

Nadir Cunéaz



Our travels in the Vallée d'Aoste have led us to several small and unexpected gems, the newest of which is the Cantina di Cunéaz Nadir. We were introduced to the young Nadir Cunéaz by Danilo Thomain in Arvier. With less than a single hectare's worth of family holdings, Nadir qualifies as our smallest domaine, and the handful of cases we buy from him each year are true homemade wines in every sense of the word. Co-operatives still predominate here, as given the scant amount of land most families own, it's simply easier to sell fruit to the local co-op than to go through the painstaking work required to bottle such a tiny amount of wine. However, like his friend Danilo Thomain, Cunéaz would rather see his viticultural efforts through to the end—to create something upon whose label he is proud to put his own name. And, like Danilo, he does this in a small room in his home. To even call his operation a “winery” is to stretch that term past its breaking point, but there's plenty of room for the few thousand bottles Nadir produces each year.

Nadir has only been commercializing his wines since 2009, but he has made immense progress since his earliest days. While he always farmed his vineyards without the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides, he has made notable adjustments in his cellar work over the years—adopting spontaneous fermentations, refining his oak sources and barrel regimen, and abandoning his earlier occasional use of passito in order to enhance purity of expression. The three wines we have just received from Cunéaz unquestionably represent his best efforts to date. Furthermore, they are heartwarming reminders of just how intimate the scale of our beloved beverage can be.

Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Lutte Raisonnée
- **Treatments:** Synthetic treatments exceedingly rare, with no herbicides and copper-sulfate the primary means of intervention
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Sandy glacial moraines
- **Vines:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 10,000 vines/ha, vines average 40 years old.
- **Yields:** Controlled through severe pruning, debudding, and an occasional green harvest
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual, usually in early October
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming, wines ferment with spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks. Cuvaison lasts c. 15 days. Vin des Géants is destemmed and ferments for c. 60 days in terracotta amphora.
- **Extraction:** Wines see pumpovers during fermentation.
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Vertical basket press
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, in stainless-steel tanks or terracotta amphora following alcoholic fermentation

Aging:

- **Élevage:** Babadec and Grand Gosier spend 12 months in neutral 225-l barriques and 300-l tonneaux. Les Gosses spends 12 months in stainless-steel tanks. Vin des Géants spends 12 months in 300-l tonneaux.
- **Lees:** Wines are racked off their lees following malolactic
- **Fining and Filtration:** Wines are unfinned and unfiltered
- **Sulfur:** Applied during vinification, at rackings, and at bottling, with c. 20 mg/l free sulfur

Nadir Cunéaz



Badebec Rosso Vallée d'Aoste



At a Glance:

- **Appellation:** DOP Vallée d'Aoste
- **Encépagement:** Petit Rouge (90%), Fumin and Vien de Nus (10%)
- **Average Annual Production:** 2,000 bottles
- **Average Alcohol by Volume:** 13%
- **Average Residual Sugar:** <5 g/l
- **Average Total Acidity:**

In The Vineyard:

- **Parcel Names, Slopes, and Locations:** From north-facing steeply sloped vineyards overlooking the Doire Baltée river in the villages of Gressan and Jovençan
- **Soil Types and Compositions:** Limestone glacial moraines
- **Vine Age, Training, and Density:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 10,000 vines/ha, vines range from 40 to 100 years old.
- **Average Yields:** Controlled through severe pruning, debudding, and an occasional green harvest
- **Average Harvest Date and Type:** Entirely manual, usually in early October

In The Cellar:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming, wine ferments spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks. Cuvaion lasts c. 15 days.
- **Pressing:** Vertical basket press
- **Time on Lees:** Wine is racked off its lees following malolactic
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, in stainless-steel tank following alcoholic fermentation
- **Élevage:** 12 months in neutral 225-l barriques and 300-l tonneaux
- **Press Wine:** Blended after malolactic
- **Fining and Filtration:** Unfined and unfiltered
- **Sulfur:** Applied during vinification, at rackings, and at bottling, with c. 20 mg/l free sulfur

In The Glass:

This wine comes from the family's oldest holdings and is named for the "Badebec," a fearsome monster who roams the vineyards after sunset. North- and northwest-facing vineyards make ripeness a greater challenge here than on the valley's opposite side, and to compensate Nadir employed the passito technique on a portion of the harvest. However, he has moved away, with 2014 the last vintage that saw that approach. It's a welcome change, and lovers of tension, acidity, and livewire mineral intensity will find much to appreciate here. A wine of this character could come from nowhere else but the dramatic altitudes of the Italian Alps.

