



DOMAINE LAFAGE

Tessellae Carignan

For twenty years, we have worked with Jean-Marc Lafage at his estate in the Roussillon and across the border in Spain, where he consults on several projects. As good as his wines were when we first met him, they only get better with each vintage.

While his family has been growing grapes and making wine in the Roussillon since 1791, it was Jean-Marc's early insight into the potential for the Roussillon to make a wide range of dry wines at very affordable prices that established his "new" estate. While his grandfather and father made wine for the family, Jean-Marc was the first to break away from selling most of his grapes to the local cooperative. Over the generations, his family had amassed scattered vineyards throughout the region, which now totals over 160 hectares of vines, most of them in excess of 50 years in age.

Another factor in Jean-Marc's success is the diversity of the terroirs in the Roussillon. Squeezed between the far southern edge of the limestone Corbières Massif to the north and the granitic Pyrenees mountains in the south, the Roussillon is an undulating terrain of complex soil types, orientations, and exposures. Three river valleys, the Agly, Têt, and Tech, drain the region generally flowing west to east, where they meet the Mediterranean. Within its borders, Jean-Marc has identified six principal sub-zones in the appellation: the Crest, the Upper Agly Valley, the Uplands of Fenouillet, Les Asprès, the Mediterranean Plain, the Rocky Coast. Each region has its own expression and when you factor in the various varieties Jean-Marc has planted, you can understand why he can make so many riveting wines at such reasonable prices.

Carignan has had a rather tumultuous history in the south of France. Once seen as a necessary grape to spur the region's recovery after the plague of phylloxera in the late 19th century, primarily for its ability to produce high yields, it has been largely replaced with "nobler" varieties such as Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre. This is unfortunate – for as challenging as the variety is to love when the vines are young – they are superb with half a century under their belt. Jean-Marc Lafage luckily resisted the call to uproot and replace this variety, and he owns a Carignan vineyard of seventy-year-old vines on the hills between the villages of Maury and Tautavel.

LOCATION

France, Côtes Catalanes

SOIL

Black slate

ELEVATION

200 meters

FARMING

Sustainable

VARIETIES

Carignan

AGE OF VINES

60 years-old

FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, destemmed, cold pre-fermentation maceration, fermented in concrete, 30 day maceration

AGING

4 months in concrete vats

ACCOLADES

91 – 2022, *James Suckling*

90 – 2019, *Decanter*

90-92 – 2019, *Jeb Dunnuck*

