



Château Coupe-Roses

Organic, natural wines, biodynamics and Spinozism in the Minervois (Languedoc, France)

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Château Coupe-Roses is a family-owned organic, biodynamic and natural wine estate situated in La Caunette (Hérault, Minervois, France), close to the Montagne Noire mountain range. At least thirteen generations of the same family have owned the place, and we'd be happy to count more of them, but *“we lost the archives when they burned down in the 17th century, after a few problems with some Protestants”*, says Mathias Paicheler, the owner of the estate with his sister Sarah Frissant. Coupe-Roses grows not only vines but olive trees also, and —this is important and precious enough to be mentioned— harvests the olives only when they're perfectly ripe. However, they do not have exactly the same approach to the grapes, which they sometimes tend to harvest slightly under maturity. Sarah and Mathias were in Paris yesterday to present their wines, at restaurant Narro, in the 5th arrondissement. And we literally drank their words as much as their wines.



Sarah and Mathias (Mathias pictured to left, Sarah pictured further down) took over the estate after their mother, who also came up with its current name. Which has nothing to do with cutting roses from a garden, but all to do with a special type of pink-purple clay that runs through the minerally rich subsoil of the property. Thanks to these veins of clay, aptly named “argile de Coupe-Roses”, a *tuilerie* (tile factory) existed on these grounds for centuries. Now, the clay cools the vines and protects them from water stress in Summer, stocking up water in Winter. Added to the other geological conditions —i. e. a karstic

plateau (*causse*), limestone rocks and pebbles, some siliceous limestone and schist—, the clay of Coupe-Roses provides plenty of freshness to the wines and a distinct personality: a delicate minerality, you can really “taste the stone” through the fluid, little-extracted red

wines, while the whites shine with rectitude, a solid vertical structure, and aromatic complexity.



35 hectares of vines, which Sarah and Mathias plan to reduce to 25, while keeping the place an oasis of biodiversity through agroforestry, grass management and animal partnership — sheep, horses and mules to work on the soils and growth. No irrigation, the underground clay takes care of that.

Mathias opted for biodynamics and natural winemaking in 2013 — 2014 for the white wines. **Champ-du-Roy** (€9,50) is a fruity white with notes of lychees and apricots, enhanced in the back of the palate by the elegant musk of

petit-grain muscat (20 percent). A perfect apéritif wine, excellent with seafood, it has a more structured brother, **Argès** (€17), a long-keeping white wine based on roussanne and white grenache, with 10 percent macerated vermentino. Peaches, pears, tension, acidity, and a very slight oxidative touch spicing it up.



As for reds, Mathias likes them light, fresh and not overly extracted, even if his red Minervois **Granaxa** (€16, grenache and 10 percent syrah) and **Vertige** offer a dense, velvety texture more reminiscent of traditional Languedoc reds.

Mathias loves philosophy (on the Spinozist side), constantly searching for causes, processes, and nuances. He also loves experimenting, and is particularly fond of a vine plot on the limestone plateau where some twenty-two different, local heirloom grape varieties are complanted and trained in *gobelet* style —aramon, clairette blanche,

piepoul blanc, piepoul noir, alicante, castets, etc. While praising the aesthetic beauty of the plot, he also explains that this very thorough complanting method “*reveals the soil*” (a hint to [Jean-Michel Deiss](#), in Alsace, who says that harvesting at the right maturity causes the variety to vanish but makes the soil appear). The grapes from that plot may be used to

complement some of the *cuvées* based on more classic grenache blanc, grenache gris, petit-grain muscat, roussanne, rolle, syrah, grenache, cinsault, or carignan.

Karst, Granaxa, Vertige, Bara Gwin: the reds (even Vertige, as well as Granaxa whose regional typicality I mentioned above) have much in common through a straightness and limpidity which could almost contradict their origin if you decided to stay stuck to the “fruit-bomb” profile of some Languedocian reds. This is the Coupe-Roses distinctive style: short macerations, wines that reflect their terroir and their soils, with an evident, noticeable minerality —schist, limestone, the stone and pebbles showing through the fruitiness, and plenty of balance.

The end of the meal reveals the best: **Claret Net** is a Southern *claret* in the original French sense of the term: a clear, light-colored, fruity red wine born on the wind-swept Karstic plateau from ribayrenc, piquepoul noir, and cinsault grapes. We’re definitely not in Bordeaux, rather in the style of these “new reds”, easy to drink, and generally classified hesitantly either as rosés or as light reds by wine sellers. However, this is definitely not a rosé, this is a red. Macerated for one night in a stainless steel tank at a maximum of 20 °C, unfiltered, this lovely grenadine-colored wine shows controlled fruitiness, hardly any tannic sensation, and fresh acidity. It is quite likely to age beautifully, and a slight (sugarless) “lambrusco” touch makes you imagine that a bubbly version of it would be nice. Now it is time to pay a tribute to the chef of Narro, who built for this wine a rhubarb-elderflower dessert, a pairing of a kind I like to describe as “psychic” — you could believe you were in presence of the dessert version of the wine, and of the wine version of the dessert.