





OUR FAMILY AND ESTATE

Our family has been in the Châteauneuf-du-Pape region since the 17th century and making wine for five generations.

In the 17th century our family purchased a vineyard plot from the Bishop of Avignon to the north of the appellation. Numerous generations followed, all working in the vineyards. In 1954, Lucien Brunel created the name “Les Cailloux” to develop the business and promote the Domaine’s high quality and special characteristics.

In 1971, André Brunel took over the reins of the Domaine. His endless motivation resulted in a rapid growth for the Domaine; repurchasing Côtes du Rhône and Vins de Pays vines, and launch of the infamous Centenary Cuvée in 1989. He also made some considerable changes in the vine management process as one of the first in Châteauneuf-du-Pape to use the ground covering method and proceed with a non-chemical approach to wine-farming. In 2012, his son, Fabrice Brunel, joined the team and following André Brunel’s passing in February 2022, Fabrice continues the family’s legacy in managing the winery and estate.

The Estate is divided up into three appellations: Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Côtes du Rhône, and Vaucluse Vins de Pays. Our pursuit for quality, respect for the land, and drive to provide customers with wines to enjoy throughout their aging, impels us to be immeasurably meticulous during production, regardless of appellation. The differences are mainly the maturation periods (longer for the Châteauneuf, and shorter for the Vins de Pays to make them available sooner) and the usage of vats (for Syrah in Châteauneuf-du-Pape to mellow out the tannins, absent on the Côtes du Rhône and the Vins de Pays to maintain the fruits freshness).

We aim to produce wines reflecting their region and origin while remaining elegant and subtle.





Châteauneuf-du-Pape

The Domaine boasts 51 acres (21 hectares) under the Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation, including 5 acres with whites, divided into approximately ten segments. The largest are Farguerol to the North, Revès and Plan du Rhône to the South and Bois de la Ville at the top end of the village. The soils vary from countless round pebbles to sandy and clay soils.

Ground Topography

The “useful” layers for the vineyard are in tiers of about 3 meters.

- From 0 to 20 inches (0 to 50 cm): mainly pebbles (80%) completed by sand. Large amount of roots.
- From 20 to 55 inches (50 to 140 cm): large amount of pebbles (60%), the remainder being mostly clay. A lot of fine roots and rootlets.
- From 55 to 118 inches (140 to 300 cm): layer of accumulated clay but still contains pebbles (about 20%).

Deep roots make it easier to trap water which is present over 26 feet (2 meters) under the surface and the pebbles reduce the evaporation due to heat or the Mistral. Therefore the plant is well hydrated even during hot summer weather.

Grape varieties planted

The red grape varieties are mainly Grenache Noir, followed by Mourvèdre, Syrah and Cinsault:

- 70% of Grenache, which, if harvested when very ripe, contribute to the strength, roundness and aromas of crushed red fruits,
- 17% of Mourvèdre which, planted in suitable soil (sandy clay) and harvested late, contribute to the structure of lively tannins and emphasize the qualities of Grenache without denaturing them.
- 10% of Syrah which imparts aromas of fresh black fruits and amplified color.
- 3% of Cinsault which offers lightness to the whole.

In white grapes, Roussanne dominates (85%) followed by White Grenache (15%)



THE CLIMATE

The Mistral: *A strong, cold northwesterly wind that blows through the Rhône Valley and southern France into the Mediterranean, mainly in the winter.*

The Mistral's strength is highly visible within the landscape: trees bowing-over, Cyprus hedges arranged to protect living areas, houses with no openings to the north, etc. Despite all of this, the Mistral has several undeniable benefits for wine-growing.

- Drains the soils, guaranteeing a Mediterranean climate for most of the year
- Limits vineyard diseases by reducing humidity
- Gives grapes a larger sugar content
- Dries grapes after the rain
- Protects from the frost

Many harvests could have been lost if the Mistral had not been blowing after some of the storms which hit during the month of September.

Hours of Sunshine:

2800 hours per year. One of the highest in France (Corsica not included) and much higher than the Bordeaux region (less than 2100 hours) and Burgundy (less than 2000 hours).

Rain:

The Châteauneuf-du-Pape region is the driest part of the Vaucluse (24 inches of rainfall on average against 30 inches in Orange which is only 12 miles away). The climate is perfect for wine as long as the occasional heavy rain doesn't occur during harvest time.

