



*A cru
great by
Nature*



LIRAC

A Cru great by Nature

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A historic cru of the right bank

A CENTURION

For a long time, the people of Lirac entertained the somewhat wild dream that Hannibal had crossed the Rhône at the foot of their vineyard. That was before scholars crushed their dreams, explaining that the mammoth femur found there had nothing to do with the Emperor's mythical journey. While each village forged its own legend, the passage through these lands of warlike or mercantile populations—Ligurians, Etruscans, Romans—remains documented. It's highly likely that the wines made their way to Rome, as a Roman centurion named Alarius supposedly gave his name to the village of Lirac. Proof lies buried beneath the TGV line from Paris to Avignon, which whisks travelers to the papal city in just three hours. During its construction in the Ramières area, workers unearthed ancient wine vats from the first century.





MEASURERS

From Avignon, crossing the Rhône at the Europe Bridge leads to one of the oldest known vineyards, where four villages—Roquemaure, Lirac, Saint-Laurent-des-Arbres, and Saint-Génies-de-Comolas—stand together to assert the Gard bank of the Rhône and the Lirac cru. Here, traces of the vine's glorious past since time immemorial distill through the twists and turns of the great river. In Saint-Laurent-des-Arbres, the village basks in its luxurious past where wine has been a local resource for centuries. Evidence lies in the traces of a vineyard in the former enclave of the Diocese of Avignon, where the Romanesque church was fortified by Pope John XXII and adorned with a keep equipped with arrow slits and sturdy battlements. The enclave served to protect the population and produced enough wine to send across the river as a tithe:

"five vessels of red wine, taken from the vat's edge"

In 1737, Roquemaure, named after its black rock, was the only port from which wines departed. The 80 merchants of the time realized the need to guarantee the origin of this production to avoid usurpations. The 50 coopers of the port made the barrels, which the measurers—preserving for posterity the brotherhood of the cru—measured to the exact level. Then, the magistrates authenticated the wines of the Roquemaure cru as well as those of the neighboring parishes, branding the barrels with the letters 'CDR,' meaning Côtes du Rhône, making them fit for sale and transport. Along the towpaths, horses strained to pull boats laden with marked barrels. At that time, there was only one bank on the right bank, 'La Coste' du Rhône, which shone on the tables of the royal courts of France and abroad. But then came phylloxera, and it was devastation—so much so that they went as far as Rome to bring back the relics of a saint named Valentine. Despite the welcome, procession, and panegyric reserved for the good saint, the destructive insect refused to listen.

A BARON

Once the vineyard was replanted with plants from America—like phylloxera, incidentally!—the beginning of the 20th century laid the new foundations of the vineyard, as solid as the foundations of the Château de Ségrès, a beacon of the future appellation. In 1804, Count Henri de Régis de Gatimel inherited the castle and a struggling vineyard. Across from him, his friend from the other bank: Pierre Le Roy de Boiseaumarié launched his fight for the recognition of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation. Without further ado, Count de Gatimel rebuilt his vineyard and embarked on the same fight for his own appellation. The year 1947 marked the ultimate consecration.

On October 14th, the southernmost cru of the Rhône Valley bordered by the restless river was born for the first time in three colors: red, rosé, and white.

It was christened Lirac, after the central village of this unique terroir, covering 1200 hectares.



A particularly cool terroir

From a geological anomaly, the vintners of Lirac have drawn strength; it lies in the genius of the place and the chance of geological time. One must imagine the Rhône in its rush to the sea when it withdraws. The great river of yore was wild, belligerent, tempestuous—before man tamed it. There, between two relief faults, it made a great curve, leaving behind sands that piled up and hardened, sculpting a miraculous subsoil.



These sands are Lirac's geological exceptionalities: a genius named safres with curved grains, reservoirs of capillary moisture, markers of finesse and elegance, imposing an agriculture that plunges roots deep. Lirac is bound to its river, like Anglore, the young maiden of Frédéric Mistral's 'Poems of the Rhône,' who offers herself to its breath, lying on a bed of blond pebbles that cover, in places, the safres of time.



