Chateau Musar

Founded by the Hochar family in 1930, Chateau Musar can be seen as Lebanon’s answer to Cru Classe Bordeaux. The main outlier here – among other more obvious but lesser reasons – is its dependence on a number of southern French grape varieties alongside those traditional to Bordeaux; the most prominent of these are Carignan and Cinsault. While the patriarch Gaston Hochar’s name still graces every bottle of Musar, it was under the winemaking direction of his son Serge Hochar (who studied at the University of Oenology in Bordeaux) that the wine was “discovered” – in its particular case by industry figurehead Michael Broadbent at the Bristol Wine Fair of 1979. What has proceeded since then has been a heady mix of hype, mystery, and actual pedigree; the estate’s location within a region of immense historical strife, as well as its deliberate throwback style (detractors see the wine’s often intense gamey character as a flaw; others point to excess volatile acidity) are a few of the pillars of this persona. To have interest in wine is to thus want to experience this bottle among friends and peers, and to then savor and/or debate its virtue(s).

Green’s has 25 bottles of the 2004.
CHATEAU MUSAR 2004

Green’s Cash Sale Price: $59.99

The 2004 Chateau Musar is an equal blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan and Cinsault. This is a rather civilized, laid back Musar. The complicated aging process is best described by the winery: "The wines spent nine months in cement vats and then a year in French Nevers oak barrels and the final blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Carignan rested for another nine months in vats before being bottled?" The winery describes this as a once-in-a-decade vintage where a heat wave caused notable increases in sugar content in a short time. I sometimes find that is a dangerous description of vineyard conditions with many risks for a winery, but it seems to have turned out well. If you’re comparing, it adds two layers of depth to the 2007 Hochar, although it is quite elegant and graceful in its own right. Most importantly, it has more of an obvious backbone even though it is late-released. Its balance, combining the nice fruit, elegant mid-palate, persistent finish and backbone, gives it a tightly wound, precise and focused demeanor. The tannins are not completely integrated, but not overly hard. They provided some welcome grip and vibrancy and never overwhelmed the wine. In the long run, they should serve this wine in good stead. Overall, it is an exceptionally graceful, somewhat modern and restrained Musar, bright, with that silky texture I saw in the Hochar reviewed this issue, while adding those layers of concentration. The cherry on top is the intensity of fruit flavor – bursts of delicious and juicy fruit on the finish, admittedly nuanced by some of the gamey notes I see here so often. Call it raspberry flavored, though, because the fruit is delicious. The gamey notes were in fact moderate and, at least for my taste, not an issue. As this rather subtle Musar aired out, I liked it more and more. I’ve had Musars that were bigger, burlier, more rustic and more astringent. Here, the subtle start was unremarkable, but it gathered steam, showed remarkable finesse and then won me over. This will certainly do better with food. Drink now-2021. 91 points.

-Wine Advocate

A succulent red, with red currant, dark cherry and dried raspberry flavors that are well-spiced. Sandalwood and cream accents linger on the rich and silky finish, revealing notes of hot stone. 90 points.

-Wine Spectator
The heralded second wine of the Chateau Musar estate; having a glass of Hochar and following it up with the flagship itself, in my opinion, compliments both wines. The 2009 Hochar Pere et Fils is a blend of Cinsault, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon and Carignan aged in French oak. For those familiar only with Musar's reputation as a producer of powerful wines likely to age indefinitely and hard to encounter young, this mid-level offering will change perceptions. Very fruity, sweet and velvety on opening, it seemed to be a relatively soft wine with modest concentration and a fleshy and forward feel, something that will appeal easily to modern drinkers with little resistance. This seemed mostly about the sexy fruit on opening. Early on, it finished not only sweet, but even with a little candy. It needed a couple of hours of aeration to show a bit more stuffing, pulling in some of the sweet fruit while displaying a bit of complexity and a bit of steel underneath. At that point, it was far more interesting and impressive. Overall, this still is ultimately a rather sexy beast, even if it manages to maintain a suave and elegant mid-palate. Don't be fooled, by the way: with air, more tannic pop arrives. Drink now-2020.
-Wine Advocate