier Grand Cru Classe strip, the 2012 has a very controlled, focused bouquet with pure</i></p>

*blackcurrant, cassis and boysenberry aromas that are well defined, perhaps less opulent than recent vintages. The palate is ripe and generous on the entry. The tannins gently grip the mouth and it rises to a suave, vanillary finish with plenty of ripe red berry fruit that will absorb the oak during its elevage. Sublime. Tasted April 2013.”*  
- NM, Wine Journal

*“A dense wine for the vintage with layers of fruit and tannins. Full body, with velvety tannins and a juicy finish. Ripe and pretty.”*  
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“95–97. Barrel sample. Promoted to Saint-Emilion’s elite Premier Grand Cru Classé category, Valandraud's 2012 shows both a mineral character and intense acidity to go with the smooth and beautiful black currant fruits. Power and elegance.”*  
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

*“(100% merlot): Opaque, fully saturated, practically impenetrable inky-ruby; this may be the darkest wine of the vintage. Deep, brooding aromas of dark berries and cherry are complicated by herbs, graphite and licorice. Chewy, rich flavors of cassis, plum, flint and herbs. The extremely long finish coats the palate with youthfully chewy yet noble tannins. Great stuff. It may surprise some that Valandraud this year is 100% merlot, but insiders know that the 2007 version was also made entirely from merlot. Thunevin didn't feel that the cabernet franc was ripe enough to go into his top wine in 2012, so he put it all into the Virginie de Valandraud--which is actually a fairly remarkable wine too, so his cabernet franc couldn't have been that bad. This is one of my favorite wines of the vintage.”*  
- ST, International Wine Cellar

*“Fabulous colour of elderberry juice. Restrained but hints at classy fruit. Juicy and dense and yet so fluid. One of the best Valandraud’s I have tasted. Firm, dense and yet light on its feet. Fabulous and very long and so much to come. (JH)”*  
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

*“100% Merlot from the classified parcels in St-Etienne-de-Lisse. Dense, rich and ripe. A powerful wine with fresh acidity and tight, firm tannins. Slightly drying finish but has all the components and is balanced.”*  
- JL, Decanter.com

*“Jean-Luc Thunevin dropped his price considerably in 2012, but he says this a response to market”*  
- TA, timatkin.com

*“Murielle Andraud has been in charge of the Bordeaux winemaking at the property since 2007. She is clearly on a roll! One of the deepest colored wines of the vintage, truffle, spicy oak, chocolate and black raspberry jam notes are impossible not to notice. Lush, rich and sexy with an opulent, flashy personality, this is one of the top wines from St. Emilion in 2012. 94-96 Pts (18-Apr-2013) “*  
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

*“Deep and saturated and very arterial in colour; lifted; ripe and very lush; very bold statement; extremely lush palate; quite sublimated style; chewy; very big indeed but extracted very nicely; tannins, many of them, seem extremely fine. Lots of wood on the finish presently with a fair bit of chew. Very good length. Very unctuous style but retains freshness. 15,000 bottles made. 100% Merlot 94-96+ Friday April 12 at Jean-Luc Thunevin”*  
- JW, winewordsandvideotape.com

**Reviews** *"85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, Valandraud is painstakingly hand made in new, mainly Seguin Moreau oak barrels by the guru of the garagistes Jean-Luc Thunevin and his wife Murielle. First produced in 1991 this was the first of the "Garage Wines" of Saint Emilion and is still the benchmark by which all others are judged. This year there is a completely new label following the promotion to Premier Grand Cru Classé. A deep black colour with big, bold black fruit and coconut on the nose. Dense, sweet and impressively opulent. Super-ripe but not over-extracted. A touch of liquorice combined with super-charged cassis. Huge but not out of balance. Impressive."*  
- Farr Vintners

*"Concentrated blueberries give richness on the nose and a sweet start to the palate. The fruit feels ripe the mid palate sweet quite supple with the tannins giving a backbone but not too obvious. The sweet flavours at the back are underpinned by bramble freshness that gives a lighter feel to the finish. 2017-30."*  
- Derek Smedley MW

*"Intensely concentrated with a wonderful array of black fruits with sense of heaviness. There is firm acidity in the background and the flavours are fresh and lively. The texture is fairly thick with layers of tannins and fruit that will need years to come together. Wait until after 2020 to enjoy this serious red for long term aging. Tasted in: Bordeaux, France. Maturity: Young. (09-Apr-2013) "*  
- JCL, asianpalate.com

*"Powerful nose of roasted oak and ripe black fruits. Concentrated, powerful palate displaying fullness. Huge fruit and oak presence. Great potential. (16-Apr-2013) "- en.gilbertgaillard.com*  
- JB, Berry & Rudd Wine & Spirit Merchants

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