



Domaine
Georges Vernay



Finesse, Elegance and Harmony
for three generations



*Domaine
Georges Vernay*



Bacchus

Painted by Caravaggio in about 1594



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*Coteau de Vernon
by Francis*

From 1940, Francis Vernay, ahead of his time and impassioned by the vine, created a legendary wine: “Coteau de Vernon”. Although he did not yet make a living from it, this wine-lover was already trying to produce a white wine of great delicacy in the northern Rhone Valley. Since then the winegrowing estate has never ceased to pursue the Vernay family's commitment to excellence and respect for the exceptional soils. And always with the goal of producing a very limited quantity of great wines from Syrah and Viognier, the purest expression of Côte-Rôtie and Condrieu.



*Chaillées de l'enfer
by Georges*

In 1953, his son Georges Vernay developed the estate and created the prestigious “Chaillées de l'Enfer”, the name of which evokes the dangerous exposure and suffering of the winegrower in tending his vines. Recognised worldwide as the saviour of the Condrieu appellation, Georges has always sought to develop the quality of Condrieu and Côte-Rôtie wines. Deeply committed (Georges has been President of the Condrieu Protection Syndicate for 30 years), he has worked tirelessly to improve production methods.



*Maison rouge
by Christine*

Since 1997, Christine Vernay, Francis' granddaughter, has continued the family commitment, anchoring its savoir-faire and imprinting her father Georges' style on the reds and whites. She created the two Côte-Rôtie “Maison Rouge” and “Blonde du Seigneur”. The vision remains the same: create fine, elegant, harmonious wines that clearly express the character of the exceptional terroir. In this way each generation leaves its own mark on the estate, while ensuring that the fruits of this long history are still there to be perceived in recent vintages.



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*With our sincere thanks
to the many restaurants around the world
that have placed their confidence
in Domaine Georges Vernay
for so many years...*

Christine



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History of Domaine Georges Vernay

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A pioneer in the renewal of the Condrieu appellation, Domaine Georges Vernay has always made wines of unique style, notable for their finesse, elegance and harmony. Three generations have left the mark of the philosophy on the estate, while perpetuating its traditions in the greatest respect for both vines and winegrowers.

The Domaine Georges Vernay lies among steep slopes of the northern Rhone Valley. The property has become a major emblem of Rhone Valley winegrowing, from the time when Georges Vernay saved the Condrieu appellation to the international awards earned by Christine Vernay's Côte-Rôtie.

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Estate Philosophy

Arts, culture and wine

Working the vines and making good wine is a long tradition in the Rhone Valley. This history, going back almost 2,000 years, still substantially influences the estate's philosophy. From the Roman dignitaries who decided to produce fine wines on the granitic hillsides overlooking the Rhone's right bank, to the latest technical developments, the estate has always fervently supported the region's values through its arts and culture. Each wine bears a part of this heritage, especially the Condrieu "Terrasses de l'Empire" whose name echoes the time when the Rhone was a frontier between the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France.

More recently, the estate has also strived to bring people together around wine and music by promoting music through a major biannual event. Christine Vernay and her husband Paul Amsellem, both lovers of jazz and classical music, have welcomed world-renowned artists such as the drummer Cecareli, the trombonist Fred Ashley and the trumpeter Ray Argrove. In 2003, concert pianist François René Duchable gave a memorable performance in the gardens of the family property, Vernon. Wine and music create unique moments. Both of them symbolise sharing; both of them are arts that draw people and civilizations together. Domaine Georges Vernay imparts these values into every wine it produces.

“*When I create
a wine, I do not
seek to impress.
A great wine
must enchant.*”

Christine Vernay

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Estate Philosophy

Respect for Nature

Respect for Nature developed very early at the Vernon property. The family home is an imposing 19th century building at the foot of the Coteau de Vernon, built by architect Dardelle, himself a nature-lover and aficionado of painting; Vernon represents the very spirit of the wine-growing estate. In a natural setting that has preserved its wild state, it has lived some of the dramatic moments of winegrowing, in particular the storm in August 1964 that suddenly darkened the sky then left nothing standing in its wake: at Vernon the earth was flattened, the vines reduced to pulp, the harvest destroyed.

