



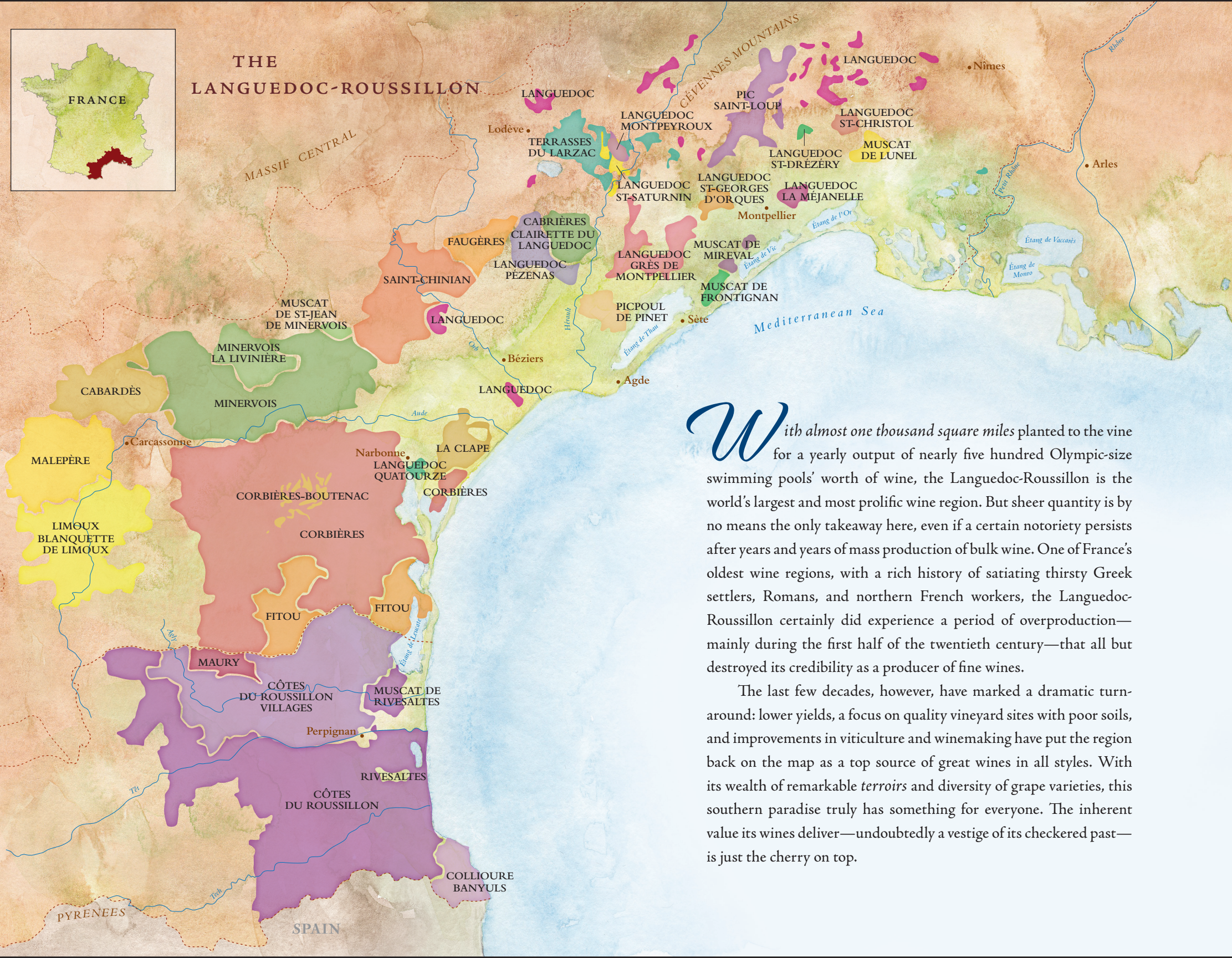
WINES OF THE
LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

CHEVALIER

MARCH 2020



THE LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON



With almost one thousand square miles planted to the vine for a yearly output of nearly five hundred Olympic-size swimming pools' worth of wine, the Languedoc-Roussillon is the world's largest and most prolific wine region. But sheer quantity is by no means the only takeaway here, even if a certain notoriety persists after years and years of mass production of bulk wine. One of France's oldest wine regions, with a rich history of satiating thirsty Greek settlers, Romans, and northern French workers, the Languedoc-Roussillon certainly did experience a period of overproduction—mainly during the first half of the twentieth century—that all but destroyed its credibility as a producer of fine wines.

The last few decades, however, have marked a dramatic turnaround: lower yields, a focus on quality vineyard sites with poor soils, and improvements in viticulture and winemaking have put the region back on the map as a top source of great wines in all styles. With its wealth of remarkable *terroirs* and diversity of grape varieties, this southern paradise truly has something for everyone. The inherent value its wines deliver—undoubtedly a vestige of its checkered past—is just the cherry on top.

