

Les Wineries du Rhône

Amadiou Pierre



PORTRAIT —

PIERRE AMADIEU, THE FORWARD- THINKING TRADITIONALIST

Pierre Amadiou is a man who loves his land. And while there's no doubt in his mind that the chief **role of a négociant is to use the information they have about the market to support the industry,** he's also clear that we should, "never forget the basics and go against what nature has given us."

In 1929, Pierre's grandfather put away his trumpet, forsaking the musician's life to focus exclusively on vine and wine. He was one of the first to make wine under the Gigondas name. Today, Pierre dances to a similar tune, reconciling market expectation with terroir-driven reality, just as faithfully but in his own way. When he took on responsibility for export growth in 1995, Pierre soon realised there was still a long way to go. "People would ask if there was any difference between Côtes du Rhône and Gigondas, and why the prices were so disparate." This was in London, and not that long ago.

The quality revolution

It's not something they ask so much these days. The northern Rhône had had its time in the spotlight, now it was the south's turn to focus on the quality and diversity of its wines. The four flagship appellations, Châteauneuf du Pape, Tavel, Gigondas and Vacqueyras, came first,

bringing in their wake villages such as Rasteau, Cairanne, Plan de Dieu, Vinsobres and Beaumes de Venise which were beginning to make a name for themselves. As quality rose, it became increasingly clear that there was a common denominator: Grenache, the iconic southern Rhône grape, at its best in these generous, sun-drenched, terroirs. **"The Rhône Valley is one of the only regions - if not the only one - where at least one new cru is approved every four or five years,"** says Pierre, "because with the help of our négociants, producers have realised that the future lies in terroir-driven wines made to ever more exacting standards."

Young versus old

This is a sign of a young, dynamic region, he says. In places like Bordeaux and Burgundy, the old hierarchy is set in stone, while here, the latest local cru, Cairanne, was promoted to AOC status as recently as 2016. "The Rhône Valley is still in its infancy. We've been making wine for over 2,000 years, but our top-quality wines have been transformed over the last 30-40 years. For a négociant, the terroirs are a godsend. **"The sheer breadth and diversity of wines and wine brands on offer gives us a range of products to cover all bases, answering every conceivable market need from budget wines to premium."**

Group work

There's still a lot to be done before Rhône wines are more widely recognised, new ways we can approach the market together. "The wine market is becoming more global. The UMVR can help us identify what consumers want, and tweak production to suit. It's important that we pool our knowledge to further the interests of the industry as a whole."

Pierre Amadiou, CEO (left), his uncle Claude (back) and cousins Henri-Claude (right) and Jean-Marie.



Founded in 1929
Employees: 14
Sales: 6,130 hl
Turnover 2016: €4.3 million, incl. €1.6m to export
Brands:
Pierre Amadiou



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Market expectations

Pierre feels that having successfully built up and positioned his premium wines, it's time to look at the core range. He's confident his people in the Rhône Valley can handle it wisely. "We tell producers on a daily basis what it is we need. The market's in a constant state of flux, but then over time, so are our terroirs, changing very slowly but surely."



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