

Reviews of the 2016 Vintage by Josh Reynolds

Stephan Asseo has a long and admirable track record for producing wines that meld the elegance of Bordeaux, where he was born and raised, and the ripeness and power of Paso Robles, where he has lived and made wine since 1997. That melding is both figurative and literal, as many of his wines are blends of traditional Bordeaux varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot) and the Rhône varieties (Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre) on which this region's fame has been built. Asseo is a curious and often experimental winemaker and was an early proponent in the region of using clay amphoras. He's not afraid of new oak but isn't crazy about using it at the expense of clarity. I learned a while ago that these wines, seductive as they are soon after release, really shine with bottle age, when the fruit and oak have had time to get to know each other better.

L'Aventure	2016	Estate Cuvée	Paso Robles	Red	96
L'Aventure	2016	Côte à Côte	Paso Robles	Red	94
L'Aventure	2016	Optimus	Paso Robles	Red	93
L'Aventure	2016	For Her	Paso Robles	Red	96
L'Aventure	2016	Chloé	Paso Robles	Red	95
L'Aventure	2016	Les Demoiselles	Paso Robles	Red	96

Estate Cuvée 2016 96 points

Vivid purple. A highly complex bouquet evokes ripe dark fruit, exotic spices and flowers, along with suggestions of incense, vanilla, pipe tobacco and candied licorice. Stains the palate with deep-pitched dark berry liqueur, spicecake and rose pastille flavors sharpened by a late jolt of juicy acidity. Impressively concentrated but lively too, showing superb delineation on the floral-accented finish, which is framed by dusty tannins that are quickly absorbed by the wine's dense fruit.

Côte à Côte 2016 94 points

Deep bright-rimmed ruby. Intensely perfumed red and blue fruit, floral pastille, cola and allspice aromas are sharpened by a powerful mineral note. Juicy and densely packed on the palate, offering sappy black currant and cherry-vanilla flavors that take on a spicy nuance with aeration. Finishes sweet, smooth and impressively long, displaying lingering spiciness and smooth, well-knit tannins.

Optimus 2016 93 points

Brilliant violet. Ripe dark berries, licorice, woodsmoke and candied violet on the deeply perfumed, spice-accented nose. Concentrated but lively as well, offering intense blackberry, cassis, cola and spicecake flavors that show impressive delineation and back-end lift. A very long, sappy finish features slow-building tannins, a hint of mocha and lingering smokiness.

For Her 2016 96 points

Inky ruby. Pungent, highly expressive aromas of ripe dark berries, potpourri, sandalwood and smoky minerals pick up a spicy nuance with aeration. Sweet and seamless in the mouth, displaying superb clarity to the sappy, mineral-tinged black raspberry, boysenberry, candied violet and spicecake flavors. Possesses a suave blend of power and finesse and finishes strikingly long and sweet, with slow-mounting tannins framing the lingering blue fruit and flowers.

Chloé 2016 95 points

Opaque, bright-rimmed ruby. A deeply perfumed, complex bouquet features boysenberry, cherry preserve, licorice, vanilla and smoky mineral qualities. Stains the palate with sweet black and blue fruit, spicecake and candied rose flavors that show a surprisingly delicate touch given their heft. Smooth, slow-building tannins frame a broad, smoky finish that hangs on with superb, floral-dominated persistence.

Les Demoiselles 2016 96 points

Youthful purple. A highly perfumed bouquet evokes ripe dark berries, candied flowers, incense and exotic spices, along with a smoky mineral overtone. Pliant, seamless and intensely spicy on the palate, offering deeply concentrated, mineral-laced blackberry, bitter cherry, vanilla and floral pastille flavors that firm up slowly as the wine opens up. Concentrated yet energetic, even lithe, delivering strong finishing thrust and dusty, well-knit tannins that come in late.