

# L'AVENTURE WINERY

## 2016 NEWSLETTER

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### 2014 Vintage Tasting Notes

“The 2014 vintage reminds of 2012 with a consistent climate and early harvest. Like 2012, it is a more California style, very pleasurable with the same silkiness. Ripe style with maybe bigger tannins which makes me think that these wines will age forever. So please, don’t rush to drink them!” - *Stephan Asseo*

#### **Estate Rosé 2015**

36% Grenache, 28% Mourvèdre, 26% Syrah, 10% Petit Verdot

Super aromatic. Exotic fruit mixed with white fruit. Bone dry with a beautiful acidity. Crisp. Perfect wine for a picnic or aperitif!

#### **Côte à Côte 2014**

50% Grenache, 28% Mourvèdre, 22% Syrah

An intense nose of deep, ripe red fruit with a touch of earthiness. Super attack, soft and rich with tons of lush black raspberry. Fine tannins and bright acidity support the fruit through an unbelievably, long mineral finish.

#### **Cuvée “Les Demoiselles” 2014**

60% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, 10% Grenache

Dark ruby with a dense core. An earthy nose of raspberry, smokey bacon and faint roses leads to a bold attack of boysenberry, blueberry and smoked and cured meats on the palate. Firm yet graceful tannins support this powerful wine through a long finish.

#### **Sibling 2014**

66% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 14% Monastrelle

Aromas of pomegranates, plums and dark cherries fill the nose. A soft attack is supported by fine, elegant tannings and evolves to a medium finish of red fruit punctuated with a touch of Syrah spice.

#### **Estate Cuvée Blanc 2015**

38% Roussanne, 36% Grenache Blanc, 26% Viognier

Nice attack on the freshness with a good viscosity, full body, lots of volume and complexity in the mouth mostly on white fruit such as pear with a touch of exotic fruit as well. Super long with a nice balance, good acidity and minerality.

#### **Optimus 2014**

42% Syrah, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Petit Verdot

This dense, dark red Optimus offers a complex nose of blackberry concentrate, cigar box and floral notes. A huge attack of blackberries, blueberries and plum reduction is supported by delicate tannins and a solid acid backbone which leads to a very well integrated, long finish with a core of minerality.

#### **Estate Cuvée 2014**

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Syrah, 15% Petit Verdot

The darkest of our offerings, the Estate Cuvée shows a deep, red rim with an opaque black center. The nose, rich with black fruit, roasted coffee, hazelnuts, saddle leather and violets continue through to the palate with an intense attack of complex fruit and spice slowly resolving to a lush blueberry reduction. Full body, very rich and dense. The big yet balanced tannins support the super long lasting finish.

## 2014 Vintage Tasting Notes Continued...

### Cuvée Chloé 2014

67% Syrah McVey Block, 33% Grenache Block  
CO-FERMENTED

A purple rim with a remarkably deep core. A super dense nose leads the way with an explosion of red and black fruit. The huge attack shows soft, brambling berries mingling with spice and floral undertones. A beautifully structured offering, the finish is expansive and lush with huge scale and length.

### For Her 2014

58% Syrah Hill Top Block, 32% Monastrelle Plateau Block, 10% Viognier Block CO-FERMENTED

A distinct deep dark nose of black fruit, pencil lead, earth and leather leads to a super intense attack of blackberry, boysenberry, violets and sweet oak. The big tannic structure supports the fruit through the massive finish. This wine is very focused and dense.

Stephan says, “no rush to drink, can age forever”.

## What Do Our Barrels Mean to Us?

Where do barrels come from? What influences do they bring? How important are they in our winemaking philosophy? What is the difference between aged and new barrels? These are common questions that are asked everyday. Most of us know that wine, for the most part, is aged in barrels but don't know the reason or philosophy behind it. Here at L'Aventure, the barrels are a large part of our winemaking process. Stephan Asseo carefully works with a variety of master coopers (barrel makers) to ensure the range of barrel profiles required in obtaining the ideal combination to create his wine. The most widely used barrels come either from forests in France or America. In our case, we use only French oak, all mainly located in central France with the exception of Vosges (see map).

