Winemaker: Olivier Bourdet-Pées
Generation: 2nd

PLAIMONT
VIGNERONS EN GASCOGNE
& PIÉMONT PYRÉNÉEN

Chateau de Crouseilles Madiran AOC

With its huge tannins tempered both by ripe forest fruits and deftly managed time in barrel, this bold offering from SW France should both intrigue and satisfy fans of Bordeaux - while remaining utterly distinct and unique. (Testifying to the grape's raw power, Tannat in this area is actually "tamed" by the addition of Cabernet Sauvignon!) Grown on slopes surrounding the hilltop chateau, these old vines enjoy calcareous clay soils and a bit of extra altitude, all less than an hour away from the Pyrenees towering in the distance. 96 points from Decanter for the 2020 vintage.

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

With the majestic Pyrénées towering in the distance, the Plaimont Cooperative of SW France sits tucked some 50 miles from both snow-capped mountain and Atlantic sea. Over the past few decades, they have single-handedly revived a host of historic grape varieties - from Manseng Noir to Arrufiac - putting their region back on the enological map and making them one of France's most exciting "new" producers.

ENOLOGIST

Olivier Bourdet-Pé
es

TASTING NOTES

Color	Dark ruby
Nose	Dark plum and forest berry with hints of vanilla and spice
Palate	Bold tannic architecture encased by ripe fruit
Finish	Long and generous

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Madiran AOC, South-West France
Vineyard Size	16 ha
Varietals List	70% Tannat 20% Cabernet Franc 10 % Cabernet Sauvignon
Farming Practices	Organic (non-certified); grapes dry-farmed and picked by hand
Elevation	250 m
Soils	Calcareous clay and gravel
Maturation Summary	In French barrels for 12-18 months and bottled for 12 months
Alcohol	14.5 %
Acidity	3.80 g/liter
Residual Sugar	0.5 g/liter
Annual Production	30,000 bottles

AUGUSTIMPORTS
WINES · SPIRITS · INNOVATIONS

PLAIMONT

In the mid-1970s, winemaker Andre Dubosc set out to revive the "lost" appellations of South West France - lost in terms of quality and also, due to the eclipsing effect of nearby Bordeaux, lost to the commercial ages. For decades, the region had simply been equated with Armagnac and inexpensive, Tannat-based wines, which in turn had quashed the enthusiasm of local producers. With an eye on reviving historic grape varieties along with the region's sense of pride, he helped create the Plaimont Cooperative in 1979, which joined the wineries of Plaisance (PL), Aignan (AI), and Saint Mont (MONT), incorporating virtually all of the region's most important estates and chateaux. Today, Plaimont has an impressive 600 growers and 5300 hectares under vine, and accounts for 98% of the Saint Mont appellation, including the gorgeous monastery of Saint Mont, whose own vineyards can be traced back over 1000 years. In addition, 55% of the Madiran AOC, 65% of the Pacherenc de Vic-Bilh AOC and 30% of the Cotes-de-Gascogne IGP are produced at Plaimont. Now with decades of experience and a palpable wind in their sails, this forward-thinking coop has attracted the attention of critics on both sides of the Atlantic, and the region has been flagged as one of the most exciting new frontiers in French wine.

Like so many European producers, Plaimont is wholly devoted to sustainable farming, and their goal is to have 100% of their farmers under HVE certification by 2025. Adding to its appeal, Plaimont has also been credited with leading the fight against climate change in SW France - in part through the revival of pre-phylloxera grape varieties more resistant to big swings in temperature. Serving as prime example is Manseng Noir, a low alcohol red grape related to Tannat. Nearly extinct in the 1970s, it has now been fully restored to the region, along with a handful of other autochthonous red varieties such as Tardif. The white grape Arrufiac - with its floral nose and supple mouth feel - is another local success story. This rare variety now has 17 hectares under vine, growing alongside Gros Manseng and Petit Courbu, Overall, the estate has been using grapes like these to create wines which display a high degree of freshness despite the ascent of regional temperatures. Lead winemaker, Olivier Bourdet-Pées, has also chosen to downplay the use of new oak: steel is used to age most whites and for reds, barrels from Burgundy and Beaujolais (versus Bordeaux) are often used to keep the focus on the fruit.

REGION

SOUTH-WEST FRANCE

Known locally as the Sud-Ouest, this lush, hilly, and historic region is the least populated corner of France but is home to some 47,000 hectares of vineyards along with a vast array of vignerons - with influences ranging from Bordeaux to Basque – with over 2000 years of winemaking behind them. In addition, this large geographic swath contains an enticing list of indigenous grape varieties (roughly 120 of the 300 cultivated there) including Malbec (aka Cot) and the rustic, big-boned Tannat. Located south and east of Bordeaux, in whose shadow the region has lingered for over 600 years, South-West France has more recently emerged as a global wine destination in its own right. It borders the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Pyrénées Mountains to the south, with Toulouse serving as cultural center.

The Sud-Ouest has four distinct sub-divisions, each with its own distinct voice. The most northernmost of these is Dordogne, named after the river which it shares with Bordeaux. Beginning 50 km upriver and to the east, the Bergerac AOC largely shares in Bordeaux's grape varieties and wine styles, as does Monbazillac. Moving further south and inland, one finds the Garonne & Tarn sub-region, along with the Lot River (notably Cahors, where Malbec reigns supreme), and finally the wild and wind-blown Pyrénées sub-region, which includes the Madiran AOC (known for its brazen, Tannat-based reds), the sweet wines of Jurançon, the tangy whites of the Côtes de Gascogne IGP, and also the Basque AOC of Irouléiguy, whose steep mountain foothills tantalize the senses. In all, South-West France has 29 AOCs and a short but growing list of IGPs.

MADIRAN AOC

One of France's oldest recognized growing zones, Madiran was initially registered as the AOC Vic-Bilh in 1948 – today, that name is reserved for white wines coming from the same geographical area (Pacherenc du Vic-Bilh) with Tannat-based reds possessing their own appellation. Regulations require wines include 60-80% Tannat, with a short list of other varieties permitted. These include Cabernet Franc (aka Bouchy), Cabernet Sauvignon, and Fer Servadou (known locally as Pinenc). With a large footprint, the AOC's vineyards span some 1400 hectares over 37 communes and 3 departments: Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Gers, and Hautes-Pyrénées (including Madiran proper on its eastern edge).

Rumored to have originated in Bordeaux and been transported by monks, Tannat from Madiran is best known for its deep hue and pronounced polyphenols – including its wild, sometimes astringent tannins which beg in most cases to be tamed. (If it serves as any indication, Cabernet Sauvignon is often used to soften the Tannat!) Little wonder, micro-oxygenation is often cited as originating in Madiran, and destemming (to reduce woody stalk and stem tannins) is mandatory. While not required by the DOC, many wines see time in the barrel and, once again to help smooth out the tannins, gentle pressing is common amongst the best examples.

In terms of geology, Madiran is comprised of 5 five large ridges running north-south between the Pyrenees foothills and the coastal plains just south of Bordeaux. Soils tend to be a clay-limestone mix, often with alluvial stones rich in iron and manganese oxide deposited by mountain rivers over time. Climate is greatly influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, which lies some 60 kilometers to the west and guarantees far more average rainfall than elsewhere in the south (just shy of 40 inches). Typically, summers run hot, autumns are sunny and dry, and winters remain mild thanks to protection from the nearby mountains.