Safres, marls, pebbles, limestones

The high Quaternary alluvial terrace of the Rhône constitutes the terroir of Lirac, which geological upheavals have contributed to complexify. This work of time will leave a common expression perceptible in the mouthfeel of the wines, revealing more than just a soil but telling the story of this land compressed between two faults: the Nîmes fault and the Roquemaure fault. One runs from east to west, the other descends from north to south. Between them: valleys, terraces, and plateaus create the fragmented relief where ochre sands, yellow pebbles, and gray limestones of the Barremian draw the colors of Lirac's soil and the diversity of expression depending on the villages and plots. The sandy marls and sands of Roquemaure and Saint-Laurent des Arbres are the most striking. In the municipality of Saint Génès de Comolas, Villafranchian strewn with rocks deposited on the safres base.



Terraces that also serve their purpose in the town of Lirac, draining and warming the vines, with sandy subsoils that store moisture, which sometimes heat up elsewhere, but here cool down rapidly. On the plateau of Vallongue, there are limestone cement sandstones with shell debris from the Miocene, scattered marine and fluvial sands, sandy colluvium, further away blue marine sandy marls from the Pliocene, remnants of small inland seas that have left their mark. Playing on the slopes, eastern exposures, plateaus, terraces, and rolling stone scree, winemakers have showcased their talent on this safres base covered with layers of time and dotted with trees like nowhere else.

Concerns about profitability were elsewhere; here in Gard, one just needed to see the reflection of the generous nature in the waters of the Rhône to understand the scale of this "terroir great by Nature".

A Cru great by Nature

Everything for freshness. Here flows the «green water,» the one that comes from the trees, carrying the breath and the luminous freshness of Lirac wines. The rugged and sometimes inaccessible geological nature of certain places and the discreetness of the appellation have not harmed the forests. Elsewhere trees have been felled, here they are respected.

Elsewhere trees have been felled, here they are respected.

Kermes oaks, white oaks, green oaks, strawberry trees, wild roses, junipers, olive trees, laurel-thymes, hackberries play a major role on the stage of climate change.





MORE TREES THAN VINEYARDS

The 1,200 hectares of the appellation are under the benevolent protection, the beneficent breath of 2,500 hectares of forests whose salvific breath contributes to the particular nature of the wine and adds freshness to the slender silhouette of the textures. In this protected setting, a microclimate bestows its benefits on vines often exposed to the rising sun given the terrain, which promotes a decrease in the duration of sunlight and contributes to the freshness of the wines.

The profile becomes more refined, and the freshness is reinvented thanks to later harvests favored by the surrounding vegetation. The sensation is no longer that of alcohol; it softens in the low pH of the soil, in slow ripening due to a proper balance between the sugar and acidity of the grapes. Biodiversity here is called «nature,» and it has been this way forever. But Lirac does not stop at this preserved biodiversity and continues to plant trees. A reforestation campaign is underway, supported by the patron Pure, a company specializing in decarbonization and financing environmental projects in agriculture. New plantings of hedges and trees are planned and carried out with the support of the entire wine-growing population. The goal is to plant 5,000 trees in 3 years.

To preserve all these achievements and with the desire to go even further in respecting the vineyard's vegetal capital, an environmental component endorsing the changes and developing the future commitment of winemakers will be included in the appellation's specifications.

AN EXTRAORDINARY VEGETAL HERITAGE

«We have managed to preserve our trees and old vines,» says former appellation president Rodolphe de Pins, proud of this historical vegetal heritage that speaks of the community's attachment to its nature: to the trees but also to the vines, some of which, preserved since the 1960s, have never been cloned and represent a reservoir of old vines capable of producing authentic Lirac wine. These plants with unique genetics have become nearly endemic, embracing the original nature of this wooded land. Very old clairettes with evocative twists bravely raise their wood against the Mistral; nearly century-old mourvèdres extract a final burst of freshness from the subsoil, while the preserved genius of ancient grenache gobelets lends style to the blends.

Stimulated by this lush environment, vintners have converted 53% of the plots to organic farming and 23% to biodynamics. Forests such as that of Clary and Sainte-Beaume are the lungs of a vineyard that exudes health. Located on the edge of Sainte-Beaume, a cave that served as a refuge for Catholics during the religious wars, flanked by a chapel, has become a sanctuary where hermits withdrew for centuries, until the Lirac town hall made it an emblem of its preserved ecosystem. Barely visible in its vegetal setting, the Hermitage of Sainte-Beaume inspires the new identity of the wine.