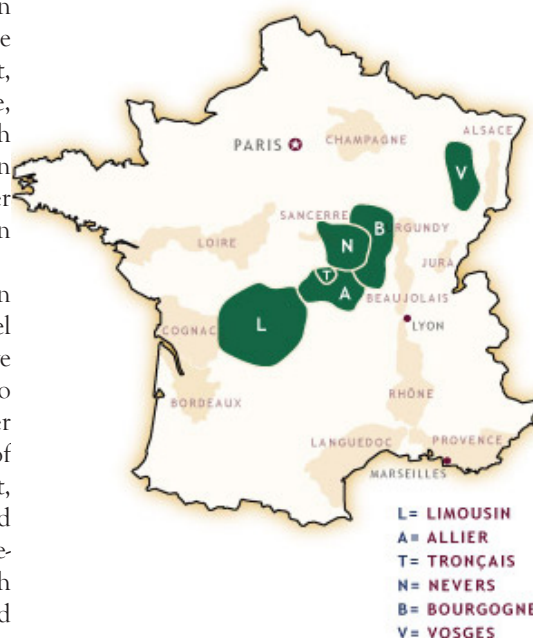
In his own words, Stephan answers all the questions. “First of all, you know my attraction for blends in general, and I like to say that barrels are part of it, between the age of the barrel and the different suppliers. Lets start by the age of the barrels, in new barrels you will have more exchange between the outside and the wine (micro oxygenation and non-oxidation) so it will have more evolution in the maturation process which will give a deeper color, rounder tannins and more complexity. With that said, even though it's new oak, due to my choice of a very special custom toast called “very blond”, the expression of the oak is not very present, just a touch to bring an additional step in the global complexity. At the opposite, one-year-old French barrels will give less oak flavor because you have less exchange in the process and therefore, the wine will stay closer to what it was before put in barrel. The combination of both allow me to keep the fruit and primary from 1-year-old barrels mixed with the complexity and sophistication touch that is brought by the new oak.



Also, in terms of age barrel selection, after multiple years of tasting, I discovered ( in my personal opinion) that the entity and character of Rhône blends were more respected if I used roughly 50% new French oak and 50% one-year-old French oak The Optimus follows the same philosophy because in my opinion it has to remain more on the pleasurable side. Finally, the Estate Cuvée because of the composition of the blend and the density of the wine, I can take advantage of 90% to 100% new French oak.

To conclude on the blending philosophy, I like to play with multiple barrel coopers because each one will bring its personal interpretation of my wishes in terms of toasting, staves thickness and forest origin. I have over 12 different coopers that I work with annually, all from France: Ermitage, Tonnellerie Orion, Boutes, Saury, Tonnellerie O, Radoux, Seguin Moreau Selection, Tonnellerie de Jarnac, Atelier Centre France, Tonnellerie D'Aquitaine, Bel Air Tonnellerie and Saint Martin. This continues to help me bring another layer of complexity in my wines.

I will finish by the aging. After 30 years of experience with different wines from old and new world pushing the maturation up to 24 months in barrel, I decided to come back to a more “reasonable” maturation time of roughly 14 months in barrel. I discovered that keeping the wine for too long in barrel ended up drying the wine, especially the tannins. Even if it was and still is “fashionable” to age up to 24 months, I moved back to match my philosophy that I will resume in one word: pleasure. We intellectualize too much on wine and in the end a good wine is a one that is balanced and will make you cry”.



## 2015 Through Stephan's Perspective



The 2015 vintage is the most surprising vintage I've seen for different reasons. In terms of quantity, it is the smallest vintage with a very very low yield (even smaller than 2011). We harvested 30% of our regular crop and when you know that my nickname is 'Mr. Low Yield' that means we harvested a very little amount of fruit.

At the opposite of 2011, the reason of this small year in term of volume is not due to frost, but to shatter. This phenomenon happens during the bloom when the weather conditions are not good (ie: too much wind, too cold or too hot in temperature). In this case, at least for the Syrah but also for the Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot (2 tons per acre!!!!) it was due to the cold temperature which made the "fecondation" not happen or made it very bad. And you know that no "fecondation" means no babies ... berries! Personally, I don't think that the draught had a major part in our specific situation, though it definitely did not help!

On the other hand, for the other varietals like Grenache and Mourvèdre, the timing of the bloom was in a different window and the weather conditions were far better therefore, we got a perfect setting with a beautiful crop.

I do have to say that this vintage caught me off guard in terms of style. The characteristics, theoretically, should have been a very early vintage, hot year condition and super low yield... Which would make me think that it would be a big, ripe, huge kind of wine. But instead, tank after tank, the wines are reflecting the opposite, a more cool year condition meaning more on the complexity and spicyness rather than the power. When I saw that I decided to do something out of the norm for me which was to add (at least for my Rhone varietals and blends) a lot of beautiful ripe stems to mark even more this spicyness.

