



# Château de la Selve

Ardèche, France

## History of the Winery

The castle around which the domaine is planted is a historic one, originally built in the 13th century as a stronghold at the borders of the Empire and the Kingdom of France, then used as a hunting lodge by the illustrious Ducs de Joyeuse family, before becoming a working farm over the next few centuries. It was bought by Benoît's parents in the 1990s, and modernized into its current form by Benoît and his wife Florence after he graduated from Beaune wine school in 2002. Today, the estate is made up of 44 hectares of vines in the IGP Coteaux de l'Ardèche, all of which are farmed organically and biodynamically.

## JS & Château de la Selve

We connected with this winery through a group that they run called Vignerons de Nature, a collective of wineries around France that are all dedicated to low-intervention farming and winemaking. The group is headed by Benoît and his estate is the location where they all store their wine together, making them a dream group to work with for any boutique importer like Julian Sinclair! Other members of this group in our portfolio are Domaine Duseigneur and Louis Chenu Père et Filles. We first met Benoît at the BIOTop wine fair in Montpellier, one of the smaller fairs that pops up around MillesimeBIO to showcase low-intervention wines. A year later in early 2023, we had the opportunity to visit the estate. Benoît, who is a charming fast-talker, headed straight into the vines waxing poetically in Français about this wild Ardechois terroir, which is arguably one of the least-tamed in France, planted to rocky, rolling hillsides and peppered between national parks featuring steep, swimmable river gorges where French adventure-seekers come for their summer holidays. We visited the cellar to see the impressive range of vessels that the estate uses for its wines, a delightful mix of old and new

barrels, tanks, and amphora. They are a large estate for Ardèche, and for organic/biodynamic farming, to which they are extremely committed. Benoît told us that they have just acquired a second 40-hectare vineyard nearby, so stay tuned for new projects from these fine folks!

## Viticulture

The estate is planted in five different parcels, all on limestone and clay soils. The parcels are on gentle slopes between 100-200m in altitude. The climate in this part of Ardèche is a mediterranean one, with substantial diurnal shift that allows for remarkable freshness in the wines despite the hot daytime temperatures. There is a permanent team of seven people who oversee the farming year-round, joined by an additional seasonal crew of 12 who aid in the winter pruning and the late-summer harvest. They grow five grape varieties: cinsault, syrah, grenache, cabernet sauvignon, and viognier, all of which range between 15-50 years old. The entire estate is certified organic and biodynamic.

## Vinification

- Spontaneous fermentation with indigenous yeasts for all wines
- All wines are fermented/aged in cement, amphora, barrels, or a combination of these vessels
- None of the wines are fined, some cuvees are lightly filtered, others are not.
- No fining
- Minimal SO<sub>2</sub> is used

## Wines

### **Petite Selve Blanc 2022**

100% Viognier, From two parcels totaling 3 hectares, called "La Selve" and "Les Blaches," both planted at 110m, on clay and pebbly soils. Vines are around 15 years old. Grapes are picked early, as soon as they reach maturity, and are pressed directly. Fermentation with indigenous yeasts in small cement tanks. Aged post-ferment for 4 months in the same tanks, on fine lees. SO<sub>2</sub> 60mg/L.

### **St. Regis Blanc 2021**

From a pebbly site called "Les Blaches" at 110m in altitude next to the river, on pebbly soils. 100% Viognier from 19 year-old vines. Picked as soon as the grapes are mature to maintain acidity, and direct pressed. Fermented in concrete and aged 50% in amphora and 50% in barrels. Minimal SO<sub>2</sub>. 12% ABV.

### **Maguelonne Rose 2022**

40% Cinsault, 30% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 5% Viognier. From a 15 hectare plot made up of a few parcels of 30-year old vines. The first parcel "Serre de Brujas" is a hillside parcel of 121m to 131m, planted to Montmorillonite clay soils (clays from Mont Morillon) and limestone soils. The second parcel is "Serre de Berty II, III, and IV," a hillside parcel a little lower in altitude with the

same soil types. The third parcel, “Rouvière Boissy,” is a hillside parcel a little higher in altitude (up to 153m) with soil of decomposed limestone and illite clay. The final parcel “La Selve” is at 110m altitude and is Kaolinite clay soils. Grapes are directly pressed and fermented with indigenous yeasts in cement. Aged 4 months in cement on fine lees. 40mg/L so2. 12% ABV.

### **Rose “Audacieuse” 2021**

A parcel selection from the Serre de Brujas and Serre de Berty sites, which both sit between 110-135m in altitude on calcareous and Montmorillonite clay soils. The total vineyard area for this wine is 4 hectares, and the average vine age is 45 years old. 60% Syrah, 20% Grenache, 20% Viognier. The grapes are direct pressed following harvest and they make a selection of the juices. 70% of the blend is fermented/aged in demi-muids between 1-6 years old and 30% of the blend is fermented/aged in clay amphora. Light batonnage at the end of the fermentation, then aged on fine lees in the same vessels, lightly filtered, total SO2 50mg/L. 13% ABV.

### **Petite Selve Rouge 2022**

From three sites, “Palissaire,” “La Selve,” and “Rouviere Boissy.” The sites range from 110-153m and contain a mix of decomposed limestone, illite clay, kaolinite clay, and limestone soils. The blend is 40% Cinsault, 40% Grenache, and 20% Syrah, from vines that are an average of 30 years old. The grapes are destemmed after harvest and fermented with indigenous yeast, with daily punchdowns and cap-wetting, for around 20 days. The wine is lightly filtered and gets 25mg/L so2. Unfiltered. 13% ABV.

### **Serre de Berty 2019**

From the parcels “Serre de Berty” and “Serre de Brujas,” which are planted between 110m-135m and are limestone, decomposed limestone, and clay (kaolinite and montmorillonite). Vines are 35 years old on average. 50% Syrah, 30% Grenache, 20% Cinsault. After harvest, grapes are destemmed, though some stems from the Cinsault are reintroduced. Fermented with indigenous yeasts, maceration for 40 days, 70% in tank and 30% in open wooden tanks with daily punchdowns. Aged for 18 months, 80% in barrels 1-5 years old and 20% in amphora. This wine is not filtered. Total SO2 22mg/L. 14% ABV.

### **Beaulieu 2020**

From three sites: “Bois Reydon” for the 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, planted at 135m on montmorillonite clay and 15% limestone soils, “Rouviere Boissy” and “Brugeas” for the other varieties (25% Grenache, 25% Cinsault), these two sites are located between 136-161m in altitude and are planted to the same soils, plus some decomposed limestone and illite clay. Vines are 30 years old on average. Grapes are destemmed and fermented with indigenous yeasts. The Cabernet is in tank macerating for 40 days with daily punchdowns. The other varieties are the press juice from Petite Selves and Berty. The wine is aged for 12 months in 50% amphora and 50% 1-5 year-old barrels. Unfiltered. Total so2 is 20mg/L. 14% ABV.