

Les Wineries du Rhône

Gabriel Meffre



PORTRAIT —

GABRIEL MEFFRE – A RHÔNE WINERY THAT'S GOING PLACES

A winery looking to tradition as a foundation for its modernity, whose Managing Director is serving president of the UMVR; Gabriel Meffre is a Rhône Winery that's going places.

A holistic approach

It all started, as it often does, in the vineyard. In 1936 Gabriel and his wife grew vines, selected grapes, made wine, and sold it on largely as bulk. When Gabriel died in the 1980s, the winery underwent a significant change, although it never forgot its roots. Wine quality rose spectacularly. Wines were aged and even bottled on-site. The bulk grower/winemaker had become a fully-fledged *négociant/élèveur* - a producer, winemaker and *négociant* in one.

Branding was central to the winery's new vision of creating value. The idea of making good wines at affordable prices was key, **wines that were "delicious from day one," (the winery motto is still 'semper voluptas'), and that would be universally popular, as 75% of production is destined for export.** Sustainable quality has always been an overriding goal for Gabriel Meffre, an essential element when making complex terroir choices and working in close, long-term partnerships with multiple

winegrowers.

Being a Rhône Winery means taking a holistic approach, considering both the upstream (production) and the downstream (consumer) aspects, with terroir, climate, and gastronomy on the one hand and open-minded innovation on the other. Geographically and culturally, the Rhône embraces both tradition and innovation. "We take the best of the past and introduce it into our newest products," says Etienne Maffre, Winery MD.

A sense of commitment

In all Rhône Wineries, innovation is the product of careful thought. "We spent the years from 1995 to 2005 building the right business structures. Implementing international standards such as ISO 9000 made sure we all said what we did and did what we said. Now it's time to look at the bigger picture." These aren't just empty words; in 2015 Gabriel Meffre was certified at level 3 (of 4) for AFNAQ 26000, a standard measuring Corporate Social Responsibility, which includes not just sustainable viticulture and water management, but extends to equality, professional development for employees and eco-design.

For the greater good

"My work with the UMVR is a continuation of what I do at Gabriel Meffre. We're in touch with the whole industry and can broach the topics we all need to discuss. Then we can all reach for the heights, all of us, together." To encourage mutual cooperation, the UMVR has drawn up a Charter of Economic Intent, applicable to all members; Its ultimate goal is for everyone to play a part in steering the ship. And that means having data; complete, accurate, up-to-date information. That's the downfall at the moment.

**Etienne Maffre,
UMVR President and
Managing Director
of Maison Gabriel
Meffre.**



Established in 1936
Employees: 129
Sales: 112,500 hl
Turnover 2016: €40 million, including €27 million to export
Brands include:
Laurus, Domaine de Longue Toque, and Château Grand Escalion



"It's not simply about what we produce. In fact, it's not about us at all. It's about introducing virtuous practice into our economic, geographic, social and natural environment."

"We are woefully short of data, and that can lead to all sorts of misconceptions. It doesn't help when we're trying to find a position that will work for everyone," says Etienne Maffre.

"What we'd like to do is gather and analyse as much data as we can, from the grapes on the vine to the bottles as sold to consumers on a range of markets. But we need everyone, *négociants* and producers, to send us their invoices, like they do in Champagne. Even when we stress that all data will be completely anonymous, it's difficult for people to understand and accept."

"It's a tough challenge," continues Etienne. We'd like to be able to share more accurate information, to pull together as *négociants* on the marketing side of things and persuade producers that sharing data can help with decision-making. **An economic model that's healthy and profitable for all concerned has to be based on collective action."**



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