

## Domaine Gayda Visit, Languedoc



It is always a good idea to take your swimming trunks with you when visiting the south of France but when you are told to bring them on a work trip you know that perhaps this will be no ordinary trip. It soon became apparent that when we were met at Carcassonne airport by a Zimbabwe born, English educated part owner of a French winery, that we were visiting no ordinary place.

Situated in the rolling hills between Carcassonne and Limoux in the village of Brugairolles, (or 'bugger all' as our host called it - "because that's exactly what goes on here"), Domaine Gayda is at the forefront of modern Languedoc winemaking. The Domaine was set up after a meeting between Tim Ford (our host for the trip) and Anthony Record at the cult South African Winery Boekenhoutskloof in 2003, and the two decided to try to mirror the great estates of South Africa by providing a winery with a top class restaurant and cellar door sales. It was at Boekenhoutskloof that they also met Vincent Chansault, a young French winemaker who has since become head winemaker at Gayda, and one of the most exciting young winemakers in the Languedoc.

Our whistle stop trip started with a delicious lunch prepared by Tim's wife Barbara before heading off to the medieval city of Carcassonne for a spot of sightseeing. On our return we met with Vincent who took us in to the vineyards immediately surrounding the winery and explained the biodynamic ethos of the property. All of the vineyards at Gayda are tended by hand and with minimal intervention with the aim being to produce the healthiest and most natural tasting juice possible. What immediately became apparent from talking with Vincent and Tim is the sheer passion that everyone at Gayda shares for their product and surroundings. The beautifully manicured



and trellised plots of vines surrounding the winery have obviously been tended and established with the utmost care, with each variety being carefully planted with a particular microclimate, aspect and soil type in mind. In the fertile soils surrounding the winery grass is left to grow between the vines in order to absorb nutrients and moisture from the soil, and thus stop the vines from becoming too productive.

Following our talk in the vineyard we headed in to the spotless winery where our tasting with Vincent was a fascinating experience and one that not only highlighted the difference between each of the wines but also a distinct 'family resemblance'. All of the wines produced, at each quality and price level shared the common thread of purity, balance and structure. We combined the tasting with a tour of the winery and once we had made our way through the stunning range of wines it was time to test our skills at Boules accompanied by the open bottles from our tasting – purely to help with the aim of course! Sadly the quality of Boules did not quite match that of the wine and as the skies darkened we headed in for supper. The beautiful food, and stunning relaxed surroundings seemed merely an extension of the general ethos that was shared by all at Domaine Gayda: That quality and a shared passion for both the land and what it is capable of producing can only be a good thing for everybody.

The following day saw us bid farewell to the winery and head off to the ragged outcrops of vines that Gayda own in the well established La Liviniere 'cru' in Minervois. Here there is a much wilder element to the vines than there is to those surrounding the winery, with untrained bush vines struggling to dig

deep and find moisture in the dry, rocky soils high up in the Montagne Noir. Unlike the more fertile vineyard plots surrounding the winery, at La Liviniere it is necessary to do some 'gardening' (weed pulling) between the vines as moisture is scarce in the poor soils meaning that the vines need a bit of extra help to find water so that they do not get too stressed. The ragged countryside and wild herbs growing amongst the vines give the wines from these vineyards a distinct character and reinforces the French notion of 'terroir'. La Liviniere was one of only two spots particularly prized by the Romans for vine cultivation, with the other being the Rhone Valley, when they first arrived in France.

With organic certification for the estate and a strong leaning towards biodiversity it is no surprise that the wines made at Gayda are true expressions of the Languedoc terroir, and in particular the individual vineyards sites from which they come. Rather than constrain themselves to the local appellations of Minervois and Malpere, Gayda choose to label their wines as Vin de pays d'Oc as this gives them the greatest freedom to blend the best fruit from any of their vineyard plots, and in turn produce the best possible wine in any given vintage. This passion for quality and aim to produce as natural a product as possible has led to some high acclaim from notable wine critics. The 2007 Syrah won 6th place in the world in the aptly named 'Syrah du Monde' competition, and was the highest ranked Syrah from France in the whole competition. Jancis Robinson and Dorset's own Steven Spurrier are also big fans of the domaine, particularly favouring the Chardonnays and Cuvée Occitane wines.

Despite this being only a very short trip, it was



difficult not to soak up the enthusiasm and passion shared by everybody involved in Domaine Gayda. We do not have the space to mention every aspect of the Domaine from its wine school, luxury Gites and amazing Restaurant, but it is clear from our visit that this is most certainly a Languedoc property to watch, and one that will continue to make distinctive, individual wines that are the very essence of Languedoc winemaking. If you do happen to be in the vicinity of Bruguairolles do be sure to call in... just don't forget your trunks!

There are three distinct levels of wine produced at Gayda and sadly we do not have the space to carry all of the wines. Below is our pick of their production from the 'entry-level' T'air d'Oc through to the individual, hand crafted wines of their superb top end.

