

Domaine Marcel Richaud

Profile

Cairanne produces many of the best wines made in the vast Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages area due to a group of talented and dedicated winemakers and good terroir. Situated atop a range of low hills, with perfect exposure, looking east over the plain between the Aigues and Ouvèze rivers, the elevation ensures slightly cooler temperatures than on the Plan de Dieu, (as the plain below is known), where the summer heat is usually extreme.

Marie and Marcel Richaud run Domaine Marcel Richaud, with Marcel as winemaker and Marie as manager. Marcel tends 40 hectares of vines, his own or his neighbors', and vinifies the grapes of about half this surface. His estate is made up of plots inherited from his parents and of rented parcels, so some grapes are sold to the local coop or to négociants. There are less Grenache vines than on most estates of the area, just 25% of the varietals grown, and the same amount of Syrah and Mourvèdre. The remainder of the estate is 10% Cinsault and 15% various local varietals. This mix is one of the reasons why Richaud's wines have such great balance and finesse. Mourvèdre especially plays an important role in toning down the alcohol degree that Grenache easily reaches in a warm year: it requires more sun and later picking, and in Cairanne it is at the northern edge of its growing region. As is often the case, a varietal gives its best and most nuanced in such "border" territory, witness red Burgundies and red Touraines from Cabernet Franc.

The focus is on harvesting a healthy and ripe crop, and the wines are made in large capacity cement vats, each varietal vinified apart until a blend is done, about 8 months later. In 2000, a bottle and barrel cellar was built of yellow sandstone blocks (from the Pont du Gard quarry), and Marcel is taking great pleasure in experimenting with new and not so new casks on small cuvées.

The first cuvée is called Terres Aigues, from younger Grenache and Carignan vines growing on alluvial soil along the river Aigues. This wine is fresh and fruity, with lovely cherry notes. The Côtes-du-Rhône les Garrigues comes from a mix of plots and vines of Syrah and Grenache 10 to 40 years of age growing on red clay and round stones. It is spicy, ripe and peppery, with more structure. The cuvée of Cairanne aims to express the village's terroir, and is made from Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre from poor, stony clay-limestone mid-slope plots. It is rich, very peppery, with complex fruit and spices, licorice and cherries.