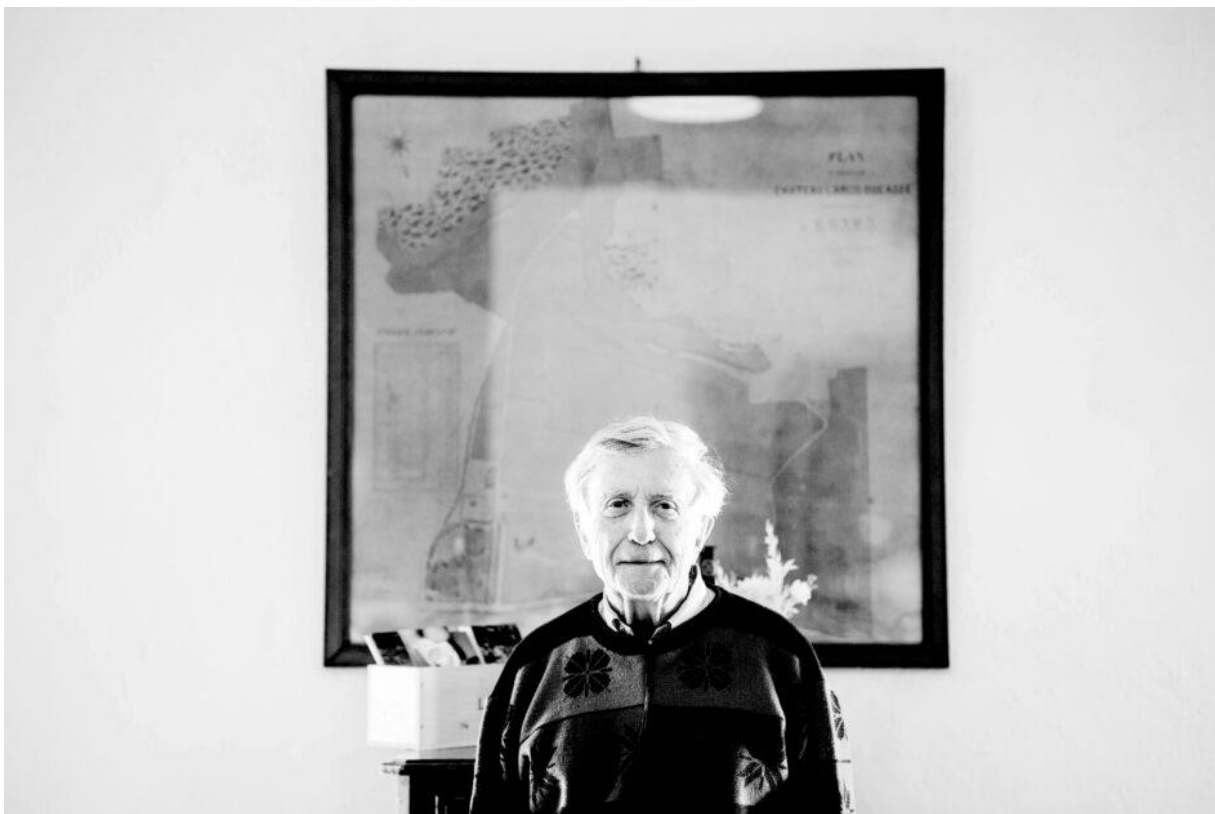


28TH SEP 2022

## Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020

Humankind's conflict with the forces of nature is a primal struggle. On a basic level, it's the crux of our survival. But often, this necessity to control our environment for posterity tips over into an obsession to conquer. It's the sport of the grapple with the ultimate opponent. It's *Moby Dick*, *The Perfect Storm*, Constable, Turner, and *The Old Man and the Sea*. A tireless theme in art, literature, and film, I can't but think that the thrill of this battle is most vividly experienced in a vintage of a single vineyard wine that exceeds all that has come before it. Because, let's face it, great wine doesn't fall from great terroir into bottles. It is earned.



Jacques-Olivier Gratiot

## The Old Man and the Sea

For many years, Château Larcis Ducasse had been an underachiever. "Though it benefits from excellent terroir, Larcis Ducasse rarely lives up to its potential," Robert Parker wrote in the 2003 edition of his *Bordeaux* book. Until this book's publishing, the wines were consistently solid yet mostly unimpressive, revealing sparks of greatness in benevolent vintages and signs of Mother Nature getting the upper hand in the more challenging years.



