

# Domaine Rotier (organic)

## Gaillac



### The Wines

- *Les Gravels Blanc*: 80% Loin de L'Oeil, 20% Sauvignon Blanc. Loin de L'Oeil, or Len de L'El in Occitan dialect, is a venerable Gaillac native. The name means far from the eye and is a reference to how the grapes fruit far from the bud (eye)—the bunches hang from unusually long stalks. In dry wines, this grape is prized for the texture it gives to wine, while a bit of Sauvignon Blanc gives lifting acidity and aromatics (for historical interest, the folks in Gaillac assert that Sauvignon Blanc originated in the Southwest, and *not* in the Bordeaux region). Les Gravels takes its name from the alluvial bench on which the vines grow, an ancient and very high river terrace or bench packed with gravel. This wine is raised entirely in tank and bottled with approximately half (40-50 mg/l) of the maximum level Demeter authorizes for biodynamic wines (90 mg/l). Normal production is around 1,400 cases.
- *Les Gravels Rouge*: Typically 20% Braucol, 40% Duras, 40% Syrah, sometimes with a bit of Prunelat. Les Gravels rouge is the domain's first red wine, made with local grapes and Syrah—all grapes being de-stemmed, which is the norm chez Rotier. Braucol, a.k.a., Fer Servadou (Latin words meaning *wild* and *keeps well*, ie, resists disease) is thought to be a Basque native, prized for tannin and color. Duras is very old and DNA testing shows it to be a cross between Tressot, a Burgundy native, and Jura's Savagnin. How it arrived to Gaillac is anyone's guess, it's prized for intense color, ripening ability, low tannin and high malic acid hence good freshness. Syrah was introduced to the Southwest in the 1950s, brings body and color and "fruit of the forest" to the wine. Prunelart, practically wiped out by phylloxera, has been shown to be the father of Malbec by DNA testing. Les Gravels rouge is raised primarily in concrete vats, with some of the wine spending three-four months in older barrels before returning to concrete. This is a quietly compelling wine, with lovely fruit, savory spice and note of tobacco, excellent lift, and just great drinkability—you're never grow bored with this at the table. Bottled with around 50 mg/l of SO<sub>2</sub> (max authorized by Demeter for reds is 70); approximately 4,000 cases annually.
- *Esquisse*: 67% Duras, 33% Braucol. Pronounced *ess-keys*, this is the brother-in-law's *sans soufre* cuvée, made without any additions of SO<sub>2</sub>. If well made (like this one!), wines without sulfur additions are said to be relaxed, without the restricted tension brought on by sulfur, and especially easy to drink. Raised in concrete vats and bottled in January following the harvest, this dark, plummy wine is best drunk young. 2,500 cases annually.
- *Renaissance Vendange Tardive*: 100% Loin de L'Oeil. A specialty of Alain Rotier, Renaissance is made from grapes richly laden with noble rot. Rotier's alluvial soils and its proximity to the Tarn River enable it to make exceptional dessert wine from fully botrytised grapes. This dessert wine is made in acacia and oak barrels (10-15% new), undergoing both alcoholic and malolactic fermentation in them, and is raised in wood for nine to ten months. The wine rests in bottle for another six months before going to market. Renaissance competes exceedingly well against more expensive Sauternes. Bottled with around 100 mg/l of SO<sub>2</sub>; maximum authorized by Demeter is 200. 1,250 cases of 500mls made annually.

Only three appellations in France have a *Vendange Tardive* category: Alsace, Juraçon, and Gaillac.