Here as elsewhere, Nature has always ended by asserting its rights, yet the estate's attachment to this Nature is a source of inspiration in creating great wines.

At Domaine Georges Vernay, this respect for Nature is apparent in the deep understanding of the past and the full knowledge of the techniques our forebears used; the writings of many generations are essential in both the vineyard and the winery. Similarly, while striving to constantly improve quality, the grapes are treated using methods that respects both flora and fauna. The very hilly vineyard makes mechanisation impossible, so the vines are maintained by hand and without use of residual weed killers or insecticides.

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Estate Philosophy

Creation and Innovation

At Domaine Georges Vernay, wine-making is a constant quest for perfection; every year the working methods are reviewed, and every year, for three generations, the estate strives to define each vintage as finely as possible.

This ceaseless effort starts with the vines: innovation is called for in the quest for ever-higher quality and purity of expression of the wines. A complete understanding of each parcel of land and each vine is important in this approach. Christine Vernay regularly walks the vineyard; empirical analysis inspires the winery work with every new vintage. After this study comes the tasting in the winery, to better feel and understand the wine that will be available in several months. Colour, aromas...every single aspect the wine slowly reveals has a meaning which must be interpreted. This cycle of research and innovation is never-ending and has been perpetuated on the estate for three generations.

“*Colour, aromas...
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The Terroir

Cradle of the Vernay family, the Vernon property, surrounded by its park and its old cedars, leaves visitors with a moving memory of unique fragrances and images: the delicate perfume of early violets, the scent of mint in the garden's early-afternoon air, the view of the Coteau de Vernon separating the viewpoint from the property. Ahead of its time and a defender of northern Rhone Valley values, Domaine Georges Vernay has the advantage of a unique environment and exceptional soils.

The estate's counts 8 hectares of land in the Condrieu appellation zone, 2.5 hectares in the Côte-Rôtie appellation and 1.5 hectares in the Saint-Joseph appellation. In Côte-Rôtie, the vines are exposed southeast, planted with 90% Syrah and 10% Viognier: it is the location of Maison Rouge parcel, one hectare of old, densely planted Syrah vines. The Viognier parcels are all in the Condrieu parish, in the heart of the appellation zone, ensuring that the soils are completely consistent. These vines always have the advantage of facing south-to-southeast on steep slopes (20% to 30%). Indeed, the terraced plantings are essential in the maturation of the estate's grapes. Every year, major work is carried out to best preserve the natural effect of the stones that stock the day's heat then release it during the night. This unique micro-climate, existing in particular on the "Coteau de Vernon" and "Chaillées de l'Enfer" parcels, complements the special composition of the soils.



The Terroir

The singularity of the “**Coteau de Vernon**” soils makes this Condrieu unique. Facing south-to-southeast, steeply inclined, this parcel of land consists of decomposing granite (known as "gore") and produces a wine whose freshness is superior to all the other wines year after year. Well drained, this soil makes it possible for vines from "sélections massales" (sometimes over 60 years old) to grow in the best possible conditions. “**Chaillées de l'Enfer**” ("sélections massales" 50-year-old vines) grows on a steep parcel consisting mainly of granite outcroppings, with small terraces facing south-to-southeast. The vines develop early owing to their especially deep roots, and indeed harvesting is generally earlier here than at the “Coteau de Vernon”. “**Terrasses de l'Empire**” (the oldest vines, dating from the 1960s) enjoy the advantages of this particular environment in the same way.

For Côte-Rôtie, the “**Maison Rouge**” (100% Syrah) parcel is to be found on granite-rich soil with the benefit of a dizzyingly impressive steepness even greater than that of the “Coteau de Vernon”. At the foot of this slope is the famous “Maison Rouge”, a symbol of the obstinate toil of the men of the region. Facing south-to-southeast, the vines mature earlier than on the other parcels of land. At the same time the “**Blonde du Seigneur**” wine entirely respects the Côte-Rôtie tradition that combines Syrah and Viognier. From these vines, the Côte-Rôtie expresses the richness of the soil in a silky and floral register.



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The Wines

Wines from two unique grape varieties: Viognier and Syrah

The quality of Domaine Georges Vernay's soils and the special climate of the region release the legendary aromatic finesse of these two great grape varieties. Indeed the Condrieu owes its long history to the magic chemistry of an exceptional soil and a unique grape variety.

