

DOMAINE PAUL AUTARD

COTES DU RHONE 2008

80% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 5% Mourvedre



VINTAGE REPORT:

Jean-Paul Autard recalls that the 2008 vintage “began under challenging conditions.” The rainy and cool Spring weather disrupted flowering and causing *coulure*, which is the failure of fertilization, thus preventing the formation of bunches of grapes. Flowering did not finish until mid-June, which was late for this region. But warm, sunny days and cool nights in late June and July, together with a beneficial Mistral wind, advanced ripening and the development of color, aroma and flavor in the grapes. As a result, their level of tannins and anthocyanins, the phenolic compounds responsible for a red wine’s color, are higher in 2008 than in 2007. Autard reports that these key elements “were more easily extracted during vinification in 2008 than in 2007.” These factors, together with the year’s naturally low yield, explain the 2008 Cote du Rhone’s impressive color, concentration, intense aromas and flavors, balance and elegance.

Harvest at Domaine Paul Autard began on September 11th under sunny skies for the Cotes du Rhone and lasted until the 20th, when the last grapes for the Autard’s Chateaneuf du Papes were picked. For comparative purposes, the 2008 harvest dates are the same in 2006, but a full seven days later than in 2007. The health of the fruit was perfect throughout the harvest period, and each *cepage* was picked at optimum maturity. The grapes were all hand-picked and then transported to the winery in small boxes so as not to damage the fruit. They were then de-stemmed and lightly crushed to begin the fermentation process by releasing juice. The maceration and fermentation took place in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks in Autard’s new winery. The tanks are equipped with a pneumatic mechanism to carry out *pigeage* (or punching down of the cap of solids) to ensure optimal and gentle extraction of color and flavor without any harsh elements. In addition, two pumping over operations (*remontages*) were carried out daily for 10 days, to enhance the extraction and to oxygenate the wine to attain a plush texture. Each of the varieties was vinified separately and assembled in March. The 2008 Cotes du Rhone was aged in tanks until bottling in late July 2009.

Jean Paul Autard’s vineyard practice aims to achieve a perfect balance between the soil and the vine. No pesticides, or chemical anti-rot products or fertilizers are used. He is guided by the method known as *lutte raisonnee*. The health of the vineyard is ensured by meticulous work by hand, such as the removal in May and June of unessential shoots and leaves that would block the proper aeration of the vines. By not allowing humidity to remain on the grapes and leaves, the possibility of problems such as rot and mildew is eliminated. Since the vines have an average age of over 50 years, production of fruit is naturally low.