The same family has owned Château Larcis Ducasse since Henri Raba purchased it in 1893. In 1990, Raba's descendant Jacques-Olivier Gratiot took over the management of the estate on behalf of the family. Then in 2002, Jacques-Olivier hired Nicolas Thienpont to take over the management of the estate, working with David Suire as the technical director. Stéphane Derenoncourt and his colleague Julien Lavenu were also brought in as consultant enologists. Together, they conducted extensive soil and vineyard studies to understand the place's needs and adapt practices. At last, a team of worthy adversaries was in place, armed with the necessary know-how and means to take on Bordeaux's capricious climate, to take the terroir of Larcis Ducasse to the limits of what it could do.

The Larcis Ducasse vineyard has consisted of the same single block of 11 hectares since 1893. The plantings are roughly 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc. Cozied up next to Château Pavie, there are two blocks of Merlot on the limestone plateau, which make up about 15% of the total vineyard area.

**Selection in the vineyard—harvesting not just by block but by individual vines within plots—is a game-changer to ensure that everything that comes into the winery is at optimal ripeness.**



“There are many springs under the plateau,” David Suire told me as we walked the vineyard earlier this month with Nicolas Thienpont and Jacques-Olivier Gratiot. “We have some of the coolest soils of the appellation.”

On the day of my visit, September 20th, their harvest was about 2/3 completed. 2022 will go down as one of the hottest, driest, earliest vintages on record. So, having cooler, water-retaining soils such as limestone and clay is a distinct advantage.

“The last of the Merlot will come in tomorrow,” Suire told me. “Our first pick of the young vines was last Wednesday. You can see that we’ve marked the vines ready for picking tomorrow with a red band.”

“We’ve got a good-sized crop this year, likely to be about 35-37 hectoliters per hectare,” said Suire. “Not bad at all!”



David Suire and Nicolas Thienpont

I paused to taste the Merlot from a 65-year-old-vine to be harvested the next day on the Côte Pavie—a steep, south-facing slope of up to 25% grade, laid out in terraces above the Château and winery, where most of the vineyard is located. The berries are small yet nicely plump, with plenty of sweet juice and crunchy, toasty seeds without bitterness.

“Each terrace is different,” said Suire. “There’s a millefeuille of different soils—a mix of limestone and clay with more limestone than clay. In places, blue clay exists under the limestone.”

The bottom section of the vineyard is in the Pied de Côte, or the foot of the slope, where the incline is a gentler 2-5% grade, made up of a sandy clay mixture.

Knowing is one thing but doing is another. Since 2002, the team behind Larcis Ducasse has got seriously strategic. Restructuring and replanting have been taking place throughout the vineyard, using massal selection, maintaining the vine density at a

relatively high 8888 vines per hectare. In 2010, a second wine was introduced to elevate the level of the grand vin. And the cellar is being completely rebuilt.

**All these measures have and will continue to help level the playing field against Mother Nature, now and for years to come. The proof is in the astonishingly good recent releases, especially the 2019 and 2020.**

As we stood mid-vineyard looking up at the terraces towards the limestone plateau, Jacques-Olivier Gratiot, who had been quietly pensive until now, pressed a small, clam-shaped piece of limestone into my palm.

“I found it in the vineyard not long ago,” he said.

“It’s a fossil,” David Suire explained. “From when this land was under the sea.”

“For you,” Jacques-Olivier explained. “Keep it.” His smile brimmed with victory, as though finally he had conquered this sea.

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Article & Reviews by Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW  
Photos by Johan Berglund

## 2020 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 61.86-97.64

99

A blend of 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc, the 2020 Larcis Ducasse is deep garnet-purple colored. The nose is still a touch locked down after the recent bottling, slowly unfurling to offer up notes of crushed black cherries, juicy black plums, and wild blueberries, with an emerging undercurrent of dark chocolate, licorice, tar, and sassafras, plus an earthy touch of damp soil and moss-coated tree bark. The full-bodied palate has jaw-dropping seamlessness with wonderfully fine-grained tannins and beautiful freshness lifting the densely laden black and blue fruit to a very long, achingly perfumed finish. This stunning wine was tasted on three different occasions with consistent results. Although this is tantalizingly delicious right now, thanks largely to those plush, densely pixilated tannins, if you're looking for that next-level experience that comes with tertiary development, try not to touch it for 7-10 years, then enjoy it over the following 40 years+.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2019 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 65.32-120.00

97

Composed of 88% Merlot and 12% Cabernet Franc, the 2019 Larcis Ducasse is a deep garnet-purple color. It prances out with open-knit, flamboyant scents of crushed blueberries, preserved plums, kirsch, and Christmas cake, leading to wafts of candied violets, jasmine tea, crushed rocks, and iron ore. The full-bodied palate shimmers with energetic black and blue fruits, supported by velvety tannins and perfectly judged freshness, finishing long and fragrant.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2018 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 68.85-123.00

