



# L'Aventure 2019 Newsletter

## The 2017 Vintage

Now that the wine is more or less at the end of its maturation (right before bottling) I can definitely tell you more about this vintage. First of all, the good news is that this vintage, in term of **quantity**, is a very good one for L'Aventure. But, rest assured, when I say, "big volume", I am still small compared to some of my neighbors! More importantly though, even though this is probably my biggest vintage since 2010, when you divide the number of bottles produced by the numbers of vines (120,000), it comes out to about .85 bottle/vine so that is not even a full bottle per vine!! You see that I don't lie to you 😊. What I am happy about in regards to the volume is that it shows the quality of the terroir of L'Aventure because in addition to the special cuvées, I was able to make some more Estate Cuvée and Côte à Côte while still being extremely selective about my fruit! In terms of style, I believe more and more that a big wine in terms of concentration doesn't necessarily mean the best wine. I think, or at least hope, that my 2017s are the perfect proof of that. They are a touch less dense (but still big) than the 2016s with a lot of balance and elegance. In other words, I would describe my 2017 as "classic". There is a lot of fruit, a lot of pleasure and while the wines are firm, they are also quite silky. The 2017s are super expressive and very distinct, and while they are already approachable I can only imagine what a few more years in bottle will do. If I have to speak more specifically about a few wines, maybe I would speak about the Chloé. Since the beginning of the birth of this fermentation, during harvest, the wine developed an unbelievable spiciness (white pepper) and it has developed more and more after 14 months in barrel. The beauty of the Chloé, and also the For Her and Inspiration, is that the blends were made during the vinification and since have never been touched!! I call them super blends...VIVA LA CO-FERMENTATION!

## Estate Cuvée Blanc 2018

**42% Roussanne, 33% Grenache Blanc, 25% Viognier**

Good news, the Estate Cuvée Blanc is back !! The bad news is that it is only 60 cases! It is, what it is... I wanted to stay in the same philosophy as my previous vintages, meaning Roussanne driven. Therefore I could only do so many cases. Don't forget that my new Roussanne block is only three years old. Since it was their first year of production, I didn't want to push those young ladies too much 😊. Remember when I pulled out the whole block of Roussanne?? Well that was because they were degenerating, and I am happy to say that the new generation of Roussanne vines that I planted definitely look better and should give me even better fruit in the future... so be patient! With that said, this cuvée will always be 'exclusive' and will never be huge in terms of quantity.

The style as always, is about the freshness and acidity. It is not a fruit bomb, but more a food wine with a lot of salinity and minerality (even more than usual). In other words, it is one tasty bottle of white that can be enjoyed now, but can also be aged a few years! **Aging 1-6 years**



## 2017 Tasting Notes

Please see below the tasting notes written by Jeb Dunnuck from jebdunnuck.com when he tasted the 2017 Vintage from barrels

### **Optimus 2017 49% Syrah, 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petit Verdot**

Starting with the wines from barrel, the 2017 Optimus will certainly be a charming, sexy, outstanding bottle of wine. It gives up lots of cassis and jammy dark fruits in a primary, full-bodied, layered style. **Aging 1-10 years**

### **Côte à Côte 2017 48% Grenache, 32% Mourvedre, 20% Syrah**

Another elegant and seamless wine is the 2017 Côte à Côte. It has an exotic, perfumed style in its cassis and strawberry fruits, and it's full-bodied, nicely concentrated, and layered on the palate. I love its tannin quality, it's balanced, and is going to drink nicely right out of the gate.

**Aging 1-15+ years**

### **Estate Cuvée 2017 49% Syrah, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 21% Petit Verdot**

The 2017 Estate Cuvée shows the effects of the heat spikes and has some firm, angular tannins that are buffered by lots of blackcurrant fruit. It has classic graphite, licorice, and lead pencil aromas, medium to full body, and good length. **Aging 1-20+ years**

### **Sibling 2017 37% Grenache, 33% Mourvedre, 30% Syrah**

The 2017 Sibling is mostly Grenache yet reminds me of a baby Côte Rôtie with its exotic spices, red and black fruits, ground pepper, and gamey notes. Medium to full-bodied, nicely textured, and seamless on the palate, it's another wine that's going to drink nicely right out of the gate.

