Winemaker: Olivier Bourdet-Pées
Generation: 2nd

PLAIMONT
VIGNERONS EN GASCOGNE
& PIÉMONT PYRÉNÉEN

Vignes Prephylloxeriques Saint Mont AOC

A true enological marvel, this incredibly rare wine from the Pyrenees sub-region in SW France was produced from a tiny plot of vines planted in 1871... which thanks to sandy soils resisted the onslaught of phylloxera. True to Tannat, the structure is bold, yet the tannins and fruit are sophisticated, layered into a lush, dark, and complex tapestry. 95 points WE for the coveted 2019 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	An array of forest berry, with subtle layers of oak and wildflower
Palate	Opulent, with rich tannins enveloped by black forest fruit and fresh fig
Finish	Complex and lingering

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

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Vineyard Location	Saint Mont AOC, South-West France
Vineyard Size	0.5 ha
Varietals List	95% Tannat 5% Pinenc
Farming Practices	Organic (non-certified); grapes dry-farmed and picked by hand
Elevation	210 m
Soils	Tawny sand, clay-limestone mix, and variegated clay
Maturation Summary	Bottled for 12 months
Alcohol	14.0 %
Acidity	3.2 g/liter
Residual Sugar	0.8 g/liter
Annual Production	1,500 bottles

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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.

SAINT MONT AOC

Formerly known as the Côtes de Saint Mont, this cool climate, sunlit appellation in South-West France was elevated to AOC status in 2011 and is named after the village of Saint Mont in the province of Gers. Situated along the Adour River, it's the northern neighbor of the better-known Madiran appellation, and sits east of the Tursan AOC. With borders that fall entirely within the Armagnac zone, Saint Mont is also part of the Pyrénées sub-division (one of 4 that make up South-West France) and lies some 100 km from both the Atlantic Ocean and the high peaks which lead to Basque country. Roughly 200 growers farm the 1200 hectares currently under vine.

Historically, Saint Mont has been known for its rustic style – especially when it comes to full-bodied, tannic reds predicated primarily on Tannat (not unlike the wines of Madiran). More recently, however, it has garnered attention for the resurgence of rare historic varieties, including Manseng Noir and Fer Servadou (of Basque origin) and for increasingly softer, more fruit-driven wines. In addition, the AOC permits both rosés and a number of full-bodied, aromatic whites, made from indigenous varieties that include Gros Manseng, Petit Manseng, Arrufiac, and Courbu.

While altitudes, soils, and climatic conditions vary across Saint Mont, the western part is home to some of the heaviest rainfall in southern France, making mildew a regular concern. Fortunately, there also tend to be sandier soils and warm breezes in this same zone, helping to mitigate the wet climate. (This area is also less susceptible to drought in an era of global warming.) To the east, more clay-driven soils are coupled with lower precipitation levels, and the entire sub-region enjoys the intense, bright sunlight for which South-West France is known.