

JEB DUNNUCK

The Brilliant 2016s from Paso Robles

Consistently thrilling wines come from L'Aventure, which is run with incredible talent and passion by St Emillion native Stephan Asseo. His 2016s are incredible efforts, and the 2017 more Rhone blends are certainly in the same ballpark.

Due to the heat spikes at harvest, Bordeaux varieties were much more difficult and hit or miss.

L'Aventure	2016	Estate Cuvée	Paso Robles	Red	99	JD
L'Aventure	2016	Côte à Côte	Paso Robles	Red	98	JD
L'Aventure	2016	Optimus	Paso Robles	Red	94	JD
L'Aventure	2016	For Her	Paso Robles	Red	97+	JD
L'Aventure	2016	Chloé	Paso Robles	Red	96+	JD
L'Aventure	2016	Les Demoiselles	Paso Robles	Red	95+	JD

Estate Cuvée 2016 99 points

A wine that flirts with perfection is the 2016 Estate Cuvee, which is 52% Syrah, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the balance of Petit Verdot, all of which spent 15 months in new French oak. Deep ruby/purpled-colored, with a masculine bouquet of crème de cassis, graphite, liquid rock-like minerality, and lead pencil shavings, it reminds me of a top 2010 Pomerol with its opulence, power and purity. Hitting the palate with full body, a layered, seamless, multi-dimensional texture, and present yet polished tannins, this beauty is one of the finest examples of this cuvee yet produced. Give bottles 2-3 years and it will keep for 15+.

Côte à Côte 2016 98 points

The 2016 Cote a Cote is a blockbuster and one of the wines of the vintage. A blend of 55% Grenache, 25% Mourvèdre, and the rest Syrah, brought up in a mix of 30% new French oak, 28% once used barrels, and the rest in amphora and concrete tanks, it offers a heavenly perfume of blueberries, blackberries, crushed violets, wild strawberries, group pepper, and spring flowers. About as pure and seamless as it gets, this beauty hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a multi-dimensional texture, no hard edges, and a huge finish. I finished my note on this wine with "Killer stuff!" You can drink this today or cellar it for 10-15 years.

Optimus 2016 94 points

Moving to the wines from bottle and starting with the 2016 Optimus, which is always a great introduction into the wines of this estate, it's a blend of 50% Syrah, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 20% Petit Verdot that spent 14 months in 60% new barrels. This full-bodied, rich yet also elegant and lively red gives up a big, sweet nose of crème de cassis, toasted spice, licorice, and graphite. With good acidity and impressive finesse and elegance as well as richness, it's a no-brainer purchase to drink of the coming 7-8 years.

For Her 2016 97+ points

The 2016 For Her got more than one "Wow" in my notes and boasts a Rockstar nose of pure blueberry and blackberry fruits, liquid violets, crushed herbs, and ground pepper. A blend of 46% Syrah, 39% Graciano (which they originally thought was Monastrell), and 15% Viognier, this full-bodied effort cuts a straight, focused path on the palate and has good acidity, awesome purity of fruit, and a great, great finish. Give bottles 2-3 years of bottle age and drink over the following decade or more.

Chloé 2016 96+ points

The 2016 Chloé (69% Syrah and 31% Grenache) is one of the closer, tighter, and more backward wines in the lineup. Sporting a deep purple color, it offers terrific notes of blackcurrants, spiced meats, and ample minerality and crushed rock characteristics. Structured, full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, and pure, it's loaded with potential yet needs 2-3 years of bottle age. Trust me, it's a brilliant wine.

Les Demoiselles 2016 95+ points

The 2016 Les Demoiselles is a 60/40 split of Mourvèdre and Syrah that was brought up mostly in used barrels and amphora tanks. It's full bodied, layered, and pure, with fabulous notes of cassis and blueberry fruits intermixed with ample smoked meats, sappy herbs, and olive tapenade. One of the more backward wines in the lineup, give it a good 3-4 years of bottle age and it should cruise for a decade or more.