**Aging 1-10 years**

**2017 Tasting Notes Continues...**

### Inspiración 2017 44% Grenache, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Syrah, 4% Grenache Blanc Co-fermented

This elegant, pure, medium to full-bodied beauty gives up loads of blue fruits, violet, graphite, and pepper, silky tannins, a great mouthfeel, and serious length on the palate. **Aging 1-15 years**

### Les Demoiselles 2017 70% Mourvèdre, 20% Syrah, 10% Grenache

This beauty boasts loads of kirsch liqueur, exotic spice, flowers, and underbrush notes as well as a big, rich, full-bodied style on the palate. It's charming and surprisingly elegant on the palate, and I suspect will drink nicely right out of the gate. Still, it's one sexy wine. **Aging 1-15 years**

### Chloé 2017 74% Syrah McVey Block, 18% Grenache Old Block, 5% Viognier, 3% Graciano Co-fermented

One of the gems in the vintage will be the 2017 Chloé, and it already offers incredible complexity and nuance in its cool-climate-like notes of black raspberries, spring flowers, ground pepper, and spice. Seamless, full-bodied, perfectly balanced, and just heavenly on the palate, it's an awesome Syrah dominated barrel sample that can't wait to taste from bottle. **Aging 1-20+ years**

### For Her 2017 54% Syrah Hill Top Block, 32% Graciano, 14% Viognier Co-fermented

I was also blown away by the 2017 For Her ... It's hard for this amount of Viognier to not stand out in a wine, yet Stephan does it brilliantly, and this complex, layered blend gives up Côte Rôtie-like notes of cassis, toasted spices, cured meats, and dried flowers. It's powerful and full-bodied, yet it's the purity of fruit, as well as balance, that makes it stand out. **Aging 1-20+ years**

## New Cuvée ... Le Retour

### Le Retour 2017 80% Syrah, 20% Grenache

A new wine, the 2017 Cuvée Syrah (there's 20% Grenache) was made due to Stephan loving the Syrah so much in the vintage. This brilliant wine is a selection of the top lots of Syrah and offers awesome perfume of crème de cassis, jammy blackberries, crushed violets, pepper, and spring flowers. It's full-bodied, incredibly seamless, and pure, with perfect balance. It's a rockstar of a Paso Robles Syrah!

**Aging 1-15 years**

After finalizing the blend for the main 2017 cuvées, I ended up with some remaining excellent straight Syrah. More importantly, throughout the vinification of this vintage I kept thinking that if I had the opportunity to do a single varietal Syrah cuvée I would be open to do it. As some of you may recall, my last L'Aventure straight Syrah was in 2005 and back then I had made the decision to stop because even though it was good, it was too big, and in the end undrinkable. A wine that is undrinkable is not for me. In fact, I always try to make wines which you can enjoy and finish the bottle without thinking about the potential but just the pleasure. In 2017 my Syrah was so elegant, that I thought it would maybe be the right moment to do a revisit and make a micro cuvée (5 barrels) of my past L'Aventure Syrah. With that said, in keeping with my philosophy that I explained above, I added 20% of Grenache which brought even more complexity and finesse to the final blend. I decided to call it "Le Retour" which means "The Return" in French. This cuvée is finally making a comeback after 13 years! Only 110 cases were made so my daughter and I made the decision to do a surprise release sometime during the year. Stay tuned to your emails 😊.



## 2018 From Stephan's Perspective



The good news of 2018 is that in terms of quantity it is looking a lot like 2017! For me that shows two things: first, that the weather conditions were impeccable during the growing season up to picking and second, that my vineyard has finally arrived at "maturity".

During harvest, I would say the weather was a bit more gentle with us. There was no big heat wave like the one we got in 2017 and my Cabernet Sauvignon was a huge beneficiary of that. I will not say that it was a perfectly smooth harvest as perfection does not exist in this world, (especially for me who is a perfectionist) 😊, but it was pretty close... Thank you California! Because it was smooth though, the harvest took forever, and we picked for two months straight, finishing at the end of October with the Petit Verdot. Let's just say I was very tired at the end 😊.

