

Domaine Combe Queyzaire

Côtes du Rhône



The Wines

- *Cuvée Les Aestivalis*: Mourvèdre 50%, Carignan 40%, Grenache 10%: This is Denis's homage to the Rhône's vins de soif of yesteryear--they did exist, particularly at bars during the lunch break, and they're coming back--based on his late-ripening varieties and cool sites. One plot per varietal, all old vines thus low yields, with ripening taking long and not coming until the end of the harvest, so low sugars and consequently low alcohols. Harvesting very early in the morning to keep the grapes cold, and beginning the fermentation in concrete to make a red but finishing as if the wine were a rosé, that is, imparting a gentle structure to the wine. Racking into steel for aging and bottling at the end of March following the harvest.

This is classified as a Vin de France because it doesn't have enough color to qualify for AOC. The name *Aestivalis* (es-tee-va-lease) is a play on festivals and été, meaning summer, i.e., a wine for summer to be served with a chill. Denis being the brainy enologist that he is, it's also a reference to a species of North American grapes, *Vitis Aestivalis*.

- *Côtes du Rhône*: This wine comes from sandy loess soils and calcareous soils (limestone for the Rhône is a rare terroir and can give real lift to a wine) and is aged in concrete tanks. The blend is roughly half Grenache and half Syrah with a touch of Cinsault and yields average around a mere 20 hectoliters per hectare for this and the *Villages* wine below. Both grapes are de-stemmed but not crushed, which permits a level of carbonic maceration (thus greatly reducing SO₂ additions--which is, in fact, the only addition, and a very small one at that). “*The spirit remains the same as at Estézargues: to extract the best components of the grapes, adding little else.*”
- *Côtes du Rhône-Villages*: This is a single-site wine. The vines grow on an ancient river terrace that forms a plateau perched between the Rhône to the east and the limestone massif to the west, and the plateau tilts eastward. The Mistral is very active here. The plateau is 100 meters in altitude, the Syrah grows at either end of the vineyard parcel surrounding the Grenache, and the vines grow amid *galets roulés*—river stones—overlying garrigue soil, red in color and rich in clay. It's a terroir similar to Châteauneuf.

The vines were planted several times in the 1970s. The actual blend of the wine can change significantly if, for example, frost hits the early budding Syrah. In 2020, the blend was 80% Grenache; in 2021, 50%. The Syrah is de-stemmed and raised in older barrel; most if not all of the Grenache is whole cluster and raised in concrete. Starting in 2022, Denis began to incorporate larger *demi-muids* barrels for the Syrah.