

Château de Valandraud 2016

CSPC# 771455

750mlx12

14.5% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation

St. Emilion

Classification

Promoted 1st Grand Cru Classé B in 2012

Website

<http://valandraud.fr/en/>

General Info

In 1989, Jean-Luc Thunevin and his wife Murielle bought a tiny 1.5-acre plot in Saint-Émilion near Châteaux Pavie-Macquin, Ausone, and La Clotte. Without the capital to build a full winery, a nearby garage was used...

The resulting wine, Château de Valandraud, was first released in 1991 (the name "Valandraud" is an amalgam of "Vallon de Fongaban" –where its vines grow– and "Andraud" –Murielle's maiden name). By 1995, it was rated 95 by Robert Parker. Thus, was born the "garage wine" movement, so influential in the 1990s, and earning Thunevin the nickname of "Bad Boy". In 2012, Château Valandraud has been promoted as a 1st classified growth of Saint Emilion. In 2017, Château Valandraud became a full member of Union des Grands Crus de Bordeaux

Winemaker

Jean-Luc Thunevin and Murielle Andraud.

Vintage

The 2016 vintage was defined by a cool and wet start to the season, followed by a very dry and rather hot summer. The winter was relatively mild. Regular and intense rainfall marked out the spring and allowed the water tables to build up their reserves. The few episodes of frost at the end of April caused no damage in the vineyard. Once again, the estuary played its essential role as a temperature regulator. Full flowering took place around 7 June. At the end of the month, the summer set in to stay, marked by very strong heat as from 15 August. The vineyard suffered but tolerated these extreme conditions thanks to the incomparable qualities of the terroir and its water reserves built up at the start of the year. Veraison started mid-August, indicating an October harvest. September was hot and sunny. The rain on 13 September relaunched the ripening cycle of the vine, slowed down by the very strong heat of summer. The 4 grape varieties reached optimal ripeness. The alternating hot days and cool nights preserved an impressive balance between freshness and aromatic power.

Vineyards

While Valandraud started off as a small St. Emilion property, over the years, Jean Luc and Murielle have increased holdings due to continued purchases of vineyard land. Today, the property is 10 hectares. The vines are located in various areas in St. Emilion. Valandraud produces red and white wine. For the red wine, the terroir varies, but the best soils consist of clay and limestone. At Valandraud, they are one of the few St. Emilion estates to include some plantings of all five, Bordeaux grape varieties; Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Carmenère. For the white wines, they have plantings of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Sauvignon Gris.

In all, Valandraud is produced from 10 hectares of vines. 8 hectares are devoted to plantings for the red varieties. the vineyards are planted to 70 % Merlot, 20% Cabernets Franc, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon and small portions of Malbec and Carmenère. 2 hectares are devoted to the production of white wine, which is split evenly between Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Sauvignon Gris.

Harvest

Picked 10-20 October

Vinification

A combination of traditional and modern techniques is used at every step of the production: double Guyot pruning, de-suckering, thinning, green harvesting... The harvest is done manually and lasts only a few days. A first grape sorting is done directly in the vineyard in order to pick only the ripest bunches. Once brought to the "organic" spirited cellar of Mr. Thunevin, the grapes are sorted one more time, before being de-stemmed. The following step consists in bursting the grapes. The



