

Bold, Dramatic Southern Syrahs

Domaine l'Aigueliere, Montpeyroux Revolutionary

"Imagine our surprise when 20 minutes after walking into this cellar in the sleepy Languedoc town of Montpeyroux, we were tasting two special cuvées of virtually 100% Syrah whose density and sheer sensual generosity reminded us of Guigal's La Mouline and La Landonne."

- Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

Domaine l'Aiguelière produces some of the most profound Syrah-based wines in all of Southern France. Indeed, Aimé Commeyras and his team are making some of the most spicy, earthy, concentrated Syrah in the world, at prices that shame California and Australia. These are wines that will floor you - they are unrivalled in the Languedoc for their nobility, complexity, and plushness. Lend us an ear while we spin this yarn.

The Land

Domaine L'Aigueliere is located near Mont Peyroux, at the northwestern limit of wine production in the Languedoc. Here on the Larzac Plateau, the warming influence of the Mediterranean begins to wane, and cool winds blow down from the Cevennes Mountains at night. With the estate's vines planted at just under 1000 feet of elevation, the region shares a climate similar to the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range.

(left: Aimé Commeyras)

The soils here are well-drained argilo-calcaire, or chalky clay, gravel, and sandstone. The altitude of the vines, combined with these very deep, well-drained soils, produces eloquent wines from the Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre varieties.



The Man

Aimé Commeyras, once the president of Montpeyrroux's grower's cooperative, grew fatigued with the dismal level of quality in the region, and decided in 1983 to launch his own Domaine. He went *biologique*, using no chemicals except Bordeaux mixture, lowered his yields under 30 hectoliters per hectare, controlled temperature during fermentation, and raised the wines in a clean, cool cellar. Are these changes starting to sound familiar to you?

The Wines

2000 Domaine L'Aiguelière Montpeyrroux

Two-thirds Syrah, one-third Grenache, which is the highest-ever proportion of Syrah in this wine. It is the purest, most peppery, black-fruited 'Tradition' ever, with extremely ripe tannins to boot. This blend does not see a stick of oak. Why buy California Syrah when there are wines like these available for under \$20?

2000 Domaine L'Aiguelière Cuvée Tradition Fûts de Chêne

Raised in old barrels that once housed the "Dorée" and "Rousse" cuvées, this Montpeyrroux bursts forth with an essence of blackberry jam, cigar box, black pepper, and caramel. Powerfully peppery, incredibly rich for the price!

2000 Domaine L'Aiguelière Côte Dorée

100% Syrah, grown on slate-like *terroir*. This wine is so concentrated and rich that it has swallowed up any trace of the new Allier oak barrels in which it was aged. Here comes the star anise, candied plums, and intense pepperiness that can only be Syrah. This is the more brazen, sexier, gooier of these two Syrahs. Could its spice-box character and sex appeal make this the La Mouline of the South?

2000 Domaine L'Aiguelière Côte Rousse

Again, 100% Syrah, grown in more chalky, clayey soil, and aged in new Nevers barrels. Even more anise and vanilla emerge from the nose of this monster, which is more structured, more *gamigue*-dominated than the Dorée, chalkier, more Bordeaux-like in character. Have you ever tasted La Landonne?