



DOMAINE
GAYDA

PRESS PACK



DOMAINE GAYDA IN A NUTSHELL

Amidst the vast swathes of vineyards that cover Languedoc, Domaine Gayda stands as a beacon for renewal and progressive winegrowing. For the past twenty years, it has breathed a New World spirit into the tucked-away corner of Southern France that is Aude, drawing on a raft of complementary terroirs and peeling back the layers of accepted practices to craft unique, distinctive wines. What ties the threads of its story together is its trio of passionate winegrowers, determined to translate their brave new vision of winegrowing into a range of innovative labels.

A UNIQUE MINDSET

The location chosen for Domaine Gayda nearly 20 years ago is an area called 'Malepère'. It is here, between the Minervois and the Catalan hinterland, that Domaine Gayda has successfully executed its carefully planned strategy to maximise the region's viticultural potential by leveraging its New World vision. Championing experimentation, (bio)diversity, innovation and

freedom, its founders hit the ground running, tapping into their previous experiences around the world, most notably in South Africa, where they met.

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Domaine Gayda is the culmination of their friendship but also their like-minded passion for wine, both of which are woven into its richly illustrated narrative. People are at the estate's core and entrepreneurship is its driving force, fuelled by what could be construed as a fanciful plan to create an estate from the ground up in Languedoc. The region, though, widely accepted as a global hotspot for innovation and creativity, was the ideal location to express their unwavering

determination to make wine differently, intuitively, to shy away from the conventions and dictates of appellations, fully embracing terroir characters whilst adding a dash of iconoclasm. Domaine Gayda is the convergence of these different strands, embodying a slightly rebellious mindset, marrying the past and innovation. Domaine Gayda's flagship label is 'Chemin de Moscou', an intriguing name which conjures up myriad images, but in fact simply refers to the land registry name of the vineyards in Brugairolles. It is a nod to the 'Moscow tree' which airmail pilots used as a landmark on their flights across Aude bound for Africa. Though subsequently struck by lightning, its message lives on. Domaine Gayda's defining features also include Chenin Blanc – a tribute to South Africa and an incongruous sight on the Languedoc winescape – along with novel blends, organic winegrowing, amphorae and wine tourism activities developed at a time when they had yet to capture the industry's imagination. It can also be defined by its free-spirited approach to creating wines from a blank, but inspired canvas. Its sources of inspiration are as varied as its range of wines – France and regions around the world have provided input, but these unconventional winegrowers have mostly drawn on their innate ability to drill down and unearth the natural treasures buried deep in Languedoc's myriad soils.



AN ESTATE WITH A STORY TO TELL

In 2023, Domaine Gayda will celebrate its 20th anniversary. With each passing year, its idiosyncratic vinous story has unfurled, punctuated by milestones and new projects. Domaine Gayda, whose cypress-lined driveway cuts through its perfectly manicured vineyards with draughtsman's precision, fits seamlessly into the landscape, belying its youthfulness. Likewise, its tranquil setting conceals its pulsating heart, where British ex-pat Tim Ford, entrepreneur Anthony Record MBE and French winemaker Vincent Chansault have combined their skills to transform a former coaching inn surrounded by sunflowers into a sensitively designed, cutting-edge winery. Here, they produce wines of excellence with no preconceived ideas about grape varieties or terroirs, keeping an open mind in order to foster the finest varietal characters, in typical New World spirit. This inherent curiosity has been an integral part of each stage of the estate's development.



KEY DATES AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GAYDA STORY

2003

The year it really all began, when the estate broke ground. 2003 is when the first Syrah vines were planted in Brugairolles, when vineyards replaced sunflowers, and when building work on the winery commenced.

2004

The winery was completed, Cabernet Franc and Chenin Blanc were planted and 6 hectares of vines in AOP Minervois were bought.

2006

The wine tourism concept emerged in Languedoc, and Domaine Gayda would inevitably become one of its first practitioners. A restaurant surrounded by vineyards and four gîtes in the old farmhouse epitomised a vision of winegrowing and lifestyle, which for the time was pioneering.

2007

The first Chemin de Moscou wine, which subsequently became the estate's icon, was released for sale under the 2004 vintage. The left-field success story became a reality.

2008-2011

These three years span from the switch-over through to organic certification. Once again, this was a trailblazing initiative for the time, inspired by New World practices and by Tim Ford and Vincent Chansault's prior experience.



2013

The now under-sized winery was extended and welcomed its first concrete eggs to diversify maturation vessels for Domaine Gayda's wines.

2017

18 hectares were bought in Roussillon, extending Domaine Gayda's owned vineyard acreage, even though the fruit had previously been bought to broaden the range of vineyard sites for the estate's wines.

2019

15 hectares of Syrah and Grenache vines were purchased in Latour de France, to tweak the estate's blends once again.

