

COMMERCE

## Chanel touts outside interests in educational Chteau Canon vineyard promotion

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*Chanel-owned Chteau Canon in Saint-Emilion, France*

By JEN KING

Alongside promotions for its apparel, accessories and N 5 fragrance, French fashion house Chanel is bolstering its fine wine business.

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The house has been involved with the winemaking industry for two decades, but many consumers may be unaware or unfamiliar with Chanel's ventures outside of fashion. Due to luxury's far reaching fronds, brands have diversified offerings beyond their original dealings, with many entering the hospitality and culinary space, two industries that have maintained momentum and trendiness among affluents.

"Luxury brands today are diversifying their portfolios by buying companies that create verticality within their respective principal holdings," said Rebecca Miller, CEO of **Miller & Company**, New York. "Due to the increase of strategic partnerships, we have seen many brands investing in complementary businesses that will serve to create more visibility and perhaps even opinion or favor of a brand by their close association.

"Chanel has enjoyed great financial proficiency over the years in high-end goods, so one must assume their leadership has vetted the investment and they understand what is required to own and manage another high-end brand," she said.

Ms. Miller is not affiliated with Chanel, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Chanel** was unable to comment directly.

Chanel and corks

In a post shared socially in early November, Chanel announced that the harvest season at its vineyard in France, Saint-Emilion's Chteau Canon, had come to a close. The end result being a "Grand Cru by Chanel."

Chanel encouraged its community of followers, who may typically only have an interest in its fashion, handbags and beauty products, to discover the 1st Grand Cru St. Emilion.



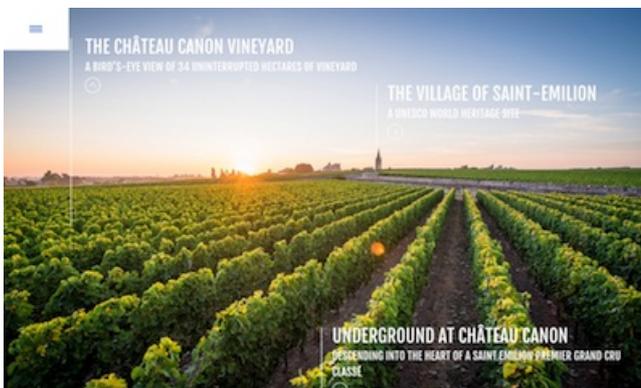
*Facebook post promoting Chteau Canon on Chanel's account*

While the Chanel brand was founded in 1906 by Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, the house has been privately owned, in various capacities, since the 1950s by the Wertheimer family. The family's patriarch, Pierre, co-founded the brand's fragrance categories, and his grandsons Alain and Gerard own and control the House of Chanel today.

It was under the direction of the younger Wertheimers that Chanel ventured into winemaking. In the 1980s, the Wertheimers purchased two high-end vineyards, Chteau Rauzan-Sgla and Saint-Emilion's Chteau Canon.

Of these vineyards, Chanel sought to promote Chteau Canon on its social pages to bring its business in the category to light for the average consumer.

On Chteau Canon's Web site, consumers can familiarize themselves with the vineyard's long heritage through a content page. Broken into chapters, the first sector is titled "Lands of Chteau Canon" and includes digital touchpoints for the consumer to better understand the environment responsible for the award-winning wines.



*Chteau Canon Web site, chapter 1*

The section includes a bird's eye view of the 34 hectare estate with blue shading used to mark different areas such as the Merlot and Cabernet vineyards, the historical Chteau and the nearby village of St. Emilion. Plus sign icons bring up additional information about each area on the aerial map.

This chapter also educates consumers on the village of Saint-Emilion, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its relation to the winemaking process. Another section quite literally takes consumers below Saint-Emilion from the vines down to its root system in various soil types to the natural spring water and the 3,000 feet of limestone quarries underneath it all.

In "Allures of Chteau Canon," its vintages are explored through videos narrated by French actress Anna Mouglalis, co-founder of auctioneer Paddle8 Alexander Gilkes, freestyle skier Xavier Kuhn and distinguished winemaker Nicolas Audebert, who joined the vineyard as general manager in 2014. Chteau Canon's wines are described using the words elegant, esthete, extremes and balanced to represent its 1955, 1982, 2003 and 2014 vintages, respectively.

For its third chapter, "Times of Chteau Canon," the vineyard includes the video shared by Chanel with its social media post. The video gives viewers an overview of the property including the vineyards, estate house and horses plowing the grounds.

### *Le Temps de Chteau Canon*

Also, this section features a 24-hour snapshot of Chteau Canon allowing consumers to gain understanding of what is going on at the vineyard throughout the day.

Lastly, consumers can visit the Croix Canon section, a second wine created at the estate.

The Chteau Canon Web site can be viewed [here](#).

In October, Chanel expanded its winemaking ventures outside of France's Bordeaux region with the purchase of St. Supry Estate Vineyards and Winery. The Napa Valley, CA winery was purchased by the Wertheimer family for an undisclosed sum.

Napa Valley is one of the most successful wine markets in the world and adding a third vineyard to its portfolio will add to Chanel's offerings. St. Supry has won a number of awards and specializes in Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon and produces more than 100,000 cases per year, according to [Reuters](#).

"The acquisition of St. Supry Estate in Napa Valley, created by French winemaker Robert Skalli, gives Chanel a solid foothold in the United States wine market, complementing its earlier purchase of high-end wine makers Chteau Rauzan-Sgla and Saint-Emilion's Chteau Canon," Ms. Miller said.

### Uncorked potential

Fashion brands have broaden offerings into hospitality as well. With many affluents having a strong interest in experiential over materialism, further exploration in these areas by brands may be well sought.

Chanel, for instance, furthered its foray into skincare with the brand's first spa to be housed in the newly renovated Htel Ritz Paris.

The Ritz Paris hotel closed in 2012 to undergo extensive renovations which are scheduled to be completed by year's end. Located in Paris' 1st arrondissement overlooking the border of the Place Vendme, the hotel and fashion house's heritages are linked through Chanel's namesake founder, making the partnership attractive for the brand's enthusiasts ([see story](#)).

Additionally, Italian fashion label Versace is bringing its brand to life via the opening of the Palazzo Versace Dubai Hotel in the United Arab Emirates.

Developed with the Enshaa Group, the property reflects the house's vision, with artistic director Donatella Versace personally designing all of the interiors and furniture for each of the 215 rooms. The second Palazzo Versace, following an opening in Australia, this hotel will deliver a truly branded experience to loyal clientele and fans of the Versace label ([see story](#)).

As with any investment opportunity, diversification is a key factor as it pertains to exposure," Ms. Miller said.

"Conglomerates comprised of various luxury brands are no different.

"By investing in related and unrelated industries it increases their ability to reach their target customers through various marketing channels, products and services by cross exposure and lifestyle applications," she said.

But, true wine connoisseurs and dedicated sommeliers may not be influenced by Chanel's affiliation with the oenology industry, regardless of how behind-the-scenes its relationship may be.

"Wine aficionados are typically focused on the basic elements that produce fine wine: climate, terroir, the grape varieties, the winemaker, his/her winemaking practices, exceptional vintages and the history of the winery," Ms. Miller said.

"Fine wine is less about ownership and more about the wine itself," she said. "Wine lovers are always exploring unfamiliar wines and new approaches because they are enthralled by the rich diversity of the wine world and the breadth of experience it offers.

"Chanel's ownership of wineries might be important to different people based on their own values and interests."

Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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