

Mathias Paicheler & Sarah Frissant

Château Coupe-Roses, Languedoc, France

chateau-coupe-roses.com

A narrow road winds up to the medieval village of Minerve, tracing the lip of a limestone gorge carved by the Cesse river. The village emerges, perched on a rocky spur at the confluence of the Cesse and the river Brian. This region bristles with history. Once a Cathar stronghold, Minerve was besieged by Simon de Montfort's troops during the Crusades of the early 13th century.

Further on, around several more bends, the village of La Caunette unfurls below a towering cliff, and above it on the cause – the limestone plateau – lie the vineyards of Château Coupe-Roses.

At 250m-400m elevation, this Minervoise micro-terroir is distinct from the plains below, and it's one that owners Mathias Paicheler and Sarah Frissant hope will one day earn cru status. The siblings took over from their parents Françoise and Pascal Frissant in 2017, becoming the 13th generation to lead the estate.

After studying oenology and working internships, Mathias returned in 2013 with a vision that diverged from his parents' style. He started small, fermenting small batches with indigenous yeasts and no addition of sulphur dioxide, while also learning their approach. Françoise may not have liked his early wines, but that was ok – they have different tastes.

Given free rein

Today, the wines are made with little or no SO₂, with spontaneous fermentation and less extraction. The challenges have been in retaining the market in light of these changes, and maintaining alcohol balance amid hotter, drier growing seasons.

Biodynamic conversion started in 2019, inspired by a course on bio-indicator plants and soil health. 'It convinced me that I needed vines on living soils,' Mathias says. The groundwork, though, had been laid before: their parents had farmed organically, guided by renowned soil consultants Claude and Lydia Bourguignon. Pascal, once director of the Ribaute cooperative, had pushed every grower towards organics back in the 1980s. 'We simply pushed things further,' says Mathias.

Sadly, Pascal passed away in August this year, but his vision remains a great inspiration. 'He taught us that it's important to have a beautiful vineyard to make good wine,' says Sarah. 'It's about harmony,' adds Mathias, 'when the whole system is greater than the sum of its parts.'

By 16, Sarah knew she wanted to make wine with her brother. Like him, she trained in oenology – 'just in case we didn't agree.' She needn't have worried. They work well *en famille*. 'We had open, active, dynamic parents,' she says, 'our mother built the



brand, and the market for it.' She observes that other young people in the Minervoise aren't quite so lucky: 'Their parents are much more conservative, they don't like change.'

Now they're planting trees around the vineyards, and co-planting ancient drought-resistant varieties: Grenache, Aramon, Ribeyrenc, Piquepoul Noir, Cinsault. Their partners, Caroline and David, even quit their jobs to join the business. 'Not for the money, but for the lifestyle,' says Sarah. 'It must mean we're doing something right.'

Natalie Earl



**Natalie Earl is
Decanter's Regional
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I tasted this just before it was bottled, and it was heaving with gorgeous berry aromas, pure fruit in abundance. There's power and tannic structure, and great waves of acidity, making it fresh and energetic, the finish zesty and almost piquant. From co-planted vines of Grenache, Aramon, Ribeyrenc, Piquepoul Noir and Cinsault, grown up on the limestone plateau at 300m. Biodynamic. **Natalie Earl**
Drink 2025-2034 Alc 13% ▶