I will say again that the big beneficiary of 2018 was and will be the Cabernet Sauvignon. There was no dehydration of the berries which made my Cabernet, stylistically speaking, not an over ripe "California Style" but still dense and super elegant. Also, because all my blocks of Cabernet were so good, while it's a little bit too early and I need to save some for my Estate Cuvée and Optimus, I am confident that...

I WILL BE ABLE TO BRING BACK WHAT EVERYBODY HAS BEEN DREAMING ABOUT, SOME STRAIGHT CABERNET SAUVIGNON IN 2018!!!!!! As always, it will be club only.

Another star of the 2018 vintage is the Syrah. Like the 2017, it has this kind of spiciness that I love and should bring even more complexity to all my blends where Syrah is involved (that includes a lot of wines!!). On top of that, by now you know my love for practicing the co-fermentation, and one of the reasons that 2018 is so nice and balanced, is the fact that my final lots of Syrah came from multiple blocks of straight Syrah meaning each tank is a beautiful melting pot of my best blocks. As for all the other grapes I produced, well I am very happy and all are good which is not something I can admit each year.

Lastly, in terms of style, it is too early to tell... you will need to be patient and wait until the next newsletter, once my wines are blended and ready to be bottled 🍷.

## Big News for 2019: Julien Asseo is Moving Back to Paso...

And opening a new restaurant called “Les Petites Canailles” which translates to “The Little Troublemakers”!!!! 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Julien, who is the middle son of Stephan and Beatrice, has been in the food industry for over 12 years. He has worked under numerous chefs both in France and America including Rich Moonen and Joel Robuchon. In 2011, Julien joined the Michelin-starred restaurant Guy Savoy at the Caesars Palace as Chef de Parti and worked himself up to Executive Chef in 2016. After 10 years in Las Vegas, Julien and his wife decided it was time for a change and wanted to start their own “adventure” in Paso Robles. The style behind “Les Petites Canailles” is a French Bistro with a modern, Central Coast feel. At this time there’s not much more we can tell you, but rest assured, you will be the first to know when there is!!



## Experiment on a new set of corks – ArdeaSeal Closures

Maybe some of you will have the opportunity to open some bottles of our 2018 Rosé or some bottles of our 2017 Estate Cuvée that have been corked with a new, revolutionary, synthetic cork called ArdeaSeal. As of now, I decided to only do it on a small quantity of bottles... For example, on the Rosé only 2,000 bottles of the 10,000 bottles received this special cork and only 1,000 of the Estate Cuvée. The idea behind these corks, even though I am very conservative when it comes to my wines, is that I always stay open to the new “technology” that keeps emerging in our industry. Cork is a very small thing, yet, very important because it guarantees the characteristics of the wine for the future. When I met the supplier and they spoke about their new approach on “top, high end, surgery, food grade material etc” for this new cork, they convinced me to try it. Why? Because if its not b\*\*ls\*\*t (pardon my French 🍷) this is what it can bring to the table:



- ↳ No corked wine as the shield that is the only component in contact with the wine, is made from a chemically neutral polymer, used in cardiovascular protheses
- ↳ Micro oxygenation that is less than a cork but more than a screwcap
- ↳ Better preservation and aging potential
- ↳ On the long-term vision, you can expect from this new synthetic cork, consistency where the quality will always be the same and where there will not be any variation.

Lastly, the end result is “wine, nothing but wine”....

To better understand the cork, here is the breakdown:

### The closure and its three components

#### ↳ The Chassis

The chassis is the core, the structural component of ArdeaSeal closure. It is a stiff support and containment element realized in high rigidity technopolymer through injection molding process. It is protected by international patents.

Thanks to its design, it facilitates the insertion of the cork-screw, which is guided

#### ↳ The Shield

The only component that comes in contact with the wine, designed ad hoc to allow the use of the best available technopolymer in terms of absence of chemical interactions.

This component is produced through injection molding process.

#### ↳ The Body

The body is the soft part which, thanks to the interference with the internal surface of the bottle neck, will guarantee with regularity and uniformity the sealing properties of the closure.

The material used is a thermoplastic elastomer and the process technology is injection overmolding assisted by foaming realized through specific agents.