Vinification/ Maturation	very rich and pure must produce is run into the fermenting vats (wood, stainless steel or concrete). The winemaking of Château Valandraud takes place with regular pumping over and punching down of the cap. At the end of the alcoholic fermentation, the new Valandraud cuvee is poured into 100% new French oak.
Tasting Notes	The Valendraud 2016 exhibits an expressive and particularly mineral bouquet that highlights the clay-limestone soil on which the vines have grown. On the palate, Chateau Valendraud 2016 turns out to be delicious. The attack exposes fine and crisp tannins, well defined and perfectly balanced with the aromas of black fruits. It reveals itself to be extremely elegant in the middle of the mouth before revealing notes of candied fruit on the finish.
Serve with	Valandraud is best served at 15.5 degrees Celsius, 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The cool, almost cellar temperature gives the wine more freshness and lift. Valandraud is best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised and grilled dishes.
Production	? cases made.
Cellaring	Drink 2022-2058
Scores/Awards	<p>96 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - March 2019</p> <p>96-99 points - James Molesworth, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2017</p> <p>96+ points - Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Interim Issue - November 2018</p> <p>95-97 points - Neal Martin, Wine Advocate #230 - April 2017</p> <p>98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - February 2019</p> <p>97-98 points - James Suckling, JamesSuckling.com - March 2017</p> <p>97 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - February 2019</p> <p>96-98 points - Roger Voss, Wine Enthusiast - April 2017</p> <p>16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - October 2018</p> <p>17 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 2017</p> <p>95 points - Jane Anson, Decanter.com - April 2017</p> <p>97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - February 2019</p> <p>97 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - April 2017</p> <p>93 points - Tim Atkin, MW - timatkin.com - April 2017</p> <p>Review Only - Farr Vintner - February 2017</p> <p>96 points - Neal Martin, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p>97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - January 2019</p> <p>94-97 points - Antonio Galloni, Vinous - April 2017</p> <p>98+ points - Jeb Dunnuck MW - November 2017</p>
Reviews	<p><i>"This is a full display of fruit, with raspberry preserve, plum reduction and creamed boysenberry notes streaming through in lockstep, while light bramble and singed vanilla accents happily take a back seat throughout. An echo of chalky minerality at the very end adds refinement and length. (JM)"</i> - JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"This has a display of drop-dead gorgeous raspberry, boysenberry and blackberry confiture flavors unfurling from its core, backed by flamboyant anise and black tea notes. It's rich, polished and seriously long. And then there's a light twinge of chalky finesse at the very, very end to keep it grounded. Score range: 96-99"</i> - JM, Wine Spectator</p> <p><i>"The deep garnet-purple colored 2016 Valandraud packs a wallop on the nose with bombastic scents of baked black plums, cherry compote, coffee beans and licorice plus hints of hoisin, cedar chest and sautéed herbs. Full-bodied, rich and decadent in the mouth, it has a firm frame of grainy tannins and a fantastically long finish."</i> - LPB, Wine Advocate</p> <p><i>"The 2016 Chateau Valandraud is a blend of 10% Cabernet Franc and 90% Merlot picked between 5 October to 15 October for the last Cabernet Franc, delivering 14.5% alcohol, less than in 2015. It has a very mineral-driven bouquet thanks to the limestone soils (please refer to the January 2017 issue of Wine Advocate where I examine the terroir of Valandraud). The palate is succulent on the entry with fine tannin, crisp and focused with superb definition, a little more finesse than the 2015 last year with a slightly confit-like finish that grips the mouth. It will require five or six years to really mellow and shave off those edges, but this will be a seductive 2016 from Jean-Luc Thunevin."</i> - NM, Wine Advocate</p>

Reviews *“Incredible perfumes and beauty with ripe plum and berry character, as well as an array of spices, such as nutmeg and cinnamon. Full-bodied, firm and silky with beautifully polished tannins. Rendered and defined. A wine with lovely, classy nature and personality. One of the best Valandraud’s I have tasted at this stage. Try from 2026.”*

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

“Fantastic core of dark fruit with blackberries, blueberries, licorice and crushed stones. Full body, beautifully polished tannins and a long and energetic finish. Pinpoint. Superb.”

- JS, JamesSuckling.com

*“Juicy, spicy and with wonderful fruit, this is developing splendidly. With black-currant flavors and tannins that give structure while allowing plenty of room for the fruit and balanced acidity, it is certain to age well. Drink from 2025. *Cellar Selection* (RV)”*

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“The wine is ripe and opulent, packed with great fruit and a solid core of tannins. It is superbly structured, yet fruity, with both firm tannins and ample acidity assuring its future. It is a fine wine for the long term. (RV)”

- RV, Wine Enthusiast

“Deep purplish crimson. Pretty sweet, ripe, ‘1990s’ nose though there is energy on the palate. An interesting conundrum: how to evolve the style. Slightly sandpapery tannins on the end. Needs time but there is certainly drive here.”

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“Picked 10-20 October. Exceptionally deep purple. Real life to this with graphite and richness. Very sweet and fully ripe but with much less acid than most other wines. Tough minerally dried grape finish on which the acid shows itself. Very dry end. Dramatic.”

