

# Les Wineries du Rhône

Château  
Mont Redon



PORTRAIT —

## MONT-REDON, 100 YEARS TO THE DAY

This vast estate encompassing some of Châteauneuf-du-Pape's best terroirs, has recently extended its winery both to accommodate the growth of its négociant business, and to make space for the newly acquired Oratoire Saint-Martin in Cairanne and Domaine du Joncier in Lirac. Mont-Redon has joined the Châteauneuf-du-Pape big league. With 150 hectares, it's now one of the appellation's largest estates, and includes 100 hectares of contiguous Châteauneuf-du-Pape vines, the remainder being split between Côtes du Rhône and Lirac. The estate incorporates Châteauneuf's three principal terroirs, namely rounded pebbles, safres and limestone, giving a full range of soil types from which the estate produces the finest of blends.

### Inspired by Henri Plantin

Henri Plantin was the founder and driving force behind Château Mont-Redon, which has been in the Fabre Abeille family since 1923. He originally purchased 100 hectares of land, including 2.5 hectares of vines in the lieu-dit of Mont Redon (Montem Rotundum in Latin, meaning a rounded mountain), a small hill covered with oak and pine trees. Henri was a visionary. He recognised the terroir's potential and continued to acquire as much of it as he could, extending his holdings to 186 hectares of contiguous land. The generations that followed got to work, tearing up existing vegetation and planting vines wherever they identified a good terroir. Pierre Fabre, together with his cousin Aurélie Abeille, make up the fourth generation at Mont-Redon, where Pierre

has held the reins since 2017. "This pebble-rich terroir is magical," he says. "Every variety thrives here, all the time. The drier the weather, the better it is, thanks to the clay content which always provides a bit of moisture. The pebbly plateau makes excellent wines with plenty of depth and power, and is perfect for Grenache, while the sands yield pure, well-coloured, aromatic Syrahs to counterbalance the powerful plateau wines, adding colour and finesse. Clay gives structure, sand provides elegance and fruity flavours, while limestone adds robust tannins, a chalky quality and extraordinary aromatic purity, which works well for whites and Syrahs."

### Limited water

The estate has High Environmental Value certification to level 3. "We stopped using weedkillers in 2018," says Pierre. Regular tilling breaks down capillarity and retains moisture deep within the soil. This helps the vines withstand drought, but importantly, also encourages them to root more deeply, exploring the depths of the terroir." And there's no doubt about it - water is in short supply. Since January 1st 2023, there has been less than 10mm of precipitation. (Interview dated April 2023.) Water reserves are in a critical state. 2022 was beset by drought, giving grapes with relatively little juice. "It's a ripe vintage with high tannic potential, and will need judicious ageing, but its concentration makes it a pleasure to work with," says Pierre. "Although the winery wasn't full to capacity, we're happy with 2022 in terms of quality. It's not 2019 or 2020, but it's very good."

### Haute Couture

Mont Redon launched its négociant business in the 2000s, starting with a red Côtes du Rhône - Réserve Mont-Redon - to meet growing demand for wines with the Mont-Redon label. A white wine made principally from Viognier soon followed, then a Côte de Provence rosé named Saint Max. Then in 2017, Pierre and Aurélie's love of the great Rhône Valley terroirs naturally led them to take an interest in Gigondas. The négociant side of the

Pierre Fabre



Established 1923

35 employees

2022 turnover: €11.5 million

incl. 60% from export



**“In both north and south, the négociant sector is powerful, a vital tool for the Rhône Valley”**

business accounts for 60% of total volume, and is run with the same rigour as the property. Wines are blind-tasted early on in the process, as soon as fermentation is complete. Blending and ageing take place in the Château's winery and cellars, which have recently been extended to allow room for more small vats, and provide space for ageing and storage. The facility is underground, with temperature controlled by two Canadian wells

### The Crus – and other wines

“There's a real energy about the Rhône Crus, and Châteauneuf-du-Pape is the most significant of them. It's a major Cru with history, quality, volume and commercial buoyancy,” says Pierre. “Gigondas is enjoying an upswing too, and the ‘magnet effect’ is having a positive impact overall, highlighting the good points of the Rhône Valley - although it somewhat masks the complex position of the Côtes du Rhône regional appellation. As we speak, whites are enjoying a tremendous surge in popularity, and are currently one of the region's growth drivers. But transforming a vineyard is a difficult job, and takes time. What if in 10 years' time the trend were reversed? We need to proceed with caution, even if something seems like a good idea at the time.”



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