Mas des Chimères

Profile

For over 20 years, Guilhem Dardé meticulously tended his family vineyards and brought his grapes to the local coop to be blended with the overproduction of his neighbors. Finally, he bought winemaking equipment, scandalized the village and struck out on his own. With the 1993 vintage, he tasted his own wine for the first time.

A self-described *paysan-vigneron*, Dardé approaches vinification with enthusiasm. His Coteaux is a blend of about 70% Syrah, 20% Grenache and 5% each Cinsault and Mourvèdre; the proportions vary according to the vintage. This wine is dark purple, with a ripe nose of cloves, cinnamon and coffee, is spicy and concentrated on the palate. The considerable amount of tannin is balanced by rich, soft matter and the finish is long, with notes of licorice, coffee and kirsch. This wine is aged in barriques and bottled unfined and unfiltered. The abundance of pigments and solid matter results in a noticeable sediment in the bottle.

Traditional methods are used in the vineyards: plowing, only copper and sulfur treatments, and manual harvesting. In this remote corner of the Coteaux-du-Languedoc appellation, vines grow on strips of clay/schist/granite soils forming terraces on the arid, strikingly red slopes (which indicates decomposed basaltic slate, colored by iron). Poor soil and dry harsh weather conditions ensure low yields and high concentration.

Dardé makes a series of other wines, but small quantities and success mean that none reach America. Among those, *L'Oeillade*, made from Cinsault, is light and fruity, perfect for a summer wine; *L'Hérétique*, a blend of Merlot and Cabernet, is a big, powerful, tannic wine; *L'Ephémère*, made with Carignan, Grenache, Cabernet and Mourvèdre, is ripe, light and round; *Cuvée Marie & Joseph* (named after Dardé's parents), from Carignan and Grenache, is big and spicy. The name of the estate means *House of Chimeras*, and aptly describes the amount of faith, dreaming and daring it took Dardé to change his life and become a winemaker.

Finding great winemakers like Dardé makes this a fun business!