## Block Map and Topography – Lets speak about the philosophy...



1. Syrah 470 (2004)
2. Syrah 470 (2004)
3. Cabernet Sauvignon 337 (1998)
4. Petit Verdot (1998)
5. Petit Verdot (1998)
6. Cabernet Sauvignon 337(2004)
7. Grenache (2004)
8. Grenache 362 (2008)
9. Syrah 1 (1998/2003)
10. Syrah Massale Selection (2018)
11. Syrah 99 (1999)
12. Syrah 01 (1999)
13. Syrah Estrella (1999)
14. Cabernet Sauvignon 15 (1999)
15. Syrah 1 (1998)
16. Syrah 1 (1998)
17. Syrah 1 (2005)
18. Graciano (2011)
19. Mourvedre Ax369 (2000)
20. Mourvedre Ax369 (2005)
21. Mourvedre Ax369 (2003)
22. Mourvedre Ax369 (2000)
23. Cabernet Sauvignon 337 (2000)
24. Petit Verdot 1058 (2004)
- 25 & 26. Cabernet Sauvignon 337 (2004)
- 27, 28 & 29. Syrah 7 (2004)
30. Viognier Ax642 (2000/2005)
31. Petit Verdot 02/400 (2001/2004)
32. Mourvedre Ax369 (2003)
33. Roussanne 468 (2016)
34. Graciano (2011)
35. Syrah 470 (2004)
36. Graciano (2011)
37. Syrah 877 (2000)
38. Cabernet Sauvignon 337 (2004)
39. Cabernet Sauvignon 337 (2004)
40. Syrah 877 (2016)
41. Grenache Blanc 141 (2008)
42. Grenache: own root (2018)

From the birth of L'Aventure vineyard in 1998 to the end of the main plantation of the domain in 2004, my philosophy has always been about taking advantage of the diversity of this site. When I say diversity, I mean face slope exposure, elevation, soil type, and micro climate. Yes, you have a micro climate even in a micro spot like L'Aventure ☺. Being in California, where the climate is kind of perfect, or at least very helpful, for the grower that I am, allowed me more freedom than anywhere else, to compose like a melody ☺ my plantation. Take the example of the Cabernet Sauvignon, and again because we are in California and not in Bordeaux, I was able to plant some Cabernet on some South and West face slopes (Block 5) where I knew I would produce some fruit that would make big, rich, ripe, "California" style Cabernet. But, voluntarily, I also planted some Cabernet Sauvignon on some East and even North (something that I would not have been able to do in Bordeaux) facing slopes (Block 3) meaning less hot, later maturation, where the style of maturity is different and therefore you get some still ripe Cabernet but less on the power and more on the elegance. At the end, my philosophy, even though some other vigneron might not agree, is that by having all those different expressions and characteristics for the same grape will make a wine that will be more complex and refined. That is the first step and maybe the most important of my deep feeling to make wine. The second step, which confirms the first, is then doing all the blends I do with all the different type of varieties. I invite you to look at our block map, which I am very proud of as it shows what I just explained above. You can see that I have taken advantage of my diversity to plan the same varieties all over my vineyard. Today, since almost all my blocks of the same varieties are getting "blended together", I cannot say that specific blocks are designated to my Estate Cuvée or Côte à Côte or Optimus. With that said, when I decided to create the Chloé and For Her (and now Inspiration), due to the specificity of the fruit, it inspired me to be designate certain parcels just for those cuvées. If you are attentive, it is written on the back label ☺.

## Q&A With Stephan

**Q:** If you are not drinking Paso, what are you drinking?

**SA:** I love a good Cab or Bordeaux blend from everywhere in the New World: Argentina, Chile, sometimes Bordeaux! Napa too... but unfortunately they are too expensive and I don't drink them often. So, more and more, and mostly I drink French Rhone wine mainly Château Neuf du Pape, sometime North Rhône Valley, but they have to from the best producer. If not it's kind of just ripe enough for my taste. Also, a lot of South Rhône like Gigondas, Bandol, and those beautiful wines produced in Languedoc Rousillon. Lastly, when I have the opportunity, I like to drink some top Priorat.

**Q:** To this day, what is the best dish that was paired with one of your wines?

**SA:** My best memory is from a long time ago... a beef filet with a not too heavy wine sauce and some salsify on the side paired with my Optimus.