

Les Wineries du Rhône

UVCDR
Cellier des
Dauphins



PORTRAIT —

THE RHÔNE VALLEY'S LEADING WINEMAKERS' UNION

The Union des Vignerons des Côtes du Rhône, (Union of Côtes du Rhône Winegrowers) is a community of winegrowers driven by passion for their land and its vines, best known to the public for its flagship wine brand, Cellier des Dauphins. The brand is named for Dauphiné, a territory historically belonging to the heirs to the French throne.

The Union is based in a terroir in the south-east of the Drôme and boasts a membership of 2,000 winegrowing families, who first got together when overproduction was at its height in the 1970s. They pooled their resources and focused on nurturing and promoting their region – and particularly on ensuring the long-term survival of their vineyards.

Their first job was to improve sales. So barely two years after the Union was founded, they created a new brand, under the guidance of their young director François Boschi. François was an insightful leader, who had a clear understanding of the importance of brands and advertising well before they became the norm. He designed a new bottle whose shape was, instantly recognisable, and brought the Cellier des Dauphins brand into the public eye by linking it to popular sports, including Formula One, skating, rugby and football. In the 1980s he also introduced a new packaging format: the 25cl bottle, to be served on planes and trains. It was history in the making.

Tradition and modernity

“Our story is a successful combination of tradition, represented by our terroirs and families, and modernity, reflected in our economic model, our vineyards – 3,000

hectares of which are HVE (High Environmental Value) certified with a further 1,350 hectares farmed organically – and our technical innovations,” says Sylvie Darves, who has headed up the Union since December 2021. The Board of Directors provided further proof of the Union’s modern way of thinking by appointing a woman to the top job. “There are far too few women in wine. My mission is to keep this pioneering spirit alive.”

Covering all markets and distribution channels

“The Union des Vignerons des Côtes du Rhône has a number of advantages. It’s a leading brand, has been popular for over five decades, and belongs to the winemakers, which is in itself a rarity. The terroir boasts a range of characterful grape varieties, and the landscape is superb, with many diverse appellations. But it’s also a forward-looking business, well attuned to trends and markets,” says Sylvie.

It is important for a brand like Cellier des Dauphins to have a presence in every distribution segment, finding the right balance to meet the needs of today’s consumer. This means incorporating a premium range where customers can find something new or unusual, but also an accessible core range which doesn’t shun the easy-drinking wines and value-for-money prices that made it a success in the first place. Whether it’s own brands, large-scale retail, negociant-made wines, estate wines, wine shops, food service or e-commerce, Sylvia Darves believes that, “each has a place, and should play a part in achieving that overall balance.”

Ramping up exports

The Union’s objective is simple: to increase exports, which are still too low as a proportion of overall activity. It makes sense to focus attention on the 50 or so countries where their wines are already available and have been for some time. This may cause a certain amount of fragmentation, but will serve to concentrate efforts and resources on priority markets.

Sylvie Darves, Marie-Véronique Blanc, Thierry Walet



Cooperative
established: 1965
110 employees
2021 turnover: €20 million., of which 25% from export.

“My mission is to uphold the pioneering spirit of the Union des Vignerons des Côtes du Rhône, and to conquer new markets”

Modern values

The Union’s values emphasise the fundamentals: solidarity, responsibility, sustainability and leading by example. They are all legitimate values, part of the Union’s history and an innate part of its being. A return to basics is the driving force behind its innovation and success.



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