To meet the difficult challenges of Viognier growing, Domaine Georges Vernay has employed substantial means. Trained personnel crisscross the steeply inclined and rather dangerous slopes that this grape variety appreciates. Limited in abundance but concentrated, Viognier is capricious, tricky, and delicate: it needs to be worked with a light hand and must not be handled roughly. During fermentation it gives off discreet fragrances that recall hawthorn and lime flowers, fruits such as white peaches, apricot and sometimes pear. The analysis of these delicate vinification aromas is a very important part of the estate's work in obtaining a great wine. It is matured slowly in casks that respect its character, so that the wine develops its richness.

Domaine Georges Vernay's Syrah is also very demanding, growing on terraces on very steep slopes with a south and southeast orientation. The passing years give it breadth, consistency and depth. To be sublimated the beautiful Syrah requires tender loving care involving lots of physical work. The right gentle "elevage" leads to a structure that allows the Côte-Rôtie to develop slowly and age 10 or 15 years.

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The Wines

In the winery

The best grapes are harvested by hand and brought to the cellars in boxes; a second sorting in the cellar completes the strict selection made in the vineyard. Then, depending on the year, the grapes receive special attention. White grapes may be de-stemmed or not, their skins may be macerated or they may be pressed directly. After going through pneumatic presses, the juice is left to settle and is then fermented, partly in tuns for “Les Terrasses de l'Empire”, in casks for the other wines. Red grapes are stalked, undergo cold maceration prior to fermentation, and are then fermented with a long vatting time at a moderate temperature. All techniques are considered: *délestage* (removing juice from the vat and letting the cap sink), pumping over the must or punching down the cap. For three generations, the raw material determines what method will be used. The free-run juice and press-juice are separated to be combined again later.

Regarding maturation, the white wines, which have been only in the tuns or the tanks, remain on the lees which are sometimes put in back in suspension. Racking takes place in January, after which the wine is rested until being transferred to stainless steel tanks in May, including a stabilizing chilling phase. The wines, matured in casks, remain on all their lees, are regularly stirred until springtime and remain in maturation for twelve months; bottling takes place at the end of the year. Certain wines undergo a malolactic fermentation, others not, the decision being based on analysis and tasting. The choice of woods is essential, with new wood limited to 25%. For red wines, maturation takes place in casks (40% new for Côte-Rôtie). The wines remain there for two years, without fining, with just a precautionary filtering before bottling.

“*The words, sounds and fragrances - all these leave their mark and shape your vision of the wine when, for 30 years, you have watched your father work and tasted what the epic harvests have produced.*”

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Condrieu

The white wines are produced exclusively from the Viognier grape variety characterized by its aromas of apricot, white peach and the scent of violets. Very much present in our “vin de pays”, the soil expresses itself with greater length and finesse in Condrieu. From old vines and matured in casks, the wines of “Chaillées de l'Enfer” and more especially “Coteau de Vernon” are rich and complex, to be drunk when they are 3 to 10 years old.

Coteau de Vernon Rich, stylish and long on the palate

The most beautiful expression of the complexity and subtlety of the Viognier grape variety. A wine with a retained exuberance, the quintessence of Condrieu. In the first years, one gets a sense of great concentration, a contained powerfulness which hardly dares to reveal itself. Only long years in the cellar will reveal the best it has to offer.



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Condrieu



Chailles de l'Enfer Pure balance

As they crossed this tract of land, wine-growers cried "Nous sommes à l'Enfer" which means "We are in Hell". Opulent and full-bodied, this wine is always remarkably balanced, with an explosion of aromas that gives it an extraordinary energy without any heaviness. It is kind enough to give a great part of itself from its earliest youth, although it takes a few years to reveal its full potential.

Terrasses de l'Empire Pure Viognier

The Condrieu "Terrasses de l'Empire" is the archetypical fruit wine, with its inimitable aromas of white peach, the svelte elegance that entirely makes the charm of its style. A Condrieu deeply rich in harmony, in which the aromatic qualities balance the wine in a beautiful freshness.



