

Yannick Pelletier

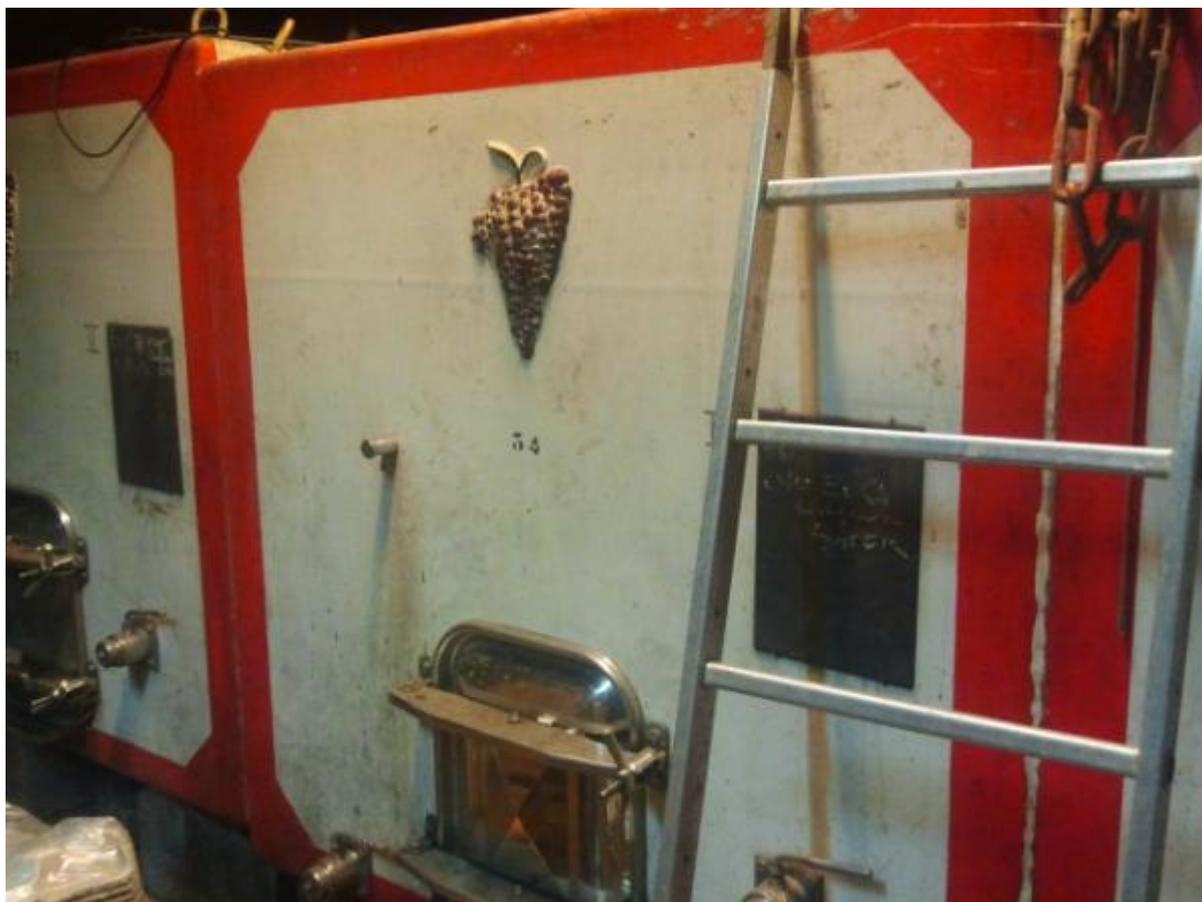
Visits

This visit with Yannick Pelletier took place in July, 2012.



Words and photos by Jules Dressner.

After meeting Yannick in front of his cellar, we stepped in to taste the unfinished 2011's. Nothing had been bottled or blended yet, but this should be happening soon to make room for the 2012 harvest. With the exception of a few old barrels and some fiberglass, the vast majority of Yannick's wine is vinified in large cement tanks.



We started by tasting some Terret Blanc and Terret Gris harvested in late October. The alcohol was surprisingly low, only 12.3%. Some of this is fermented in fiberglass, the rest in wood to add structure. It will be bottled as *L'R de Rien*, a crisp table wine that hasn't made it stateside yet (for quantity reasons).



Next we tasted Cinsault from different concrete tanks; Yannick believes these will all turn up in the 2011 *Oiselet*. The prominent characteristics were red fruit on the nose and palate, with a nice tannic structure and finish. We also tasted a fiberglass fermented Grenache that will probably end up in *L'Engouvement* -it was showing darker and deeper fruit. We ended on some Grenache Gris from barrel: it had a smoked meat quality on the nose, was a little marked by the oak, but overall showed concentrated fruit and a tannic finish.

After tasting the 2011's, Yannick proposed we revisit 2010 with lunch at [Cave Saint Martin](#), an excellent wine bar, retailer and restaurant in the neighboring town of Roquebrun.



This place is run by the infamous Raymond Lecoq, the guy who sells his charcuteries to all of our favorite restaurants in France. Also, our waitress was none other than Marcel Lapierre's daughter Camille! Lunch consisted of a lot of seasonal, local fish and various forms of pork and cheese. Yannick loves the fact that a place like this exists so close to his house.

"In the summer, I eat here almost everyday for lunch."

Denyse and I hadn't seen Yannick since the *Dive Bouteille*, so it was a good time to catch up. Fresh with memories of the Roussillon, I started describing the great energy I felt there: the ever increasing amount of estates starting up or converting to organic viticulture/minimal intervention winemaking, everyone getting along and helping each other out, the enthusiasm to break free of the region's bad reputation... Yannick -while happy to hear about this- informed us that the good vibes haven't really spread up North yet.

"We are maybe two or three here (Saint-Chinian) who have the same priorities."

Case in point: the Saint-Chinian A.O.C board recently declassified the 2010 *Oiselet* into a *Vin de France*. Why? Because Yannick used more Cinsault than is legally allowed in the blend...

This puts him in a tough position: though all his good customers still bought the wine, not having the AOC can have devastating effects on sales, particularly in France. Still, Yannick is considering intentionally declassifying all his cuvées in future vintages. It's a decision many of our growers have made in the past: it's a risk, but at least it gives them the freedom to make the wines they want to make. Either way, Yannick doesn't see his relationship with the INAO getting any better.

"I can feel that the AOC has a problem with me, and I don't want to fight to be accepted in an institution that doesn't want me around."

After lunch, it was vineyard time! First stop, Yannick's only Mourvèdre vines.





These are grown on very dry clay and limestone. The vines were acquired in 2009, and are 30 years old. The Mourvèdre ends up being blended into the *Cocci-grues*. For the last year, Yannick has been experimenting with biodynamic techniques, and wants to start making the preparations himself.

Next, we visited a schist parcel, a mix of 60 year old Carignan and Grenache vines on the top and some much younger Syrah vines at the bottom.





In the case of these schist soils, the first 30 centimeters are very hard stone. But once you get past those, the schists are completely shattered, so this where the vines' roots truly take. The Carigan portion is particularly rocky.

Next was Yannick's baby, a parcel of Grenache Blanc and Grenache Gris he completely planted himself.



These were planted last April on schist and clay. 63 ares total. The soils here had been resting for 15 years, which was a big factor in Yannick's purchase. The other? A very nice panoramic view!



The last site we saw was Grenache on dark clay. This parcel is in an isolated clos.



