

Dard & Ribo

Profile

René-Jean Dard and François Ribo started their estate in 1984 in a back street of Tain-l'Hermitage. There was about 1HA from Dard's family, all the rest was rented or slowly acquired over the years.

Born in the towns that face each other across the Rhône River, Tournon in the Ardèche and Tain-l'Hermitage in the Drôme, Dard and Ribo met in wine school in Beaune in their late teens. They work 7.5HA of vines scattered over 7 villages, with most of their holdings in Crozes-Hermitage, some in St-Joseph and a slice of Hermitage.

In their cellar, part of a large farm building in the hamlet of Blanche-Laine in Mercurol, they craft subtle, unextracted Syrah for immediate enjoyment, and several whites from Roussanne and Marsanne. "What we like is natural wine because it's alive, wine that does not necessarily have to be kept - just drunk and drunk again." (François Ribo, quoted in John Livingstone-Learmonth's *The Wines of the Northern Rhône*, p.382)

What is different with them is that they view Syrah as a grape giving elegant and pleasant wines, rather than sturdy, big, tannic wines. They want their wines to taste well quickly, not after years of cellaring to dissipate hard tannins. They even make a cuvée called "*C'est le Printemps*" that is released in the spring following the harvest, almost like a nouveau of Syrah. They tend to vinify by plot, because they have such a wide varieties of terroir and vine ages.

Among the regular cuvées is a Crozes-Hermitage red from plots located mainly in Larnage, on red clay with gravel and alluvial stones. The white Crozes is a blend of Roussanne and Marsanne planted on a mix of glacial alluvial deposits, rolled stones and red clay. The Saint-Joseph red comes from different plots of sandy granite, red clay and gore (decomposed granite.) The St-Jo white is only Roussanne, an exception in an AOC where Marsanne dominates.

The *spéciales* include the Crozes Les Bâties from 2HA in red clay; the Crozes Pé de Loup from a soil of white gravel with kaolin (white clay); the white Crozes Les Karrières, from very old Marsanne growing on kaolin; "K", from the same plot, when the vintage allows.

Also, from St-Joseph, the cuvée Pitrou, made from late-picked Roussanne when the season is right, and the grapes concentrate to a yield of 20HL/HA. If the weather is not exceptional, these grapes go into the Les Champs, the regular white St-Jo.