

# Failenc Sainte Marie



Remains of a Roman winery have been found at the site of the Domaine Failenc Sainte Marie, a testament to the ancient tradition of winegrowing at that location, but the domaine, in its present form at least, was founded during the reign of Louis XIV by an officer returning from service on the Indian subcontinent. Situated just outside of the tiny village of Douzens, a mere 12 kilometers east of the ancient walled city of Carcassonne in the Languedoc' Corbières district, Failenc Sainte Marie is a small property, with only 8 ha of vineyards stubbornly clinging to the rocky foothills of Mont Alaric and buffeted by the harsh and drying Tramontane and Autan winds. The terroir is composed of inhospitable, rocky limestone terraces, with only vines, olive trees, and some scraggly brush able to survive. Syrah, Grenache Noir, and Cinsault are the red grape varieties raised here, with 1 ha devoted to white grapes: Roussanne, Macabeu, Bourboulenc and Clairette.

I had the good fortune of discovering this delightful family in 1991 when I drank a bottle of their wine while dining with Olivier Jullien (Mas Jullien) in Saint Guiraud, about an hour from the Failenc. I barely waited for dinner to conclude before calling the Giberts to set up an appointment the following morning, and we have been happily working together ever since. Jean-Baptiste, son of Dominique and Marie-Thérèse, has now taken command of the domaine and has converted to organics and continued his parent's legacy of wines loyal to their native, wild terroir.

## Viticulture:

- **Farming:** Practicing organic
- **Treatments:** Copper sulfate only
- **Ploughing:** Annual ploughing to maintain vineyard health
- **Soils:** Limestone-clay
- **Vines:** All vines are head-trained. Syrah is c. 40 years old; Grenache is 30-35 years old; and Carignan is c. 100 years old.
- **Yields:** Controlled through severe winter pruning, debudding, and an occasional green harvest, yields average 50 hl/ha.
- **Harvest:** Entirely manual, usually in late September
- **Purchasing:** Entirely estate fruit



## Vinification:

- **Fermentation:** All wines ferment spontaneously in concrete vats. Red wines see partial destemming, and rosé wine macerates for a few hours before being bled off. All blends are co-fermented.
- **Extraction:** Red wines see a combination of punchdowns and pumpovers, depending on the nature of the vintage.
- **Chaptalization and Acidification:** None
- **Pressing:** Pneumatic pressing
- **Malolactic Fermentation:** Spontaneous, following alcoholic fermentation

## Aging:

- **Élevage:** Corbières spends c. 18 months in fiberglass and cement vats. Noé ages in fiberglass vats. Circomference de presse spends c. 18 months in neutral, 500-l demi muids. Rosé and white wines age for c. 6 months in concrete vats.
- **Lees:** Wines remain on their lees until racking following malolactic.
- **Fining and Filtration:** Rosé and white wines are fined with bentonite and see sterile filtration. Red wines are unfined and see plate filtration.
- **Sulfur:** Applied at harvest and at bottling, with 60 mg/l total for white and rosé wines and 40 mg/l total for red wines