



The Adventure of L'Aventure

Posted by Fredric Koepfel under [Cabernet sauvignon](#) , [California](#) , [Central Coast](#) , [Grenache](#) , [Paso Robles](#) , [San Luis Obispo](#) , [Syrah](#) , [mourvedre](#)
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I encountered the cabernet sauvignon wines of L'Aventure at the "Cabs of Distinction" events mounted by the Paso Robles CAB Collective — CAB = "Cabernet and Bordeaux" — April 26 and 27. The fledgling organization is dedicated to promoting the idea that the Paso Robles region, long known as an area fit for Rhone variety grapes and cabernet sauvignon wines of the (ahem) cheaper sort, is capable of producing great, expressive, long-lived cabernets. I was



impressed by many of the cabernets I encountered that Friday and Saturday, on a sponsored trip to Paso Robles, and I'll write about those wines and the possibilities for Paso Robles cabernet soon.

Today, however, I want to focus on L'Aventure, a winery founded in the late 1990s by Stephan Asseo, a Frenchman who founded Domaine Courteillac in Bordeaux in 1982 and whose family owns Chateau Fleur Cardinal and Chateau Robin in Côtes de Castillon. Asseo's thorough background in French wine and his French education, at L'Ecole Oenologique de Macon, give him the ability to work with the demanding terrain and climate of Paso Robles, in the Santa Lucia Range, and make wines that are rigorous, mineral-influenced and highly structured yet packed with spice and delicious flavors. In these reviews you will find — I hope repeated not too often — the words "beautiful," "supple," "balanced" and "formidable." In fact, those terms pepper my notes on the L'Aventure cabernets from the Paso Robles CAB Collective barrel tasting of barrel samples from 2012 — only six or seven months old and still with aging ahead — and from the Grand Tasting event the next day. A few weeks later, back in Memphis, I discovered at a local trade tasting that L'Aventure is represented by a distributor here, though the wines I tried that afternoon were Asseo's Rhone-style Côte à Côte and his cabernet-syrah blends Estate Cuvée and Optimus.

Some wines quickly strike me with their sense of immediacy, completeness, power and elegance, and that's how I felt about these chiseled, faceted yet deeply sensuous wines from L'Aventure. They're not cheap, and they're not plentiful, but they're certainly worth seeking out.

First, the barrel-sample of L'Aventure Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2012, Paso Robles, tried at the Paso Robles "Cabs of Distinction en Primeur" tasting on April 26. The wine is 100 percent cabernet sauvignon; it will age about 15 months in 100 percent new French oak barrels. The color is inky-purple; beguiling aromas of cassis, rhubarb tart, blueberries and fruitcake are penetrated by scintillating notes of iodine and iron; this is a dynamic wine that displays tremendous depth of tannic power, granitic minerality, resonant acidity and an absolutely beautiful fruit character. It is soaking up the spicy oak and turning it into something subtle, supple and elegant. Alcohol content not available. Production will be 300 to 500 cases. Best from 2015 or '16 through 2025 to 2030. Excellent. About \$80 to \$85.

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Now let's look at L'Aventure Estate Cabernet Sauvignon in its versions from 2010, 2007 and 2006, tasted at the Paso Robles "Cabs of Distinction" event on April 27. Each followed the winery's standard regimen for this wine of aging 15 months in 100 percent new French oak barrels. The rendition for **2010** is 100 percent cabernet; it offers an expressive nose of ripe black and blue fruit packed with graphite, cloves, pepper and lavender, while at not quite three years old it leans greatly on its lithe and lithic structure. Try from 2014 or '15 through 2020 to '25. Production was 425 cases. The **2007** contains five percent petit verdot. Perhaps it's the three year advantage over the 2010, but the '07 feels riper, just a bit softer and more approachable, more floral and spicy, more "Californian," yet classically Bordeaux in its cedar-bay leaf-black olive elements and its still formidable tannic-granitic essence. About 1,075 cases produced. The **2006**, ah yes, what exquisite balance and poise and integration, albeit a deeply earthy wine, layering its succulent and spicy black fruit flavors with notes of briers and brambles, graphite, a hint of mushroom-like soy sauce; tannins are still close to formidable but shapely, finely-milled; acidity throbs like a struck tuning-fork. Alcohol content and production unavailable. Drink now through 2018 to 2022. Exceptional. These three cabernets each \$80 to \$85.

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The three wines from L'Aventure that I tasted in Memphis fall into a Rhone Valley mode, or at least that seems to be the inspiration, though batteries of cabernet sauvignon are deployed here too.

L'Aventure Estate Côte à Côte 2010 is a blend of 42 percent grenache, 34 percent syrah and 24 percent mourvèdre; the wine aged 14 months in a combination of half new French oak barrels and half one-year-old barrels. The color is radiant dark ruby; boy, what a lovely wine ensconced in a taut yet generous and beautiful structure; this features aromas and flavors of ripe, roasted and fleshy blackberries, blueberries and plums deeply imbued with lavender and licorice, briers, graphite and cloves, with backnotes of fruitcake and dried rosemary, with that pungent herb's slightly resinous quality. The wine feels chiseled from oak, granite and tannin, yet even now it's expansive, expressive and very drinkable, now through 2018 to 2020. How can it feel so perfectly balanced at 16.1 percent alcohol? Production was 900 cases. Excellent. About \$85.

L'Aventure Estate Cuvée 2010 is a blend of 42 percent each syrah and cabernet sauvignon with 16 percent petit verdot; the wine aged 15 months in 100 percent new French oak barrels. The color is deep ruby-mulberry with a kind of motor-oil sheen; again a ripe and fleshy wine but permeated by smoke and spice and nervy graphite-like minerality; it's very intense and concentrated, dusty with minerals and tannins that coat the palate, dense and chewy

and tightly packed, rigorous but a bit succulent and opulent too. 15.7 percent alcohol. 1,350 cases. Try from 2015 or '16 through 2020 to '24. Excellent. About \$85.

Still available in my local market and elsewhere, I assume, is the nicely aged L'Aventure Optimus 2006, a blend of 50 percent cabernet sauvignon, 45 percent syrah and 5 percent petit verdot. The wine offers a dark ruby color with a slightly lighter magenta rim; again I find myself waylaying the adjective "beautiful" for this occasion, because Optimus 06 delivers lovely poise and equilibrium and a seamless amalgamation of ripe slightly stewed black currants and blueberries, fine-grained tannins, polished oak and vibrant acidity, all pierced by the great abiding character of these wines from L'Aventure, a lean, lithe lithic quality that sustains, challenges and gratifies. 14.5 percent alcohol. Now through 2018 to 2020. Excellent. About \$45.

I'm quoting suggested retail prices; in my neck o' the woods prices may be \$5 to \$10 higher.