Wines in the spirit of the times

The delimited area established by the appellation decree covers 1,200 hectares. Within this area, there are 1,000 hectares claimed in Lirac in the 3 colors of red, white, and rosé. The notable increase, year after year, in the number of declared plots within the appellation signals the valor of the wine. There was a time when it was easier to sell and therefore claim vineyards in Côtes du Rhône than in Lirac. This past disadvantage has transformed into a growing attraction for the wine, particularly from producers of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Thirty-two owners have crossed the Rhône to explore the Lirac terroir, welcomed by the historic winemakers delighted by the newfound prosperity of their vineyard.

" Wine is a triangulation between humans, soil, and climate, which when they work together, have a sense of wholeness, and this is what we find in our wines, with tannins that are never aggressive and a consistent acidity that serves as the common thread. Our reds have tannins that are like sand slipping through the fingers "

says Grégory Sergent, one of the 73 winemakers and co-president of the appellation syndicate with one of the few merchants of the appellation, François Miquel from Maison Ogier. The cooperative, on the other hand, produces 10% of the appellation across 3 wineries. This group of winemakers, which tends to rejuvenate thanks to the modernity of the wine, stands united behind the branded bottle, with a stylized blazon evoking the crown of the Count de Ségriès above the gate of the village of Saint-Laurent des Arbres for some or the Hermitage of Sainte-Beaume for others... Even though the villages work in the same direction and the winemakers collaborate, each one defends their own territory; it's the mix and variety of the terroir that dictates this, an almost Burgundian diversity.

FLAVORS OF LIRAC

"Our wines benefit from the finesse of the soils; they are in tune with the times with the brightness of the fruit, liberated from the dictate of power to favor their refreshing nature. Discovering them is adopting them"

François Miquel, co-president of Lirac. Certainly, there are as many Liracs as there are estates, but all the wines are linked by a common dynamic under the favorable conditions of exposure to the rising sun, surface forests, and sandstone subsoil. The sincerity of the wines, which suffer less from the effects of hot vintages compared to elsewhere, can be perceived in all three colors. The rosés, making way for their cousins from Tavel that blend at the border with Aquéria with Lirac, are produced in smaller quantities. The reds, and especially the whites, are, however, characterized by a modern style, while still being wines of terroir that are increasingly appealing to a wider audience. The unique configuration of the terroir is showcased in the profile of striking, savory, and vibrant whites, combining the characteristics of generosity and depth, capable of aging beautifully and well.



Sometimes wooded but never overly luxurious, they benefit from the low pH of the soils and the influence of the forests to display a pronounced precision, often zestful, with savory bitters close to umami. Grenache and clairette provide body and acidity, thick skins bring bitterness, and aging on fine lees imparts aromas and richness. Occasionally, roussanne appears in the blend, enhancing roundness, while viognier contributes exoticism.



Bourboulenc, clairette, picpoul, marsanne also join the celebration. They are whites with character and have seen significant growth in recent years (+18%).

In terms of red wines, the Lirac family is led by the masters of southern reds: grenache noir, syrah, mourvèdre, and cinsault.

The coloring intensity gives way to transparency in garnet-toned hues, more evocative of the softness of extractions on grapes that achieve, due to extended maturation, good natural balances. The distinctly airy nature and the velvety tannins of Lirac, often present from their youth, are a tactile reflection of the soils and exposure to the rising sun. Never aggressive, the reds remain digestible, balanced, and elegant.

LIRAC IN FIGURES

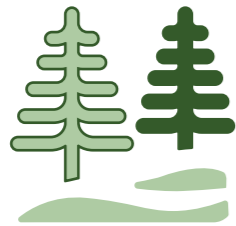


Appellation Area

1200 hectares
of which 841 hectares
are claimed Lirac

4 municipalities

Saint Génès de Comolas
Saint Laurent des Arbres
Roquemaure
Lirac



Forests

cover
2500 hectares



Red wines 86%
White wines 12%
Rosé wines 2%



*56% of the domains are organic,
with some practicing biodynamics*

73% of the «claimed» surfaces for the 2023 harvest
are certified/labeled under an environmental label or
certification



78 private cellars
6 cooperatives
21 negotiators





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