



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

## DOMAINE DE LA GRANGE DES PÈRES

Country: France

Region: Languedoc

Appellation(s): Vin de Pays de l'Hérault

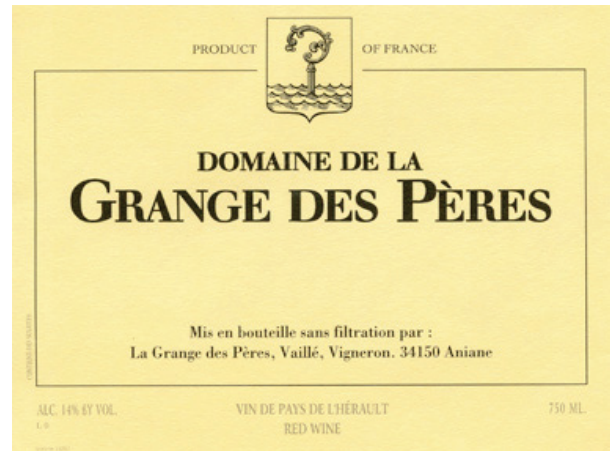
Producer: Laurent Vaillé

Founded: 1989

Annual Production: 2,500-3,000 cases

Farming: Traditional

Website: N/A



Attaining cult wine status is not an easy feat, and certainly not when the odds are stacked against you. Laurent Vaillé has achieved what others thought impossible. Having spent his early career training under such masters as Jean-François Coche-Dury (Meursault), Gérard Chave (Hermitage), and Eloi Durrbach (Domaine Trévallon, Provence), he settled in the l'Hérault of the Languedoc and purchased his own land in 1989, near Aniane. In this area of the region, where the limestone is hard and abundant and the soil poor, no one thought he would ever have any success planting a vineyard on his plot of choice. Though it took dynamite and bulldozing to clear twice the amount of limestone, boulders, and glacial scree that was found in his neighbor Aimé Guilbert's Daumas Gassac vineyards, he found ideal *terroir* for his grapes. He did not have to look far to find ideal fruit, either. He sourced his Syrah, Marsanne, and Roussane cuttings from Gérard Chave and his Cabernet from Domaine Trévallon. Laurent's South-facing vines get very low yields, normally from twenty to twenty-five hectoliters per hectare. All are pruned in the gobelet style. The simultaneous restraint and power of his wines makes them ideal for aging. As for the skeptics, they are currently eating their words. His area of the Languedoc has since become known to produce some of the greatest wines in the region. In his words, "Nature gave us a partition of land. It is up to us to interpret it."

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## DOMAINE DE LA GRANGE DES PÈRES (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
<b>Vin de Pays de l'Hérault Blanc</b>	80% Roussanne 10% Marsanne 10% Chardonnay	15-20 years	Glacial scree, Limestone	1 ha
<b>Vin de Pays de l'Hérault Rouge</b>	40% Syrah 40% Mourvèdre 20% Cabernet Sauvignon			9 ha

\* "ha"=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

## VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- Traditional farming and vinification
- Vines in *taille gobelet*
- White varietals are blended before being put into barrels for malolactic fermentation, then aged in *demi-muids*
- Red varietals are harvested and vinified separately and then aged in 228-L barrels separately. Reds are blended after the wines are fully complete, before settling and bottling.

## MISCELLANEA

*Visiting Vaillé at his property in the Languedoc is always a memorable experience. First, to the cellar with a pipette, to taste through several vintage in barrel. First the blanc, two vintages in demi-muid. Then the rouge, two vintages in barrique, the Syrah, Mourvèdre and Cabernet Sauvignon all separated. Laurent will master the blend in a proportion that satisfies him at some later date. So we try to get an idea for the vintage overall, as we simultaneously dive into the qualities that each cépage brings to the table. Tasting with Laurent is always intellectual, and he says very little, calmly measuring your reactions to the wines he's patiently nurtured over several years. Occasionally he will venture a comment, and when he does, you listen. Afterwards, we'll climb out of the cool, deep cellar and join his mother, father, and brother at an old wooden table in the kitchen of their home. If it is wintertime, a fire will be crackling in the hearth. Laurent's mother is a superb cook, and everything she serves comes from her garden, her poultry farm, or a local hunter. Laurent will invariably bring up an older vintage of his blanc and his rouge, and will typically serve another wine from his personal collection. He is passionate about visiting, tasting and buying the great wines of Western Europe. Most recently, he pulled out a 1995 Vega Sicilia from Spain.*

Dixon Brooke, KLWM