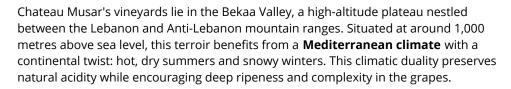# Chateau Musar

A rich and storied expression of Lebanon's most iconic estate, Chateau Musar Red 2017   offers an evocative blend of old-vine character, complexity, and exotic spice.

Musar 2017

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

90 vinous

Region and Vineyards

Chateau Musar's vineyards lie in the Bekaa Valley, a high-altitude plateau nestled between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges. Situated at around 1,000 metres above sea level, this terroir benefits from a **Mediterranean climate** with a continental twist: hot, dry summers and snowy winters. This climatic duality preserves natural acidity while encouraging deep ripeness and complexity in the grapes.

The **gravelly soils over a limestone base** contribute minerality and freshness to the wines. In 2017, the vineyards experienced an unusual growing season. Following a winter of abundant snow and rainfall, the spring remained cooler than usual, delaying budburst. A one-day frost in late April quietly reduced yields, particularly among early-pruned vines. Intense summer heat - peaking at 37°C in late June - further concentrated the remaining fruit. Cinsault, traditionally the most drought-resistant of the trio, stood out in its resilience and vibrancy.

Winemaking

The 2017 vintage is a **classic blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, and Carignan in equal proportions**. Each variety was vinified separately, beginning with **spontaneous fermentation using ambient yeasts** in concrete vats. Temperatures ranged from 27°C to 30°C, allowing for expressive aromatics and full extraction.

After primary fermentation, the wines underwent **malolactic fermentation**, finishing by early November. Aging took place over **12 months in French oak barrels from Nevers**, imparting subtle structure and spice. The final blend was assembled in early 2020 and bottled in the summer **without fining or filtration**, preserving the wine's natural texture and depth. Notably, the last-picked Cabernet Sauvignon displayed **unusual aromas of guava and exotic fruit**, underscoring the vintage's idiosyncratic profile.

Alcohol :14,00 %

Composition: 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Carignan, 30% Cinsault

Musar 2017

Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Bright ruby with garnet hues, reflecting both youth and evolution.
- **Aroma:** Intensely aromatic with a complex bouquet of dried cherries, forest floor, tobacco leaf, and Middle Eastern spices. Subtle hints of leather, incense, and even tropical fruit like guava emerge with time in glass.
- **Palate:** Medium-bodied yet layered, with ripe red and black fruits, fine-grained tannins, and vibrant acidity. A savoury, earthy core evolves into notes of spice box, cedar, and umami. The finish is long, harmonious, and slightly wild—quintessentially Musar.

Did you know?

The 2017 vintage joins an unusual Musar lineage of wines ending in "7"—**1987, 1997, and 2007**—all of which showed atypical structure and strength for the estate. **Serge Hochar**, Musar's legendary winemaker, often likened such vintages to decades in style rather than single years, reflecting nature's mysterious rhythm.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Lamb tagine with apricots and almonds** - echoes the wine's spice and dried fruit notes.
- **Mushroom and lentil moussaka** - umami-rich ingredients pair beautifully with Musar's savoury depth.
- **Duck breast with cherry sauce** - mirrors the wine's dark fruit core while complementing its acidity.
- **Chargrilled aubergine with za'atar and tahini** - a Levantine nod to the wine's origin, balanced by its earthy and herbal undertones.

Vinous (Antonio Galloni) (VN) : 90 Points (2017)

The 2017 Château Musar has a perfumed bouquet with well-defined plummy red fruit, fireside embers and pressed flower scents. A hint of VA in the background gives the aromatics a welcome kick. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannins and well-judged acidity, harmonious, not powerful, yet full of flavor. A pleasing bitterness surfaces towards the finish, with moderate persistence and a residual white pepper tang lingering in the mouth. Very nice.

Decanter (DCT) : 93 Points (2011)

A very wet spring in 2011 in the Bekaa Valley led to a delayed season and their second latest harvest on record. This has aromas of plum sauce and damson, varnished woods and noticeable volatile acidity – part of the style. The palate is medium- to full-bodied, with tangy balsamic acidity and a savoury, leathery finish. It's just starting to drink now but will last well thanks to its dense lattice of ripe tannins. (MW) (5/2018)