

Domaine des Bernardins

France - Rhone Valley

Domaine des Bernardins is a fifth-generation family-owned estate on the edge of the tiny village of Beaumes de Venise. The owners are Elisabeth Hall (the granddaughter of Louis Castaud) and her husband Andrew Hall.

Winemaking began in the early 19th century at Domaine des Bernardins. The property was previously owned by Bernardin monks before being transformed into a wine estate. Mr. Louis Castaud was concerned about the village's traditional production methods disappearing, and after 10 years of hard work, he achieved appellation status for Muscat de Beaumes de Venise in 1945 (for the 1943 vintage). Today, his daughter Renée Castaud is still active in day-to-day life at the estate, in addition to granddaughter & owner Elisabeth and husband Andrew, and their son Romain. The family still has one bottle of 1847 Muscat that demonstrates just how old it is.

The area has been populated since the time of the cave dwelling people (the name "Beaumes" means caves) who came from the town of Venise near Carpentras. Like many of this region's villages, Beaumes de Venise has been producing wine since Roman times, however it is unique in its production of 'vin doux ' (sweet fortified wine). Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) wrote: "Muscat has been grown for a long time in Balme and makes wonderful wine." Since then the story of Muscat de Beaumes continued to be told, and even supplied Pope Clement V in Avignon and then the entire kingdom's nobility, including Henry IV.

The vineyards consist of 22 hectares (54.34 acres) in total, with 15 hectares of Muscat (which yields 30 hl/ha) and 7 hectares of red grapes (Syrah and Cinsault) for Côtes du Rhône Rouge production. The viticulture is traditional - pruning, de-budding, trellising, leaf removal and picking are done by hand, the soil is prepared by good old-fashioned ploughing, and organic compost is made from grape marc (the discarded stalks and skins). Domaine des Bernardins follows standards for sustainable agriculture.

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Muscat petits grains,

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