

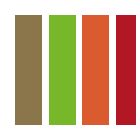


DOMAINE GAYDA



DOMAINE GAYDA DEFIES CONVENTIONS

Figure Libre epitomises the pioneering spirit that has prevailed at Domaine Gayda since 2004. Encompassing a range of four 'Arthouse' IGP wines, the label is the result of experiments by winemaker Vincent Chansault who favours freedom of choice in terms of varietals and blends. Defying conventional categorisation, this totally freestyle take on wine has become a runaway success.





The choice of Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc – both made as single varietals – is unusual to say the least in Merlot territory, in the heart of the Malepère appellation in western Aude. The labels of the two 100% varietal wines in the Figure Libre range feature a man with his back towards us, making swirling gestures – in this case whipping up vine leaves – and seemingly inhabited by magic, like the conductor of an orchestra or Harry Potter. The design typifies the creative, and at times spellbinding spirit in which the task of ‘Arthouse’ winemaking is approached at Domaine Gayda. The estate was built from nothing by three partners: Tim Ford and Anthony Record from Cape Town, who partnered with winemaker Vincent Chansault, originally from the Loire Valley. All three men were firm believers in the potential of Languedoc’s terroirs. By giving voice to their beliefs and their unorthodox choices, they have revealed the substance of those vineyard sites and guide them towards excellence.

TWO NON-CONFORMIST SINGLE VARIETALS

“When we travelled to Brugairolles, South-West of Carcassonne, from South Africa in 2003, we were struck by the influence of the Atlantic climate on the vineyards. We were starting with a blank canvas, so decided to plant northern grape varieties Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc around the estate”, recounts Vincent Chansault. His Loire origins naturally guided him towards grape varieties that were particularly well-suited to Malepère, Languedoc’s most westerly appellation area. This choice of varietals, though, did not sit well in the land of Merlot, the red grape variety that accounts for a 50% share of the appellation’s wines. The two single varietal, single vineyard and organically certified wines – with biodynamic trials currently ongoing – are therefore marketed not as appellation wines but as IGP Pays d’Oc.

FREESTYLE BLENDS

The two single varietals would not mark the end of experimentation at Domaine Gayda though – far from

« **FIGURE LIBRE IS THE NAME GIVEN TO TWO SINGLE VARIETAL AND TWO BLENDED WINES. IT MIRRORS A MINDSET AND THE DESIRE BY A BOUTIQUE WINE GROWER AND NEGOCIANT-WINEMAKER TO GET HIS CREATIVE JUICES FLOWING AND EXPLORE DIFFERENT POSSIBILITIES. THESE ALTERNATIVE CHOICES OF GRAPE VARIETIES AND BLENDS TRANSCEND APPELLATION RULES** »

**Vincent Chansault,
winemaker at Domaine Gayda**

it. Blended wines were rapidly trialled and labelled as Freestyle because they are deliberately produced outside the classic appellation system. “The diversity of soil types and climates in the region fascinated me. I was driven by a kind of lust for discovery which led me to experiment with the potential of this patchwork of vineyards by buying grapes as a negociant-winemaker”, explains Vincent Chansault. This is the spirit in which he makes the two blended wines in the range – one red (Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Carignan) and one white (Grenache, Marsanne, Roussanne and Macabeu) which bring together in the same bottle vineyard sites that would otherwise never have met, creating bold and serendipitous blends. “I believe in appellations but I openly assert my affiliation to a wine region with the freedom to combine early-ripening coastal fruit with higher elevation, later-ripening grapes, thereby creating a fusion of ripeness and fruit whilst retaining balance through freshness”, explains Vincent Chansault. Reflecting their ability to push the boundaries and explore uncharted territory, the four wines were poured at the world premiere of the Bond film Skyfall with Daniel Craig. These “non-conformist, mould-breaking wines” have since then found their audience: 30,000 bottles of white and 80,000 bottles of red are sold annually.

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