



JEB DUNNUCK

"Stephan Asseo, who's assisted more and more by assistant winemaker Patrick Davies, continues to keep his L'Aventure estate near the top of the pyramid in Paso Robles. This report looks at the 2019s and 2020s, and both appear to be beautiful vintages. The 2019s are some of the finest wines I've tasted at this estate and have a rare mix of power and vibrancy, with incredible aromatics and sensational purity and precision on the palate."

ESTATE CUVÉE BLANC 2020

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **93**

I always love the white from this team, and their 2020 Estate Cuvee White (54% Roussanne, 27% Viognier, and the rest Grenache Blanc) is medium-bodied, fresh, and lively, with lots of crushed lemon, salty mineral, and floral aromas and flavors. It would offer plenty of pleasure on its own, but it's going to shine on the dinner table over the coming 2-4 years.

ESTATE OPTIMUS 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **94**

The 2019 Optimus should be snatched up by savvy readers. Based on 57% Syrah, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the rest Petit Verdot, it just about jumps out of the glass with gorgeous cassis, floral, pepper, and graphite-like aromas and flavors. As seamless as they come, this full-bodied, elegant, pleasure-bent 2019 is going to evolve for a decade.

ESTATE CUVÉE 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **100**

Pure perfection from Paso Robles, the 2019 Estate Cuvee checks in as 50% Syrah, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Petit Verdot that was raised in 81% new French oak. Incredible cassis and black berry fruits as well as violets, chocolate, graphite, and who knows what else emerges from the glass, and it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a concentrated yet weightless mouthfeel, building tannins, and a great finish. It's more seamless and approachable than the more backward, structured 2018 and will have two decades of prime drinking.

CÔTE À CÔTE 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **100**

Another magical wine from this estate is the 2019 Côte à Côte, a blend of 34% each of Grenache and Mourvèdre, with the balance Syrah. Brought up in 29% new French oak, it boasts a dense purple color as well as incredible aromatics of blue fruits, smoked game, violets, black pepper, and spring flowers. One of those incredibly complex, nuanced wines that still brings depth and richness on the palate, it's perfectly balanced, has ultra-fine tannins, and a gorgeous finish. It's the finest vintage of Côte à Côte ever produced. Drink it over the coming 15+ years.

ÉPICÉ 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **97**

There are a tiny 100 cases (4 barrels) of the 2019 Epice. It's 100% Syrah, which is rare for this estate, but it was a block that stood out in the vintage. Revealing a deep purple hue as well as a Saint-Joseph-like array of ripe blue fruits, peppery herbs, stems, and spice, it hits the palate with medium to full-bodied richness, terrific tannins, and a great finish. It's complex, layered, and just another remarkable Syrah from this team.

INSPIRACIÓN 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **96**

A cuvée that was introduced in 2016, the 2019 Inspiracion is 38% Grenache, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Syrah, and the rest Grenache Blanc that was brought up in a mix of new and once-used oak, with 20% aged in amphora. It's a big, rich, beautifully textured 2019 with lots of dark berry and currant fruits as well as notes of ground pepper, cured meats, and spice. One of the broader, more expansive, opulent wines in the lineup, it's about as sexy as they come. Give it a year and enjoy over the following decade or more.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **98**

The 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve checks in as 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot that was aged 15 months in new barrels. It's another seamless, incredibly pure, focused expression of this variety that will stand up to any Cabernet out there. Lots of crème de cassis, lead pencil, sweet tobacco, and chalky minerality all flow to a full-bodied red with ultra-fine tannins, no hard edges, and a great finish. It's going to benefit from 4-5 years of bottle age, and I suspect it won't hit its early stages of maturity until after a solid decade.

FOR HER 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **98**

The 2019 For Her comes from a parcel of north-facing Syrah (56%) and the rest 32% Graciano and 12% Viognier that's always co-fermented. The élevage spans 14 months in 50% new and 50% once-used French oak. It has a darker edge in its blue fruits, pepper, asphalt, and violet aromatics, and this carries to a full-bodied, beautifully textured, supple, sexy red blend that has present tannins and one heck of a great finish. It has another 15+ years of prime drinking ahead of it.

CHLOÉ 2019

TASTING DATE 9/30/2021 RATING **98+**

A straight beast of a wine, the 2019 Chloe offers blockbuster levels of black and blue fruits as well as notes of graphite, ground pepper, and crushed rock. Based on a co-fermented blend of 69% Syrah, 23% Grenache, and 8% Viognier that saw a slightly shorter maceration than normal, this inky hued, full-bodied, massive 2019 still somehow stays flawlessly balanced and elegant on the palate. It's going to take 5-7 years or more of bottle age, but it's a brilliant, heavenly wine.