



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

PIERRE GONON

Country: France

Region: Rhône

Appellation(s): Saint-Joseph, Vin de Pays de l'Ardèche

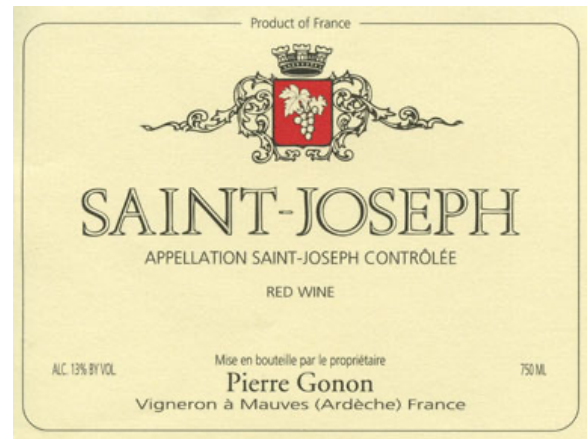
Producer: Pierre & Jean Gonon

Founded: 1956

Annual Production: 2,300-3,500 cases

Farming: Organic (certified since 2013)

Website: N/A



Pierre Gonon farmed some of the best slopes of Mauves, in the very heart—and the historical birthplace—of the Saint-Joseph appellation. In 1988, he turned direction of the property over to his sons, Jean and Pierre. This friendly, talented team of brothers has since earned a reputation as the domaine of Saint-Joseph.

This section of the western bank of the Rhône boasts a long history of viticulture and winemaking. Grown on stone terraces dating back to Roman times, le vin de Mauves—a term coined by Jesuits in the 17th century—featured prominently on prestigious tables throughout France and beyond, even enjoying a mention in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. When Saint-Joseph gained AOC status in 1956, the area under vine was very small, centered around the villages of Mauves, Tournon, and Saint-Jean-de-Muzols. The steep, east- and southeast-facing slopes here create what is nearly a mirror image to the fabled hill of Hermitage directly across the Rhône. In fact, the two appellations sit on the same granite bedrock formation, bisected by the river's flowing waters to create the topography we see today.

In 1971, the Saint-Joseph appellation was significantly expanded, bridging the gap between Cornas to the south and Côte-Rôtie in the north. The vast increase in acreage included lesser sites on flatter land, and many over-cropped, forgettable wines soon followed. The Gonon brothers break this paradigm completely, as they both farm and vinify in the old-school style. They work their ten hectares of land entirely by hand, the steep grade and narrow spacing making mechanization impossible in most parcels. Their vines are trained in the traditional *échalas* method, with a single stake per vine, and they do not trim the shoots. While the Gonons have been farming organically since 2004—without any chemical fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides, and using all-natural composts—they obtained certification in 2013. Their low-yielding vineyards span the three original communes of Saint-Joseph, sitting on poor, well-draining granite and gneiss soils, including old-vine parcels purchased from the famous Raymond Trolat, now retired, in 2006. Vineyards are replanted with *sélection massale* cuttings from their strongest vines to perpetuate healthy rootstock and ensure genetic diversity. Once in the cellar, they ferment the wines traditionally in open, oak vats, with regular punch-downs by foot. The reds see a high proportion of stem inclusion, traditional in the



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PIERRE GONON (continued)

region, and show classic aromatics of black olive, violets, and game with a great capacity for ageing. The Gonon brothers' wines are gutsy and wild, while still showing the freshness and delicacy typical of the appellation.

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Vin de France “Chasselas”	Chasselas	Planted 1890	Gneiss	.10 ha
Saint-Joseph Blanc <i>Les Oliviers</i>	80% Marsanne 20% Roussane	40 years average	Granite, clay, loess	2 ha
Vin de Pays de l’Ardèche “Les Iles Feray”	Syrah	25 years average	Alluvial, granite	.72 ha
Saint-Joseph Rouge	Syrah	40 years average	Granite	7.5 ha
Saint-Joseph Rouge “Vieilles Vignes”	Syrah	Planted 1920’s	Gneiss	1.2 ha

* “ha”=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- Vineyards are farmed organically
- All vines are from *sélection massale*
- Yields are kept very low by pruning, ranging from 30-38 hl/ha
- Grapes are harvested by hand
- Only indigenous yeasts are used

Vin de France “Chasselas”:

- Whole clusters are pressed gently with a pneumatic press
- Juice settles for 12 hours before being racked into fermentation casks
- Wine ages in *barrique* and *demi-muid* on fine lees for 11 months, undergoing a regular stirring of the lees

Saint-Joseph Blanc *Les Oliviers*:

- *Lieu-dit* of *Les Oliviers* regarded as the greatest for producing white grapes in the Saint-Joseph appellation ; vineyard is situated on the terraces above the town of Tournon, just across the river from Tain l’Hermitage
- Whole clusters are pressed gently with a pneumatic press
- Juice settles for 12 hours before being racked into fermentation casks
- Wine ages in *barrique* and *demi-muid* on fine lees for 11 months, undergoing a regular stirring of the lees



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PIERRE GONON (continued)

Vin de Pays de l'Ardèche “Les Iles Feray”:

- Produced from flatter vineyards at the bottom of the slope (between the *Route Nationale* and the Rhône) and young-vine fruit from hillside vineyards
- Grapes are mostly destemmed (50-80%, depending on the vintage)
- Grapes are lightly crushed before fermentation
- Wine is aged for 10 months in old *demi-muid*
- Wine is bottled before the following year's harvest
- Bottled unfiltered

Saint-Joseph Rouge:

- Grapes are partially de-stemmed (up to 20%, depending on the vintage)
- Grapes are lightly crushed before fermentation
- Vinification in large open vats
- Pump-overs or punch-downs occur twice daily for two or three weeks
- After maceration, wine is transferred to *foudre* and *demi-muid*
- The wine ages for 14 to 16 months and is racked twice during this time
- Bottled unfiltered

Saint-Joseph Rouge “Vieilles Vignes”:

- Produced from three parcels in Saint-Jean-de-Muzols planted just after World War I
- 100% whole-cluster fermentation—no destemming
- Whole grape clusters are lightly crushed before fermentation
- Bottled unfiltered
- Produced only in certain years