2019 CORBIÈRES ROSÉ “GRIS DE GRIS”

◆ DOMAINE DE FONTSAINTE \$18

DEEP IN THE CORBIÈRES APPELLATION, in the heart of the esteemed sub-zone of Boutenac, the Laboucarié family of Domaine de Fontsaïnte has earned a following for their light, crisp rosé of direct-press Grenache Gris. The 2019 edition provides all the euphoria we have come to expect from the wine’s flawless track record of thirty-plus years of thirst-quenching delight. Bright and crisp, with an appetizing color that glimmers seductively in the glass, the 2019 delivers a fragrant burst of juicy citrus, *fraises des bois*, and orange blossom before a delicate, finely etched mineral finish cleanses and stimulates the palate.



2018 LANGUEDOC BLANC “SAINTE AGNÈS”

◆ ERMITAGE DU PIC SAINT LOUP \$26

HERE IS ONE of southern France’s most amazing values in white wine. A Roussanne-dominated blend grown at high altitude in limestone atop the Pic Saint Loup and aged in *foudres*, this country white shows so much class and is so lively you will be blown away. In addition to the relatively cool *terroir*, the Ravaille brothers’ passion for biodynamic farming undoubtedly contributes to this wine’s surprising nerve and verve. It has enough stony freshness to keep your palate sharp and will even improve for several years in the cellar. This dry white is truly a hidden treasure of southern France.



2018 LANGUEDOC *BLANC* “LES COCALIÈRES”

◆ DOMAINE D'AUPILHAC \$38

THE LANGUEDOC is certainly not known for its white wines, but planting the right grapes in the right site can yield great results. Retaining freshness is the crucial determinant here, as the hot meridional climate favors low acidity, and grapes like Marsanne and Grenache Blanc are lacking in natural acidity to begin with. At 350 meters above sea level, Les Cocalières experiences diurnal temperature shifts crucial to preserving this acid, while the northwestern sun exposure prevents excessive ripeness and correspondingly flabby wines. The vineyard also boasts a curious and unusual soil: the land was once a lake that formed after the eruption of an ancient volcano, resulting in a mixture of limestone and basalt—a rare geological phenomenon.

Sylvain Fadat, founder of Domaine d'Aupilhac, ferments the juice wild and ages the wine for more than a year in neutral casks, where it completes its malolactic fermentation before an unfiltered bottling. The Cocalières *blanc* perfectly reflects its *terroir*: taut, mineral—almost salty—and suggestive of the wild thyme and fennel that grow abundantly around the vines. It also has tremendous aging potential; a 2002 opened recently showed astonishing complexity, reminiscent of honey, almonds, wildflowers, and liquid rocks.

2018 COLLIOURE *ROUGE* “PUIG AMBEILLE”

◆ DOMAINE LA TOUR VIEILLE \$30

COLLIOURE is one of the most difficult areas in the world to cultivate grapes. Its impossibly steep, inhospitable schist slopes, which plunge into the Mediterranean near Spain's border, cannot be mechanized. Gnarled vines twist from the harsh, windswept landscape of pure bedrock. Known primarily for its fortified sweet wines and traditional oxidative *rancio* bottlings, this coastal haven is also home to unique reds. Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Carignan thrive with patient care, cleansed by the salty sea air. Vincent Cantié of La Tour Vieille is an artist from another era, eking out masterpieces from these foreboding, beautiful hills. A classic southern French red, this cuvée has the attitude and spiciness you'd expect from a full-blooded Catalan.



2017 SAINT-CHINIAN *ROUGE* “CLOS DE LA SIMONETTE”

◆ MAS CHAMPART \$40

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that Isabelle and Mathieu Champart set up shop back in 1976. They still seem as young and enthusiastic as ever, and they must have a good laugh when they think of all the banks that refused to follow their endeavor, telling them there was no future in their little corner of the Languedoc. Not only did they make quite a future out of it, they became the hands-down benchmark of Saint-Chinian by which all others are judged. A single swirl and sniff of this Mourvèdre-majority beauty is all it takes to see what forty-four years of experience can bring to the table. From a striking parcel surrounded by dry-stone walls made from the calcareous debris that litters the vineyard floor, this cuvée puts Saint-Chinian on the map next to Bandol, Faugères, and the other great southern appellations. You'll find lots of pleasure and even more soul.