2022-2023

A new winery, the establishment of a vine conservation centre, plans to plant almond or pistachio trees...

IN THE VINEYARD AND THE WINERY

From the original blank canvas to the present-day, Domaine Gayda's saga has unfolded as much in its vineyards and winery as in the visionary yet instinctive ethos of its founders. Through its vineyard sites, switch-over to organic or biodynamic winegrowing, inspired winemaking methods and now signature blending style, Domaine Gayda blazes its trail, from one vintage to the next.



DOMAINE GAYDA'S FOUR TERROIRS

"After a twenty-year search, we have found Domaine Gayda's four terroirs", claim Tim Ford and Vincent Chansault, understandably proud of their mosaic of vineyard sites which shape the identity of the estate's wines. The four prime sites, which have been assembled through a series of acquisitions, are distributed across Aude, Hérault and Pyrénées-Orientales.

- **In Brugairolles** - calcareous sandstone planted to Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon and Viognier.
- **In la Livinière** - the limestone plateau is home to Syrah, Grenache, Cinsault, Mourvèdre, Carignan and Viognier.
- **In Latour de France** - gneiss and granite soils facing South-West are planted to Syrah, Grenache and Carignan.
- **In Col de la Dona** In Col de la Dona - schist facing due South opposite the sea is planted to Syrah and Grenache.

This array of vineyard sites and weather patterns - ranging from Atlantic to Mediterranean via mountains - not only forges the distinctive styles of the wines, but also encapsulates the extensive variety of this southern wine region. It offers these new-wave winegrowers an incredible opportunity to get their creative juices flowing and design unique wines, whilst constantly honing the house style at Gayda.

VINES AND BIODIVERSITY

Keeping close to nature and translating site-expressiveness into wine has now become a classic mantra within the wine industry, but it was already being put into practice twenty years ago at Domaine Gayda. By 2008, as the vineyards were still being planted, the switch-over to organic began, culminating in official certification in 2011. Though the approach is not dogmatic, vineyard management also subscribes to biodynamic principles. A range of grape varieties continues to be planted on Domaine Gayda's four outstanding sites, but the aim is also to diversify the choice of crops. In 2019, a 1.5-hectare field of truffle oaks was planted and a one-hectare olive grove is already producing olive oil enjoyed by the founders and their employees. But innovation is a key driver at Domaine Gayda and a desire to constantly reinvent itself is prompting suggestions of planting different crops, such as almond and pistachio trees, in the near future.

WINEMAKING TECHNIQUES THAT CAPTURE A MODERN-DAY SPIRIT

Domaine Gayda's wines have a hallmark style that has found favour with enthusiasts. They stem from meticulous, laser-focused winegrowing; a skilful fusion of terroir and consumer-driven vision; a subtle balance between fruit and freshness; and between drinkability and ageability. *"We make the wines we enjoy, but also those that meet market needs. We don't try and make intellectual or elitist wines. We are committed to making wines for pleasure, which are enjoyable when young but can also mature for up to 15 years. Our wines are renowned for their ability to stay fresh, but they also develop more fruit and finesse, even though we will always retain our signature style and value our large-format Burgundy barrels. Twenty years down the line and we are constantly experimenting. We make wines instinctively, with virtually no plan B. Once a year, this adrenalin rush is important, it is part of our genetic make-up",* explains Winemaker and Loire Valley native Vincent Chansault.

FROM HARVESTING TO AGEING - THE PROCESS AT DOMAINE GAYDA

- Exploring machine harvesting as an option to save time, due to increasingly unpredictable harvest dates, so that the fruit can be picked as cool as possible and therefore in the morning;
- The most appropriate choice of ripeness in order to produce fruit-forward wines that stay fresh;
- Single-vineyard winemaking using whole-bunch fruit and wild yeast;
- Emphasis on maturation using a range of vessels, from small and

large-format barrels to concrete eggs and terracotta amphorae;

- A desire to strive for the most natural wines possible by reducing sulphur and oak, so that the fruit and terroir characters can be fully expressed;
- Fine-tuned blending - a trademark of Domaine Gayda wines - to produce the quintessential fusion of vineyard sites, grape varieties and maturation techniques.

DOMAINE GAYDA AND CLIMATE CHANGE

From drought, frost and unpredictable harvest dates to areas that are becoming arid, winegrowing is facing the challenge of climate change head-on. *"It will become increasingly challenging. Coping with climate change is a significant focus of our work today and for the future. Twenty years ago when we started out, these were questions we did not raise - now they dictate our choices but also guide our work ethics. For example, irrigating vineyards is not a priority as water is also a major issue",* stress Tim Ford and Vincent Chansault.

