

PREMIUM

St-Chinian report 2023: Latest releases tasted

‘Out of the dichotomy of its two terroirs St-Chinian emerges as a high-quality appellation making characterful wines worthy of attention,’ says Natalie Earl as she assesses the most recent vintages and gives her verdict on the resulting wines.



Natalie Earl

November 2, 2023



In the vines with Thierry Navarre, pioneer of local varieties in St Chinian's cru of Roquebrun.

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St-Chinian 2021 vintage rating: 4 / 5

St-Chinian 2020 vintage rating: 4.5 / 5

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Scroll down to see tasting notes and scores for the top St-Chinian wines from 2020 & 2021

2020



Looking towards the vines of Domaine Terres Falmet, which are on a north-facing outcrop of limestone. Credit: Decanter / Natalie Earl

The growing season

Following a mild winter and fairly warm spring, rain arrived in May and brought with it problems of disease in the vines. Yves Falmet, of Domaine Terres Falmet in the south of the appellation, recalls that there was 'strong mildew pressure'. Overall, though, this was a very good vintage, with a hot summer producing good ripeness and well-balanced wines.

Whites

There are a few 2020 whites on the market now, but most have moved onto 2021s. The 2020s tasted showed the ripeness and heat of the vintage, with good concentration and fruit complexity.

Reds

The 2020 reds are excellent, with supple berry fruit, lots of spice, deep charred characters and really succulent acidity. They're drinking very well now. That being said, some still tend towards over-extraction and jamminess. This is likely a stylistic choice though, with some wines feeling a little old-fashioned.

See the Languedoc latest releases score tables:

All top-scoring wines

All top-scoring white wines

All top-scoring red wines

See notes and scores for all St-Chinian latest releases rated

2021



The town of Roquebrun, which lends its name to one of two St Chinian crus, along with Berlou.

The growing season

'Spring frosts meant that maturity arrived late, and there was a small yield,' says Thierry Navarre of his eponymous domaine in the town of Roquebrun, in the northern, schist-dominant part of the appellation.

The frosts were fairly localised though, and due to the extremely varied topography of the entire St-Chinian growing area, those with vines on slopes avoided the worst of it.

Falmet has vines on a north-facing outcrop of limestone, 'some nearby vineyards were impacted by the frost, but as my vines are on a slope, the cold air stays at the bottom, my vines weren't really affected,' he says. The fact that he also prunes particularly late means that the vines had not yet gone through budbreak by the time the frost arrived.

Whites

Overall the 2021 whites really impressed. Delicate, floral, with great intensity of citrus fruit and lots of textural complexity.

A quick note on the 2022 whites, many of which are now on the market: these need a little more time in bottle; they're plush, luscious and a little waxy.

Reds

Where the whites excelled, the reds didn't quite meet the same heights. 2021 reds had hefty tannins, which appear a little spiky in some of the wines. There seems to be enough ripeness, though, so they should soften in time.

Individual appellation analysis:

Limoux | Corbières & Minervois | Faugères | Picpoul de Pinet | Terrasses de Larzac | Pic St Loup | La Clape

Top-scoring wines

White

Domaine des Pradels-Quartironi, Le Moineau des Glycines, St-Chinian 2020 – 94 points

Red

Thierry Navarre, Ribeyrenc, St-Chinian 2021 – 94 points

Thierry Navarre, Le Laouzil, St-Chinian 2021 – 94 points

Terres Falmet, L'Ivresse des Cimes, St-Chinian 2021 – 94 points



In the cellar at Clos Bagatelle with Christine Deleuze.

Top five value wines

Domaine La Linquière, Fleur de Lin, St-Chinian 2021 – 93 points

Les Vignobles Foncalieu, Petit Paradis, St-Chinian 2022 – 88 points

Cave de Roquebrun, Les Fiefs d'Aupenac, St-Chinian 2020 – 93 points

Clos la Rivière, St-Chinian 2019 – 93 points

Clos Bagatelle, Sentiers de Bagatelle, Colline, St-Chinian 2020 – 90 points

Top five producers to look out for

Domaine de Pech Ménel

A domaine run by sisters Elisabeth and Marie-Françoise Poux whose wines show the elegance and ageability of St-Chinian reds.

Domaine des Pradels-Quartironi

An organic family domaine in the north of the appellation, I was particularly impressed by the white, which offers great value for money.

Domaine La Linquière

A domaine of 25ha, it was the white that took my breath away here, Rolle and Grenache Blanc in a delicate blend of crushed rocks and apple blossom.

Domaine Terres Falmet

Vines on the north face of a steep limestone slope, which looks more like a landscape found in Burgundy or Champagne. Grapes are harvested ultra ripe, macerations are long, the wines are structured yet poised, with good freshness and character. As well as a top-class St-Chinian cuvée, owner and winemaker Yves Falmet makes a number of single-variety wines, giving Aramon, Carignan, Mourvèdre and Cinsault their time in the spotlight.

