

La Bancale

Fenouillèdes
Roussillon, France

History of the Domaine

Both lovers of nature, Bastien and Céline met as teenagers in their native northern France. They moved to Languedoc in their early twenties to study and work in agriculture. They both worked at estates around both Languedoc and Roussillon, developing a passion for native varieties and the wild old bush vines of southern France. While interning with Jean-Louis Tribouley and Domaine de l'Auseil in the village of Latour-de-France in the eastern part of the Agly Valley, they fell in love with the cooler climate and complex terroirs of the Fenouillèdes, and sought out their own vineyards, purchasing their first hectare in 2014. Since then, they have carefully added plots and today have around 5 hectares total, spread over different communes. The philosophy of the estate is to express the unique terroirs of their part of Roussillon and the quality of the native grapes. To this end, they make their wine as naturally as possible, using a hands-off approach in the vineyards and in the cellar.

Julian Sinclair & La Bancale

We met Bastien at the Roots66 Wine Fair in Montpellier in early 2022. He was the second booth we visited, and his wines stuck with us throughout the rest of the day. Bastien himself is thoughtful, soft-spoken, but direct, speaking passionately about his corner of Roussillon, a region that we are rapidly falling in love with ourselves. We were struck by the complexity and purity of the wines, especially for a winery that has been producing for under a decade. We look forward to seeing what Bastien and Céline create in the coming years.

Viticulture & Winemaking

Nearly all of the 7 hectares of La Bancale's vines are planted to native, 70+ year-old, head trained bush vines. The exceptions are some trellised Syrah, two plots of Macabeu planted in 1980, and some younger vines of Grenache Gris. Soils are either decomposed granite or black schist and marl. Some of the plots are co-planted with red and white varieties. Everything is farmed organically and the estate is in the process of obtaining its organic certification. They do some minimal tilling with a tractor, but all the vineyard labor is otherwise done by hand. The vines themselves are spread over the following communes: Trilla, Lesquerdes, Prugnanes, Maury, and Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet, where the cellar is located.

In the cellar, very little intervention is used. Yeasts are always indigenous, and any barrels that are used are neutral. Filtering is done very gently on cellulose plates, a method called "degrossissante", which removes the coarse lees but not the fine lees, and lets yeast and bacteria through. Fining is not used. Sulfur additions are likewise very minimal and made only as necessary.

Wines



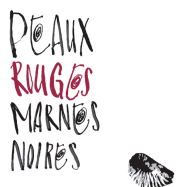
Chair Blanche Marnes Noires 2022

50% Grenache Gris and 50% Macabeu from a single plot. The Grenache Gris is composed of younger vines of 13 years and older vines of 71 years. The Macabeu vines are 43 years-old. The soils are calcareous black shale called Calschistes d'Albien. The grapes from both varieties are harvested together and blended right away during pressing. The juice undergoes one night of cold settling in stainless steel tanks, and is then racked off the gross lees into a fiberglass vat. Fermentation begins spontaneously and takes about a month to finish malolactic fermentation without any lees stirring. After fermentation, the wine is racked off the fine lees and is given a small 19ppm dose of sulfur. The wine ages in fiberglass tanks for 5 months before bottling. 26mg/L So₂ added.



Fleuve Blanc 2022

A blend of Grenache Gris (40%), Macabeu (20%), Grenache Blanc (15%), and Carignan Blanc (15%), grown on calcareous black shale soils called Calschistes de l'Albien. Vine age ranges from 6-8 years for the Grenache Blanc and Gris, to 35 years for the Macabeu and 30 years for the Carignan Blanc. In the cellar, the grapes are blended at pressing, settled overnight, and then spontaneously ferment together in sandstone amphora, where they also age for around 6 months or more. A small dose of SO₂ is added either right after malolactic fermentation completes or at bottling, 19mg/L total.



Peaux Rouges Marnes Noires 2022

Young 17-year-old vines of Grenache Noir from a single plot called "La Garrigue," grown on calcareous black shale soils called Calschistes de l'Albien. Grown at 280m of elevation. The fruit was harvested in the early morning and placed directly into tanks. It is whole cluster fermented for 10 days with indigenous yeasts. Grapes are pressed and then returned to the vats to complete fermentation over the next few weeks. After that, the wine is racked and a low dose of sulfur is added. The wine then aged for 9 months in tank. If necessary, an additional small dose of sulfur is added at bottling. Total SO₂ 26mg/L.



Fig. 22 : Carréton

Carréton 2022

100% Mourvèdre from a single plot of 30 year-old vines, grown on limestone scree soils in the commune of Maury. The grapes ferment spontaneously in whole bunches for 10 days, with very little extraction. The wine is pressed and then returned to the tanks to age over the winter in tank. If necessary, a light filtration and additional small dose of sulfur is added at bottling. 15mg/L total SO₂.