96

The 2018 Larcis Ducasse is a blend of 89% Merlot and 11% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple colored, it comes bounding out with boisterous scents of stewed black plums, boysenberry preserves, and fruitcake, followed by nuances of sandalwood, cinnamon toast, licorice, and dusty soil with a waft of molten chocolate. The full-bodied palate is full-on decadent, delivering firm, ripe, grainy tannins and plenty of freshness to support the concentrated black fruit preserves, finishing on a persistent anise note.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2017 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 51.61-90.00**

**95**

A blend of 92% Merlot and 8% Cabernet Franc, the 2017 Larcis Ducasse is medium to deep garnet colored. It soars from the glass with fragrant notes of rose oil, Morello cherries, redcurrant preserves, and raspberry leaves, followed by suggestions of Ceylon tea, fallen leaves, cardamom, and lavender. The medium to full-bodied palate is soft, graceful, and caressing, delivering just enough freshness to the perfumed red fruits, finishing with a soft-spoken intensity.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2016 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 50.00-103.19**

**97**

The 2016 Larcis Ducasse is a blend of 87% Merlot and 13% Cabernet Franc. An opaque garnet-black in color, it requires a fair amount of swirling before erupting with a profound perfume of blueberry preserves, ripe black plums, juicy blackberries, and dark chocolate, leading to nuances of licorice, espresso, fertile loam, and Indian spices, plus a hint of black truffles. The densely laden, full-bodied palate is still very tightly wound at this stage, giving peeks at the layers of minerals, exotic spices, and fragrant earth notes intertwined with the generous black fruits, backed by firm, rounded tannins and amazing tension, finishing with epic length. While the richness and quality of the tannins

make this an irresistibly delicious drink now, try to keep your hands off it for another decade and then drink it over the next 30 years+.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2015 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 64.84-119.95**

**96**

Composed of 87% Merlot and 13% Cabernet Franc, the 2015 Larcis Ducasse is deep garnet colored. The nose is a little shy and grumpy to start off, offering glimpses at tar, damp soil, truffles, burnt rubber, and smoked meats notes, before going full peacock and revealing gregarious notes of kirsch, juicy black plums, wild blueberries, and violets, followed by a waft of star anise. The full-bodied palate explodes with bright, opulent red, black, and blue fruit layers, showing off this vineyard's remarkable tension and very fine-grained tannins, finishing very long and very fragrant. Enjoy it now, after decanting a good 2-3 hours previously, or forget it in the cellar for another 6-8 years and drink it over the next 25 years+.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2014 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 44.83-85.56**

**93**

A blend of 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc, the 2014 Larcis Ducasse is deep garnet colored. It needs a bit of swirling and coaxing to unlock notes of juicy black cherries, blackberry preserves, and dried mulberries, plus suggestions of unsmoked cigars, cast-iron pan, and dusty soil with a waft of dried herbs. The medium to full-bodied palate is mature and ready to enjoy now, delivering lightly chewy tannins and plenty of earthy/tertiary goodness, finishing with lingering black tea and exotic spice notes. It should cellar a further 12-14 years, but why wait?

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**



Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2013 Larcis Ducasse

**93**

The 2013 Larcis Ducasse is a blend of 84% Merlot and 16% Cabernet Franc. Medium to deep garnet colored, it sails out of the glass with easy, breezy notions of black raspberries, redcurrant jelly, and Morello cherries, followed by touches of bay leaves, tobacco leaf, and dried lavender. The medium-bodied palate is lively and refreshing, offering soft, silky tannins and plenty of bright red fruit, finishing on a perfumed note.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2012 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 56.67-94.94**

**93**

Composed of 83% Merlot and 17% Cabernet Franc, the 2012 Larcis Ducasse is deep garnet colored. It opens with broody notions of tar, new leather, tapenade, and charcuterie, before revealing a core of boysenberry preserves, plum pudding, and stewed black cherries. The medium to full-bodied palate is plush and filled with mature, savory-laced black fruit preserves, finishing on a stewed tea note.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2011 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 38.42-73.00**