Nadir Cunéaz



Grandgosier Pinot Nero Vallée d'Aoste



At a Glance:

- **Appellation:** DOP Vallée d'Aoste
- **Encépagement:** Pinot Noir (100%)
- **Average Annual Production:** 800 bottles
- **Average Alcohol by Volume:** 13%
- **Average Residual Sugar:** <5 g/l
- **Average Total Acidity:**

In The Vineyard:

- **Parcel Names, Slopes, and Locations:** From north-facing steeply sloped vineyards overlooking the Doire Baltée river in the villages of Gressan and Jovençan and the south-facing Badeun vineyard near Chambave
- **Soil Types and Compositions:** Limestone glacial moraines
- **Vine Age, Training, and Density:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 10,000 vines/ha, vines range from 10 to 40 years old.
- **Average Yields:** Controlled through severe pruning, debudding, and an occasional green harvest
- **Average Harvest Date and Type:** Entirely manual, usually in early October

In The Cellar:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming, wine ferments spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks. Cuvaision lasts c. 15 days.
- **Pressing:** Vertical basket press
- **Time on Lees:** Wine is racked off its lees following malolactic
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, in stainless-steel tank following alcoholic fermentation
- **Élevage:** 12 months in neutral 225-l barriques and 300-l tonneaux
- **Press Wine:** Blended after malolactic
- **Fining and Filtration:** Unfined and unfiltered
- **Sulfur:** Applied during vinification, at rackings, and at bottling, with c. 20 mg/l free sulfur

In The Glass:

Fermented in stainless steel and aged in used small French oak barrels, Nadir's "Grandgosier shows gorgeous varietal character in its pure, taut, pretty red fruits and whiff of underbrush. Since 2016 this wine contains, in addition to the domaine's vineyards in Gressan and Jovençan, the fruit from a small newer planting in Chambave, on the north bank of the Doire Baltée. Known as Badeun, this south-facing vineyard contributes welcome ripeness to the final product, and this is a lovely, spice-drenched Pinot Noir of tremendous character.

Nadir Cunéaz



Les Gosses Rosso Vallée d'Aoste



At a Glance:

- **Appellation:** DOP Vallée d'Aoste
- **Encépagement:** Vien de Nus (60%), Petit Rouge (25%), Vuillermin (15%)
- **Average Annual Production:** 800 bottles
- **Average Alcohol by Volume:** 13%
- **Average Residual Sugar:** <5 g/l
- **Average Total Acidity:**

In The Vineyard:

- **Parcel Names, Slopes, and Locations:** From the Bedeun vineyard and Creta Platta vineyards in Gressan
- **Soil Types and Compositions:** Limestone glacial moraines
- **Vine Age, Training, and Density:** Trained in Guyot and planted at 10,000 vines/ha, vines average 10 years old.
- **Average Yields:** Controlled through severe pruning, debudding, and an occasional green harvest
- **Average Harvest Date and Type:** Entirely manual, usually in early October

In The Cellar:

- **Fermentation:** Following total destemming, wine ferments spontaneously in stainless-steel tanks. Cuvaion lasts c. 15 days.
- **Pressing:** Vertical basket press
- **Time on Lees:** Wine is racked off its lees following malolactic
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, in stainless-steel tank following alcoholic fermentation
- **Élevage:** 12 months in stainless-steel tanks
- **Press Wine:** Blended after malolactic
- **Fining and Filtration:** Unfined and unfiltered
- **Sulfur:** Applied during vinification, at rackings, and at bottling, with c. 20 mg/l free sulfur

In The Glass:

The only one of Cunéaz's wines not named for a local monster, "Les Gosses" derives from a French term for "little children" (monsters in their own right, to be sure!)—of which Nadir has three. With electrifying acidity and a complexity-contributing edge of woodsmoke, this is a classic Vallée d'Aoste lip-smacker, stuffed with juicy black cherries and crunchy plums.