

# Les Wineries du Rhône

Ogier



PORTRAIT —

## OGIER, THE AMBASSADOR

With roots in Châteauneuf du Pape, long-term partnerships with producers both in the north and the south of the valley and a fast-growing wine-tourism offering, Ogier is the **perfect ambassador for the Rhône terroirs**.

When a business goes from barrel-making to wine-trading it's not hard to follow their train of thought. That's exactly what happened at Ogier, one of Châteauneuf du Pape's historic négociant houses and owner of Oratoire des Papes, which was acquired by Advini in 1994. Ogier are never short on ideas; their goal is to proclaim the virtues of the Rhône Valley far and wide, raising awareness of the quality of its wines both from the north and south of the Valley, 98% of which have AOC status.

### Sourcing is key

Although they make the occasional ad-hoc purchase from a broker or grower/supplier, **Ogier primarily work with a network of 70 partners across all the region's terroirs**. Their contracts are generally multi-year, ranging from three years in Châteauneuf du Pape to 10 years in the Côtes du Rhône, and linked to revenue guarantees. This allows the winery to secure its required purchases of wine and grapes. MD François Miquel explains. "We want to be as consistent as possible. That's easier if the majority of our supplies come from the same producers year after year."

As négociants, Ogier play a significant role within their supplier network, monitoring vine growth, making joint decisions about harvest dates, producing winemaking specifications and visiting the vineyards on a regular basis. Nothing – or next to nothing – is left to chance. "We can improve things across the board by helping individual winegrowers to grow and develop." Ogier even organise an annual blind tasting event, where the best wines are rewarded with price increases.

### Nurturing the gems

Promoting Rhône Valley wines also involves raising awareness of its crus. Lirac is one of Châteauneuf du Pape's closest neighbours – so close in fact that the environment and soils are very similar. But prices can be 10 times lower. Unsurprisingly, many Châteauneuf du Pape producers have bought properties on the other side of the river, in Gard. "Lirac is a gem," says François. "An American journalist recently called it the 'baby' Châteauneuf du Pape." It doesn't have one particular flagship estate to draw the appellation along in its wake; it's more a series of small properties.

**So it's up to the négociants and UMVR to create momentum, spread the word, capture the interest of wine writers and buyers and endorse the image of the Rhône crus as excellent wines at value-for-money prices.**

"We'd love it if the northern négociants got on board with this," says François. "And it would make a lot of sense to include a Châteauneuf du Pape and a Lirac in the same range."

**François Miquel,**  
MD of Maison Ogier



#### Established 1859

Employees: 67

Sales: 66,000 hl

Turnover 2016: €32

million of which €17

million to export

**Brands include:** Clos de l'Oratoire des Papes, Oratorio, Notre Dame de Cousienac. Heritage.



**"It's not about selling visitors as much wine as they can carry. Most have come by plane anyway. It's about selling the dream, the lifestyle, our brands and our terroirs."**

### Selling the dream

Every year, Ogier welcome over 30,000 visitors to their historic site in Châteauneuf du Pape. The first part of the visit involves the garden, where visitors learn about the different soil types: limestone, sand, red sandstone and the famous rounded pudding stones. A hundred million years of geology in five minutes! Next stop – the winery and its 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> of semi-subterranean cellars where the wines slumber in barrels, absorbing a gentle hint of oak - the unmistakable Ogier touch. Then it's on to the shop. Or maybe a tour of the vineyard, by electric bike, horse-drawn carriage or on horseback. Or how about a cookery lesson? Or even an overnight stay?

Ogier don't do things by halves. "It's not about selling visitors as much wine as they can carry. Most have come by plane anyway. It's about selling the dream, the lifestyle, our brands and our terroirs." It's about being an ambassador.



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