

Les Wineries du Rhône

La Bastide
Saint Dominique

La Réserve
Saint Dominique



HAPPINESS IS ... SAINT DOMINIQUE

Originally, it was just a sideline – a bit of fun – but now it’s taken on a whole new meaning, as Véronique and Eric Bonnet juggle owning their own property with their burgeoning négociant business, the southern Rhône their natural playground. It started out as something of a game. Eric Bonnet, a winegrower in Courthézon and the 4th generation of a wine family, became a ‘wine detective’ in his spare time, searching out top-quality wines for a few select customers, notably in the US. They recognised his skill, valued his hard work, and soon began asking him to find specific wines, particularly Crus. This was in 2005. Slowly, the business began to take off. Eric handled only small quantities, not more than 10 to 15,000 bottles, just for a bit of fun. He also made a few forays into the northern Rhône, including Hermitage red and white, Cornas and Côte-Rôtie, but these largely came to nothing.

Crus as drivers

In 2010, an agent suggested Eric take things up a notch. Which he did. And within 10 years, the négociant part of the business skyrocketed, from trading 15,000 bottles to 150,000. Wines were bought in as a finished product, then matured in the Domaine’s own cellars. “It was a long time before I felt like a négociant,” Eric admits. “My passion has always been the Domaine. Over the years, the négociant business has grown steadily, and now the two sides are evenly balanced. But we don’t have overblown ambitions: we’d like to retain the family dimension. I still prefer to make small to medium-sized quantities, but to do it better. He and his sister Véronique, who joined him in 2016 from Hong Kong (where she worked for 7 years in the textile events business) specialise

in the Crus of the southern Rhône: Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Gigondas, Vacqueyras, Lirac and Rasteau. “It’s primarily what our customers want,” says Véronique. Crus are becoming increasingly popular.”

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. Take the surge in Ventoux, which they didn’t see coming. “It’s a super-accessible appellation, very pleasing, and excellent value for money,” says Eric. “It burst onto the scene more quickly than expected, achieving a couple of excellent tasting scores which gave us good visibility.”

Châteauneuf-du-Pape - naturally

The pair were also pleasantly surprised by the popularity of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, now the négoce’s top wine. Veronique and Eric’s excellent understanding of the appellation (which they also work across some dozen hectares on their own estate) and their detailed knowledge of the terroir give them extra credibility. “As producers, we’re well-placed to select other wines. We know the terroirs, the vintages and the problems - we experience them day to day. The embossed bottles allow us to work with full transparency, and to differentiate between the estate and our négociant business,” says Eric.

The family estate

The Bastide Saint Dominique family estate comprises around 50 hectares of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Cairanne, Rasteau, Côtes du Rhône and IGP Méditerranée. Wine is in the family’s blood. Veronique and Eric’s great-grandparents Henri Favier, Jules Rochebonne and Noëlie Astier also made and sold wine, either as négociants themselves, or to the cooperative. Then their parents, Gérard and Marie-Claude, merged the family vineyards, bought out the tenant farmers and gradually extended their land holdings. In the late 1970s, they bought a dilapidated country house (bastide) in the lieu-dit of Saint Dominique. Restoration work revealed a mediaeval chapel, with the coat of arms featured on Châteauneuf-du-Pape labels carved into the stone.

Véronique
and Eric
Bonnet



La Réserve Saint Dominique established in 2005, Bastide Saint Dominique in 1975
10 employees
2022 turnover: €2.5 million
incl. 55% from export



“The Rhône Valley is super-dependable, but I say there’s still plenty of opportunity to have fun”

House style

Bastide Saint Dominique’s house style is a combination of delicious flavour and good balance, of freshness and the trademark roundness of these terroirs. Its wines are clean, straightforward and elegant.

These parcels grow in safres - surface sand overlying layers of limestone – while the remaining vineyard thrives in soils of red clay and rounded pebbles. All vines are grown organically, with certification scheduled for 2024. The land is ploughed regularly, and yields remain naturally low. Grapes are harvested by hand and sorted once in the vineyard and a second time in the winery. Each variety (Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, Mourvèdre, Carignan, Clairette, Roussanne and Viognier) is vinified separately, then blended. Eric favours concrete vats for ageing, to retain freshness. “We’re a small, family estate,” says Véronique. “We’re good at what we do - making high quality wines that hit the spot. Everything looks very encouraging.” So it’s all systems go, in the vineyard, the winery and on the sales front. We’ve set the foundations, now the next step is to redirect the spotlight and promote our brands.”



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