Thierry Navarre

Based in the picturesque town of Roquebrun, Thierry Navarre followed in the footsteps of his grandfather and father, who were also '*des hommes de la terre*' (men of the earth), he says. From the early days he has been a proponent of ancient local varieties, such as Rivairenc.

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Tasting notes and scores for the top St-Chinian latest releases:



Domaine La Linquière, Fleur de Lin, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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Such delicate, refreshing aromas of crushed rocks, wet chalk and apple blossom. This is a sparky wine, with great intensity of lemon pith and zest, a rocky core, and waves of yellow plum and honeysuckle. Delightful.

Points 93

Mas Champart, Blanc, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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A wine with distinct notes of apple blossom, apple pie and lemony intensity. It has a soft, squishy mouthfeel and great textural complexity, a pithy and chalky sensation. Flavours of white blossom, pear and nut, this is delicate and poised with a seam of chalk through the middle. A blend...



Points 93

Domaine Les Eminades, Montmajou, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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Rich and opulent on the nose, with aromas of vanilla, toast and spice. The palate shows a leaner story, with lemon tart, flint, wet stones and a chalky texture. Quite Burgundian in style, grippy and textural on the palate. 30-year-old Grenache Blanc and 24-year-old...



Points 93

Thierry Navarre, Lignières, Vin de France, France 2022

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Singing apple blossom, yellow apple and white blossom aromas, with a chalky palate led by apple, honey and lemon pith. It's tangy and a little oxidative, tart, with dustings of cinnamon and spice. A blend of Rivairenc Blanc, Grenache Gris and Clairette, labelled as Vin de France.

Points 92



Château Coujan, Bois Joli Blanc, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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Golden yellow in colour, this shows appetising aromas of candied peel, lemon rind, grapefruit, and some nuttiness. Lots of pithy texture surrounding a palate of pineapple and fresh apricot and an elongated stony finish. Ripe, creamy peach and orange rind provide...

Points 92



Domaine de Pech Ménel, Blanc de Pech-Menel, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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A deep golden-yellow in the glass. Sophisticated and intense, a wine of impressive aromatic complexity, this shows notes of fresh straw, blanched almonds, beeswax and yellow apple. The palate has fleshy stone fruit, alongside apple pie and a hard nutty core, dusted with spice and a hint of smokiness. Clay-limestone...

Points 91



Thierry Navarre, Cuvée Olivier, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Dark and rich but not heavy, with lifted peppery, scorched tones over the black cherry, liquorice and bramble fruit. Such a scrummy wine, so supple and open, with a spicy finish.

Points 94



Thierry Navarre, Ribeyrenc, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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A pale cherry-red in the glass, this genius wine is bright, juicy and fresh, a real tonic showing delicious orange zest, cranberry, raspberry, and loads of wild strawberry fruit. Touches of juniper and fresh rosemary, too. It's light-bodied, refreshing and drinkable. Wine's answer to modern times.

Points 94



Thierry Navarre, Le Laouzil, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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A dark expression on the nose, but this wine still shows great freshness under the freshly ground coffee and cocoa powder complexity. Wild cherries mix with orange peel, spice and red apple, with excellent juiciness and concentration. A lovely lightness of touch.

Points 94



Terres Falmet, L'Ivresse des Cimes, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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Rich and inviting, this is expressive and characterful, providing enticing, heady notes of black fruit and dried herbs. Bold, juicy blackberries sing harmoniously with notes of liquorice, char and deep spice, with cassia and cade humming underneath.

Points 94



Terres Falmet, Carignan, Vin de France, France 2022

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Aromas that encompass both sweet fruit and deep savoury tones, where blackberry and Marmite come together elegantly. Dark and rich but not jammy, with succulent acidity and sweet pops of blackberry and raspberry fruit. Light dusty tannins. Not classified St Chinia...

Points 93



Terres Falmet, Cinsault, Vin de France, France 2022

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Gorgeous, bright and vibrant, this is a fresh red that's quite light body, it could even take a chill. The profile is spicy with dark, salty fruit. Despite its lightness there's body and density, and lots of gushing freshness, not at all jammy. Pippy, grippy and dry. Not classified as...

Points 93



Cave de Roquebrun, Les Fiefs d'Aupenac, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Arresting and aromatically complex, red and black fruit saturate the palate but there's an energetic lift that many don't achieve. Searing acidity, prominent but ripe tannins giving a bold structure. A very impressive and accomplished wine from the Roquebrun cooperative...

Points 93



Domaine Marie de Lauzerda, 4ème Pas Sur La Lune, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Inky black in colour with a ruby rim. Bold and intense aromas, overflowing with blackberries, figs, prunes, toast, char, coffee and cedar. It's thick and dense, the tannins still serrated. The fruit is nice and ripe and also tart and tangy. It's a super serious wine with excellent ageing potential...

