

Domaine Estrade

Côtes de Gascogne



Domaine Estrade occupies the hills above Fourcès, deep in Gascony, a rolling countryside of small polyculture farms. Fourcès is a fortified village dating from the 12th century, one that's rather unique in having been built in a circle instead of a grid, originally surrounding a castle and now a common, with arcades along the inside of the circle of half-timbered houses and a protective wall along the exterior. These days there's a lord's chateau immediately outside the wall, alongside a small river, but this chateau dates from the 15th century. The one that was there earlier had been the home of a lord who backed the English in the 100 Years' War, and when the French finally won the war, this lord had his digs burnt down.

The Estrade family has been farming a mix of grains and grapes here since 1962, and the domaine has estate-bottled a portion of its production since 2003. Today brothers Rémy and Eric, representing the third generation, manage affairs. They used to farm a couple hundred acres of wheat, fava beans, chickpeas and lentils, all organically, along with vines. These days, the beans and cereal fields have been rented to other farms so that the brothers can concentrate on their 123 acres of vines. Most of these are white varieties: Colombard, Sauvignon Blanc, and Ugni Blanc. These vines average thirty to forty years of age and are harvested at night when temperatures are coolest, which preserves fresh aromatics and avoids having to artificially chill down the grapes. Much of the electrical power at the domaine comes from solar panels, and water used in cellar operations is recycled. In 2018 the brothers embarked on the road to organic viticulture and certification came in 2022 (the cereals and beans had already been certified).

The domaine is located in the Ténarèze zone of Armagnac. Fortunately, all of the Estrade's grapes go into their wine, and that's a really good thing considering the demand the family handles every year. Their Côtes de Gascogne is a great value.

The Wine

Côtes de Gascogne: Colombard 60%, Sauvignon Blanc 40%. Refreshingly low in alcohol, this is a fragrant, fresh, crisp dry white wine that excels as an apéritif.