

# Les Wineries du Rhône

**Les Vins**  
**Jean-Luc Colombo**



PORTRAIT —

## "GOOD TIMES, AROUND THE TABLE WITH FRIENDS. IT'S WHAT WINE IS ALL ABOUT."

Jean-Luc Colombo is a winegrower and chef, in tribute to his mother. He makes his wines the way he would cook a fine meal: by following the basic rules and tasting often.

### What drew you to the wine world?

"Some négociants already had a grandfather or father working in the business, but that doesn't make them any less passionate about their work. My mother was a chef and my father a doctor; neither was a négociant or winemaker. I wanted to get a better understanding of food and wine, and the best way was to grow my own vines. And I also wanted to live surrounded by nature, with my dogs, my birds and my fish."

**"We don't make wine because we want to talk about stainless steel tanks, presses and filters.** That's all essential kit, but what making wine is really all about is sitting at the table, enjoying it with friends. When you're wondering what to drink with soupe au pistou or fish soup, grilled sea bream or rack of lamb, you don't mean beer or pastis, no matter how much you like them. You mean wine. But what do you go for? There are so many different wines in

the Rhône Valley that there's something perfect for almost every type of food."

### What made you choose Cornas?

"We came here in the 1980s. I've always loved cooking, and loved finding the right wines to pair with iconic recipes like wild hare à la royale. That's how I found Hermitage. I came to Cornas to make wine with good ageing potential, and was absolutely entranced by the beauty of the countryside and woodland. Burgundy is too far north for me. I could have gone for Châteauneuf du Pape and Gigondas, both of which are great wines. But nature here is wilder. We're in the south of the North; we got sun, we've got olive groves. After all, I'm from Provence..."

### How would you describe your style?

"All our wines, whether we buy in the grapes and wine or whether they're from the estate, are made to be subtle, elegant and balanced. I'd say that florals are more important than fruit, which means we have to pinpoint exactly the right harvest dates and make sure we are spot on with our winemaking. One of my teachers once told me, **"We make wine in the vineyard. We taste our grapes."** If the fruit has cherry or apricot flavours, they'll come through. If you're working on Cornas or Châteauneuf du Pape, you have to keep tasting everything. It's not one to be drunk young. Luckily, we get guidelines – from the terroir! Cornas is a dark, intense wine with plenty of tannins and good ageing potential. It's perfect with pigeon, kidneys and beef. You stick to things you know will work."

**Jean-Luc Colombo,**  
Managing Director.



**Established in 1987**  
Employees: 19  
Sales: 11,847 hl  
Turnover 2016: €7.8 million, including €4.2 million to export



## "Wine is like art. It's so complex it could easily become an obsession."

### How can you give a Vin de Garde a lighter touch?

By spending a lot of time with chefs, and tasting their food and the wines. Beaucastel and Mont-Redon, for instance, are both Châteauneuf du Pape, but so different. Appellation rules don't dictate the exact way you 'cook' your wine, and that's very important. There's Marcel Guigal's techniques, then there's ours. Ageing your

wines in vats or barrels are two different things. As Jacques Manière once said, "A badly-cooked chicken is a chicken that died in vain." Cook fish for just two minutes too long, and it'll spoil. It's the same for wine. **Leave your lees in the barrel just two weeks more than you need, and you get an unpleasant, leesy smell. It's a delicate, complicated process. Maybe this is how the great houses deliver quality – they know how to influence the outcomes of maturing and ageing.**"

### How do you see the future?

"Wine is changing; consumers are starting to want more elegant flavours. But global warming means that the Mediterranean-ness of our wines will be increasingly prominent. Our next challenge is to work with the changes."



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