

# Les Wineries du Rhône

**E. Guigal**



PORTRAIT —

## E. GUIGAL NEVER A DULL MOMENT

The words 'Nul bien sans peine' - no pain no gain - are etched into the sundial at Château Ampuis, where father and son team Marcel and Philippe Guigal continue the work started by the estate's founder, Etienne. Etienne arrived here one fine day in 1924 to visit his brother, and never left.

### "Improving" wines

They talked about work, how hard work overcomes any obstacle and how nothing gets you nothing. Even now, hard work is one of the family's core values, along with quality and respect. **Three generations of the Guigal family - Etienne, Marcel and now Philippe - have built up a négociant business, famous throughout the country for the quality of its wines and its position in the Rhône countryside.**

The family have a particular fondness for the northern Rhône. They would love for it to be better known, and for Côte Rôtie to be restored to its former glory. They treasure their vines, but also love history and books. They've learned that two centuries ago Côte Rôtie and Hermitage wines were seen as "improvers" for Château Latour and Château Lafite (the latter was even labelled "Lafite Hermitagé" right up to the 1920s), and that the highly-respected Viognier grapes from which Condrieu is made were grown

here and here alone for over 2,000 years.

### The Elite Cru

"Yet even now when people talk about French wine, they mean Bordeaux or maybe Burgundy, but not the Rhône Valley," says Marcel sadly. We need our larger communal appellations to pull this region into the limelight so our wines are as famous and easily recognised as a Bordeaux or Burgundy.

Quality-wise, there's been enormous progress recently, from the regional Côtes du Rhône appellation right up to the crus. "Now we need to double down on our efforts, focus on enhancing our image and secure the positioning we deserve throughout France."

### Doing what we know best

At times the Guigals see themselves as guardians of the temple; they are the only winemakers in France to age their great wines for three years. (And if the angels demand their share, so be it!) **They draw on the best of their traditions, making no concessions to speed or fashion. It's part of who they are.**

They won't be pushed into doing just any old thing, like reducing depth of colour in Tavel because the current trend is for paler wines. "That's when we put our foot down," says Philippe. "If Tavel starts morphing into Provence, it's not Tavel anymore and we may as well down tools. We made our first Tavel way back in 1942."

### An open mind

The Guigals are fizzing with new project ideas. They extended their vineyards to 75 ha, and wouldn't change a single metre of them. The family, known for their focus on growing and

**Marcel (right) and Philippe Guigal, CEO and MD of Maison Guigal.**



**Established in 1946**

*Employees: 29*

*Sales: 59,767 hl*

*Turnover 2016: €58 million, including €25 million to export*

**Brands include:** Côte Rôtie La Mouline, Côte Rôtie La Turque, Côte Rôtie La Doriane



**"We need our larger, communal appellations to pull this region into the limelight so our wines get the fame and recognition [they deserve]"**

production, are now turning their gaze to the consumer.

A new winery is on the cards, a visitor-friendly site featuring three hectares of the family's spectacular underground cellars at Ampuis open to the public. "There's going to be a museum section where visitors can learn about the terroirs and wine growing in the Rhône. 2,400 years of history is something quite special," smiles Philippe

Their second project links the family's twin passions of wine and history, in the form of Maison de la Gabelle, a 16th century Renaissance style gem they have bought in Condrieu. Their plan is to create a boutique hotel dedicated to luxurious living.



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