

# Terre des Chardons

## Profile

Terre des Chardons is a 9HA estate belonging to the Chardon family, who also runs the separate Domaine Sainte-Marie-des-Costières, in the village of Bellegarde, between the cities of Arles and Nîmes. This area, still part of the Rhône wine region, is a border between Provence and Languedoc.

The Chardon family settled there in 1983, and turned to organic methods in 1987, then to biodynamic practices in 2002. The soils are essentially "*galets roulés*", round stones left by ancient glaciers like in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, locally called gress. The village of Bellegarde is sometimes called "little Châteauneuf".

In 2003, the winemaking facility and cellar was built from local stones, similar to those of Pont-du-Gard (the Roman aqueduct, which brought water to the city of Nîmes and had to bridge the river Gard, is still standing.) The other materials used in construction are traditional local tiles and cork sheets for insulation.

The vines are Clairette for the white cuvées, and Syrah and Grenache for the reds. They are trained on *treillissage* to better resist the strong North wind (Mistral) that blows almost constantly in the area. The newest plantings of Clairette and Grenache are in "gobelets", or self-standing bushes, for better penetration of sun and wind. Syrah is more breakable and needs support. The stones accumulate heat during the day and keep the vines warm at night; the Mistral is the cooling factor.

The red cuvée *Marginal* is made from 90% Syrah and 10% Grenache. The grapes are selected on the stoniest plots, harvested by hand in small boxes, and destemmed but not crushed. No sulfites are added to the crop and the maceration lasts 20 to 30 days. The pressing is done with an old-fashioned vertical hydraulic press with wood walls, of the type that was common in Champagne in the past. The wine is then aged in cement tanks on its fine lees, and bottled about 9 months after the harvest, without filtration.