



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE

Country: France

Region: Rhône

Appellation(s): Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Producer: Frédéric & Daniel Brunier

Founded: 1898

Annual Production: Approx. 24,000 cases

Farming: Organic (practicing)

Website: www.vieux-telegraphe.fr



One cannot think of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the most celebrated *cru* of the Southern Rhône, without thinking of Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe. The Brunier family is legendary in its own right, having been rooted to the enigmatic plateau known as “La Crau” for over one hundred years. The wines of Vieux Télégraphe evoke the concept of *terroir* in its purest form: they reflect their dramatic climate, the rough terrain that defines the soil, their full sun exposure at a higher altitude, the typicity of the varietals with an emphasis on Grenache, and of course, the influence of their caretakers, the Brunier family. For many, *La Crau* is Châteauneuf-du-Pape’s grandest *cru*.

The Bruniers’ story begins in 1898 with Hippolyte Brunier. A modest farmer who lived off the land, Hippolyte kept less than a hectare of vines to make his own wines. His small vineyard was at one of the highest points in between Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Bédarrides, a stony plateau called “La Crau”. The elevation of this terrain had prompted the construction of a communication tower in the late 18th century to transmit telegraph messages between Marseilles and Paris. Otherwise, the allure of this barren landscape is not immediately discernable—there is nothing but *galets roulés*, or rounded stones, as far as the eye can see. Up so high, the vineyards are exposed to all kinds of elements—rain, hail, scorching sunshine, and especially the unruly Mistral. This was unwelcome terrain where only the toughest *vigneron* dare plant, although the notorious mistral works wonderfully to prevent rot.

However difficult to farm, Hippolyte saw how the wine from his parcel pleased others, and he began bottling more, gradually increasing his vineyard holdings to sixteen hectares. His sons helped work the farm, although most of the grapes were being sold off as premium fruit to *négociants*. The Bruniers weathered many storms—not the least of which was the ravaging of their vineyards by phylloxera. Hippolyte’s grandson, Henri, eventually joined the family business, and with him came great changes: replanting the vineyards, the construction of a new winery, bringing temperature control into the winery to protect the wines during the fermentations, and most importantly, the launching of the domaine’s first bottlings under the Vieux Télégraphe label.



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After years of closer study, *La Crau* proved to be a privileged vineyard site. At the extreme southeast of the appellation, a large three-meter trench in the vineyard reveals its stratifications, millions of years in the making. The layers show early alluvial deposits, limestone, silica, and a robust red clay (known as *molasse*) that has come to characterize this terrain. Sitting on the surface of the soil, the *galets* hold important functions: they insulate the vines from both the cold and the heat, and they provide ideal drainage for the roots.

Kermit first met Henri and his wife, Maguey, in the mid-seventies. As Henri began to filter the wine around 1980, Kermit asked that his blend remain unfiltered. When the Bruniers had tasted the results of several vintages, they returned to an unfiltered bottling for their entire production. Henri retired in 1988 and left the domaine in the hands of his two sons, Daniel and Frédéric. The Brunier Brothers have expanded the family's holdings significantly to seventy hectares, and have boldly expanded their winemaking ventures into new territory. They have created the second label for Vieux Télégraphe known as Télégramme (formerly known as Vieux Mas des Papes), they purchased Domaine La Roquette in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and they joined forces with Kermit Lynch to buy the historic Domaine Les Pallières in Gigondas (which had been in the Roux family for over five hundred years!).

The wines of V.T. are classics, displaying strength, rusticity, earthiness, and tremendous longevity. The old vines of *La Crau* are all used for the final assemblage. The grapes from the newer vines (still all over twenty years) are used for the wines of Télégramme. The greatness of the domaine is just as much a tribute to the Bruniers as it is to *La Crau*—they have the ability to make great wine even in tough vintages. Their goal is to find a harmony between aromatic complexity, tannic structure, and richness, which they achieve year after year. The maligned 1984 vintage is still a marvelous wine.

The range of their other projects has served to express the variety of *terroirs* in the region, representing a diversity that defies any stylistic pigeonholing. For more information on the Bruniers' projects, please view to the following:

Famille Brunier (Le Pigeolet, Mégaphone, Piedlong)

Domaine La Roquette

Domaine Les Pallières



DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge “Télégramme”	80% Grenache 10% Syrah 6% Mourvèdre 4% Cinsault	35 years average	Alluvial deposits, Limestone, Silica, and Molasse (red clay) with <i>galets roulés</i>	Varies
Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc La Crau	40% Clairette 30% Grenache Blanc 15% Bourboulenc 15% Roussanne	40 years average		5 ha
Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge La Crau	65% Grenache 15% Mourvèdre 15% Syrah 5% (Cinsault, Clairette, et al)	60 years average		65 ha

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

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- Vineyards are sustainably farmed
- Hand-harvested
- Two rigorous sortings of the grapes following the harvest
- Grapes are pressed gently by pneumatic press
- White wines are aged in *barriques* and *demi-muids* (10-15 % new oak)
- Reds wines are aged in 50-60 hl *foudres*

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge “Télégramme” :

- Grapes sourced from these *lieux-dits*: *La Crau*, *Pignan*, *Colombis*, *Escondudes*, *Rascassa*, *Font de Michèle*, *Blaireaux*
- Systematic de-stemming of the grapes
- Traditional fermentation in temperature-controlled *cuvées* for approximately 25 days
- Wine rests in cement tank for 10 months, and then ages for another 6 months in *foudres*

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc La Crau :

- Grapes sourced from *La Crau*, the *lieu-dit* that is known for the *galet roulés*, or rounded stones, that cover the vineyard for as far as the eye can see
- Fermentation begins in cement tank. Halfway through fermentation, wine is transferred to oak (*barriques*, *demi-muids*, and *foudres*) until fermentation finishes
- After fermentation, wine is racked and returned to oak to age
- 70% of wine undergoes malolactic fermentation
- Wine ages until spring following vintage, and then it is bottled



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Châteauneuf-du-Pape *Rouge La Crau* :

- Grapes sourced from *La Crau*, the *lieu-dit* that is known for the *galet roulés*, or rounded stones, that cover the vineyard for as far as the eye can see
- Grapes are partially de-stemmed
- Traditional fermentation between 25-35 days in stainless steel and wood *cuvées* (all temperature-controlled)
- Wine rests in cement tank for 10 months, and then ages for another 12 months in *foudres*
- Wine is bottled unfiltered, after 22 months of aging