

# TASTE LANGUEDOC - A BLOG ABOUT THE WINES OF THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

SUNDAY, 1 JULY 2012

## Domaine Ste Cecile du Parc



I never cease to be amazed by the number of new wines estates in the Languedoc. They seem to pop up at an incredible rate. I thought I knew about all the significant estates in our immediate neighbourhood, but no, there was Domaine Ste Cecile du Parc at the Rising Stars tasting earlier this spring. And following that encounter Christine Mouton Bertoli invited me to visit. She gave us directions - take the road from Caux to Pézenas and turn up the dirt track opposite a large white tower covered in graffiti. As yet there is no sign up. And it is a lovely spot, backing on to the large walled property of le Parc, which totals 140 hectares, enclosed by one large wall, which dates back to the Middle Ages and if you are looking carefully, you will see two sets of open gates crossing the road between Caux and Pézenas.



Christine and her régisseur, Jérôme, took us round the vineyards and we met her husband Stéphane later. His other career is the Intermarché in Pézenas. Christine explained that they have 9.5 hectares, planted with Grenache, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Sauvignon, with 15 hectares of land altogether, including some olive trees. The Cabernet Franc and Grenache are recent plantings, and the Carignan and Cinsaut will probably be pulled up. The Cabernet Franc is Stéphane's particular enthusiasm. They have carried out a lot of soil analysis; they have limestone and clay, some villevranchien and a little sand.



The previous owner sent his grapes to the Caux coop, so they needed build a cellar, a smart streamlined building, which was ready for the 2011 vintage. There is a brand new basket press, and cement vats are varying sizes, a couple of wooden tronconique vats, some stainless steel tanks, and they are also considering a couple of cement eggs. Barriques are in the adjoining cellar. Stéphane arrived at this point, and talk of the encouragement that he had been given by Vincent Puymbet from Domaine la Colombette. He had worked in Italy for a number of years and as a newcomer to the Languedoc, had simply not realised that the wines of the Languedoc could be so good. Their very first vintage was 2005; but 2006 was more serious.



First we tasted from vat and barrel :

2010 Cabernet Franc – deep colour; rounded nose with some oak, and on the palate ripe cherry fruit balanced with oak, acidity and tannin. It will be given a total eighteen months élevage, in a tronconique vat, in which it was also fermented.

2011 Cabernet Franc.  
This was fermented in a tronconique vat and was destined to go into barrel the next day. Deep colour; quite rich and concentrated. Very ripe berry fruit. Very good tannins. Amply rewarding Stéphane's enthusiasm.

There were a couple of vat samples of Syrah; one made by carbonic maceration was very perfumed with notes of tapenade and ripe cherry fruit, with a freshness and elegance. It was their first attempt at carbonic maceration and they were very pleased with the results, with its nice balance of acidity and tannin. The classic fermentation seemed heavier and riper in comparison.

They have experimented with various coopers, Dagaud & Jaegle, Seguin Moreau, Radoux, among others, as well as the Tonnellerie de Mercurey, which they particularly like. They usually ask for a chauffe moyen.



A barrel sample of Syrah was perfumed and peppery with nicely integrated oak. Next came two barrels of Syrah made by maceration carbonique, one was the vin de goutte, which was very perfumed and elegant, with a refreshing lightness, while the vin de presse had a more solid nose, with ripe fruit and supple tannins, and was more substantial than the vin de goutte. An interesting contrast to see them side by side.

