

# CHATEAU MUSAR ROUGE 1999

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan. The color is a brilliant, deep red. Aromas full of red and black fruits, mostly cherries and cassis, with nuances of vanilla and chocolate. This follows through to the palate which is rich, well balanced and powerful. Flavors of mellow spices are evident in the beginning and mature red fruits surround very smooth tannins. A hint of orange is apparent on the very long, smooth finish. Organic.

*"Fans will know what to expect – others will be delighted to discover a rich, dark, velvety wine with cedar, smoke, even chocolate and liquorice, topped off with a wonderfully fragrant perfume" - Simon Hoggart, The Spectator, 28th January 2006*

1999 was an exceptional year. A mild winter with very little rainfall was followed by usual spring weather. The summer was also mild, with a cloudy July and August preceding a hot and sunny September. The resultant grapes reached maximum maturity with great all-round concentration, displaying good acidity and a high sugar level. The Musar reds are made from three grape varieties, Cinsault, Cabernet Sauvignon and Carignan, all of which are grown around three wine villages, Ammiq, Aana and Kefraya, made even more complicated by the diversity of soils from rich to rocky, which with vintage variations, necessitate the sort of juggling act at which Serge Hochar is a supreme performer.

The vineyards are situated toward the southern end of the Bekaa Valley, north of Lake Qaroun, in the villages of Aana and Kefraya. The Bekaa has a Mediterranean climate and an altitude of more than 3,000 feet above sea level. The soil is predominately gravelly with a limestone base. The vines were planted from the 1930s onwards (average age: 40 years). The grapes are hand-picked in the cool of the morning. Lengthy fermentations with natural yeasts in separate cement vats, racked at 6 months after the harvest. Then aged in French barrels (oak from the forest of Nevers) for one year. The resulting wines are blended to reflect the strengths and individual characteristics of the year and bottled without filtration at the end of the 3rd year following harvest. The final blend is aged for a further 3-4 years in bottle before being released in its 7th year.

In 1930, at just 20 years old, Gaston Hochar founded Chateau Musar, inspired by Lebanon's 6,000-year winemaking tradition and his travels in Bordeaux. In 1959, after studying oenology at the University of Bordeaux, Serge, Gaston's eldest son, with great passion became winemaker, his father having graciously given way. Serge then spent 18 years perfecting the formula for Chateau Musar's Red. The civil war that tore Lebanon apart from 1975-1990 did not defeat them; Serge refused to abandon the wine, and lost only the 1976 and 1984 vintages to the war. Owing to his inspiring determination and grand passion for his wines, Serge received the inaugural "Man of the Year Award" from Decanter magazine in 1984. Recognition from Michael Broadbent, at the 1979 Bristol Wine Fair, threw Musar into the international spotlight and helped create a cult-like following. Today, Chateau Musar is one of the most written-about and discussed wines in the world. Every wine of Chateau Musar is produced naturally with a 'non-interventionist' wine making philosophy and the winery was the first in Lebanon to implement organically certified viticulture.



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## Tasting Note:

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## Shelf Talker:



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