



CHÂTEAU DU MOURRE DU TENDRE

CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE • CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE

Leaving Courthézon, driving north on the Route de la Plaine, you will find yourself climbing a gradual incline. An ivy-covered brick wall on one side and a hedge on the other will make it feel like you are traveling through a tunnel but once you reach the top of the hill you will be surrounded by a sea of vines, and if the day is clear, the Dentelles and Mont Ventoux will dominate the eastern horizon. This hill is locally known as Mourre du Tendre, or the hill of love and situated on the crest of this hill, not too surprisingly, is Le Château du Mourre du Tendre.

For several generations the Paumel family has farmed grapes in the Rhône Valley. The current patriarch, Jacques Paumel took control of the estate in 1962 from his father, and in 1988 he and his wife Josephine decided to start estate bottling their own wines using the name of the hill on which their ancient provençale farmhouse and many of their vines are situated. Technically semi-retired, Jacques and Josephine have turned over the running of the estate to their daughter Florence and her son Paul Verité. Perhaps retired is not the right term, as you will still find the pair arguing about how much wine they have available to sell with two sets of books: one written down on note cards that Jacques keeps in his vest pocket while Josephine seems to have the numbers memorized. Amusingly these numbers never seem to be quite the same. While they work this out you will be treated to a wide array of local delicacies with which to occupy yourself and having recently tasted their wines – a Côtes-du-Rhône, a Côtes-du-Rhône Villages, a Côtes-du-Rhône Villages Plan de Dieu, and a Châteauneuf-du-Pape – you will eagerly await their final judgment and buy everything that they are willing to part with. The wines are that remarkable.

The estate is 25 hectares in size with 3 ha in Châteauneuf-du-Pape in the lieu-dits of Le Crau, La Guigasse and Saintes Vierges. All are sandy terroirs. The Grenache found in these sites was planted in 1929 or in 1942 while the Mourve-



dre is a relatively recent addition, having been planted by Jacques in 1967. They have a 1.5 hectare plot of Grenache and Mourvedre, planted on clay limestone soil and located just outside the appellation of Châteauneuf du Pape in the lieu-dit of Clos de Grenadiers. The Grenache dates to 1925 and they are the oldest vines that the family owns. In 1969 Jacques planted Mourvedre and Grenache to supplement these old vines so it now totals 7 hectares. From this site the family makes their Côtes-du-Rhône Villages. In Plan de Dieu they have a newly acquired plot of 70-90 year old Grenache, Mourvedre, Cinsault and Syrah grown on gravelly red clay soils. Finally there are 10 hectares of Grenache, Cinsault and Carignan, also on clay limestone soils and quite near the cellars of Mourre du Tendre. These vines are the source of their Côtes-du-Rhône.

FACTS & FIGURES

FOUNDED

1988

PROPRIETOR

Famille Paumel

WINEMAKER

Paul Verité

SIZE

25 ha

ELEVATION

90-120 meters above sea level

SOILS

Clay limestone, gravel, red clay, sand

VINE AGE

40-100

VARIETIES

Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Carignan

FARMING

Sustainable

HARVEST

Manual

CELLAR

Whole cluster, semi-carbonic maceration and fermentation with indigenous yeasts, 15-35 day maceration, aging in tank for 24-30 months before bottling

Farming at Mourre du Tendre is minimalist and traditional. Everything is done by hand and the family has never used pesticides in their vineyards. The harvest is conducted in several passes and the grapes are carefully sorted when they reach the cellar. The Paumel family makes powerful and traditional wines and the fruit is not destemmed, fermentations occur spontaneously after a short semi-carbonic maceration, and the élevage is quite long – averaging about three years in a combination of concrete tanks and foudre. The resulting wines are charming, bold and structured with much more in common with Barolo and Barbaresco than most anything else you will find in the region. Needless to say they age beautifully and gracefully, even the Côtes-du-Rhône. Sadly we only receive tiny quantities. If only we knew whether Jacques or Josephine had the more generous ledger...