**94**

The 2011 Larcis Ducasse is composed of 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet colored, it skips out of the glass with bright, cheery notes of Morello cherries, black raspberries, and underbrush, leading to suggestions of unsmoked cigars, mossy

tree bark, and licorice. The full-bodied palate is bright as anything, featuring ripe, grainy tannins and bold freshness to frame the lively red berries and savory layers, finishing with a real skip in its step. A triumph for this vintage, and well worth seeking out. Enjoy it right now at its fruity best or keep it another 20 years+ for the tertiary end of the spectrum.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2010 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 122.51-348.95**

**97**

Made from 83% Merlot and 17% Cabernet Franc, the 2010 Larcis Ducasse is deep garnet colored. Remarkably, it is still very closed and reduced to begin, offering vague tar and scorched earth notes at the very beginning before opening out to offer glimpses at a powerhouse of plum preserves, blackberry compote, and mince pie notes, followed by wafts of licorice, crushed rocks, and smoked meats. The full-bodied palate is densely laden with youthful black fruit and earthy layers, supported by firm, superbly fine-grained tannins and amazing tension, finishing very long. It needs another 5-7 years, at least, to hit its stride and should keep another 20-years+.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2009 Larcis Ducasse

**\$ 95.10-190.20**

**95**

A blend of 81% Merlot and 19% Cabernet Franc, the 2009 Larcis Ducasse is deep garnet colored. It charges out with bold, beautiful notes of licorice, prunes, blueberry compote, and fresh figs, followed by suggestions of chargrill, wood smoke, and cigar box. The full-bodied palate is mature, delivering loads of dried berries and earthy layers with a velvety texture, finishing long with just enough freshness. Drink it now and over the next 10-12 years+.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2008 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 52.83-113.89

**94**

The 2008 Larcis Ducasse is a blend of 84% Merlot and 16% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet colored, it gallops out of the glass with energetic, ready-to-go scents of baked black plums, boysenberry preserves, and stewed black cherries, complemented by suggestions of dried roses, dusty soil, cumin seed, and Sichuan pepper. The elegantly crafted, medium-bodied palate is graceful and refreshing, featuring ripe, rounded tannins and loads of evolving layers, finishing long and fragrant.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2007 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 82.99-82.99

**92**

A blend of 78% Merlot and 22% Cabernet Franc, the 2007 Larcis Ducasse is medium to deep garnet colored with a touch of brick. It slowly releases subtle notes of wet stones, iron ore, tilled soil, and fallen leaves over a core of prunes and dried cranberries, plus a waft of aniseed. The medium-bodied palate tingles with lively acidity and mature mineral and red berry flavors, framed by soft, powdery tannins, finishing with a refreshing lift. Drinking well right now, it is probably at its peak, but should hold another 10+ years.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2006 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 60.71-79.97

92

The 2006 Larcis Ducasse is a blend of 78% Merlot and 22% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet colored, it offers up scents a baked blackberries, stewed tea, fruitcake, and dried sage with hints of tobacco leaf and tar. The medium-bodied palate has rugged, chewy tannins and muscular black fruits with loads of earthy layers and just enough freshness to lift the finish.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2005 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 250.00-507.43

97

Deep garnet colored, the 2005 Larcis Ducasse swans out of the glass with opulent scents of plum preserves, kirsch, raspberry pie, and dried mulberries, giving way to nuances of cigar box, star anise, crushed rocks, and truffles. The full-bodied palate is electric with tension and energetic, evolving black and red berry flavors, framed by very fine-grained tannins, finishing long with a whole firework display of mineral and exotic spice sparks.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 2004 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 62.44-109.56

92

Medium to deep garnet-brick in color, the 2004 Larcis Ducasse rolls out of the glass with open-knit scents of stewed plums, dried cherries, and sauteed herbs, followed by hints of damp soil, fallen leaves, and charcoal. The medium to full-bodied palate is plush with plenty of freshness, delivering mature, savory layers and an earthy/mineral-laced finish.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)

## 1959 Larcis Ducasse

\$ 301.99-301.99

96

Medium garnet-brick in color, the 1959 Larcis Ducasse opens with electric sparks of dried cranberries, star anise, and rusty nails, giving way to a compelling core of mince pie, dried figs, cigar box and, eventually, an atomic core of prunes, incense, camphor, and Indian spices scents erupts from the glass. Flavors of dried red berries, exotic spices, and herb-crusteds meats dance on the medium-bodied palate, textured by soft, powdery tannins and that signature of beautiful freshness, finishing with incredible length. If you are staring at an offer for this wine while reading this note - BUY IT, just do it. This is an incredible chance to drink-in the history of this remarkable vineyard from a year when it simply sang.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

Reviewed Date: **September 28, 2022**

Source: [Château Larcis Ducasse 1959-2020](#)