Don't get me wrong, when I say that the wines are more on the complexity than the power you still have beautiful flesh, full body, and super length at the end!

### A Lesson in Wine With Stephan

**AOC Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée:** In English means "Controlled Designation of Origin". It is the French Government certification given to regions for agricultural products such as wine. Through the AOC, regions are "forced" to only make wine from designated varietals for that region. For example: Cabernet Sauvignon is a Bordeaux varietal and therefore cannot be used in the Rhone region. This control was one of the reasons Stephan decided to move so that he could have the freedom to plant and blend any varietals together.

**AVA:** Abbreviated for "American Viticultural Area". For regions that have vast diversity, such as Paso Robles, AVAs are created to showcase and separate different parts of a specific region to acknowledge those differences. There were 11 AVAs created for Paso Robles last year, L'Aventure is part of the Willow Creek District.

**Co-fermentation:** A term used quite a bit by us since the release of the Cuvée Chloé and For Her. It's the practice of fermenting two or more grape varieties at the same time. Or as Stephan likes to put it, "it is a super blend".

**Finish:** When describing a wine this is the flavor and taste that your palate experiences after you have swallowed. It is also something that Stephan seeks in his wines, a longer finish that keeps on going...and going...!!!

**Maceration:** This is the time during the vinification when the grapes, the seeds, skins, pulp and sometimes stems allow their materials to be extracted. This is where color, flavor, tannins among other things are extracted from the skins and seeds into the wine.

## A Lesson in Wine With Stephan Continued...

**Malolactic Fermentation:** Also known as “malo”, is the process where hard malic acids that are naturally occurring in wine are transformed into softer, lactic acids. Malolactic fermentation is used quite often for whites yet thanks to our terroir our Estate Cuvee Blanc has no malolactic fermentation!

**Racking:** The racking process can happen multiple times during the year, it is when the “clean” wine is emptied from the barrel, leaving all the sediments at the bottom. At L’Aventure we don’t do it by sucking the wine from the top but by pushing through a cane with nitrogen (inert gas) which makes the operation very soft for the wine. See pictures of Daren demonstrating the cane and Dave washing the barrel with high pressure hot water.

**Saignée:** French term for a method of producing rosé by bleeding of the tanks after the wine has had limited to no contact with the grape skins. This is how we make our crisp and dry rosé!

**Tannin:** A word used quite often when describing wines as it is the backbone of a wine and one of the key components to a long aging wine. Tannins are extracted from the grape skin and stems, coupled with acidity and alcohol.

**Terroir:** One of Stephan’s most common used word when describing L’Aventure. It is a sense of place created from numerous environmental factors from the soil types, the exposure, the climate, topography and any other specific characteristics from the location. All the factors play a huge part on the vines and in the expression of the wine. Stephan likes to say that his wines are “90% his terroir and 10% the actual winemaking.”

**Vigneron:** This is without a doubt Stephan’s favorite word; it is a French term that is used to describe the winemaker who is also a wine grape grower.



### Julien Asseo

#### New Executive Chef of Guy Savoy

Julien Asseo, son of Stephan and Beatrice, has been promoted to Executive Chef for the restaurant Guy Savoy at the Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Julien had been working for the 2 star Michelin restaurant for over two years as “Sous Chef” and “Chef Tournant” before being promoted in November 2015. This picture was taken after the Asseo family surprised Julien at the restaurant and ate at the Chef’s Table. Stephan and Beatrice couldn’t be more proud to see their son working his passion in one of the most respected restaurants in the culinary industry. If you are interested in eating at Guy Savoy, you can visit their website [www.caesars.com/GuySavoy](http://www.caesars.com/GuySavoy). We assure you, you won’t be disappointed.



### Estate Cuvée 2013

#### Top 50 Best Wines of 2015

We were honored that our Estate Cuvée 2013 was included in the Top 50 Best Wines of the World for 2015 by Robert Parker’s Wine Advocate. “Selected from the 30,000+ tasting notes published by our reviewers during the year, these were the most exciting new wine releases of 2015, based on absolute Quality, Singularity and Hedonistic/Intellectual appeal.

In no particular order, these wines all represent the pinnacles of greatness while spanning a broad range of countries, regions, grapes, and style.”- Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Editor-in-Chief Wine Advocate

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