**2009 T'air d'Oc Chardonnay** – *Brightly packaged with a screwcap reminiscent of the windsock at Carcassonne airport this fresh and fruity unoaked white has plenty of zesty, ripe fruit and is a cracking example of pure, unadulterated Chardonnay. £7.85 per bottle*

**2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Domaine Gayda** – *A classic Sauvignon with lemon and lime mingled with tropical fruits underpinned by a streak of minerality which lifts and enhances aromas. Clean and fresh on the palate with hints of grapefruit and gooseberry with a long, crisp finish. £8.99 per bottle*

**2008 Syrah, Domaine Gayda** – *With a nose of black pepper, liquorice and spice this delicious Syrah is full bodied with layers of black fruits, pepper and rounded tannins. A fresh, clean and*

*concentrated style that is more akin to a Northern Rhône style than that of the Languedoc. £8.99 per bottle*

**2007 Cuvée Occitane Rouge** – *A blend of Syrah, Mouvedre, Grenache and Carignan aged in old oak barriques for 9 months. The fruit is hand harvested and sourced in part from the La Livinière cru in Minervois and highlights the unique terroir and style of this ancient wine producing area. Justifiably a 'Jancis Favourite' - £12.99 per bottle*

**2008 Figure Libre Cabernet** – *One doesn't come across a great deal of Cabernet Franc in this part of France, but the pioneering spirit of Gayda is changing that. Winemaker Vincent is passionate about the red wines of the Loire and produces this 89% Cabernet Franc/11% Cabernet Sauvignon blend with the experience that he gained whilst previously making wine there. Opaque and perfumed with black cherry and cassia this wine is full bodied and intense with multi-layered blackcurrant, cedar and graphite characters. The dense fruit character is bound up by a structure of fine grained tannins and lively acidity. Absolutely delicious! £15.99 per bottle.*

To introduce these fabulous wines we are delighted to offer a 10% discount off the entire Gayda Range for September and October.

## Did you know?

*Of the 20 billion closures used each year for wine bottles, roughly 13 billion are made from cork and that this uses only about 30% of the total amount of cork harvested.*

# New Arrivals

As usual we have been busy tasting, selecting (and rejecting) masses of wine and can boast a host of new arrivals since our last newsletter. Some you will be aware of but others are brand new and below is just a small selection of what to expect when you are next in the shop.

**2009 William Robertson Chenin Blanc, Robertson, South Africa** – It's not often that a wine appears on both our New Arrivals and Bestsellers lists but this deliciously expressive wine deserves its place on both. Packed with equal measures of fresh pear and golden delicious apple characters and a zesty, dry, refreshing palate this is the perfect all rounder. This is a genuine bargain at only £5.99 per bottle.

**2008 Domaine de Mus Grenache, IGP Pays d'Oc, France** – Every time we taste this lovely wine we have a different experience, but one constant is how much we enjoy it. Medium weight, with expressive cherry and blackberry fruit intermingled with coffee and chocolate - this is a lot of wine for the money. £7.85 per bottle.

**NV Prosecco Frizzante 'Spago', DOC Treviso, Rive della Chiese** – Light, fresh and elegant this semi sparkling 100% Prosecco provides delightful drinking all year round. There is also an equally delicious rosé at the same price. £8.99 per bottle.

**2009 Picpoul de Pinet, Domaine de Guillemarine, France** – We've been after a good Picpoul for ages and one that is not produced by the big names of the area. This example fitted our requirements perfectly, displaying elegant flavours of pear, lemon and pineapple fruits mingled with delicate floral notes. This is a great food wine and one that is versatile enough to match a variety of dishes. £8.99 per bottle.

**2006 Copertino, Rocca dei Mori** – Rocca dei Mori are 4th generation growers and winemakers in the sun baked region of Puglia in Southern Italy. We were really impressed by all of their stunning wines in a range that manages to be true to its southern Italian origins yet display hints of modernity that will surely appeal to the new world drinker. This delicious, brooding wine is packed with warming, tarry richness and held together with plenty of acidity and length. Drink now with plenty of breathing or keep your hands off it for a couple of years if you can! £11.99 per bottle

**2000 Squinzano DOC, Rocca dei Mori** – Another belter from our new friends in Southern Italy, this more 'ish blend of 70% Negroamaro and 30% Sangiovese is a true steel fist in

a velvet glove. 10 years old and drinking beautifully with no signs of tiring, the wine shows a wealth of rich blackcurrant, menthol tinged fruit on both the nose and palate. Dense, rich and smooth with tremendous length this wine shows modern Italian winemaking at its most accomplished. Not the cheapest, but worth every penny at £18.99 per bottle

**NV La 50/50, Vin de Table, Anne Gros et Jean-Paul Tolle** – This joint venture between two of Burgundy's finest winemakers has produced quite staggering results. Made from 20 to 40 year old Carignan, Cinsault and Grenache vines, each parcel is vinified and aged separately for a year prior to blending. Deeply flavoured, and supremely elegant the wine is drinking beautifully now and showing racy, mineral-tinged fruit alongside well structured tannins. Complex stuff - £16.99 per bottle.

