LES VIGNERONS DES ESTEZARGUES

TAPARAS, WHITE

APPELLATION
AOC COTES-DU-RHONE
COLOR
WHITE WINE
VINTAGE
2023
FARMING
ORGANIC
VINE AGE
25 YEARS
VARIETAL
47% GRENACHE BLANC, 37% ROUSSANNE, 10% VIOGNIER, 4% CLAIRETTE, 2% BOURBOULENC
ALCOHOL
14%
SOIL
LIMESTONE & CLAY
FERMENTATION
GRAPES ARE 100% DESTEMMED.
MACERATION OF 4 HOURS.
FERMENTED WITH NATURAL YEAST.
AGING
7 MONTHS IN CONCRETE TANK.
LIGHT FILTRATION.
UNFINED.
SO2
20 MG/L
AGING POTENTIAL
2-3 YEARS
CASES PRODUCED
1 450 CASES
TASTING NOTES
The nose is concentrated, with an explosion of candied yellow fruits and honeyed notes. There is more tensions in the mouth, with substance and lift. Roundness, smoothness, a slightly waxy while still mainting a freshness not often found in white rhone varietals particularly appeals to spicy dishes, this is a wine that finds all its legitimacy at the table, winter and summer.

THE STORY

Les Vignerons D' Estézargues is a co-operative cellar in the small town of Estézargues, very close to Avignon and the Pont du Gard in the southern Rhone valley. Co-ops typically receive grapes from their members and then make wines in large batches, not mentioned vineyards or winemakers. Typically the focus is on quantity. Not quality. Wines produced in co-operative cellars are often not what we associate organic viticulture or natural winemaking… but Les Vignerons D' Estézargues is special. The caves co-op, as they call them in France, are a traditional and still very important part of the wine landscape, especially in the South, as sharing know-how and the cost of cellar space and equipment brings important synergies to the participating growers. In most cases, the co-ops make conventional wines in large batches and process grapes from many different vineyards together, focusing on quantity and cost-efficiency rather than quality or environmental respect. Les Vignerons D' Estézargues, on the other hand, is a whole different animal on both accounts. Their unique approach, practically unheard of among cooperatives of this size, is what really sets them apart.

Estézargues was established in 1965 and, as early as the 1980s, shifted towards natural winemaking thanks to the arrival of Jean-François Nicq, a talented winemaker influenced by the ideas of natural wine legends like Marcel Lapierre. Nicq (now making wine in his own boutique Domaine des Foulards Rouges in Roussillon) put the cave firmly on track towards respectful farming and practically no additives in the cellar. No commercial yeast, no enzymes, no gum arabic, no acidifiers, and also almost no sulfur. "We use a minimal amount of SO2 at bottling if needed, to make sure the wines are safe even when exported overseas, but that's it," says Armelle Rouault, current winemaker at Estézargues.

Another feature rather untypical of a coop is Estézargues' focus on vinifying many of their terroirs separately—a practice promoted by Nicq's successor Denis Deschamps. Deschamps even had the cuverie doubled in 2018, thus making it possible to showcase the unique personalities of the grower's best plots even more. These wines proudly bear the name of the particular domaine on their labels (such as Genestas or Grès Saint Vincent), and represent "a great way to valorize the work of each grower—we vinify the wines in almost the same way so it's really up to the grapes to show what's in them. And I can't help but see the personality of each grower in the final wine as well," Armelle smiles. She's happy to have both the individual and all-together approach featured in the roughly 20 different cuvées that Estézargues produce every year, as the communal bottles such as Grandes Vignes Blanc or Rouge are a good symbol of the brand's collective nature. She affectionately calls the community "village gaulois" in a reference to the beloved Asterix & Obélix comics and the fact that most of the original founding families are still members today, with the third generation now in command.