



DOMAINE DE FONTBONAU

Domaine de Fontbonau is a 42 hectare estate located in a hilly and wild environment where 14 hectares of vineyards are the neighbour of little woods of truffle oak trees, safre rocks, junipers, olive trees and lavender fields. It is a privileged site in a locality south of the Drôme Provençale, which still houses a former Benedictine priory and its adjacent farm.



Two childhood friends and wine enthusiasts

"When I was 6, my grandfather Pons who was a wine merchant in Narbonne, introduced me to wine and its production, at 26 years old, I created a wine bar in Paris, Fontbonau came as a natural consequence." Frédéric Engerer
President of Château Latour in Pauillac for 15 years and more recently Domaine d'Eugénie in Vosne Romanée, Frédéric has developed a keen sense of expertise on *noble terroirs*, wine varietal expression, implementation of organic viticulture, wine ageing cares as well as on understanding the wine connoisseurs' tastes.'

"I always saw my grand father then my father and mother deeply attached to our family wine estate. In 1991, I started spending all my free time and holidays visiting wineries from all over France to get a deeper understanding of winemaking and at 30 years old, I took over the family Domaine." Jérôme Malet.

From the experience of arid lands of Roussillon where the Domaine Sarda-Malet is, Jérôme keeps as a goal to produce dry and sweet wines always more elegant and representative of the Catalan land. From year to year, he crafts new "cuvées" with unique personalities.

Childhood friends, Jérôme and Frédéric decided in 1997 to conduct a first joint wine experience: a mass selection of Cabernet Sauvignon is then planted in Roussillon and a rare wine, called Marius (Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes) is for the first time marketed in 2004. There are now some 4,000 bottles sold on the largest markets. In 2008, they embark on another human and wine experience and revive an estate graced by centuries of history, le *lieu-dit* Fontbonau. They assign the operational responsibility to Sophie Mage graduated from ENITA (National School of Agricultural Engineering) and winemaker.

"We took over the estate in April 2008, fascinated by the scene. We were equally impressed by its heritage as by the land where crooked feet of Grenache were deeply rooted. We could feel the potential there... while still being well aware of the work and investment to reach it." *Jérôme et Frédéric*



A historical and viticulture heritage to revive

Domaine de Fontbonau is located a few kilometers away from the Enclave des Papes, south of the Drôme Provençale. Not run at its fair value in recent years, yet the place has an extremely rich history. A Benedictine priory of the twelfth century with Carolingian foundation and built on a place of Gallo-Roman worship is adjacent to our plots of Syrah. Archaeological excavations have revealed traces of occupation of the site as early as in the Middle Neolithic (about 3000 BC) and in Early Bronze Age (about 1500 years BC). The farm is certified as an inhabited place in the fifteenth century and was very probably a dependency of the monastery. Fontbonau is also mentioned on the map of Cassini (old French map drawn in the 18th century on the orders of Louis XV), thus attesting the recognition of the locality at that time.

Preserved, wild, enchanting, the landscape of Fontbonau consists in 70 years old Grenache vines and 30 years syrah, truffle oaks, lavender and olive trees. Since our acquisition, we have been keen on constantly upgrading this place with all due respect to local traditional cultures.



Our old vines are rooted in soil comprised of sand, silt and fine clays. Poor soils but colonized by the root system of our strains, a rapid drainage during rainy weather but a useful reserve of precious water during summer droughts. The basement is made of safre, a mollasse sandstone which can easily crumbled and is composed of sand and sediment left by the inland seas in the secondary and tertiary eras.

We are fortunate to be nestled under the foothills of the Lance, some 350 meters above sea level, which protects us from excess heat and balances our wines.

The Mistral is another important component of this terroir, it often obliges Sophie to spray our vines before 6 o'clock in the morning. He sweeps our plots, dry soil after the rain, concentrates berries and allows us to keep healthy grapes.

Due to their exposure to sun and to Mistral, their altitude and slight variations in soil, we are dealing with a mosaic of parcels. None forms a large island, each is different and it is therefore natural that we adapt and vinified them, in separate tanks to best express their terroir.

The word from Sophie:

"When I visited the domain for the first time, a morning of spring 2008, I had a "coup de coeur". The weather was beautiful but the wind blew, as if to warn me that here, I will everyday have to deal with this wind which is said to make you go crazy!"

Vines meticulously cared for by organic practices

From the first year on, we tied up ourselves into the vineyard restructuration.

Improvement of the plots' drainage, precise studies of our soils, implementation of a program to rebalance the parcels and their utilisation in line with what we wished to produce, plantation of 2,5 acres (1 hectare) of Roussanne and Viognier and Cabernet Sauvignon in 2010.

To maintain a balance with the local traditional cultures, we also re-planted olive trees on well exposed slopes and we are gradually integrating a truffle field in the middle of our parcels of vines.

In parallel, we proceed with a regular mechanical ploughing of our soils, an organic pest and disease control and with a differentiated management of the canopy surface our vine. These mechanical ploughing enables a better oxygenation of the soil, helps to the development of beneficial fauna and flora and provide better rooting of the vines: vines can draw its water and mineral resources over a greater depth and are less sensitive to climatic hazards.

Our Grenache are mostly goblet pruned, this gives them a greater resistance to wind strength and a better aeration of the vine and thus the future harvest.