And then we went on to bottles:

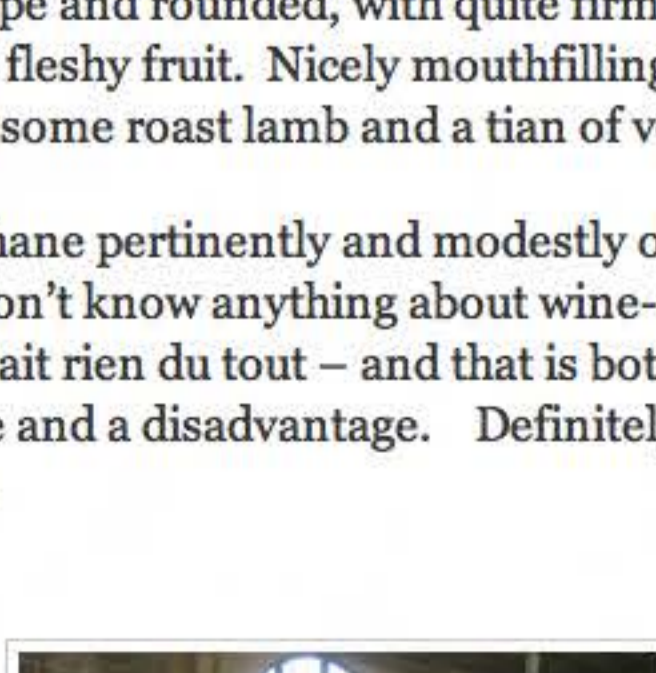
2011 Notes Frivoles, rosé IGP Caux – 6.00€  
1/3 each of Grenache, Carignan and Cabernet Franc, pressed. Very pretty pale colour. Delicate fresh nose and palate. Delicate dry and fresh. Delicious in the May sunshine.

2011 Notes Pures - 9.00€  
A pure Sauvignon. Light colour. Rounded oak nose, but with very good fruit underneath. Nicely crafted and satisfying. Should develop further in bottle.

2009 Notes d'Orphée, Pézenas – 9.00€  
Syrah with some Cinsaut. Élevage partly in barrel and partly in a stainless steel tank. Quite rounded and textured with satisfying layers of flavour and supple tannins.

2009 Sonatina, Pézenas – 12.00€  
Again, 90% Syrah with some Cinsaut. Fermented in a tronconique vat, with élevage in that and in barrel. Ripe and rounded, with quite firm tannins and some fleshy fruit. Nicely mouthfilling, and a treat with some roast lamb and a tian of vegetables.

And Stéphane pertinently and modestly observed that 'we don't know anything about wine-making' – on y connait rien du tout – and that is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Definitely an estate to follow.



ROSEMARY GEORGE MW

What qualifies me to write and comment on the Languedoc? Quite simply, I have been following its development for thirty years. I was one of the first women to pass the Master of Wine exams, back in 1979, and I became a freelance wine writer in 1981, since when I have written eleven books, covering not only the Languedoc, but also Chablis, Tuscany and New Zealand.