Soils:

The natural diversity of soils is explanation enough for the wines complexity: limestone from marine or alluvial deposit, sandy soils on the banks of the Rhône, calcareous soils (hard and dry or soft and marly), and alluvial clay soils ... just a short list of the varied soil types present in the region.



Châteauneuf-du-Pape Specificities

Terroir

Even when round pebbles are present on numerous plots, they do not cover the whole appellation area which boasts a very wide variety of soils. Some sectors are composed of gravelly or sandy earth and some even with calcareous or calcareous-clay soils. The environment is equally varied with successions of plains, plateaus, terraces, and hillsides.

The infamous Châteauneuf-du-Pape “round pebbles” and their effects on the wine

During the Ice Age, these pebbles were swept down from the Alps by the Rhône River when it covered the entire valley. The pebbles are numerous in some plots, giving the impression that the vineyards grew within a sea of pebbles. They are mostly composed of large rock crystals mixed with red sandy clay. After storing up the day’s heat, they return it to the soil and vines over night, thus contributing to preserving the vine stocks at a constant temperature, allowing for bunches to ripen to perfection.



Côtes du Rhône

The Domaine is comprised of approximately 98 acres (40 hectares) in Côte du Rhône, mostly located to the east of the city of Orange and the rest being in the Gard near Lirac.

Ground topography

The upper ground layer is mostly made of modern sandy-clay type alluvial deposit. It is resistant to water stress in summer, therefore decreasing the need for vineyard irrigation. The lower layers are mainly made of limestone with a strong draining capacity. In turn, the roots are less deep than for Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The climate is exceptionally sunny with an average rainfall of 25 inches (650 mm).

Grape varieties planted

The grape varieties are made up of old Grenache vines, 85% of which are over 40 years old. The Domaine also had 3.7 acres (1.5 hectares) of Côte du Rhône whites in the commune of Bédarrides which have been replanted with new vines of Roussanne, Clairette and White Grenache.



A Bit of History



Wine-Growing Development in the Rhône Valley

The first vines date back to the settlement of Greek explorers along the Mediterranean around 600 B.C. Starting from this period and up until the relative peace during the Pax Romana, the Rhône had become an ideal, and the only fully-operational, trade route for many centuries. The Roman period witnessed the growth of local farming to meet the needs of European armies and numerous settlers who came to live in Gaul. Our ancestors were therefore rapidly reputed to mastering vineyards (planting, grafting, pruning, etc.) and also contributing to various technical innovations (replacing the amphora by the wood barrel among others).

After the Fall of the Roman Empire, the church ensured the maintenance and development of quality production. Benedictines, Carthusians, Templars, and the Knights of Malta were well implanted in the valley – each Order successively made a living winemaking. The arrival of Popes in Avignon in 1309 guaranteed the recognition all over the Christian world of Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines. Residents for over a century, they saw to the vineyard's expansion and reputation in the world over.

In 1860, the phylloxera epidemic brought a sudden halt to the vineyard area's expansion and only got back its initial size after 50 years of hard work. New planting and grafting techniques, improvement on production rules, and rallying together towards a common goal all led, in 1935, to the creation of the INAO (National Institute for Appellations of Origin).



The type of vine selected depends greatly on the soil type and desired character of the end product.

Each Domaine plot has thus been carefully analyzed to determine its individual specificities (type of geological layers, draining capacity, sun exposure, etc.) and therefore to chose the most appropriate grape variety.

For Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the grape variety planted has one objective, to produce a powerful but elegant wine which keeps well but can also be enjoyed young.

This led to the strategic planting definition below for our Châteauneuf du Pape red:

- 70% of Grenache – harvested very ripe, resulting in a generous, round wine that offers aromas of crushed red fruit.
- 17% of Mourvèdres – when planted in suitable soil and harvested late, brings structure and firm tannins, reinforcing the Grenache qualities.
- 10% of Syrah – offering aromas of fresh black fruits and accentuated color.
- 3% of Cinsaults – bringing lightness to the wine.

For our Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc we use 75% Roussanne, 15% Grenache Blanc, and 10% Clairette to enhance the freshness and balance.



