



Bin No:
1822

Wine: **Chateau Musar Red 1997 Vt**

Country: *Lebanon*

Region: *Bekka Valley*

Producer: *Chateau Musar*

Vintage: *1997*

Colour: *Red*

Grape Variety: *Cabernet Sauvignon - Carignan - Cinsault*

Status: *Still*

Organic Certification - Vegetarian - Vegan

Body Value *E (A is light, E is full-bodied)*

abv: 14% - bottle size: 75cl



Tasting Note

The Chateau Musar 1997 has a deep cherry red colour and a smoky nose full of spice and mature cherry fruit. On the palate, flavours of cherries, redcurrants, pomegranates mix with those of cinnamon and nutmeg. Good acidity with good tannin levels results in a wine of classic structure and long ageing potential.

Winery information:

The Hochar family's philosophy of respect for the environment means that the 180 hectares of Musar vineyards are managed with minimal human interference and all the wines are made as naturally.

Chateau Musar was the first producer in Lebanon to achieve organic certification for its vineyards. Most are located in the Bekaa Valley, cradled between two mountain ranges running parallel to Lebanon's Mediterranean coastline. Vines have been cultivated here for at least 6,000 years: the Phoenicians (seafaring ancestors of the modern Lebanese) were instrumental in bringing vines and wines from Byblos across to all of the areas around the Mediterranean.

This wine is the 'Grands Vins', each with their unique signature and imprint in the world of wine. Since 1930, every aspect of production – grape sourcing, fermentation, oak-ageing and bottle maturation – has been trialed to achieve the ultimate expression of Musar's specific 'terroirs' (site-specific interactions of soil, vine, climate and time).

A guide to the style

In youth, Chateau Musar Reds are dense and richly-textured, with intense 'baked fruit' characters: plums, damsons, cranberries, cherries, figs and dates. Bordeaux grape Cabernet Sauvignon lends black fruit flavours; Rhône grapes Cinsault and Carignan contribute fragrance (violets; pepper) and supple spiciness. Either set of qualities might dominate a particular vintage, but the style is always emphatically Lebanese: enticingly aromatic, with persistent fruit flavours. Over decades the wines acquire tawny hues and mellow notes. We still offer wines from the 1950s: mesmerising artefacts of vintage.

Flanked by snow-covered mountains, and nestled at 1000m (3,000 feet) above sea level, the serenely beautiful Bekaa Valley is blessed with 300 days of sunshine a year, fresh mountain breezes and an average temperature of 25°C (encompassing snowy winters and hot summers). Remote and unspoilt, the Musar vineyards were 'organic' by default before the term was coined.

All the grapes are hand-harvested by local Bedouins between August and October. In the winery, ambient yeasts do the work of fermentation. The bare minimum of sulphur is used and the Chateau Musar wines are neither fined nor filtered.

Vinification:

A fairly normal winter followed by a fresh spring with no hail or frost. Summer was mild with a very cloudy and fresh August and sunny September.

These perfect conditions allowed the grapes to mature slowly at a pace rarely achieved. The harvest started on 15th September and ended on 11th October for the reds, stopping for four days from the 30th September due to rain. When picking resumed on 3rd October, it was almost like harvesting in a different vintage.

The wines spent 9 months in cement vats and then a year in French never oak barrels and the final blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan rested for another 9 months in vats before being bottled and transferred to the Chateau Musar cellars high in the mountains at Ghazir to begin its journey of maturation and development

Grapes and vines

Seven years in the making, Chateau Musar Red is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan and Cinsault from vineyards near the Bekaa Valley villages of Aana and Kefraya on gravelly soils over limestone. Planted from the 1930s onwards, yields are low from these mature bushvines (average age: 40 years): 35hl per hectare.

Winemaking

It was the slowest and best fermentation we have ever had at Chateau Musar, especially between the 15th and 30th September with 80% of the harvest in the cellar. I tasted the wines on the 18th November. Almost all malolactics were finished and wines looked ready for drinking. Very, very beautiful wines and the white wines are just as beautiful as the reds. All wines are big and perfectly balanced whatever the cepage – Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault, Merwah and Obaideh. Definitely a vintage to follow very closely – Serge Hochar, November 1997

Blending

The varietal components are brought together two years after the harvest; the resulting blend is then placed back in cement tanks before being bottled 12 months later. Each wine is blended to reflect the character of the vintage. After 4 years' bottle maturation in the deep stone cellars of Chateau Musar, the finished wines are released a full seven years after the harvest.

Storage

To keep the wines showing at their best, bottles must be cellared in darkness, lying on their sides and not subjected to unnecessary movement or fluctuations in temperature.

Food Recommendation

We would recommend serving with game, hard cheeses and red meats.

Decanting and serving

Bottled unfined and unfiltered, Chateau Musar Reds are suitable for vegans (fining agents often contain animal proteins); they're also richly-textured and likely to 'throw a crust'. This is a common feature of most fine wines and is especially true of Musar Red vintages over a decade old. Ideally, bottles should be stood up the night before opening to settle any sediment. After careful decanting (and discarding of sediment, usually in the last centimetre of the bottle) the wine should be allowed to breathe for several hours and served at 18°C with roasts, grills (especially lamb), casseroles, game, and mature cheeses.

