

CELLAR MASTER WINE CLUB

September 2020

2012 Xavier Vignon Cuvee Anonyme Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France



As the technical director and head enologist at “Laboratoire Avignon Oenologie Conseil,” Xavier Vignon is the consulting winemaker at more than 300 estates, including most of the best-known domaines in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In lieu of payment for his laboratory’s service, he sometimes accepts wine, which the micro-négociant company he established in 2002, “Xavier Vins,” uses to produce exceptional wines of the southern Rhône Valley. Originally a physical chemist, Xavier is particularly interested in how the spectrum of dissolved mineral salts in the groundwater of each vineyard, which varies from parcel to parcel, influences the expression of terroir in the grapes. “I’m a trained enologist,” he says. “I’ve examined wine down to the molecular level. Which, in the end, convinces me that what is most important are the vines, the depth of the roots, and the health and balance of the vineyard.”

Using a combination of skills, Xavier Vignon has established himself as both a merchant and winemaker. Since 2002, Xavier has worked as a negociant, gathering the very best grapes produced by top growers to make his own Xavier Vins line. Since he’s an enologist he has the knowledge and experience needed to navigate vineyards and produce high-quality wines of different varieties. He produced his first Xavier Vins vintage in 2007. Today, they continue to produce their wines at Chateau Husson in Courthézon, France. In addition to producing wines in the Châteauneuf du Pape appellation, he also creates wines in Gigondas and villages in the Cotes du Rhône. Xavier Vins make three lines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape reds and two lines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape whites. Xavier also works as a consultant to a number of makers throughout the Rhone Valley. He owns 24 grape harvests around the globe and maintains close connections and friendships within the wine industry.

Xavier Vignon carefully selects his Cuvée Anonyme from among the most promising barrels at his top client estates. The star-studded list includes Raymond Usseglio, Château La Nerthe, Domaine La Mordorée, and Domaine de Beaufort, among others. Which means that this unique cuvée takes selection to the highest possible level: the cream of the cream of the cream.

Seven of the thirteen permitted varieties are in the blend, which is mostly comprised of 65% Grenache Noir and 25% Mourvèdre, with the balance made up of Vaccarèse, Counoise, Cinsault, Terret Noir and Muscardin. All four important terroirs are represented: la Crau, les Galets Roulés, les Sables, and les Urgoniens.

Notes from www.xaviervignon.com

“The top wine from the portfolio, the 2012 Châteauneuf du Pape Cuvee Anonyme offers thrilling purity and focus in its lively dark fruits, roasted meats and underbrush-scented bouquet. Full-bodied, ripe and textured, with fantastic polish and sweetness to its tannin, it has a supple, forward feel, yet will easily evolve through 2024 to 2029” Wine Advocate 95 points.



Reg **\$59.99/btl**

Member discount on additional btls **\$39.99/btl**

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2014 Domaine Lionnet Cornas Terre Brulée Northern Rhone, France



Distinguished as a fine Syrah producing zone since the 18th century, Cornas, like Cote Rotie, is made up of vineyards covering steep and hard-to-work granite terraces. As a result the region's wines fell out of favor during the mid-20th century when the global market was more focused on bulk wines and vineyards that yielded high quantities. It wasn't until the 1980s when a group of energetic young winemakers reestablished the integrity of these precipitous terraces and also began making an ultra-modern style of Syrah. The new style didn't need a decade before it was drinkable and could reach the consumer faster than the region's traditional wines. Given the new quality coming out of the zone, its popularity once again soared and today a good Cornas can easily challenge many of those from Hermitage. Characteristics of Syrah from Cornas include teeth-staining flavors of blackberry jam, plum, pepper, violets, smoked game, charcoal, chalk dust and smoke. Ludovic Izerable, a refugee from the Haute Savoie city of Grenoble, married Corinne Lionnet whose family has been growing grapes in the village of Cornas since 1575 (that's correct ... no typo ... almost five centuries ago). Corinne took control of the domaine in 2003 when her father, Pierre, retired. She and Ludovic now run the show.

The domaine is quite small, only 2.2 hectares at the moment (additional vineyards will be added to the domaine shortly enabling the Domaine Lionnet to also produce a Saint Joseph). The vineyards are organically farmed and are certified as such by "Ecocert".

The vineyards are divided into four separate parcels across four distinct lieux-dits: Mazards, Combes, Chaillot and Brugerres. The vines are all between the ages of 40 and 100 years. Each parcel is harvested separately and vinification is done parcel by parcel as well. The harvest, of course, is manual with a severe selection being done in the vineyard.

The cuvaizon is long (three weeks) and the fermentation is completely natural: indigenous yeasts and no other materials whatsoever (no albumin, no enzymes, no gelatins ... zero!). The grapes are left intact; they are never destemmed. The fermentation occurs in cement vats; then, the wines are racked into large oak barrels (tonneaux and demi-muids). No new oak is used.

Notes from www.wine.com