

CHATEAU MUSAR ROUGE 2016

Cinsault, Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep ruby in color with high viscosity. Red cherries, plums, carob and figs dominate the nose with a hint of eastern spice. Kirsch and plums follow through to the palate with blackcurrant and chocolate. The tannins are velvety soft and this wine has a lot of depth and fruit concentration with a long finish.



The 2016 harvest showed without a doubt, that global warming is causing higher annual temperatures and at the same time, successive years of low rainfall have resulted in drier soils. Clearly, these factors may affect maturation of the grapes as well as the wine-making process but for 2016, with the much needed rainfall and almost perfect climatic conditions. Each varietal was fermented with natural yeasts in concrete vats, then aged for 12 months in French oak barrels. After the various fermentations, the quality of the Cabernet was outstanding, with a great depth of fruit and concentration. Cinsault was elegant and silky with an explosion of aromas. As usual, Carignan showed its quality, benefitting from the warm conditions sacrificing yield though in turn, gaining greater concentration. The wine was blended in February 2019 and bottled in July/August of that year.

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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Cinsault, Carignan & Cabernet Sauvignon. Aromas of red cherries, plums, carob, figs & eastern spice; flavors of kirsch, plums, blackcurrant & chocolate; velvety soft tannins; depth & fruit concentration with a long finish. Organic.

Shelf Talker:

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