

Les Wineries du Rhône

Delas Frères



PORTRAIT —

DELAS FRÈRES – CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE

Delas Frères' Technical Director Jacques Grange, a Burgundian by birth, has found the right combination of grapes, soils and climate in Tain l'Hermitage to make the wines he loves.

Give us 3 to 4 words to describe Syrah in the northern Rhône

Powerful, intensely-coloured, elegant, and, the most difficult one to achieve, delicate.

Our biggest challenge in these great terroirs is to make very subtle, very precise wines. We've got anthocyanins, tannins and flavour, which we must be careful not to distort. And importantly, we've also got a climate in which vines thrive. They need little intervention, they grow sustainably. We've got the Mistral, and we've got sunshine without the scorching heat they get further south or around the Mediterranean. We are at the northernmost limit for single-varietal plantings. It was a conscious choice to plant vineyards here at this latitude; it's where I feel comfortable, make the wine I like best and where I can claim a certain amount of expertise.

What sort of wine do you aim to make?

If the wine critics are to be believed, my Burgundy-inspired methods come through fairly clearly.

They've developed over time, a bit of a backlash against current trends. Around 15 or 20 years ago, winemakers were pushing extraction to its limits. Oak ageing was all the rage, not always skilfully done; sometimes it was over the top, or showed too many new-wood nuances. But that was then. Now, given Syrah's capacity for doing what we want it to do, the tendency has been to cool its ardour and coax out its **elegance, finesse and terroir-driven individuality from the word go.**

Can you foresee any problems?

Our Syrahs, except for the vines grown in granite, can take on a rather coarse structure and tannins. The coarseness disappears as density increases, but can reappear on ageing; hence the need for freshness and tension. Some like to call it minerality. I think there's a definite relationship between the bedrock and a wine's aromatic structure. You can feel it as soon as you taste the berries at harvest-time, but it's also something that engulfs you as you walk through the vineyards.

Where do you rank Hermitage wines?

Hermitage are some of the best wines on the planet, on a par with the Burgundy or Bordeaux crus, or a great wine from Tuscany.

They really are fabulous, both the reds and the whites, which is quite unusual. You don't need to understand them, or even to like or dislike them. They make you feel quite humble. There's liking a wine, and then there's admiring it. I think that's how you recognise a great terroir and a great wine. It's as simple as that.

**Jacques Grange,
Technical Director,
Maison Delas**



Established in 1835

Employees: 23

Sales: 14,800 hl

Turnover 2016: €11 million

Brands include:

Domaine des Grands

Chemins, Domaine des

Tourettes, Les Bessards,

La Landonne



"Our main aim is to make a fresh, elegant wine"

Maison Delas Frères isn't particularly well known. Does that bother you?

Yes, although we try not to show it. It's a long road though, so we made a list of priorities. The first step was to dust everything off, bring it all back to life, and make sure we were expressing our full potential. We invested in premises, equipment and technological processes to get us where we want to be; we've made good progress, but there's still plenty to be done. We like to take things slowly and make sure it all works over time. It's taken us 20 years so far. But for the last 3 to 4 years we've plateaued in terms of recognition and growth. What we need now is to welcome people in, share our dreams with them, help them to learn. We're right in

the centre of Tain l'Hermitage, a place steeped in history, where wine is life; and we've just started on a huge building project. **This is a family winery, so we'd like somewhere we can invite our customers and distributors – people who mean a lot to us because they're real wine lovers. People like that are always in demand, and we've had to put them on hold.** We'll be bringing our premium fruit here for vinification, from our own vineyards as well as suppliers. And at last we'll be able to receive visitors and sell from our own shop. We're hoping to finish work by mid-2018, and vinify our 2018 harvest here. We're investing 150% of our turnover, which is pretty daunting - but it shows that even as 'outsiders'* we have an enduring commitment to the region and believe in it. We have total confidence in the future, and there's no doubt in our minds that we'll be reaping the benefits within 5 to 10 years.

* Delas Frères is part of the Louis Roederer Group who also own Champagne producer Deutz.



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