

Yannick Pelletier

Profile

Yannick Pelletier's estate currently consists of 10 ha in the Saint Chinian AOC that he has been working with since January 2004. He currently grows four varieties: Syrah (15%), Mourvedre (5%), Grenache (50%), Cinsault (16%) and Carignan (14%), and has recently acquired 0.5 ha of 50 year old Terret Blanc vines which he plans on vinifying by 2011. The parcels are relatively distant from each other which lets him take advantage of many different types of terroirs: 65% schist, 23% clay and limestone and 12% round stones. The youngest vines are 15, the oldest 70. The vines are in their third year of conversion to organic agriculture.

For the most part Yannick does goblet pruning in the vines, which applies to the Grenache, Carignan and Cinsault. The Syrah is trained in Cordon de Royat, and normally he leaves six to eight spurs with one bud each.

The soil is worked with one or two plowings and a possible hoeing by hand. He fertilizes the soil with an organic compost; about 500 to 1500 kilos per hectare. Yannick and his team do as much of the work as they can manually, for what he describes as two reasons: the work is more thorough than if done mechanically, and also avoids the passage of tractors which pack down the soil.

Pelletier's property is relatively small; about half the size of the average estate in his area. In his own words: "This would allow me to mechanize all the work and not employ anybody. If I did this, however, the wine wouldn't be made as well and wouldn't taste the same. You need one person for pruning, two people for debudding, six for the harvest and four to sort the grapes, not to mention the occasional help of friends and family."

To protect the foliage, he uses contact treatments, copper and sulphur, that don't penetrate the plant and therefore are not present in the grape.

Debudding, or green pruning, is the most important work done in the spring. It entails eliminating non fruit-bearing shoots (called gourmands, or suckers) or those which grew in the wrong spot, especially in the center of the vine. This allows air to circulate through the plant, control yields and concentrate the sap for the best shoots.

Pelletier's guiding principle in the winemaking process is to preserve the integrity of the grapes and wine: manual sorting of the grapes, use of gravity (yes!), indigenous yeasts. If the grapes are clean, pure, healthy and of good quality, he sees no reason to alter them with chemicals or oenology.

Yannick's wines are made, aged and bottled without sulfites. They are not fined or filtered and should be stocked in a room or cellar that does not exceed 18 C (64.4 F).



St. Chinian Schist