

Château Valandraud 2017

CSPC# 831122

750mlx12

15.0% alc./vol.

Grape Variety 90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon
Appellation St. Emilion
Classification Promoted 1st Grand Cru Classé B in 2012
Website <http://valandraud.fr/en/>

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". In 2012, Château Valandraud has been promoted as a 1st classified growth of Saint Emilion. In 2017, Château Valandraud became a full member of Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux
Winemaker Jean-Luc Thunevin and Murielle Andraud.

Vintage Clearly, 2017 Saint Emilion will always be remembered as the year of the frost. The nights of April 27 and April 28 hit temperatures of below -4 Celsius. The Right Bank has not experienced this much damage from frost since 1991.
Second generation fruit, the grapes that start growing after the frost, was successful to varying degrees. The results depended on the vineyard, terroir and good luck. The problem with those grapes is, if they reached maturity, it was not at the same time as the main harvest, so the berries needed separate vinifications. It was a lot of work especially since the percentage of second-generation grapes used is quite low.
Another difficulty, or opportunity, depending on the situation was that first-generation grapes are the product of a cooler, dry growing season and the second-generation grapes received more sun, inheriting riper characteristics and higher degrees of alcohol, giving you 2 different wine styles. This is where the magic of blending comes in.
Part of the reason the frost struck with such ferocity was that it hit just after bud-break, when the plants are at their most delicate stage of development. The vineyards which survived the frost were still looking for an early, and hopefully successful harvest.
The wines offer more red fruit character and less alcohol than you find in the more recently heralded, 2016 and 2015 vintages. Most 2017 Saint Emilion wines will also offer fairly early drinking windows.

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 Carmenère. 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 Carmenère. 2 hectares are devoted to the production of white wine, which is split evenly between Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Sauvignon Gris.

Harvest Picked October 4-10, 2017



Vinification	A combination of traditional and modern techniques is 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
Vinification/ Maturation	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 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 and aged for 22 months.
Tasting Notes	Chateau Valandraud 2017 shows the brilliance of a Saint-Emilion First Growth. The blend reveals all the generosity of Merlot (90%) with its tasty spiciness and the right touch of Cabernet Franc (10%). Its pure fruit and perfect balance structured with fine tannins breathes the elegance that the estate is known for. Chateau Valandraud 2017 is definitely a superb success of the appellation and it promises a great future.
Serve with	Valandraud is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Valandraud is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised and grilled dishes.
Production	2,125 cases made.”
Cellaring	Drink 2022-2040
Scores/Awards	<p>96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 31, 2020</p> <p>93-96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - April 2018</p> <p>93-95 points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate #236 - April 2018</p> <p>96 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2020</p> <p>94-95 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - April 2018</p> <p>96 points/Cellar Selection - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - March 1, 2020</p> <p>95-97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 1, 2018</p> <p>17 points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - October 2019</p> <p>17+ points - Julia Harding, JancisRobinson.com - April 2018</p> <p>93 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2018</p> <p>94 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2018</p> <p>17.5 points - Jean Marc Quarin (score only)</p> <p>15.5 points - Farr Vintner - April 2018</p> <p>90-92 points - Derek Smedley, MW - April 2018</p> <p>93+ points - Neal Martin, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p>92-94 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - May 2018</p> <p>98 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - February 2020</p> <p>93-96 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2018</p> <p>97 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - February 2020</p> <p>94-97 points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - April 2018</p> <p>18+ points - Matthew Jukes, MW - April 2018</p>
Reviews	<p><i>“This is ablaze with cassis, cherry preserve and blueberry reduction flavors that ripple with energy, inlaid with graphite, anise and Lapsang souchong tea notes. The long finish displays a luxurious feel, with a subtle underlay of chalky minerality. Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2022 through 2040. 2,125 cases made.”</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>“Gorgeous blackberry, boysenberry and raspberry compote flavors flow out from the core, enveloping the apple wood, anise and black tea frame as they move. Offers a gorgeous feel, ample depth, lovely polish and fine underlying acidity throughout. A terrific effort. 2,125 cases made”</i></p> <p>- JM, Wine Spectator</p>

Reviews *"The deep garnet-purple colored 2017 Valandraud gives up crushed blackcurrants, chocolate-covered cherries and espresso on the nose with hints of licorice, tar and smoked meats. The palate is medium-bodied with a solid frame of ripe, sweet tannins and just enough freshness to contain the bombastic fruit, finishing long and berry-laced."*
- LPB, Wine Advocate

"Intense, ripe dark plums and berries with graphite and stones, as well as fresh, cedary oak. This has powerful yet very seamless and intense fruit presence with a very concentrated array of ripe dark plums and rich, assertive fruit, which builds smoothly on the finish. Impressive poise here. Try from 2025."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Lots of beautiful blueberry and blackberry fruits here. Medium to full body, round and very polished tannins and a flavorful finish. Wet-earth undertones. Velvety mouthfeel at the end."
- JS, JamesSuckling.com

"Initially this wine seems massive. But as it opens out, it shows its balanced, perfumed side. Ripe black fruits are evened out by the wine's concentration and richness. In turn the acidity and the smoky flavors give it depth and potential. Drink this wine from 2025."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Bold tannins and rich fruit combine to give this wine a dense structure, yet with a great sense of freshness. Black currants and a firm tannic backdrop promise excellent aging potential. It's impressively structured and should be held until 2025."
- RV, Wine Enthusiast