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Condrieu

Pied de Samson

The hearty Viognier

According to a legend in Rhône Valley, the giant Samson set one foot on the right bank and drank from the Rhone. The trace of his footprint lies not far from the Vernay property. The Viognier expresses itself here in its early state with a fruity heartiness.



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Côte Rôtie



Maison Rouge

Rich, delicate and long on the palate

100% Syrah. This Côte-Rôtie is a delicate, stylish and structured wine. A dark ruby purple, rather full-bodied, this wine has an astounding perfume of dark fruits, oriental spices and smoke. It expresses assertive tannins and is silky and attractive on the palate. It develops sumptuous liquorice and cigar-box tones. Outstanding aging potential.

“ I like the well-matured red fruits and the smoky aspect that come to the fore with the finish. With Côte-Rôtie, I always look for the finesse, the texture and this unique silky aspect. ”
Christine Vernay

Blonde du seigneur

Finesse and stylishness

This Côte-Rôtie with its côte blonde aspect, including 10% Viognier, combines a powerful aspect with very floral notes. Each vintage brings out its intrinsic characteristics, resulting in a luscious and stylish wine. A beautiful dark colour, having a smoky, mineral nose with dark fruits, black olive and pepper, again set off by a floral factor. Its aromatic palate, with well-constructed but smooth tannins, continues into a beautiful long finish. An immediate pleasure that slowly, through years, extends to become the pure expression of Côte-Rôtie Syrah.



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The International Press

Christine Vernay - A Woman of the Vineyards (traduction from a french newspaper)

by Françoise Petit



When she taught French to foreigners at the ENA school, spoke Italian to order a veal cutlet prepared the Milan way and rose to her feet to applaud her pianist fiancé, Christine was relishing the Parisian lifestyle. Today at the head of a emblematic winegrowing estate, the daughter of Georges Vernay has received the lessons of

country life, vine by vine, to make her plants express their artistry. The charms of the capital are becoming a memory. With Paul Amsellem, her musician husband (formerly manager of the Prénatal shops in Paris), Christine Vernay is continuing the work of the father who gave so much to the generous land of the Rhone Valley. It is thanks to Georges Vernay that Condrieu has become AOC, which made the man as popular as Paul Bocuse, virtually his twin - next February they will be 160 years old between them! Before passing the torch to his daughter, Georges Vernay conquered the United States without speaking a single word of English. No matter, his exploits abroad brought about Uncle Sam recognizing him as the best winegrower of 1995.

Since his retirement in 1987, Christine has made the success story happen again. Her press clippings are taking over the files in her office. In the most prestigious wine magazines or in Parker's guides, the lovely winemaker is triumphing. Her way of being a woman, from nose to palate, from head to foot, makes her stand out as much as her upscale vinification, her art of being a winegrower.

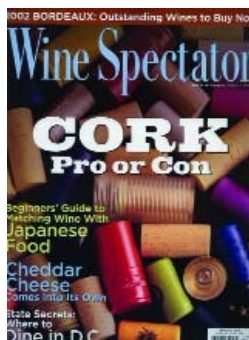
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Wine spectator

(march 31, 2005)

The esteemed Georges Vernay, now 78, dominated Condrieu in the appellation's early days. During the 1950s, his domaine had the only 15 acres of Viognier in the appellation. That has all changed now. With 270 acres of vines and numerous producers, Condrieu is one of the



Northern Rhône's premier white-wine appellations. Vernay retired in 1997, and his daughter, Christine, now handles the winemaking while her ebullient husband, Paul Amsellem, 50, handles the business.

Without formal training, Christine, 47, is quietly piloting a steady ship. The former schoolteacher admits that 10 years ago she never dreamed of being a vigneron. Today, she works with 42 acres of vineyards-nearly half in Condrieu, the rest in St.-Joseph, Côte-Rôtie and the Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes-and produces about 8,000 cases annually. Christine only employs 20 percent to 25 percent new wood on her whites and likes to ferment completely dry. Consequently, even when the wines have high alcohols and low acidities (as in 2003), they remain lithe and approachable. Among Vernay's several Condrieu bottlings, the top cuvée is the Coteau de Vernon, made from the estate's original vineyard, planted in the 1920s. There are also Les Chaillées de l'Enfer (from a vineyard planted in 1957) and Les Terrasses de l'Empire. All three show clean, bright, focused characters in the 2003 vintage. Their elegance is impressive, considering the opulent, tropical fruit nature of most whites in 2003.