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

### WHY THE LANGUEDOC?

My very first visit to a wine cellar in the Languedoc was in 1979 and I have returned regularly since then, researching two books, firstly French Country Wines, and subsequently The Wines of the South of France, from Banyuls to Bellet. French Country Wines was published in 1990 and took me off the beaten track to many lost vineyards of France, but inevitably the Midi formed a large part of the book. In those days you sensed the beginnings of a revival in the fortunes of the region; some of the estates with a serious reputation today, were leading the way back in the 1980s, such as Gilbert Alquier in Faugères; Daniel Domergue in the Minervois; Domaine Cazes in Rivesaltes. Aimé Guibert had made his first vintage at Mas de Daumas Gassac in 1978 and set an unprecedented price expectation for a wine from the south of France. Alain Roux was making pace-setting wines at the Prieuré de St. Jean de Bébian. Other reputations have faded and many others were yet to be made. My visit to the Pic St. Loup focused on the cooperative at St. Mathieu de Tréviers, and on that cooperative alone. The leading names such as l'Hortus, Mas Bruguière, Mas de Mortiès, Clos Marie, or Domaine de Cazeneuve were as yet quite unknown. The same phenomenon applies to the village of Montpeyroux, whose wines were also represented by the village cooperative. At the time no one foresaw the enormous development that would take place in the 1990s. Nonetheless back then, the Languedoc intrigued me. On the last day of my last research trip for French Country Wines, back in October 1987, I had lunch in Narbonne with Claude Vialade, who was the export director for one of the big players of the region, les Vignerons Val d'Orbieu, an enormous marketing and export association of cooperatives and smaller wine producers. One of us said: there is a book to be written on the Languedoc. I mentally filed the idea and ten years on, and two or three books later, I embarked on The Wines of the South of France, which covered all the vineyards between the Spanish and Italian borders, including Provence as well as Languedoc Roussillon, and also the island of Corsica. The Wines of the South of France was published in 2001 and examines the vineyards of the Midi as they were on the eve of the millennium. I could write a second, comparable book, featuring only wine growers who have started making wine in this century. But these days it is impossible to keep abreast of the pace of change with the printed word; the region demands the immediacy of the web. Numerous research trips only served to fuel my enthusiasm for the wonderful region of the Languedoc. Holidays in gites between Perpignan and Druguignan, as well as snatched weekends in the middle of research trips, enabled my husband and I to decide on our favourite corner of the Languedoc. And in 2004 we bought a house within easy reach of the towns of Pézenas and Clermont l'Hérault, which gives me a wonderful base for visiting the local wine growers. Our village does not have a particular reputation for its wine, but many of the nearby villages do. We are in very easy reach of Faugères, St. Chinian, some of the highlights of the Coteaux du Languedoc and the new area of Pézenas, as well as the Vin de Pays des Côtes de Thongue, which is one of the more innovative of the numerous vins de pays of the region. So with this blog, I hope to keep abreast of some of the many new and exciting developments in the region

### INTRODUCTION TO THE LANGUEDOC

Why the Languedoc? Quite simply, it is without doubt the most exciting and innovative wine region of France. Everything is possible; the appellations may lay down ground rules, but the parallel vins de pays allow for unlimited experimentation, creating a host of new and exciting wines. Over the last twenty years or so this vast vineyard, which stretches from the Spanish border round to the delta of the Rhone has undergone a dramatic transformation, so that the wines have improved out of all recognition. And that pace of change continues unabated, with each vintage bringing new wine growers and new wines. Those are the wines and people I want to talk about, as well as old established favourites. And since wine goes with food, I do not intend to ignore the rich gastronomy of the region. And I also reserve the right occasionally to extend this blog beyond the confines of the Languedoc, into Provence and Corsica and maybe even further afield.

### USEFUL LANGUEDOC LINKS - AND OTHERS

- [A fellow MW's experiences in the Languedoc](#)
- [Creme de Languedoc - Everything you need to know about Languedoc](#)
- [For customised wine courses specialising in the Languedoc, conducted by an English MW for customised wine tours of this wonderful region.](#)
- [For help in house-hunting in the Languedoc](#)
- [If you are looking for self-catering accommodation](#)
- [Le Couvent, Roujan - The best best B&B in the Languedoc](#)
- [One of the best wine lists devoted to the Languedoc](#)
- [To help you plan vineyard visits all over France, and much more](#)
- [What's on in the Herault - and my weekly wine coup de coeur](#)

### BLOG ARCHIVE

- ▶ 2013 (3)
- ▼ 2012 (74)
  - ▶ December (4)
  - ▶ November (4)
  - ▶ October (4)
  - ▶ September (7)
  - ▶ August (7)
  - ▼ July (5)
    - [Domaine les Aurelles](#)
    - [Domaine Verena Wyss](#)
    - [The Faugeres Fete in 2012](#)
    - [Domaine de l'Escarpolette](#)
    - [Domaine Ste Cecile du Parc](#)

- ▶ June (5)
- ▶ May (7)
- ▶ April (6)
- ▶ March (12)
- ▶ February (9)
- ▶ January (4)

- ▶ 2011 (72)

- ▶ 2010 (79)
- ▶ 2009 (28)