In addition to these treatments, a meticulous care is given to the leaf surface. Our goal is to optimize the grapes loads by foot, to help to the maturation of healthy grapes when this is the most appropriate time in the cycle of the vine. We therefore conduct, when appropriate, trimming, leaf thinning and cluster selection.

The combination of a solar terroir and the painstaking work that we do, inevitably involves small yields.



A thoughtful cellar

Throughout this adventure, building a winery on the property was not the least of our challenges. To awaken this sleeping beauty, we must offer it a vat room and an ageing cellar. We deliberately opted for a contemporary architecture. The building produces enough electricity for its operation and we collect all the waters.

Our first requirement was to pursue as natural a winemaking style as possible, allowing the characteristics and aromas of the grapes to express at its best.

Thus for example, we sized our vats according to the size of the parcels so that each can be vinified separately and, subsequently, drained into separate barrels. During the blending, we will judge the quality of each of them and we will allow ourselves not to integrate some barrels.

The harvest is a key step. The sorting of the grapes is done within the parcel by well trained harvesters and carriers. We also carry a second sorting at the end of the row.

Afterwards, from the reception of the grapes till their barrel aging, we favour a traditional winemaking during which grapes and then juice is treated with the mildest manner possible, depending on their maturity, their potential (tannins' quality, colours and aromas concentration). Also, we limit as much as possible any berries moves: all our equipment for reception of the harvest, for de-stemming and for pressing is movable. The wine is then drained into barrels by gravity.

We wish for extracting a beautiful substance by respecting the crop. In this perspective, we can possibly proceed with a small cold pre-fermentation maceration to extract noble colours and aromas. During the fermentation and maceration, we alternate between pump-over and soft manual punching down of the cap. The frequency and duration of these measures as well as the choice of either of these techniques will always be determined according to the evolution of the quality of the musts perceived by our daily tastings. We seek a balance between structure, fine tannins, expression of the typical varietal aromas and fruit freshness.

After a 12 month ageing in barrel, the wines are bottled without fining or filtration thus preserving the expression of the wine.



A short summary of Fontbonau:

Soil:	sand and silt with fine clay
Altitude:	350 meters
Grape varieties:	Red: 20 acres (8.5 ha) of Grenache, Syrah 7,5 acres (3 ha) Plantations 2010 syrah 2,5 acres (1 ha) and cabernet sauvignon 1,7 acres (0.7 ha) White (planted in 2009): Roussane 2,2 acres(0.9 ha); 0,25 acres(0.1 ha) of Viogner
Average age of vines:	70 years for Grenache, 30 years for Syrah
Density:	3500 vines per hectare for cordon pruning, 4000 for gobelets and 6000 for new plantation
Yield:	12 to 25 hl / hectare
Vinification:	cold pre-fermentation maceration, alcoholic fermentation and maceration hence a total of 20 to 30 days with alternate punch down and pump over, soft pressing with re- integration of press wine into the free- run wine depending on their quality, malolactic fermentation in vats or barrels
Maturing:	12 months: 10% new oak, 90% barrels of one or two wines and some demi-muids of 600L
Production:	6.500 bottles in 2008, 21.000 in 2009

The 2009, a superb vintage to inaugurate our new cellar:

2009 was a rather warm year. It was also marked by low rainfalls until the end of August. Quickly praised by the press, this was nevertheless a year for which the characteristics of the terroir and the winemakers' work played a crucial role.



Budbreak occurred quite late, indeed the first leaves were not visible until 22nd of April, but the growing cycle was then quite fast and the year was announced as relatively early.

The flowering took place under a perfect weather.

Until the end of August, the weather was particularly sunny and warm punctuated by very little and rare rainfall. At Fontbonau thanks to our sandy loam soils, well supplied with water in the early season, and to deep rooting, our old vines have adapted well, even during the brief heat wave of August.

The return of rain and cooler nights in late August helped accelerating the synthesis of tannins and anthocyanins. Nestled under the foothills of the Lance, we benefit from a large temperature amplitude between day and night, this is essential to the development of the complexity of Grenache varietal.

The few rain events in early September had no impact on the sanitary aspect of the grapes, a leaf thinning was performed in early August and again in early September on the vines with a denser vegetation. The benefactor wind Mistral, who blows into the Rhone valley from the northwest, was able to dry the grapes and we were able to wait for optimal ripeness.

The harvest took place on September 21st and 22nd for Syrah and from the 23rd September to the 1st of October for the Grenache. Each plot was harvested manually. The pickers carefully sorted the grapes in the vineyards so only ripe and healthy grapes got into the vats.

Our new building and its facilities were ready just on time for the start of the harvest and were totally effective and functional. We harvested and vinified 210hl of crop.

This 2009 vintage was announced as warm and exuberant, we were so very keen on balancing these two characteristics with as much freshness and purity as possible, similarly to our 2008 style. We decided to focus our winemaking on a lower oxygenation of our musts to keep fresh and pure fruit aromas.

The wines were drained in barrels or half barrels in mid-December, still separating the plots to be more precise when making the final blend. Only 70% of the barrels, the most elegant and complex, have indeed been selected to be part of our first wine.

Analytical characteristics of the wine:

Alcohol content: 15% vol.

Tasting notes:

Intense dark red color with purple hues, Fontbonau 2009 is characterized on the nose by a complex combination of red fruits, berries and spicy aromas. On the palate, a powerful structure with lots of finesse supports a gourmet wine, fruity with hints of roasted coffee beans aromas. Rich and concentrated, this vintage offers a nice balance and excellent length.