

Les Wineries du Rhône

Maison & Domaines
Les Alexandrins



PORTRAIT —

MAISON & DOMAINES LES ALEXANDRINS, STARTING UP IN THE NORTHERN RHÔNE

When a rapidly-expanding Maison de Négoce (in this case Nicolas Perrin) teams up with an equally young, dynamic winegrowing estate, it's safe to say they'll be sharing more than just a name. This is a business that's going places, with the energy of a start-up and a healthy respect for tradition.

Wisdom beyond our years

At just 10 years old, Maison Nicolas Perrin is surrounded by the giants of the wine world. Their office/showroom, in an idyllic spot in Place de Taurobole, Tain l'Hermitage (well, where else would you set up a wine business?) **epitomises the fledgling Winery: compact, elegant and functional.** Maison Nicolas Perrin was set up in 2009 as a foothold in the northern Rhône for the Perrin family, who had hitherto specialised in the wines of the south, heading up Château de Beaucastel in Châteauneuf-du-Pape among others. For Nicolas Jaboulet it was an exciting new venture after the sale of Jaboulet Aîné to the Frey family. "We started from nothing. A blank slate," says Nicolas. "We had no vines, no cellars. We planned to start off as a micro-négociant, sourcing wines from four appellations in the northern Rhône: Côte-

Rôtie, Saint-Joseph, Hermitage red and Hermitage white". Over the years the range has grown, and now includes Crozes-Hermitage red and white, Cornas, Condrieu and Vins de Pays from Syrah and Viognier. All from the north.

Joined-up thinking

Normally you'd progress from winegrower to négociant. Here, it's the other way around.

Maison Nicolas Perrin started out as a négociant, then joined forces with Les Alexandrins, an estate founded by two highly respected appellation winegrowers, Guillaume Sorrel and Alexandre Caso. Their stories were similar: the Mercuriol-based estate had also been established in 2009, also with no vines or cellars. And the bond was strong. Nicolas Perrin even changed the company name to Maison & Domaines Le Alexandrins. Guillaume Sorrel, whose father still operates in the Hermitage AOC, explains that, "one of the main contributions a négoce business can make to a small estate like ours is its sales network." Nicolas Jaboulet, meanwhile, had long intended to team up with a winegrowing estate to improve customer perception, by "showing we understand about soil and terroir."

The hill is part of my life

Nicolas Perrin – or rather Maison & Domaines Les Alexandrins – are currently developing two wine ranges, one from négoce supplies, the other home-grown. Sales have soared from 35,000 bottles in 2010 to 240,000 in 2015. So things are going well; the only sticking point might be future growth. Because the northern Rhône is relatively small, and once you've looked at Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph the other appellations seem a bit restrictive, their yields limited. **"My family is from Tain l'Hermitage, so it would be inconceivable for me not to make Hermitage wine.** It's an emotional bond; That hill's part of my life. It

Nicolas Jaboulet (left), Manager, and Nicolas Sorrel, associate.



Established 2009
Employees: 2
Sales: 1,500 hl
Turnover 2016: €1.8 million incl. €1.1 million to export



"We started from nothing. A blank slate. No vines, no cellars [...] and now we buy grapes, blend wines and have our own estate. We cover all three aspects of the job. It's exactly what we set out to do"

produces fantastic, long-lived wines. I only make a tiny proportion, but at least I'm here," says Nicolas.

Guided tours

He recommends touring the hill by electric bike: 2 bottles in the saddlebag, and off you go to immerse yourself in nature and explore this unique terroir. **"Once you've experienced it, it'll be in your blood for ever."** Nicolas has spent a lot of time on the road recently, launching his new Maison de Négoce primarily in the UK and US. Now he feels it's time to stay at home, welcoming visitors to the winery and talking them through the production process. "When we talk about wine, of course, we're talking about more than just production techniques. It's about the soils, the grapes and the climate. And that naturally brings us on to the people and the work they do."



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