

Ao Yun

From vineyards perched above the clouds in Yunnan, Ao Yun 2021 channels Himalayan altitude into a poised, powerful Cabernet-led blend–sleek tannins, vibrant freshness, and a finish that lingers with mineral clarity.

Ao Yun 2021

, China

98 James Suckling



Region and Vineyards

Ao Yun farms a mosaic of terraces in the Shangri-La area of Yunnan, at the foothills of the Meili Snow Mountains. The sites lie between **2,200-2,600 metres** above sea level across the villages of Adong, Xidang, Sinong and Shuori. This elevation brings strong UV light, large diurnal swings and a prolonged season, building colour, fine tannin and aromatic lift while preserving acidity. Alluvial and colluvial mountain soils drain freely, and traditional handwork is essential on these steep slopes.

In 2021, the estate experienced an exceptionally dry, warm first half of the year, followed by a steady ripening under pristine mountain skies. Crucially, the highest plots (around 2,600 metres) fully ripened and were included in the grand vin. Harvest unfolded slowly—from early September into early November—allowing parcel-by-parcel picking at optimal phenolic maturity, yielding a wine of concentration, freshness and **saline precision**.

Winemaking

The 2021 blend is **57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Cabernet Franc, 12% Merlot, 6% Syrah and 6% Petit Verdot**. Each of the many micro-parcels was vinified separately with gentle extraction to respect fruit purity and the natural tannin finesse conferred by altitude. Alcohol sits around **14.0%**.

Élevage lasted **12 months (60% in Chinese stoneware/glass vats; 40% in French oak barrels, c. 30% new)**, followed by **8 months in tank** before bottling. The stoneware component safeguards aromatic vibrancy and texture, while the measured oak regimen brings polish and length without masking terroir character. The result is a finely knitted structure with **supple, powdery** tannins and an effortlessly balanced profile.

Alcohol :14,00 %

Composition: 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Cabernet Franc, 12% Merlot, 6% Syrah, 6% Petit Verdot

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Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Deep, lustrous ruby with a youthful purple rim.
- **Aroma:** Dark currant and blackberry layered with wild herbs, blood orange peel, cedar, cigar box, Szechuan-tinged spice and graphite; hints of dried rose and cocoa.
- **Palate:** Full-bodied yet lifted; ripe blue/black fruit wrapped in fine, dusty tannins. Savory pepper, tobacco and mineral notes drive through a long, vertical finish, edged by cool mountain freshness.

Did you know?

"Ao Yun" means "flying above the clouds." The estate vinifies and matures a significant share of the wine in Yunnanese stoneware jars—an approach tailored to this high-altitude environment to preserve purity and moderate oak influence, highlighting the site's singular **Himalayan** identity.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Five-spice duck breast:** the wine's dark fruit and gentle spice mirror the glaze while acidity cuts richness.
- **Herb-crusted lamb rack:** Cabernet structure and savory herbs echo the crust and tame the fat.
- **Charcoal-grilled ribeye:** dense fruit and fine tannins complement Maillard notes and marbling.
- **Aged Comté:** nutty umami and firm texture resonate with the wine's mineral length.



James Suckling (JS) : 98 Points (2021)

Deep and concentrated but at the same time refined, fresh and complex, this Ao Yun cabernet combines power and concentration from the vintage and place with polished, demure aromas of dark currants, black olives, dark tobacco leaves, cigar box, paprika, dark spices, dark minerals and a touch of cocoa powder. Full-bodied and powerful, with masses of dusty tannins and a vertical yet ample finish. A warm, dry-vintage wine that's powerful but beautifully balanced, polished and refined. 57% cabernet sauvignon, 19% cabernet franc, 12% merlot 6% syrah and 6% petit verdot. 14% alcohol. It is a selection of grapes from four villages, Drink from 2027.

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Decanter (DCT) : 96 Points (2021)

Bitter orange peel, Chinese five spice, exotic spices, green bell pepper, capscicum, leather and fragrant dark fruit. Ripe and forward, fleshy and bright, this shines out of the glass. Glossy in terms of fragrance and heady scents, as well as ripe fruit, but there's no heaviness on the palate and the aromatic expression is so delightful. A touch of sweetness to the fruit also. Firm and structured, with a velvety texture. Juicy and well made, there's precision and a sleek overall frame. Very good indeed. A blend of 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Cabernet Franc, 12% Merlot, 6% Syrah and 6% Petit Verdot. The estate experienced the longest period of drought ever in the first half of 2021 with warmer and dryer than usual conditions meaning that the plot situated at 2,600m in altitude were able to fully ripen and be included in the grand vin for the first time. The harvest was 56 days long stretching from 6th September to 2nd November. Yield 20hl/ha. 3.49pH. Ageing 60% in stoneware jars and glass vats, the rest in French oak barrels.