

# Château Valcombe



Chateau Valcombe came into our lives around the year 2000 when our long-time vigneron in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Paul Jeune of Domaine Monpertuis, decided to spread his wings and purchase this domaine in the Ventoux, on the outskirts of the town of St. Pierre de Vassols. The Ventoux has never been known as an area capable of producing exceptional wines but the prior owner of Valcombe, had acquired a rather grand reputation for the wines of this estate. Frankly, on first encountering the wines of that epoch, I was underwhelmed. Stylistically, the wines were the opposite of what prize in wine: overripe, overoaked, overdone! I looked at Paul Jeune, and asked him whether this was what he expected to produce at Valcombe. I was relieved to discover he valued the property for its potential, its the old vines and the excellent exposure of the vineyards on the lower slopes of Mont Ventoux. Paul's instincts were proven correct as he proceeded to produce wines of impeccable balance that had staying power to boot. We have remarked numerous times on the ability of the reds of Valcombe to improve with significant bottle age. Both the 2005 and the 2008 Ventoux Rouge "Signature" bottlings developed a following long after other wines from this appellation would have already seen their best days.

With a view towards retirement and the problems associated with succession to the next generation which can be complicated and costly in France, Paul opted to sell his holdings in the Ventoux. Luc and Cendrine Guénard purchased the estate and worked under Paul Jeune's tutelage during the transition period. They now are proudly independent vignerons with a compulsion to further improve this jewel of an estate. Their first efforts were in the 2009 vintage and we expect to have a long relationship with this couple who have taken the necessary steps to gain certification as organic growers.

## Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Certified organic since 2013 by Ecocert
- **Treatments:** Only copper sulfate
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Limestone-clay and sands
- **Vines:** Planted at 3,200 vines/ha and trained in Gobelet and Cordon de Royat, vines average 55 years old, with the oldest Carignan an Grenache vines planted in 1936.
- **Yields:** Controlled through pruning, debudding, and green harvesting
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual, usually mid-September
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



## Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Rosé wines ferment with selected yeasts in concrete vats. Following total destemming, red wines ferment spontaneously in concrete vats. Cuvaision lasts c. 14 days.
- **Extraction:** Racks-and-returns for Reds during fermentation.
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing for red wines. Direct pneumatic pressing for rosé wines.
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, in vat following alcoholic fermentation for red wines. Prevented via temperature for rosé wines.

## Aging:

- **Élevage:** Wines age 6-12 months in concrete vats.
- **Lees:** Red wines are racked off their lees following malolactic and remain on their fine lees until assemblage prior to bottling. Rosé wines are separated from their lees to promote freshness.
- **Fining and Filtration:** Wines are unfinned and see plate filtration.
- **Sulfur:** Added only at bottling, with c. 70 mg/l total sulfur