2015 PAYS D'HÉRAULT *ROUGE*

◆ DOMAINE DE LA GRANGE DES PÈRES \$125

JUST SOUTH OF ANIANE, near Montpellier, there is a vigneron so focused on his pursuit of perfection that he consistently produces some of the greatest wines in all of France. In the age of social media and self-marketing, Laurent Vaillé of Domaine de la Grange des Pères is a rare breed: practically a hermit, who doesn't use email, mostly ignores the phone, and rarely answers questions in more than one sentence, this farmer almost only works in his vines, uninterrupted on his quest to perfect the translation of his grapes and their *terroir*. Early in his career, Vaillé trained at some of France's best wine addresses: Coche-Dury, Chave, and Trévallon. Now, a few decades later, he has earned his place alongside them in the pantheon of France's most talented vignerons.

Laurent planted his vineyard from scratch after dynamiting and bulldozing the land clear of boulders and limestone—an onerous task that proves his strong belief in the potential of Aniane's *terroir*. Since harvesting his first vintage in 1992, he has proven his critics wrong and amassed an impressive cult-like following for his stunningly complex and long-lived wines. Thrilling to taste now, this majestic red will deliver even more down the road, leaving you with a singular, unforgettable experience when you ultimately decide to pop the cork.





2019 Corbières Rosé “Gris de Gris” <i>Domaine de Fontsaïnte</i>	90% Grenache Gris, 5% Carignan, 5% Mourvèdre	50-year-old vines, on average Silica, clay, limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F Do not decant	Nectarine, wild strawberry, melon Succulent, zingy, mouthwatering, delicate	Drink now
2018 Languedoc <i>Blanc</i> “Sainte Agnès” <i>Ermitage du Pic Saint Loup</i>	50% Roussanne, 30% Grenache Blanc and Gris, 15% Marsanne, 5% Clairette	15- to 18-year- old vines Clay, limestone, dolomite	Serve <i>cold</i> 50–54° F Decant optional	Anise, lychee, yellow peach Creamy, mouth- filling, nervy	Drink now through 2025
2018 Languedoc <i>Blanc</i> “Les Cocalières” <i>Domaine d'Aupilhac</i>	30% Roussanne, 30% Vermentino, 20% Grenache Blanc, 20% Marsanne	Vines planted 1999–2002 Limestone, basalt	Serve <i>cold</i> 50–54° F Decant optional	Wildflowers, fennel, stone fruit Saline, waxy, taut, persistent	Drink now through 2030
2018 Collioure <i>Rouge</i> “Puig Ambeille” <i>Domaine La Tour Vieille</i>	80% Mourvèdre, 10% Grenache, 10% Carignan	25- to 45-year-old vines Schist	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant optional	Spices, violets, dried herbs, dusty earth Supple, medium- bodied, accessible	Drink now through 2025
2017 Saint- Chinian <i>Rouge</i> “Clos de la Simonette” <i>Mas Champart</i>	65% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache, 15% Carignan	Grenache and Mourvèdre: 15–25 years, Carignan: 60–110 years Marl, clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant 1–2 hours	Blackberry, black cherry, game Inky, chewy, palate-staining, stony	Drink now through 2035
2015 Pays d'Hérault <i>Rouge</i> <i>Domaine de la Grange des Pères</i>	40% Syrah, 40% Mourvèdre, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cunoise	15- to 20-year-old vines Glacial scree, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 60–64° F Decant 1–2 hours	Tobacco, lavender, plum, red and black fruit Rich, deep, voluptuous, majestic	Drink now through 2040

front cover: The Pont du Diable, a Languedoc
landmark, just north of Aniane. © GAIL SKOFF
back cover: Sylvain Fadat in his Cocalières vineyard.
© GAIL SKOFF
far left, top: The harvest team at Fontsaïnte.
© DOMAINE DE FONTSAÏNTE

far left, bottom: Barrel aging at Ermitage du Pic Saint Loup.
© ERMITAGE DU PIC SAINT LOUP
middle: Collioure. © ANTHONY LYNCH
near left: Clos de la Simonette and its limestone.
© ANTHONY LYNCH
map: EVAN WINSLOW SMITH

The Making of A GREAT LANGUEDOC CUVÉE

Domaine d'Aupilhaç's Cocalières Blanc

LES CÉPAGES Choosing grape varieties well adapted to the local conditions—in this case, Roussanne, Vermentino, Grenache Blanc, and Marsanne—ensures balance, complexity, and an authentic expression of place in the final blend.

ELEVATION/EXPOSURE

High altitude and northwestern exposure temper the Languedoc sun. In a hot climate, freshness is key.

LE VIGNERON

A great *vigneron* brings out the best in his *terroir*—for Sylvain, this means organic viticulture and low-intervention cellar practices.

ENVIRONMENT

Abundant sunshine, timely rains, and cleansing winds play a crucial role, while herbs of the *garrigue* infuse the grapes with their inimitable spicy fragrance.

SOIL Poor, rocky soils ensure good drainage and low yields. Here, limestone and basalt bring complexity and minerality.