We use sustainable farming methods and have the utmost respect for our vineyards. We are committed to fostering a healthy long-term growing environment.

We never use herbicides or pesticides and we believe in partial companion planting the vineyards (leaving grass growing around the vines)

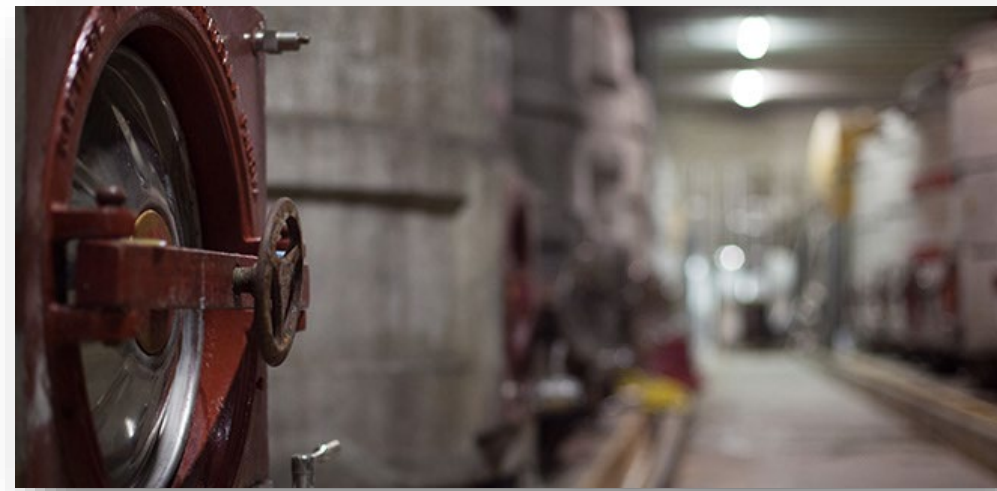
Benefits:

- Improving the structure and load bearing capacity; machines can enter the vineyards without sinking into the ground, therefore without compacting the superficial layer.
- Protecting the soil from harsh climatic conditions, notably hydraulic; limiting the natural gullying and infiltration of water by using a larger root system.
- Making vines compete for water access; allowing notably for a higher concentration of sugar and aromas in the grapes and a reduction in the yield.

Plowing is an ancestral method for working the soil. It was especially used during the Antiquity period to bury the seeds well into the ground, allowing them to grow and prevent pest damage. Today, rather than using it as a means for planting, we use it as a tool for grass management and to alleviate the need for herbicides.

Benefits:

- Restructures and aerates the soil, forcing the roots to grow deep-down in order to find the necessary nutrients.
- Mixes the soil with farming residue, solid dung, lime and mineral fertilizer, while introducing oxygen.
- Controls several perennial weeds and prevents other weeds from growing in the spring at the same time as the vines.
- Breaks the disease cycle.



Vinification is the transformation process of grapes into wine. In the successive steps, each choice made by the wine-maker will influence the end-quality of the wine.

Steps of Vinification:

- **Destemming:** Separating the berries from the stalk (taking the grapes off the bunch). Keeping the stalks (referred to as the “whole” harvest) allows the wine impurities to be absorbed but an unripe stalk can give very unpleasant herbaceous aromas.
- **Crushing:** Bursting the grapes to release the juice.
- **Pressuring:** Pressing the grapes to recuperate the juice and have it sent to a decanting vat.
- **Settling of the must:** Settling of the juice by removing floating particles.
- **Alcoholic fermentation:** A process where the yeast slowly convert the sugar into alcohol. This step produces powerful CO2 emissions and increases the temperature in the vat. This lasts between 15 and 45 days.

This step coincides with the **maceration**: the must (juice) is in contact with the skin to allow the tannin and color to be extracted.

- Pumping over which consists of recuperating the fermenting must accumulated at the bottom of the vat and pouring it onto the cap which floats on the vat surface,
- Rack and return which consists of recuperating the must at the bottom of the vat and pouring it into a second vat and then sending it back onto the cap,
- Punching of the cap which consists of crushing the cap into the fermenting juice by breaking it up to extract the color and aromas.



Working Methods

The grapes, carefully picked and sorted by grape-pickers in the vineyard, are sent as-is to the vinification cellar in small containers.