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

“An estate that is fascinating to taste in this vintage. Cassis, blueberry and liquorice flavours have huge persistency, with a dense but creamy texture across the palate. For the past two years they have carried out much less green harvesting and the yield in 2016 is at 50hl/ha, the highest ever. ‘Us, the big proponents of low yields’, Jean Luc Thunevin tells me with a smile. He knows, as I do, that this is a big success, an extremely lovely wine that still impresses plenty. No surprise that this counts as my favourite Valandraud to date. 92 IPT. 90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in 100% new oak. More than 96% of the production in this grand vin. Drinking Window 2027 – 2050”

-JA, Decanter.com

“Deep, dark, inky in color, the wine is rich, opulent, very concentrated, lush, sweet and intense. The nose, with its licorice, flowers, smoke, chocolate and boysenberry is impossible to ignore. But it is the decadently textured, full bodied, plush palate presence and the long, fruit filled, earthy finish that seals the deal.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“Inky in color, the wine shoots out of the glass with spring flowers, licorice, smoke, boysenberry and cigar box. Rich, fleshy, supple with velvet-textured tannins, the wine is long, concentrated, deep and sweet. The dark fruit, licorice and plum liqueur finish has freshness and length. Made from a blend of 90% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon, reaching 14.5% alcohol with a pH of 3.5. The harvest took place October 8 to October 20.”

- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

“With its saturated colour, scented oak and bold, fig, bramble and blackberry fruit, this is a very serious, densely layered Valandraud with plenty of extraction and structure, but good freshness and vivacity too. 2024-30”

- TA, timatkin.com

Reviews

“Valandraud is painstakingly hand made in new, mainly Seguin Moreau, oak barrels by the guru of the garagistes Jean-Luc Thunevin and his wife Murielle. First produced in 1991 (just 1900 bottles) with the help of Ausone's Alain Vauthier, this was the first of the "Garage Wines" of Saint Emilion and is still the benchmark by which all others are judged. Previously seen as an "outsider", Valandraud was awarded Premier Grand Cru Classé status in the 2012 classification of the wines of Saint Emilion. Not tasted En Primeur.”

- Farr Vintners

“The 2016 Valandraud offers an exquisite bouquet of pure dark cherry and crushed strawberry scents mixed with pressed flowers and hints of spice. The medium-bodied palate is harmonious and silky-smooth, with supple tannin and just a touch of black pepper and cedar toward the persistent finish. Jean-Luc Thunevin has crafted a supremely gifted Saint-Émilion. Drink 2022-2045.”

- NM, Vinous

“The 2016 Valandraud is exceptionally beautiful. Powerful and explosive in the glass, the 2016 is superb today. Dark cherry, plum, mocha, spice, espresso, leather and smoke add layers of nuance. One of the things I like most about Valandraud in 2016 is the combination of fruit richness and vibrancy. Those elements make for a stunning, punchy Saint-Émilion that hits all the right notes. This is a fabulous showing from Jean-Luc Thunevin and Murielle Andraud. (AG)”

- AG, Vinous

“The 2016 Valandraud is fabulous. Rich, exotic and plush on the palate, it exudes raciness in all of its dimensions. Sweet toasted oak, crème de cassis, raspberry jam, spice and floral notes all run through the 2016. Even with all of its richness, it remains light on its feet for such a big wine, especially as it opens up in the glass. There is plenty of depth and concentration, that is for sure, but the 2016 also retains freshness as well as energy, with a good deal of tannin underpinning the fruit. Quite simply, this is a stellar Valandraud.”

- AG, Vinous

“Including 15% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, the Merlot-dominated 2016 Château Valandraud is a brilliant example of this cuvée that should match or exceed the incredible 2015 at maturity. Brought up all in new oak, its deep purple color is followed by a powerful bouquet of crème de cassis, graphite, smoked earth, and hints of earth. Possessing full-bodied richness, thrilling purity of fruit, ripe tannins, and just about perfect balance, it's another tour de force from the incredibly talented Jean-Luc Thunevin. It's slightly more elegant than the L'Interdit de Valandraud cuvée and will benefit from short-term cellaring and cruise for two decades or more. 98+ points”

- Jeb Dunnuck
