Château Coupe Roses (biodynamic) Minervois

The Wines

- *Champ du Roy blanc:* A hugely aromatic, dry blend of Grenache Blanc and Muscat (roughly 30% and the variety is Petits Grains). Yearly production averages 1,000 cases.

- *Frémillant Rosé:* A direct-press rosé from parcels chosen for this rosé and harvested by hand. The blend is based on Mourvèdre (roughly 40%), then with by and large equal proportions of Cinsault, Grenache, and Syrah. *Frémillant* is old Occitane dialect meaning a light red wine. Yearly production averages 1,000 cases.

- *Minervois Cuvée Bastide:* The first of four Minervois cuvées, Bastide is made of roughly equal parts Carignan and Grenache, with around 5% Syrah. The élevage is done in tank. A terrific buy for a true *vin de terroir*. In this wine is all the *garrigue* underbrush of the high Minervois, laced with high-toned blueberry notes and underpinned by Carignan's tarry black notes. Yearly production averages 3,500 cases.

- *Minervois Cuvée Vignals:* This is the south, so pronounce that final "s." Vignals is based on Syrah (roughly 60%), and filled out with Grenache (30% +/-) and then Carignan. This is the tier above Bastide and like Bastide, it is raised entirely in tank. Deliciously medium-weight, fresh, spicy, long, and infused with *garrigue*. Yearly production averages 3,500 cases. You should buy some.

- *Minervois Cuvée Granaxa:* Granaxa is Occitane dialect for Grenache, and this is Coupe Rose's Grenache cuvée with 10% Syrah, raised in second and third-year oak barrels. Now we get into more weight and body, with distinctly earthy overtones in the red fruit. Yearly production averages 1,000 cases.

- *Minervois Cuvée Orience:* This is the domaine's top cuvée based on Syrah with 10% Grenache, made in barrels, about one-third of which are new. The Syrah comes from their best clay/limestone parcels high up on the plateau above the village. Orience has black/blue fruit with spice, earth and elegance in spades. It's with this cuvée that the mountain microclimate really shines through. Production averages 600 cases.

- *Bara Gwin:* Cinsault 35%, Grenache 35%, Syrah 30%. Françoise Le Calvez's father hailed from Brittany, and she still has the family homestead there. In old Breton, bara gwin means bread & wine, two of the essentials. This is one of the "natural" wines her son Mathias began making when he took over the vines and cellar in 2016. Initially, the endeavor was a competition with himself to prove to their enologist that it was possible to make a clean, correct and indeed good wine without the addition of either yeast or SO2 (the school of thought had long been that you had to use one or the other, that going without either was too risky--and it still holds, unless you have entirely healthy grapes and are hyper vigilant during fermentation and élevage). Once he proved that, he went on, with help from his sister Sara and her guy David, to expand the range with the cuvées Karst and Árgês.

  Bara Gwin is made from grapes growing in the commune of La Caunette--the Cinsault and Grenache growing in the karst plateau above the village and the Syrah growing in a heavily clay zone. They are hand-harvested on the early side of pick dates and co-fermented in stainless steel after a 10-day maceration. Bottling is in the spring following the harvest. The wine has no additives of any sort; it is simply lightly filtered at bottling. Production averages 1,650 cases.

- *Claret Net* is a play on words, referring to clean & concise or plain & simple, and it's a reference to the light, garnet-colored wines of Bordeaux back in the day when such wine was called Claret.

  The varieties are Causse Aramon, Cinsault, Morrastel, Piquepoul Noir, Ribeyrenc, etc., co-planted with close to 15 other forgotten ones such as Brun Fourca, Clairette Rose, Blanche, Grand Noir de la Calmette, Piquepoul Gris, Terret Noir, Gris et Blanc. They're co-planted together in various plots totaling about 5 hectares (just over 12 acres) in 2021-22 and are harvested by hand all together to ferment together in steel. No additions whatsoever; élevage over winter in steel; 800 cases.

  One interesting fact about these forgotten varieties is that they ripen at 11-13 degrees of alcohol. Claret Net is a window into what wines of Languedoc often looked like before the phylloxera epidemic. It's a wine that asks for a chill and makes for a smile.

  Lastly, the place on the karst plateau. In Sarah's words: *The plantation was a nice moment, Jules was a kid and our father was ok, we did a picnic on the vineyard with a lot of wind. The wind there gives the sensation of freedom! That is why we love this place so much, and it's a place that attracts many people for walking. Our father told us all the time, "You must work the aesthetics of the vine if you want good grapes and good wine". This area (for Karst and Claret Net) is very beautiful and attractive. We also have planted trees and bird houses. And we did work the soil with horses two times each year. You understand that we try to do our best to have a nice vineyard, life on it, in order to have delicious wine.*

- *Karst:* Cinsault 30%, Syrah 30%, Grenache 20%, and Piquepoul Noir 20%. Karst is a geological term for a huge outcropping of calcified limestone, one that in this case rises above Coupe Roses' village of La Caunette, which is nestled in the first valley of the Cevennes Mountains deep in the upper Minervois appellation. Like Árgês below, this is meant to be a transparent *vin de terroir*, one reflecting its arid, windswept conditions and its savagely meager limestone soils (the roots grow in the calcified rock, and the limestone wash of the wine over your palate is palpable). As such, each variety is de-stemmed and carried--no pumps, folks!--in buckets to its own amphora, in which the wine undergoes alcoholic and malolactic ferments spontaneously. These vessels are more porous than wood but neutral in aromatic and flavor compounds, and make for immediately accessible, juicy red wines--all of which is reinforced by aging over winter from November to March in neutral barrels. No fining or filtration, no SO2 or other additions. 250 cases.

- *Árgês:* Roussanne 60% and Grenache Blanc 40%. Pronounced *Ar-jess*, this comes from the lieu-dit of Babio to the northeast of the village (Karst comes from the north-northwest). The name is an homage to the ancient Greeks, who may have been the first to make wine in Gaul; it's their word for clay. The soil here is clay-limestone, but the emphasis is on the clay, and it's the coupe-roses clay once used by Françoise's forefathers to make roof tiles. This heavy topsoil lays 1-2 meters over limestone bedrock, nurturing just over three acres of Roussanne and just over one of Grenache Blanc. Harvest is by hand, the grapes pass over a selection table, fermentation is spontaneous (20% in neutral 500L demi-muids, the rest in steel), blending takes place in early December, and bottling is in the following spring. No fining or filtration, no SO2 or other additions. 250 cases.