Upon arrival, they are transferred into a rolling receiving bin which forward them to their final destination. This installation is above the cellar allows the grapes to just fall into the vat where they will be vinified.

Vinification of White Grapes

Only white grapes picked in the morning pass through **the crusher** (small machine made of two rollers which burst open the grapes as they pass through) and then go into a **pneumatic pressing machine**. For the next two hours, this pressing machine, using an inflated compressed air membrane, will slowly press the bunches, extracting the juice referred to as must. The latter is then cooled down to 12° and sent into a concrete vat where it will naturally decant for 24 hours. The cleared must is then pumped into the fermentation vat and yeast is added to ensure a slow, regular, low-temperature fermentation during 4-6 weeks.

Vinification of Red Grapes

20 to 40% are deposited whole to their fermentation vat where they burst open upon arrival after a drop of around 16 feet (5 meters). Their role in the vat is important as the presence of stalks (what holds the bunches of grapes) gives the must a better draining system through the grape and thus facilitates pumping operations. The acidity of this stalk also contributes to adding freshness to the grapes which are often very ripe and lack acidity. The remainder of the grapes are sent to the **destemming-crushing machine** where they are separated from the stalks and then burst to release part of their juice in the vat where they will ferment. When the vat is full, a pump homogenizes the must and simultaneously adds the yeasts which will begin the fermentation, taking 2-3 weeks between 25-30°.

During this period, **pumping over operations** will be carried out (pumping of the must at the bottom of the vat and sending it to the top where it will sprinkle the solid part which is floating above the must). **This operation is to gently extract the color and tannins** in the grape skins, an extraction we amplify through rack and return. **The latter** consists of emptying the must from the vat to obtain a light pressure of the grapes under their own weight, then sending it to the top where the cap soaks in it for several hours.

Once the alcoholic fermentation phase is over, a **maceration** phase begins; extracting the fatty acids such as glycerol, giving the wines roundness. During the pumping over, we mix the lees, making them float in what is now the wine and slowly blend blend.



Aging

Aging occurs between alcoholic fermentation and bottling. Its main purpose is to tone down the tannins and purify the wine.

Methods of Aging:

- Vat Aging (concrete, stainless steel, and notably resin). Hygienic and makes it easier to maintain the wine fruit character.
- Barrel Aging (or a cask): More easily tones down the tannins and imparts oak character of vanilla, roasted coffee, etc. Barrel intensity mainly varies depending on the barrel heating.

At the Domaine, we prefer Vat Aging

Only the Syrah (10% of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape blending) is aged in barrels with 1-2 wines to soften the tannins.

Blending

This consists of blending wine from various plots which were initially vinified separately. This is done about 15-18 months after harvest.

Our drive is to make a powerful but elegant wine, boasting fantastic aromatic finesse and great aging potential which explains why the final blending may vary from one year to the next.

Les Cailloux cuvée will always have a dominant Grenache base mixed with Mourvèdre and Syrah for the tannins and the structure, but the proportion of each can strongly vary depending on the production year. Once the wine blending has been chosen, the wine is bottled then stocked away from the light and heat before being sent.