**2009 Hay Shed Hill Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia**

– We weren't particularly looking for any more listings of top end Aussie Chardonnay, but one taste of this elegant, cool climate white and we were hooked! Michael Kerrigan (ex Howard Park and Mad Fish winemaker) has bought the Hay Shed Hill property and breathed new life in to it. Only hand picked fruit from ultra low yielding vines is used to make this stunning wine that displays restraint and class in equal measures. This delicious wine heralds a new direction in Australian Chardonnay. £17.95 per bottle.



**2008 Pitchfork Cabernet/Merlot, Margaret River, Western Australia**

– Another fantastic effort from Michael Kerrigan at Hay Shed Hill. The Pitchfork wines are made without oak and aimed to produce the same complexity and enjoyment that their more serious siblings deliver but with an earlier drinking edge to them. There is also a delicious Semillon/Sauvignon white to partner this rounded, plump and juicy red. Both are £10.99 per bottle.



**Did you know that we sell Gift Vouchers?**

All denominations available.



# Bestsellers

- 1). 2009 Castillo del Moro Tempranillo/Syrah, Castilla La Mancha, Spain - £5.45
- 2). 2009 William Robertson Chenin Blanc, Robertson, South Africa - £5.99
- 3). 2009 Domaine Haut Bourg Sauvignon Blanc, VdP Val de Loire - £7.99
- 4). 2009 Rioja Rosado, Bodegas Navajas, Navarette, Spain - £6.99
- 5). 2009 Aubun Rose, Domaine de Lansac, VdP d'Alpilles, France - £9.95
- 6). NV Prosecco 'Spago' Frizzante, DOC Treviso, Rive della Chiese, Italy - £8.99
- 7). 2008 Merlot, Domaine du Peras, VdP d'Oc, France - £8.95
- 8). 2006/7 Malbec Reserva, Luigi Bosca, Mendoza, Argentina - £10.99
- 9). 2007 Montagny 'Le Clou', Domaine Clos Salomon, Chalonaise, Burgundy - £15.99
- 10). 2009 Kintu Merlot, Maule Valley, Chile - £5.65

## Autumn Wine Dinners:

**Sienna Restaurant - Classic French Wines** - In the first of two dinners at Sienna we will be showing five classic wines from around France and matching them with a classic three course meal prepared by Russell. What could be more civilised? *13th October, 7.45pm prompt start. £60 to include 3 Course meal, coffee and all tasting wines. Please book direct with the restaurant on (01305) 250022.*

**Sienna Restaurant - Boutique South Africa** - South Africa has so much to offer the adventurous wine drinker from straight forward and fruit driven wines through to the serious and food friendly wines from the myriad of boutique wineries dotted around some of its beautiful wine regions. *10th November, 7.45pm start. £60 per head to include 3 course meal, coffee and all tasting wines. Please book direct with the restaurant on (01305) 250022.*

**Olive Tree - Sherry & Tapas Evening** - Our passion for the remarkable and versatile wines of Jerez knows no bounds and as it has been a while since we decided to shout about how good we think they are, we have persuaded our friends at the Olive Tree Restaurant in Bridport to come up with some suitably delectable dishes to match the wines to. *Wednesday*

*1st December, 7.30pm for 8.00pm start. £28.00 per head to include all food and tasting wines. Please book directly with the restaurant on (01308) 422882.*

As usual, we have negotiated special rates with Charlton Down Taxis to get to and from the tasting for £10 per head. There will be one pick up at the shop and one drop off back at the shop at the end of the evening. Please book your taxi place at the shop separately to the dinner.

**Sienna Restaurant - Christmas Canapé & Christmas Wine Matching Sessions** - In a departure from our usual dinners, we will also be running 3 separate sessions with 6 hand selected wines specifically with Christmas in mind. Russell will be creating 6 individual canapés to accompany the wines and will be on hand to talk about his creations, and it is hoped that between us we will provide plenty of inspiration for festive entertaining. *Sunday 5th December - Sessions starting at 11.00am, 1.00pm and 3.00pm. Sessions will last approximately 1 1/4 hours. £15.00 per head to include all canapés and matched tasting wines. Please book your place with us at the shop on (01305) 266734 or in person at 37 Peverell Avenue West. Sessions are limited to 12 people at one time so please book early to avoid disappointment.*

## Win a bottle of Champagne in our prize quiz.

Simply send in your answers to the questions below by 30th September for your chance to win a bottle of our excellent House Champagne, Louis de Custine Brut. The draw will take place on Monday 4th October and the winner notified soon afterwards.

- 1). Which grape variety is used to make the wines of Condrieu?
- 2). What is the name of the glass stopper that is increasingly being used to close wine bottles?
- 3). Which fruit is used in the making of Crème de Mure?
- 4). Name two of the grape varieties permitted in making Sauternes?
- 5). In which country is the wine producing region of Denmark?
- 6). What is the minimum age that an Armagnac has to be to qualify as an XO?
- 7). Which part of Italy does Limoncello come from?
- 8). Which famous French Château uses a Viking Ship as its logo?
- 9). The Torrontes grape variety is best known as coming from which country?
- 10). What is the most widely planted grape variety in Spain?

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