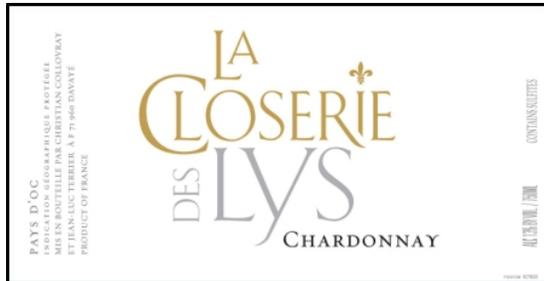


# La Closerie des Lys

## Limoux



Roughly 50 miles south of the old walled town of Carcassonne are the vineyards of La Closerie des Lys. They grow deep in the Pyrenean foothills on the sides of two mountains, flanking a little hollow anchored by the village of Antugnac. The village is old and forgotten, with a church that was fortified in the Middle Ages as a bastide against marauding mercenary bands, but few travelers venture off the road to climb the hill to visit Antugnac and its church.

The lowest vines sit at 900 feet; the highest look out at 1,700 feet. Mostly they face south, such as the mature Chardonnay parcels in the photo below (those are the Pyrenees in the distance). The lowest parcel, planted in 2003 to Syrah, has the deepest vein of clay and is the most protected from the region's buffeting winds, and in 2018 for the first time Closerie bottled wine from this site as the domain's first 100% Syrah. For some, its aromatics are chock full of the northern Rhone's bacon and violets; for others, it speaks of intense central Loire Cab Franc. The site is Closerie's warmest, but there's no doubt about it being a cool-climate wine.

The reigning appellation here is Limoux, Languedoc's coolest appellation in the south and the only AOP for Chardonnay. Christian Collovray and Jean-Luc Terrier, childhood friends and producers in Mâcon, well understood this in 1997 when they came in search of vineyards. They wanted to expand their business and property prices were good in the south, but what clinched the deal for them was that Closerie's vines were in Limoux's *Haute Vallée de l'Aude*—the coolest zone of all, a narrow band following the Aude River from Limoux to Quillan—and it had some of Languedoc's original plantings of Pinot Noir from the 1970s. Those vines have since been replanted, but they showed what was possible.

The partners quickly understood that the location offered mountain freshness—the diurnal shifts are remarkable here—tempered by Languedoc's sun. Indeed, they discovered that the Chardonnay vines high up on the slopes followed the same ripening cycle as their vines at Domaine des Deux Roches in the Mâconnais, which surprised them more than a little.

In 1997 Closerie had 112 acres of vines. In 2002 the partners embarked on replanting three-quarters of the existing vines while adding new parcels, all with high-density plantings. Today Closerie has 272 acres with 13 varieties (Cab Franc, Chardonnay, Chenin, Cinsault, Grenache, Malbec, Mauzac, Merlot, Muscat, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon blanc, Sorelli and Syrah). The vines give yields of 35-40 hectoliters per hectare, well below the maximum permissible (which are 48 for red and 50 for white). Mathilde Fort oversees them all.

Mathilde's a local. Her uncle has a domain nearby. She accepted the position of *chef du cave* at Closerie in 2013, after a stint at Errazuriz in Chile and—get this—after training at Domaines Didier Dagueneau, Mas Amiel, Vieux Télégraph and Burgundy's Clos du Tart. Christian and Jean-Luc still come down routinely to partake in tastings and blending decisions, and their sons are involved too—it's very much a family affair—but the day to day work is Mathilde's show. Early on, the partners came to have complete confidence in her.