



Domaine de Saint Cosme - "Les Deux Albion" IGP Principauté d'Orange - white - 2017

Limestone in a cool micro-climate. Organically certified vines.
Whole-cluster, direct-to-press with slow pressing and no crushing.

50% Viognier on the limestone soils of Saint Martin
20% Marsanne on the limestone soils of Saint Martin
30% Picpoul on the limestone soils of Saint Martin
Fermentation: 25% in demi-muids, 50% in small casks and 25% in tanks.
Ageing on the lees.

The Saint Martin named vineyard in Violès is located right on the boundary with the Gigondas appellation, across the river Ouvèze which marks the border between the two villages. This proximity is of paramount importance.

Firstly, the two villages share historical bonds: Gigondas and Violès have always been part of the Principality of Orange, annexed to France during the French Revolution. The principality has had a deep-rooted influence on our agricultural practices, our culture and our mindset. Hence our strong attachment to the "Principauté d'Orange" appellation which is freighted with significance. Before the French Revolution, a royal prerogative allowed Saint Martin and Saint André to produce white wines from Muscat. I find it quite extraordinary that just a few metres away from Gigondas, now so famous for its top-flight Grenache noir wines, Saint Martin can lay a claim to recognition dating back much further, but for white wines. History always influences agricultural practice. I love this setting bordered by woodland and the river. I have often found it inspirational. I found it incomprehensible that it should be abandoned by wine growers after being a prized location for white wines for so long. When the opportunity arose to buy 14 unbroken hectares, I did not think twice. Being able to shape a new vineyard, exactly the way I imagined it, was an exhilarating challenge. We have kept the four hectares of woodland and planted ten hectares of white varietals using field selections, planting vines in stages from 2014 until now.

The soils at Saint Martin are unique in our region: they are limestone that was swept along by the Ouvèze river 30,000 years ago. Limestone is typically ubiquitous in the soils of Gigondas, but those of Saint Martin have twice as much. In fact, such is the limestone content here that vine growing is very close to its limit. But limestone is also the finest guarantee for growing white wine imbued with finesse, drive and elegance. It was therefore important to introduce a superlative quality plant heritage into the vineyard and roll out my

ideas. So I planted field selections of Viognier vines from Condrieu – the canes were taken from Condrieu's oldest vines growing in the extraordinary named vineyard of 'Volan'. In the southern Rhone Valley, it is essential to pair Viognier with a grape variety that adds freshness. Among the many varieties available, my favourite has always been Piquepoul blanc – it is a solid, fresh, aromatic grape variety with a razor-sharp texture. It has the ability to provide "an effective backbone, without drawing attention to itself". I also produced a field selection of Marsanne on old vines on Hermitage hill. The three grape varieties are blended to produce 2017 Deux Albion.

The 2017 vintage reveals the freshness, aromatic finesse and salinity that are so typical of limestone soils. The team at the estate has worked hard on the soils and the vines over the past few years to give voice to this beautiful terroir. The outcome is beautiful and I am delighted to be able to share it with you today.

The second year of harvesting at our Saint Martin vineyard sees the Marsanne vines produced from a field selection in the finest Hermitage sites come on-stream. The selection imparts finesse, texture and complexity. 2017 was not a straightforward year for the whites – we had to be very careful not to harvest too late to maintain good balance. As usual, the Piquepoul was a great help in maintaining wonderful balance hinging on freshness, though obviously the core of this wine is the Viognier – on the limestone soils of Saint Martin, it fully expresses itself. This year sees our Clairette, Ugni Blanc and Bourboulenc vines start bearing. We have one unplanted hectare at Saint Martin and are going to plant it with 'Saint Côme' – no, you're not dreaming, Saint Côme is an endangered grape variety. Only 2.5 hectares are left worldwide and it is only right that Saint Cosme should welcome Saint Côme and give it a home. An ancient white grape variety renowned for its freshness, exploring its identity will be a major eye-opener. The vineyards at Saint Martin are an exciting adventure – year after year, the limestone soils reveal themselves as the vines start to bear. If you taste each vintage of this wine, you and I will be going down the same path together. Flint, dried apricot, marshmallow heirloom rose and violet.