

Château Combel-la-Serre

Profile

Julien Ilbert is a young, charismatic vigneron with a fresh perspective on his native Cahors. Vines have been in the Ilbert family for generations, though grapes had always been sold to the local cave coopérative. In 1998, Julien decided to break off and start his own estate. Things didn't exactly go according to plan, and a chance meeting with Mathieu Cosse at a rugby match quickly led to a seven year relationship, with Julien being Mathieu's main source for high quality Auxerrois (aka Malbec, aka Côt).

After an amicable split in 2005, Julien was back on track to producing his own wines, and Château Combel-la-Serre was born. 25 hectares of Auxerrois are planted on a diverse amount of terroirs, all within 5 kilometers of the cellar. Though a Cahors wine only needs to be 70% Auxerrois to get the appellation, Julien believes it is the only grape suitable for what he's trying to accomplish. In such he has consciously avoided planting the traditional Negrette and Tannat, while completely eschewing the more recent trend of planting Bordeaux varietals.

The estate is certified organic as of the 2015 vintage, but chemicals have not touched the vineyards for quite some time. Everything was conventionally farmed from the advent of such technology, but the death of Julien's grandfather from Parkinsons deeply affected the family's agricultural philosophy. Convinced that the chemicals he'd openly exposed himself day in and day out were at the root of his illness (on top of the vines, an additional 40 hectares of cereals were worked by the family at the time), the Ilberts stopped using these products on their land.

The wines have also evolved in the decade since Julien launched his own estate, culminating in what we now get to enjoy in our glasses. Though you should never judge a book by its cover, Julien has made the decision to design playful labels and bottle the wines in Burgundian bottles, two seemingly superficial details that are actually a very bold statement in the ultra-traditional mindset of most Cahors producers.

As far as the wines, we will start importing the following three, with more cuvées on the way.

Le Pur Fruit du Causse: cement vinified and aged, fresh and delicious.

Château Combel-la-Serre: a little warmer and more serious, some cement, some steel and some fiberglass vinifications assembled quickly after malo and aged together in stainless for one year and then in older barriques for another year.

Le Lac Aux Cochons 2012: From a distinct parcel and one of his best sites, 90 year old vines are grown in limestone and clay with a high amount of iron component. Aged 2 yrs in demi-muids.