"Very dark with black core. Chabby blackcurrant on the nose. Dry in texture but has lots of refined and scented black fruit on the palate. Almost sober in its dark, rocky flavours on the palate. The alcohol shows less than you might expect because the fruit is full and pure. Needs a lot of time. (JH)"
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"Very dark, black core. Sweet and perfumed, rich in black fruit and a hint of violets supported by oak's sweet spice. Full in the mouth, compact tannins but lots of fruit at the core. Dense and generous at the same time. Needs plenty of time. Drink 2024-2035"
- JH, JancisRobinson.com

"They have done a very good job of finessing this wine while still remaining true to their new philosophy of turning the volume down from 11. A highly enjoyable wine with genuine juiciness through the mid-palate, with the most beautifully fleshy texture of raspberry and blackberry. A touch of sweetness at the close of play makes this extremely appetising, and this is without doubt an excellent Valandraud. Drink 2025–2038"
- JA, Decanter.com

"Subaqueous in color, the wine effortlessly performs an aromatic dance of black cherry, plum, licorice and vanilla. Round, soft and plush, the wine is full bodied, concentrated, fleshy and tannic. Give this five to seven years for everything to percolate."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Frost reduced the production in 2017 to 2500 cases (25% down) as 2 of the 9 hectares were affected. The blend is 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. As deep as usual this year, almost black and opaque in the glass. The nose is one of Turkish coffee, sweet vanilla, liquorice and damson. The palate follows, with a very dense, rich and extracted core of sweet fruits. The tannins, however, are not as heavy as in some years, and the fresh acidity of the vintage serves to freshen the palate. There is lots of toast and wood smoke here, and it is mouthcoating, chewy and extracted - but it is critically in balance. This is modern and powerful, but well-managed and impressive."
- Farr Vintners

Reviews *“Rich and ripe the fruit is sweet the nose has depth the palate a rich mix of mainly black fruits. Fine tannins underpin with the ripe fruit giving richness at the back the finish is lighter with minty freshness 2025-37”*
- Derek Smedley MW

“The 2017 Valandraud is very deep in colour. The nose is very intense with black cherries, blueberry, fig jam and black olive compote, nicely defined but perhaps intending to close down for two or three years. The palate is medium bodied with supple, fleshy tannins. There is a mixture of red and black fruit laced with black pepper and truffle, sweet and velvety towards the precocious finish that you might mistake for a 2018. Very sensual but afford it several year in bottle. Drink 2025-2045.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2017 Valandraud was 30% impacted by the frost on the lower reaches of vines, which were either deselected into the troisième vin or sold off. The wine was picked from 10 October and then sporadically over the next week, relatively late. It is matured in 100% new oak as usual. It has a very intense, voluptuous bouquet with layers of crème de cassis, boysenberry and blueberry fruit, a little glossier than I was anticipating, what you might call a “ravishing” nose. The palate is full-bodied with saturated tannin, rounded in texture with layers of black cherry, blueberry and cassis fruit. This is a bold Valandraud that shrugs off the effects of the frost and goes full throttle towards the finish whilst maintaining sufficient freshness and tension that it never palls in the mouth. Drink 2022-2042.”

- NM, Vinous

“One of the stars of the vintage, the 2017 Valandraud has turned out even better than I expected. It was magnificent in two separate tastings. Deep and sumptuous, the 2017 possesses off-the-charts intensity and power. Dark red cherry, red plum, chocolate, licorice and spice build as this explosive wine shows off its personality. There are only a few wines in 2017 that are truly exciting and viscerally thrilling. Valandraud is one of them. Don't miss it! 2025 – 2042”

- AG, Vinous

“A majestic, sumptuous wine, the 2017 Valandraud has so much to offer. The interplay of the rich red and raspberry fruit along with elements of underlying tension give the 2017 explosive energy to balance its natural sumptuousness. Hints of rose petal, mint and licorice develop in the glass, but it is the wine's vibrancy that is most compelling today. The 2017 Valandraud is exceptionally beautiful. I won't be surprised if it turns out even better than this note suggests. Sadly, production is down to around 25,000 bottles from the more typical 40,000 or so.”

- AG, Vinous

“A blend of 90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in new barrels, the 2017 Chateau Valandraud is up with the creme de la creme of the vintage. Killer notes of creme de cassis, graphite, white flowers, and violets all emerge from the glass, and this beauty has a wonderful sense of purity, full-bodied richness, ultra-fine tannins, and a great finish. It opens up beautifully with time in the glass and is a remarkable effort in the vintage. Give it 3-4 years if you can and enjoy any time over the following two decades.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“Unquestionably up with the crème de la crème of the vintage, the 2017 Valandraud boasts a ripe, fabulously sexy bouquet of blackberries, blueberries, black cherries, violets, and loamy earth. About as pleasurable, rounded, and expansive as it gets in the vintage, this full-bodied Saint-Emilion has a stacked mid-palate, sweet tannin, and a great finish. I was able to taste this cuvée on two separate occasions and absolutely loved it both times.”

- Jeb Dunnuck

“Not surprisingly, given its statistics, this is a huge wine made, seemingly, from titanium girders and some massively perfumed oak, but there is also a lot of fruit here to feast on. Showy and demonstrative and very impactful, this flavour takes one's breath away, but it is, remarkably, in balance, unlike other monster-sized wines.”

- MJ, matthewjukes.com
