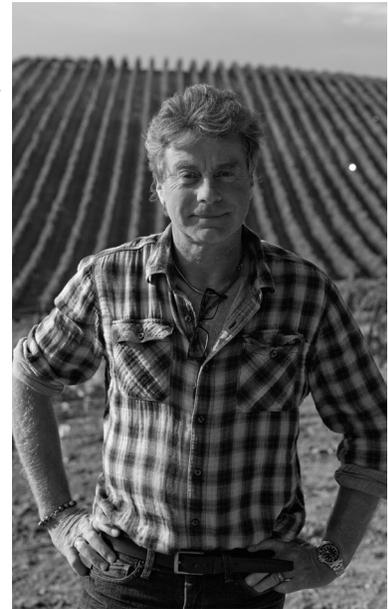




## Stephan Asseo: The Man Behind L'Aventure

Stephan Asseo has been in the wine industry for nearly three decades. After he graduated oenology college in the Burgundy region of France in 1982, the Asseo family purchased their first property, Domaine de Courteillac, on the Right Bank of Bordeaux. Later, the family purchased additional properties: Chateau Robin and Chateau Fleur Cardinale. With a unique style, Stephan raised those properties to a level of quality that brought him continuous accolades from the European press, travel guides and the Wine Spectator. Soon, well established wineries like Chateau Guillot Clauzel in Pomerol and Chateau Corbin were asking Stephan to manage their properties as well.

When Stephan announced his desire to create a vineyard and winery in America, most of his friends and customers were surprised... Why would he leave an established, comfortable situation in Europe to take a chance in the new world? For Stephan, who wanted to expand his expertise while gaining more freedom in viticulture and vinification, it was the beginning of L'Aventure (the "adventure" in French). He began searching with his wife, Beatrice, in California for land, including Napa/Sonoma and Santa Barbara counties. It was after this tour that he was most impressed with the quality of terroir of California wine country's newest rising star: Paso Robles.



### Our Terroir: Paso Robles West Side - Willow Creek District

The site for the vineyard was selected after an extensive study of the area that matched Stephan's experience as a vigneron. He immediately favored the west of Paso Robles for its sloping hills and authentic quality terroir. The one hundred twenty seven acre property he chose is comprised of multiple hills of various elevation, complex soils and excellent water drainage. He finds the aspects of this terroir to be fundamental in obtaining the high quality fruit necessary to create the wines he had envisioned for L'Aventure.

Because of its close proximity to the ocean, the vineyard is characterized by warm clear days with nighttime temperatures which can drop by approximately 40 degrees. This dramatic diurnal temperature variation increases the time of the grapes maturation cycle providing fruit that creates a more complex and balanced wine. With clear, sunny days typically lasting well into November, our fruit has the chance to stay on the vine longer to develop mature polyphenols, while the cool nights help retain acids, resulting in the ideal combination of maturity and balance.

The rolling hills that define the vineyard provide multiple facings on which Stephan strategically planted vines with carefully chosen grafted rootstocks. The thin layers of topsoil on these hills covers a succession of siliceous and calcareous shale which consists of old marine bones, shells, diatoms and plankton slowly deposited on the sea bed over millions of years, only to be lifted up through tectonic activity. The combination of these base soils with clay, metals, and quartz contribute to the complexity of the fruit in multiple ways. This soil locks up nutrients coaxing the vines to create small, thick skinned berries to ensure protection of its precious seeds. The shale also acts like a sponge, storing water during the rainy season and redistributing it back to the roots in the dry season. This assures a perfect feeding for the vines, giving them a balanced water source from which they regulate themselves, as opposed to the bingeing characteristics typically developed with irrigation. The shale also coaxes the vines to send roots deeper to collect water as the surface dries, rather than staying close to the surface and collecting from the drip system.

Stephan's choice of this lean terroir provides him with the fruit necessary to create wine with a good balance between alcohol and acidity. The resulting wine are full and rich yet well balanced with finesse and elegance.