What is a priority, though, is adapting and innovating. To achieve this, Domaine Gayda has made some strategic choices that are reaping rewards. Harvesting by machine offers a more proactive, quicker response, allowing grapes to be brought to the winery before the mercury soars during the day. A variety of vineyard sites mitigates the risks of weather incidents by focusing on cooler sites to retain the desired freshness in the wines or higher elevations that are less prone to frost. The varietal range remains unchanged, but is planted on different sites. Another approach is to prioritise biodiversity and companion crops - planting hedges in vineyards or opting for pistachio trees at a time when California is uprooting its trees due to lack of water...



CHARACTERFUL WINES

From the freedom of the PGI system to the array of grape varieties and vineyard sites and inspiration from near and far, Domaine Gayda's wines each tell a different aspect of this unique estate's story. The underlying intent, however, is always the same and that is to continue to make headway and be guided by the desire to make wine that is always good, but not necessarily what you would expect of a specific site or grape variety.



FLAGSHIP LABELS AND NEW RELEASES



Villa Mon Rêve
The only appellation-labelled wine (Cru La Livinière), Villa Mon Rêve ranks as Domaine Gayda's top cuvée. The name originates from the stone cottage built by its owner for his convalescing wife. In this magical natural vineyard setting, she recovered, and the cottage was then named 'Villa Mon Rêve' or 'The House of My Dream'. The dream became viticultural when a block of old Syrah vines produced the wine that Tim, Vincent and Anthony had dreamt of – an elegant Syrah showing the ultimate in finesse and power.



Chemin de Moscou
The Chemin de Moscou label, created for the 2004 vintage, is Domaine Gayda's 'Alpha & Omega': it is a blend of old vine Syrah from La Livinière with their alter ego from the granite soils of Latour de France in Roussillon, along with Cinsault and Grenache grown in La Livinière and Roussillon. This best-seller's quirky name in fact encapsulates a story with strong local roots: it is named after the Moscow tree and the estate's namesake vineyards listed on land registry. History tells how airmail pilots flying over the village's vineyards, delivering post between Toulouse and Barcelona in the aftermath of the First World War, used it as a landmark.



Altre Cami
Meaning another path in Catalan, this new label mirrors the different avenues being explored from a winemaking perspective. The project stems from a desire to showcase the estate's finest vineyard blocks in Roussillon and to encapsulate the uniqueness and typicity of its Catalan terroirs.



Figure Libre
Why Figure Libre? Because it epitomises the freedom to focus on grape varieties that certainly do not hail from Languedoc – Chenin Blanc for the whites and Cabernet Franc for the reds. Planted in 2004, the vines have embraced their new home effortlessly.



Figure Libre Freestyle
Two wines – a red and a white where grape varieties are blended 'freestyle' – fully encapsulate the spirit of Domaine Gayda, where shaking up viticultural conventions and thinking outside the box are the norm.



La Minuette
A blended rosé made in the Languedoc spirit but named in honour of the first rose planted by Tim Ford in Kenya in the 1980s during his horticultural days in Africa.



En Passant
A limited edition red and white, this duo is crafted every year in a free-spirited, wanderlust style. The wines are a nod to The Passenger by Iggy Pop – restless with a pop-rock attitude, they encourage you to expect the unexpected, mirroring the spirit at Domaine Gayda.

COLLECTION

Four varietal wines showcasing Viognier, Chardonnay, Grenache and Syrah, fusing tradition and innovation.



Flying Solo
Boldness in a bottle. Turning its back on international grape varieties, this label turns the spotlight on Grenache – the Mediterranean grape variety that forms the cornerstone of the range – blended with Syrah, Viognier or Cinsault. This intrepid label pays tribute to the pioneering airmail pilots who risked life and limb to ensure postal deliveries in the 1920s.



T'Air d'Oc
A New World spirit for these high-tech, honed Syrah or Sauvignon single varietals, where the interminable Languedoc winds give their own special identity to this range.





GAYDA PORTRAITS

In the same way that Gayda wines are often blends, the estate itself is a blend of men, backgrounds, stories and passion. **Domaine Gayda was born after three men – Tim, Vincent and Anthony – met in South Africa. The story continues today with a patron, Anthony Record, and three men out in the field: CEO Tim Ford; Winemaker Vincent Chansault, and Sales Manager David Chardon.**



WINE TOURISM AT THE ESTATE

The art of hospitality and the wine tourism experience is high on the agenda at **Domaine Gayda**. From the very outset, the aim has always been to showcase, share and discuss the world of wine, with dedicated staff and novel, convivial activities.

BOUTIQUE, VISITS AND TASTINGS

In addition to the Boutique, which stocks the full range of wines, **Domaine Gayda** offers various options for visiting the winery and the vineyards, and tastings by appointment.

New features include :

- Themed visits of the estate revolving around biodiversity and other crops (truffles, olives...)
- A curated tasting of older vintages of *Chemin de Moscou*.

