

Les Wineries du Rhône

Vignobles
Alain Jaume



PORTRAIT —

THE ALAIN JAUME FAMILY: A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

Creating a range that really makes sense; making wines that stand the test of time as well as those ready to enjoy right away; producing a Châteauneuf-du-Pape exclusively from Roussanne in 1990 and having it hailed by Robert Parker as one of the appellation's three top white wines: the Jaume family take their wine very seriously indeed. And it shows. The Jaume family of Orange have been dedicated to wine since 1826, but this particular story starts in 1978, when Odile and Alain Jaume created Domaine Grand Veneur: 9 hectares, mostly of Côtes du Rhône, with a little Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Today their holdings extend to 155 hectares in Châteauneuf, Vacqueyras, Lirac and Côtes du Rhône. Forty years of expansion, and an estate ready to hand over to their children, Christophe, Sébastien and Héléne.

Looking to Lirac

Christophe and Sébastien finished their studies – oenology, then a Master's in Wine Marketing for Christophe, and oenological engineering for Sébastien – and were joined by Héléne, 10 years their junior, in 2014, after her business and management course. The family decided that opportunities for growth in Châteauneuf-du-Pape were limited, and crossed the Rhône to Lirac. “We fell in love with the appellation,” says Christophe. “The red clay terroir and rounded pebbles are very similar to what we have here. The potential was immediately obvious.” The family took over Domaine du Clos de Sixte in 2003. In those days, wine merchants were hesitant to put their faith in Lirac, but not any more. “They believe in it. As an appellation, it just needed a boost – and now quality is steadily increasing. Alain

was appellation president for 7 years, and it's fair to say he worked hard to give it the boost it needed,” says Christophe. “50% Grenache content and the galets roulés – rounded pebbles – terroir give the wine a distinctive texture, a luscious fullness, and good ageing potential. We're saying 5-6 years, but it could go well beyond that. We've got some superb 2005s, and all for €14.”

Conversion to organic

“New developments in vineyard management techniques made it possible for us to convert to organics, which has opened up new markets,” says Sébastien, “But although organic agriculture ensures grape health, it gives no guarantee of flavour. Making a wine enjoyable to drink is something we have to work on throughout the production cycle. At the end of the day, it's satisfying both for us and our customers to know that phytosanitary residues are reduced to a minimum.”

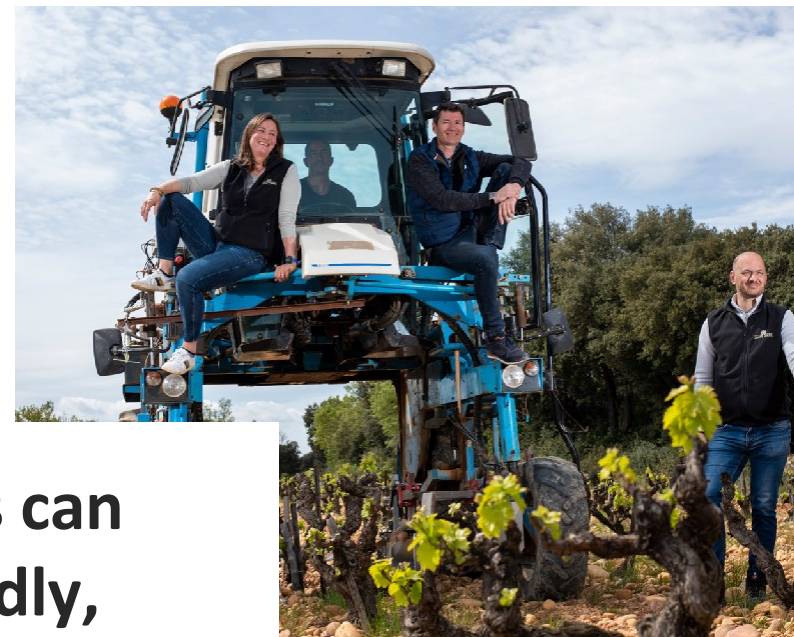
The start of the négoce

1997 was a pivotal year. Frost and hail caused major damage north of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but undaunted by the weather, Alain Jaume created a new wine brand bearing his own name, boldly taking his first steps in the négociant world with his wines of the southern Rhône. Northern Rhône wines were added later to complete the range. “It was all new to us, but our production values were the same as ever: to make high quality wines and say no to high-volume trading, where we have no expertise and which is contrary to our core philosophy.” The increase in trading volumes came about gradually, both for export and traditional channels, as the family developed a taste for the négociant business. They were ultra-demanding when it came to quality, offering only the best of the southern Rhône: a fruit-driven Ventoux, simple and delicious – a highly affordable entry-level wine; a single Côtes du Rhône, full of character and body, and highly terroir-expressive; a Gigondas, honed to perfection by the family; a well-structured,

Héléne, Christophe
and Sébastien
Jaume



Established: 1978
20 employees
2022 turnover: 5.3 million
incl. 65% from export



“Results can vary wildly, depending on blend”

aromatic Rasteau, a Cairanne, intense and full of black fruit; and a Vacqueyras produced by Château Mazane, acquired by the family in 2013.

Don't forget the rosé

Alain Jaume's mouthwatering Tavel is made by a process of maceration and extraction, delivering the appellation's trademark crushed strawberry flavour. “There's a range of scents and flavours in the glass you just don't get from direct-pressed rosés.” says Héléne. “It's fabulous, but it's aimed at the well-informed consumer. We've spent nearly 10 years battling the notion that all rosés should be transparent. Why is it that people appreciate a diverse range of whites and reds, but will only consider one style of rosé?” For their Côtes du Rhône

rosé, Bellissime, the family have played by the rosé marketing rules: “We're in Provence. We have the same grape varieties, but not the same style. Here, the rosés have a similar rounded fullness to the reds; they have more body.”

Duty calls

When it comes to wine quality, there are no concessions: the Jaume family are wary of fashions and short-term trends. “It's foolish to think you can go for the easy option and try to please everyone at all costs, if it means your wine will be dead within 5 years. We have wines made to be enjoyed immediately on release: the Ventoux, and our Les Champauvins are delicious from the word go. But once you start looking at premium wines, you have a duty to your heritage, a duty to produce something that'll be great in the future. If we want to keep our reputation as producers of top wines while trading intermediate-level wines, we need to make sure we're better than good. An importer tasting everything from Ventoux to Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes, needs to sense every terroir expressing itself. Everything depends on what happens in the vineyard and winery. If that's done well, sales follow naturally.”



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