The Wines





Current Label Transition



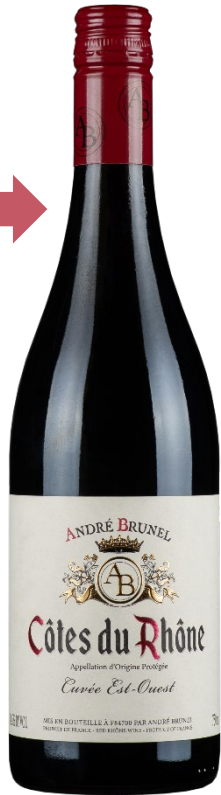
v. 2019



v. 2020



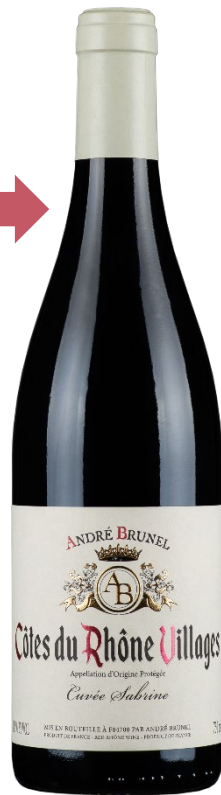
v. 2018



v. 2019



v. 2017



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v. 2019



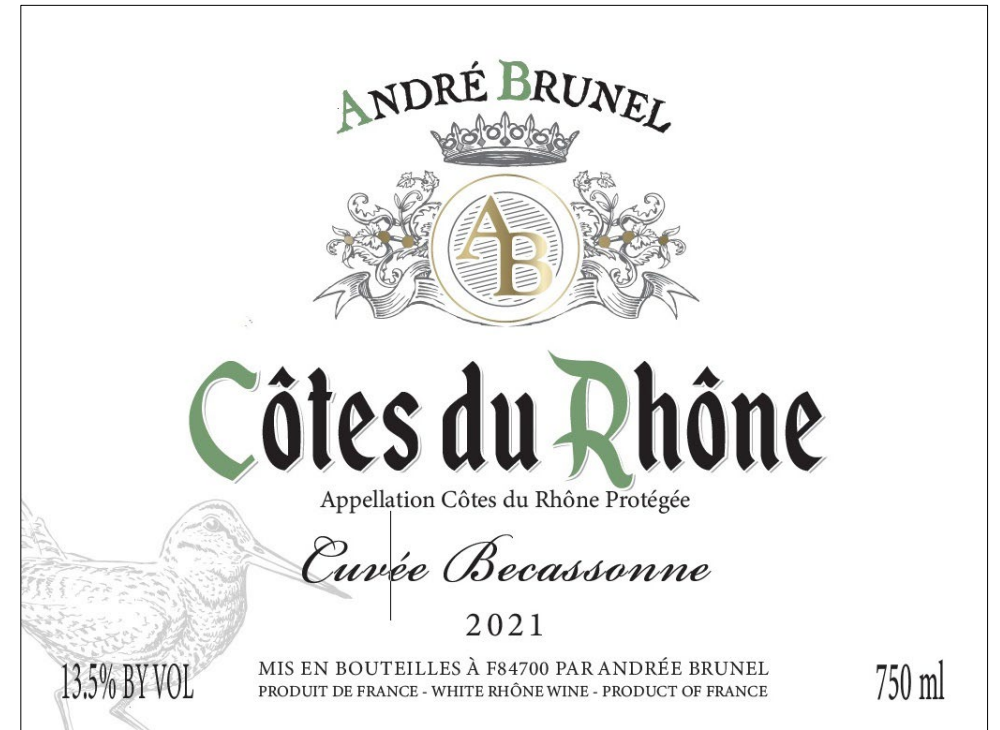
v. 2020



Upcoming Label Transition



v. 2019



v. 2021



Wines Not Undergoing a Label Change



Meet The Team

André Brunel :

- Master degree in mathematics. He was a mathematic teacher for five years in his 20's before coming back to help his father with the winery and estate.
- He was a big fan of Quentin Tarantino movies, especially Kill Bill.
- He was one of the pioneers in Châteauneuf du Pape for the introduction of grass management to control the vigor of the young vines and supply of water.
- He had a true entrepreneur's spirit with the increase of the size of the estate in new appellations like Côtes du Rhône and Vin de Pays, the creation of a negociant company, one of the first in Châteauneuf to export to US, Japan during the early 80s.
- One of the pillars of the defense of the appellation Châteauneuf du Pape in the 90s while being the president of the syndicate of the producers.

Fabrice Brunel :

- Master degrees in engineering and business management
- Work for ten years as a supply chain and production management consultant in a consultancy in Paris
- Love Excel spreadsheets.
- Love riding his Triumph motorcycle, running ... and yoga courses.
- Try to develop the legacy of his dad : engage in sustainability : solar panels will equip the new winery to provide 70/80% of the energy needed, 90% of the plastic and cardboard used are recycled, etc...

The current winemaker is Romain Pitaud :

- Master degree in Oenology.
- Three years of vinification in Burgundy.
- Two years of vinification in Bordeaux : one made at Smith Haut Lafitte
- One year as the assistant of Philippe Cambie, the famous winemaker of t.he South of France.
- He joined the estate 5 years ago.
- Very precise and very talented. Your wines will be in good hands.