WORKSHOPS

Blending is the cornerstone of the **Domaine Gayda** method – allowing it to craft one-of-a-kind wines – so the estate offers visitors an introduction to blending where they can take their own wine home. This captivating, fun-filled experience can be enjoyed alone or as part of a teambuilding activity.

HOSPITALITY

A restaurant open all year round welcomes visitors for lunch and dinner, serving grilled foods and traditional, seasonal cuisine. ‘*Les Paillottes*’ surrounded by vineyards also hosts special summer events.

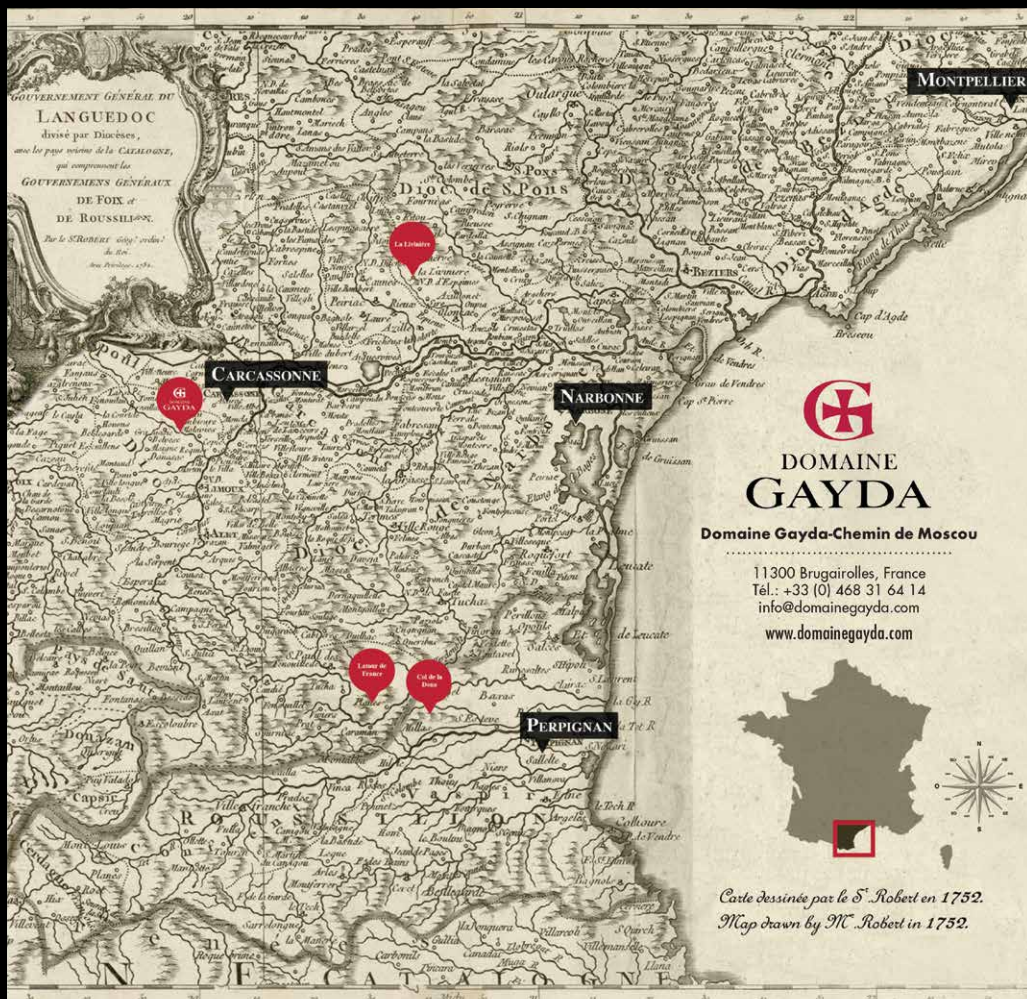
EVENTS

Domaine Gayda hosts public and private events, including seminars and themed evening events.



DOMAINE GAYDA'S VINEYARDS



MAP OF THE DIFFERENT AREAS AND THEIR GENERAL LOCATION



DOMAINE GAYDA'S FOUR TERROIRS

Domaine Gayda, La Livinière, Col de la Dona, Latour de France
The vineyards extend across Languedoc and Roussillon and show a distinctive variety of unique vineyard sites. The single-vineyard selections of vines grown on limestone, sandstone, granite and schist shape the wines' incomparable character and offer a testament to this amazing region.

Chemin de Moscou - 11300 Brugairolles
Tél. +33 (0)4 68 31 64 14
www.domainegayda.com

 @domainegayda 

PRESS CONTACT SARAH HARGREAVES
IN THE MOOD PRESS RELATIONS AGENCY
TÉL. +33 (0)4 67 54 70 03 • MOB. +33 (0)6 13 61 17 84
SARAH@INTHEMOODPRESS.COM • WWW.INTHEMOODPRESS.COM