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The International Press

Wein Gourmet

(giulio / agosto 2004)

... Zum Glück hat Condrieu eine Renaissance erlebt und dank ehrgeiziger Winzer wieder an Profil gewonnen. Traditionsreiche Namen wie Vernay erlebten eine Wiedergeburt, und auch relative Neueinsteiger wie Cuilleron, Gangloff, Niero und Villard trugen dazu bei, das generelle Niveau zu heben.



Heimat der Viognier:
Die besten Weine
kommen aus der Appellation
Condrieu an der Rhône

Gambero Rosso

(giugno 2004)

**Domaine Georges Vernay
Côte-Rôtie Maison rouge'01**



Un altro Cote-Rotie di stile elegante. Il naso è davvero intrigante, dominato dai piccoli frutti freschi e dalla tipica pepature, giocato sulla freschezza e arricchito da piacevoli note animale. Molto bella la bocca che, per niente grassa e polposa, si esprime attraverso un linguaggio fine ed elegante in cui l'acidità gioca il ruolo predominante. Molto equilibrato e lungo il finale in cui tornano il frutto e la nota speziata.

*Finesse, Elegance, Harmonie
depuis trois générations*



Wine Spectator

(December 2002)

GEORGES VERNAY Condrieu, best recent wine : Condrieu Les terrasses de l'empire 2001 (score 93)

Georges Vernay had no expectations that his daughter, Christine, would take over the 42 acre family domaine in Condrieu, because he had two sons. That was just fine with Christine, who liked her life in cosmopolitan Paris.

However, the Vernay's aren't static folk. The elder Vernay, a charismatic grower now in his mid-70s, is know as the " savior of Condrieu " because he led the battle against the extinction of the appellation ; it had fewer than 20 acres of vineyards in the early 1950s, when he launched his campaign. Today, Condrieu boasts about 270 acres, and young growers from as far Tavel in Southern Rhône are coming to Condrieu to plant Viognier.

Georges' dynamism rubbed off on his sons, with unexpected results. First Daniel, now 48, left Condrieu for the United States, where he is rehabilitating race horses in Texas ; then Luc, 44, who made the wines for years, followed his passion for ultralight aircraft and opened a flight school.

That left Christine, who agreed to come back. The rural life of her youth beckoned, and in 1996 she returned to Condrieu's steep hillside vineyards on the shores of the Rhône River, settling with her Parisian hisband, Paul Anselem, 48, now the winery's marketing director, and their children. After a crash course in wine-making, Christine bacame the winemaker in 1997. The slender, dark-haired and elegant 45 year old mother of twi clearly prefers finesse over power. Her best wines come from 17 acres of mostly old vines grown in very steep terraced vineyards.



In 2000 and 2001, Christine has hit her stride, making outstanding Condrieus. "With the whites, I continued along the same style as my father. I've always like very straight, elegant and aerial," says Christine. "You need a delicate approach to Viognier or the wine can quickly become vulgar and heavy, and the perfumes too exuberant".

The Côteau de Vernon 2000 (score 90) is made from 60 year old vines, and the Les Chaillées de l'Enfer 2000 (score 92) from 45 year old vines. Both wines are partially aged in new oak barrels, but the wood doesn't overwhelm the ripe fruit. Although Les Terrasses de l'Empire is made from 25 year old vines and can be least concentrated of Vernay's three Condrieus, it is a beauty in the great vintage (score 93). Christine has also produced outstanding reds from 1999 and 2000 in Côte-Rôtie, where Vernay owns 7.4 acres. The domaine also aowns 3.7 acres in St-Joseph and makes Syrah and Viognier vins de pays from another 12 acres planted inn the region.

Scores	
Condrieu Coteau de Vernon 2000	90
Condrieu Les Chaillées de l'Enfer 2000	92
Condrieu Les Terrasses de l'Empire 2001	93
Côte-Rôtie Blonde du Seigneur 2000	90
Côte-Rôtie Maison Rouge 1999	93



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