

# Domaine Jolivet

## Saint Joseph



*L'Instinct 2015: A most praiseworthy wine, delivered with fine detail.*

\*\*\*\*(\*) John Livingstone-Learmonth, drinkrhine.com, 2017

SAINT-JOSEPH  
L'INSTINCT  
DOMAINE JOLIVET

In 2013 Bastien Jolivet returned to his family domain to make wine. He had done internships in New Zealand and South Africa, and then worked four years side by side with Stéphane Montez at Saint Joseph's Domaine du Monteillet. Upon his return home, his father stopped selling the harvest to the co-op and began to farm the vines with his son for themselves.

They tend 23.5 acres of vines in St-Jean-de-Muzols in the heart of the original St-Joseph appellation. At its creation in 1956, the appellation was centered on Tournon, opposite Tain l'Hermitage, and encompassed six villages whose terraced hillside vineyards were capable of making wine a clear cut above generic Côtes du Rhône. Of those six villages, three represented the core with rich histories of grape growing and wine making. They were Tournon, Mauves, and St-Jean-de-Muzols—with St Jean succinctly celebrating the vine's age-old importance in its eleventh-century church, where grapes are carved into the capitals of its columns.

In 1969 the appellation was extended from those original six communes to twenty-six, growing from a six-mile stretch along the west bank of the Rhone to nearly 40 miles, a much-criticized change but one reflecting the new economic power of wine. In the early 1990s, responding to this criticism, the syndicate of growers restricted the total area available to be planted from 7,000 hectares to less than 3,500, and created a mechanism to reduce vineyards planted on poor sites—mainly on the plain or high on the cold plateau—over a 30-year period. Still, today the appellation goes from Condrieu down to Valence, a length easily broken into a northern and southern zone with stylistic differences. The demarcation is the village of Sarras. In general terms, wine from the northern zone tends to be more peppery, leaner, more taut and reserved, whereas wine from the southern zone, especially in the original appellation, tends to be riper, well constituted with tannic structure, more generous and open.

That said, these wines do not have the body, structure, and stuffing of their counterpart across the river in Hermitage. The soils are fundamentally similar, but Hermitage's south-facing hillside gets as much as two hours more of sun during the ripening season than St-Joseph's east-facing hillsides, which accounts for the best of St-Joseph possessing such flattering drinkability at a young age—something that Hermitage's far more reserved wines can't lay claim to.

Bastien Jolivet's grandfather maintained the domain in a polyculture, and joined the co-op in Tain l'Hermitage in 1963. His son Alain, Bastien's father, continued selling the domain's grapes to the co-op until 2013, quitting after 50 years. Alain was also responsible for enlarging the domain's AOC vineyard surface from just over an acre to just over 12.

Today the domain farms 15 acres of Syrah for its red St-Joseph and 2.5 of mostly Marsanne with a little Roussanne for its white. In addition, it farms six acres in appellation Vin de France for two colors as well. Currently, half of this is farmed organically while the other half is farmed sustainably. Each year as he comes to better understand his vines, Bastien makes changes to better protect the environment and increase the health of his vines.

In the cellar, all fermentations are spontaneous. Syrah vines less than 30 years of age are de-stemmed; those that are older are considered on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Bastien is a big fan of working with stems because they can add complexity, density, length and balance to the wine, but he is proceeding slowly with the amount of stems he uses in fermentations. The wines are not fined and only filtered minimally. Likewise, SO2 additions are kept to a minimum.