

The Rhône Wineries

Vignobles &
Compagnie



STANDING STRONG

Bruno Mailliard is a relative newcomer to Vignobles & Compagnie, a wine business established in 1963 and owned by the Bordeaux-based Taillan Group. In addition to his role as managing director he also looks after sales, which currently stand at 11 million bottles a year. His plans for the future include promoting export growth, diversifying domestic sales and steering the company towards higher-value products.

And let's remember to call it Vignobles & Compagnie – it's no longer Compagnie Rhodanienne! The new name better reflects the identity of this business, based in Gard, at the meeting point of the three great wine-producing regions of Rhône, Languedoc and Provence. Provence plays a relatively modest role in operations, while the Rhône and Languedoc contribute equally. Since 2017, Vignobles & Compagnie have also owned Château des Sources in Costières de Nîmes with its 50 hectares of vineyard, hence the Vignobles (vineyards) part of the name.

Hybrid and proud

Vignobles & Compagnie is a prime example of the hybrid négociant/winemaker model that has gained traction in recent years. Successful wineries, both private and cooperative, need volume, so they open up a négociant arm; meanwhile négociants are increasingly managing their own estates. Since wine houses started making wines themselves, the image of the négociant has undergone a sea change. “And I like that,” says Bruno. “I started out in a cooperative in Aude, then spent 13 years managing Les Grands Domaines du Littoral in Europe's largest organic

vineyard area. So I've come full circle: I'm a négociant with one foot in the vineyards. And if you want to get to know the industry well, it's a great place to be.”

Increasing exports

Vignobles & Compagnie sell their wines in around 40 countries, with support from the Taillan Group's three offices in Dallas, China and Japan. Customers see them as a reliable supplier with strong roots in every region of France, admiring their ability to craft bespoke wines as well as the bottles of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas that add value to the Group's fine wines business. “Adaptability is our strength. We can turn our hand to anything: our teams have genuine entrepreneurial spirit. Everything moves so fast, and we have to respond in kind. Exports have levelled off, so we need to give them a boost. The Chinese market ran out of steam following the recent health crisis, but at last we're seeing movement again.”

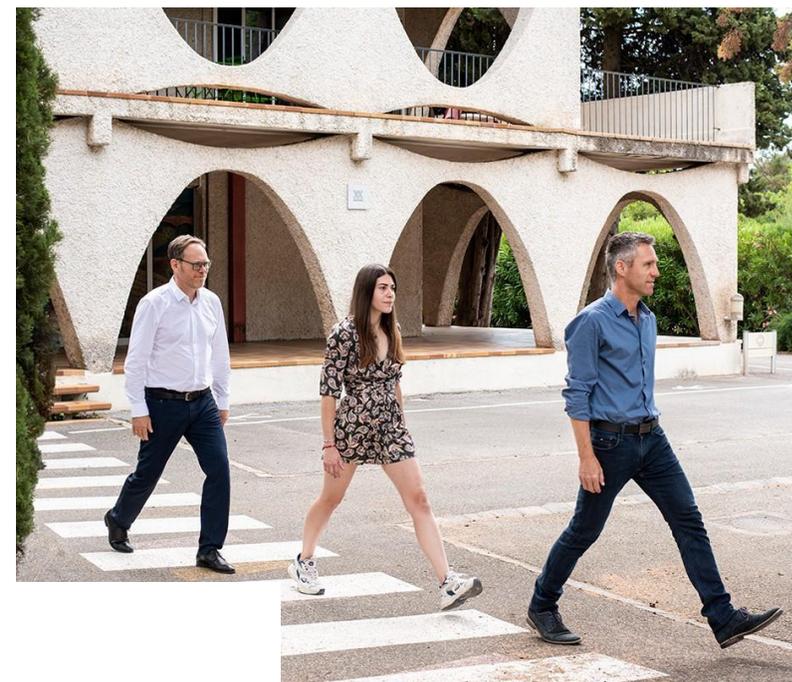
Grape variety and origin

Export clients tend to look at three things: price, colour and grape variety. Consumers see things more simply. With Merlot, they know they'll get super-fruity flavours, while a Sauvignon will be lively, with bold, vibrant aromas. But things are changing, and even New World wines are focusing on wine origin. Winegrowers' associations exist now in California to ensure origin is acknowledged. But the idea of local appellations is still closely associated with France. The word terroir isn't even translated, but always used in the original French. “That's an attitude worth preserving” says Bruno, “although it mustn't prevent us from making wine easier to understand. We make Vins de France, which gives us more leeway, and ensures we can adapt quickly to new demands. Our Petit Cochonnet range has been quite a hit in Asia. It's a fun wine which a lot of people find appealing. And then alongside it, we've our reassuringly familiar appellation wines.”

Bruno Mailliard



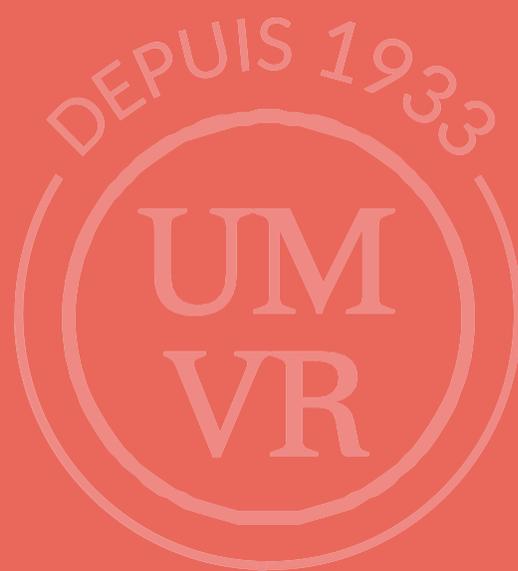
Established: 1963
45 employees
2023 turnover: €20 million
incl. 30 % to export.



“As négociants, we're experts in creating wines”

Polishing diamonds

At Vignobles & Compagnie, it's not just wine in the vats – it's diamond, though still in the rough, as Bruno puts it. They need to be fine-tuned and carefully presented if they're to become the ultra-premium products customers in this market expect. “Our challenge over the next few years is to concentrate on moving towards prestige wines, and to have the courage to assert our value. Our wines are easily up to the mark; it's ourselves we need to convince. We need to understand that we can charge more for certain wines. And we're determined to take the time to get things right. I was in the Champagne marketing world for 13 years and I know how important it is to match the image to the product. For the premium end of the market I'd like to develop a stylish, modern design. Provence has done a great job: their designs are fresh and appealing. I've just come back from England, and it's so obvious when you look at the shelves there. You can tell a wine's provenance from the style of the bottle.



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