

Eric Texier

Profile

Eric Texier became a winemaker after a first career and without any family background in vines or wines. As such, his goals and methods developed not so much from his years of schooling, but from his readings, his visiting winemakers around the world, and working in Burgundy with Jean-Marie Guffens at Verget.

After giving up the idea of buying vineyards, which was too costly a proposition for a beginner with his ambitions, he started a small *négoce* where he selected particularly interesting vineyard plots and the sincere, hard-working farmers who grew the healthy grapes he wanted to buy and vinify. He rediscovered nearly forgotten areas of ancient fame, like Brézème in the northern Côtes-du-Rhône, and nurtured relationships with people who tend their vines with passion and care. He has since acquired plots in Côte Rôtie and Condrieu in the northern Rhône, and replanted several hectares in Brézème, with Syrah and Roussanne.

That's how he came to produce about 30 different wines, from 10 different origins, from Bussièeres in the Mâconnais to the northern Rhône and the southern Côtes-du-Rhône. The wines are vinified in their areas of production, which means a lot of juggling tasks and traveling at the time of harvest. When they have obtained their AOC, the young wines are transported to Charnay-en-Beaujolais, just north of Lyon, where Eric lives and has recently acquired a wonderful *élevage* cellar. This beautiful underground vaulted cellar was built in the 16th century, and temperatures stay cool and stable through the year.

Like all good winemakers, Eric strongly believes that wines are made in the vineyard, and that his work, after the harvest, consists in following the lead of the vintage, and accompanying the wines so they fulfill their potential. Exact steps in vinification vary according to the varietals, terroirs and vintages, but the goal is always to provide the grapes, musts and wines with the best environment and intervene as little as possible.

His techniques for white wines include sorting in the vines and at the winery, whole clusters pressed in a vertical press (that's the old fashioned wood kind), no added yeasts, barrel fermentation (less than 10% new wood), aging on fine lees, malolactic fermentation for all dry wines, minimal use of SO₂, no pumping, fining and filtration only when absolutely necessary.

For his red wines, he does the same sorting at harvest, 100% destemming most of the time, bringing the grapes to the press by conveyer belts, cold maceration under a CO₂ blanket for aromatic extraction, natural yeasts, pigeage and remontage twice a day, during maceration and fermentation. The temperatures are controlled not to exceed 34 degrees C (93F), aging is done in 2 to 5 year old barrels of 228L and demi-muids of 450L, with only limited use of new oak, no filtration and egg white fining only when necessary.

A Bordeaux native who has lived in or around Lyon since 1979, Eric is a jovial, energetic and fun-loving person who wants his wines to make their drinkers happy. He's always looking to innovate, and, since he loves German wines, he started emulating them in 2005 by vinifying Viognier grapes from Condrieu as if they were Riesling. Ô Pâle is 8 degrees of alcohol, sweet and light, with fresh acidity and delicate aromas. Unfortunately, in 2006 his Viognier grapes ripened so quickly that most

were already too high in sugar when he started the harvest, and this delicious and whimsical wine is going to be even harder to acquire.