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## Our Vineyard:

Stephan chose to install a vertical trellis system in the vineyard. The foliage is a very important element as it is the “maturity” factory of the vine. The shoots are raised up between the wires allowing significant sun exposure and increased photosynthesis to promote greater maturity of the polyphenols that provide the intense color and soft tannins found in L’Aventure wines. This also provides a better balance of the sugar/ phenolic acid combination of harvest. This is why our canopy is extensive: more than four feet tall, allowing a huge amount of leaf growth. We systematically trim the canopy to ensure optimal sunlight penetration, maximizing photosynthesis.

The pruning method we use is the classic “ Guillot Double” with a very low double cane or low classical double cordon. The choice of rootstock was made to take full advantage of the terroir. Stephan selected only those with a long, slow maturation, and a deep root system. To further contribute to this slow maturing deep rooted concept, planting was done with a very high density of 2100 plants per acre.

The irrigation system was designed specifically with the ability to irrigate each row individually. Irrigation is not systematically used, only when a little extra push is needed during flowering and veraison. This allows Stephan to create an optimum balance in the vineyard, pairing the amount of water with the sun exposure, climate and soil characteristics.

The rows are disked and chiseled regularly to help the water penetrate and reach the deeper soil. This, along with the sponge like characteristic of the shale, coaxes the root system to descend further into the soil, taking full advantage of the terroir.

The time of harvest is based not only on the usual brix criteria, but also when the phenolic maturation is perfect. The yield harvested is limited to two tons per acre to ensure premium fruit optimum maturity, balance and concentration.



## The Winery and Vinification Process:

L’Aventure winery reflects Stephan’s commitment to excellence. All of the equipment is state of the art, a perfect blend between technology and tradition.

At harvest, the grapes are manually sorted to eliminate leaves, vegetable parts, unripe clusters and dry berries. The red varieties are 100% de-stemmed and carried to the tank via conveyor belt. Various small tanks are used to respect the source of each lot throughout vinification. A thermostat is used on each tank to maintain as close as possible the

perfect temperature. The cold control is used for pre-maceration to develop more fruit characteristics, the hot for fermentation and post maceration to obtain elegant and stable tannins.

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## The Winery & Vinification Process Continued :

The white varietals are given a light pressing. The juice is then transferred to a stainless steel tank to allow the sediment to drop. Primary and malolactic (if needed) fermentation take place in French oak barrels.

French oak, because of its origin and texture, does not require the same toasting as other oak. Stephan chooses a long, soft and deep toasting, allowing a true respect of the fruit and wine characteristics. This provides rich, soft stable tannins and subtle vanilla and toast characteristics to the wines. Our barrels come from a variety of master coopers providing a range of barrel profiles which Stephan uses to create subtle and balanced blends. Stephan's several years working with these professionals helps him in obtaining his ideal combination of barrels from which to create his wines.

## L' Aventure Wine:

To respect the spirit of L' Aventure, Stephan says "the blended varieties are the cornerstone of our production... blending increases the authenticity and the complexity of the creation as a whole". The production is limited and will always remain so. Every component used, from cork to the wood case, is of the highest quality.



### Optimus:

A classically-styled wine that truly embodies our saying: "L' Aventure.... Where Bordeaux meets the Rhone!" This is the first wine Stephan made when moving to Paso Robles. Considered a "crazy blend" it includes Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. Today, Optimus is more of an approachable wine that can be enjoyed sooner and doesn't need years in the cellar.

100% Estate fruit from L' Aventure Vineyard



### Cote a Cote:

The Cote a Cote has always been Stephan's representation and vision of the Rhone region. Seductive, balanced and full bodied this is wine that usually consists of Syrah, Grenache and Mourvedre. 100% Estate fruit from L' Aventure Vineyard, only the best of these three varietals get blended.



### Estate Cuvee:

"The wine represents the realization of my vision for great blended red wine in Paso Robles. In this wine you have the best representation of our Willow Creek District terroir!"- Stephan Asseo, Owner/Vigneron  
The Estate Cuvee includes only the "cherry picking" of our Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot to best represent our vineyard. This is a wine that has the possibility of aging 15+ years...

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