Points 93



Lorgeril, Château de Ciffre, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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Brooding and plump fruit on the nose, plush blueberries and blackberries. Perfectly ripe fruit playing nicely with some spice. A lot of smoky herbs on the nose here too, dried thyme. Full bodied, with a very serious tannic framework. Really mineral and stony, slatey. From...

Points 93



Domaine la Croix Sainte Eulalie, Cuvée Baptiste, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Lifted red fruit, with some delectable notes of fresh fig and prune. A touch of roasted meat, dried thyme and rosemary. Fresh and juicy on the palate, with lots of raspberry and red cherry freshness and a dried herb undertow. A little lighter in colour and style, and delicious for...

Points 93



Domaine l'Orchis Pourpre, Tango, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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There's a paleness to the colour here, yet the aromas are dark, with black cherries and bramble. The palate has a whiff of vanilla, and there's a slatey, flinty, graphite note to the back palate. A well balanced and elegant wine. Succulent and tasty. From schist soils.

Points 92



Les Vignobles Foncalieu, Via Nostrum, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Dark leather and cedar with forest berries rolled in earth and dried thyme. Mouthfilling, succulent and juicy. The tannins are present but resolving, and tertiary dried fruit characters are beginning to come through but it's still got a lot of youthful fruit. Char, toast and vanilla, roasted meat and coffee....

Points 92



Domaine du Vieux Chai, Terrasses de Ceps, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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A dark fruit profile on the nose here, black forest berries and slows. Deep and concentrated, it's simmering with rich fruit kept in check by grainy tannins. A spicy kick and red fruit tang lifts the finish.

Points 92



Domaine Vila Voltaire, La Faute, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Smoky, charred nose, with dark berries and wet stones. A ripe and delectable fruit profile under swathes of oud and cardamom spice. Ripe and silky tannins. Impressive. Spontaneous fermentation, aged for two years in third and fourth use demi-muids. Limestone soils.

Points 91



Domaine la Bosque, Las Borios, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

Open, lifted, red-fruited aromas with a light touch of volatile acidity, but just under the radar enough to bring lift and energy. Cooked strawberries, ripe plums and spice define the palate, which is juicy, and the tannins are structured and present. It's vibrant and...

Points 91



Domaine Les Eminades, Sortilège, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

Intense and enticing aromas of coffee and smoke pique your interest, then heaps of blackberries tumble forward onto the ripe palate. Indigenous yeast fermentation, followed by 18 months of ageing in third, fourth, and fifth-use oak, which has given a rounded texture as well as some spice. It's elegant, flashy...

Points 90



Clos Bagatelle, Sentiers de Bagatelle, Colline, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

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Lighter in colour, this shows bright fruity aromas of strawberry, raspberry and redcurrant. There's less extraction here, it's softer and more approachable, lighter in body and tannin than many. Still delicious, just less complex. Juicy, moreish, bright.

Points 90

Mas d'Albo, Mythique, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

Sweet, ripe black fruit emanates from the glass, a touch of blackberry compote. 18 months in French oak, a quarter of which was new, has nonetheless left its mark with a swoosh of vanilla, clove and spice. The palate is juicy and red fruited, with lashings of seductive, rich chocolate,...

Points 90



Hecht & Bannier, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

There's a brightness to the fruit aromas here, a little lifted. Ripe blueberries, cherries, plums. The palate is juicy, fresh and tart, with black cherry and juicy forest berries, chewy fluffy tannins and medium length. Drinkable and youthful.

Points 90



Thierry Navarre, Vin d'Oeillades, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2022

A bright, juicy, characterful wine made from the Oeillade variety that's easy to drink but still has decent structure. A touch of white pepper here, and flash of dried thyme and fennel there. It could take a slight chill, too.

Points 90



Cave de Saint-Chinian, Le Secret des Capitelles, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2020

Fruit forward and full flavoured, this majority-Grenache blend from the cooperative in St Chinian is a crowd pleaser. Crushed raspberries, blackberries, dried cranberries and toasted almond precede a palate of sweet fruit and bitter chocolate. Popping with juicy...

Points 89



Domaine Les Païssels, Les Païssels, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

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Subtle roasted meat and bramble on the nose, spice, toast and vanilla too but in a balanced way. Moreish and succulent on the palate, with dense tannins but they're elegant too. Schist soils. Carignan and Grenache aged in tank for 12 months, Syrah and Mourvèdre aged in oak barrels for...

Points 89



Château de Gragnos, Lou Daro, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2022

Deep dark purple colour, lots of bold black fruit, sweet blueberry, inky and deep. Intense tannins that are quite mouthfilling, dense and furry. This really is a big wine. Still very youthful, but has good potential. Medium acidity. From clay-limestone soils, 40-year-old...

Points 88



Domaine La Madura, Canopé, St-Chinian, Languedoc-Roussillon, France 2021

Deep and inky colour and aromas, bramble and blackberry. A note of sweet jammy blueberry holds throughout the length. Bold serrated tannins. Youthful.

Points 88



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