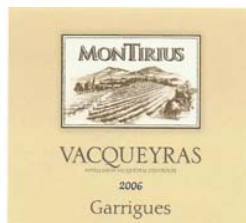


Montirius, Vacqueyras



Eric and Christine Saurel began bottling wine under the Montirius label with the 1996 vintage (the name is a contraction of their childrens' names: Manon, Justine, and Marius). Eric is the fifth generation to assume the mantle of *vigneron* in the Saurel family. His grandfather was instrumental in the development of the Vacqueyras co-op after WWI and the Saurels remained important members until 2002, when Eric and Christine pulled out. This resulted in protracted litigation—the loss of the Saurel's crop was a financial blow the co-op fought hard to avoid—but finally in 2008 the court ruled in favor of the Saurels.

During the summer of 2002, the family and its contractor worked like crazy to build a state of the art cellar next to the family house. They live on the Plateau des Garrigues between Vacqueyras and Sarrians, next to their Le Clos vineyard on an edge of the plateau. This edge falls steeply down to low-lying *vins de pays* vineyards, and on this hillside they put in a three-level gravity operated cellar. The top level is for receiving the grapes and crushing them; the lower two levels house the vast concrete tanks in which the wine is made and aged. A water reclamation system was built using sand, soil, and various plants for purifying all water used in the winery's operations (and hats off to the Saurels for taking this step, given the enormous amount of water used in wine production worldwide that ends up in municipal sewage systems)..

The Montirius vineyards have been organic since 1990 and certified biodynamic since 1999. The Saurels make the following wines with a decided emphasis on purity--they are made entirely in large cement vats without any wood influences.

- *Cadet*: This is a vin de pays de Vaucluse made with Grenache, Syrah, Carignan, and Merlot from just over 12 acres of vines growing at the feet of the Plateau des Garrigues. Production averages 2,500 cases.
- *Sérine*: A Côtes du Rhône that comes from a special 3.7 acre vineyard of the old, small-berried Syrah known as Serine (a natural *sélection massale* rather than a modern clone). Montirius leased this vineyard beginning in 2007. The average age of vines is around 45-years-old and now the vineyard is undergoing biodynamic conversion.
- *Côtes du Rhône*: This is a *négociant* wine that the Saurels buy from a fellow biodynamic grower who has quite a reputation in his own right. Love to tell you his name, but we've been threatened with water-boarding if word ever got out. The blend is based on Grenache, with supporting roles played by Syrah and Mourvèdre.
- *Vacqueyras Garrigues*: Formerly labeled simply Vacqueyras, this is a blend of roughly 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah from vineyards growing on the Plateau des Garrigues. This plateau is a large glacial deposit much like the Châteauneuf deposit but further from the Rhône River (so with much smaller *galets*, or stones) that curves around the village from the northwest to south. In addition, seven terraced vineyards stepping down the south flank of the Dentelles at the AC border for Gigondas provide fruit for this wine. Some parcels date back to 1925 and the overall average age is approaching 50 years old. This wine is classic Vacqueyras, sporting a bold Provençal nose and a rich spicy middle, and finishing with deliciously ripe tannins. Production averages 6,500 cases.
- *Vacqueyras Le Clos*: Le Clos comes from a special 21-acre vineyard surrounded by forest and planted to 50% Syrah and 50% Grenache. Its soil contains a significant amount of mormorillonite clay, prized in vineyards for its density (Petrus owes much of its fame to this clay). The wine is deep, dark, dense and age-worthy. Production averages 2,500 cases.

- *Gigondas Terres des Aînés*: Formerly labeled simply Gigondas, the grapes for this wine come from three parcels. Two are in the mid-slope zone of the AC: one adjacent to Les Pallières, north of the village; the other immediately south of the Dentelles just northeast of Vacqueyras (the Gigondas plantation is commonly believed to cover much of the Dentelle's western flank, but it also spans to the southern flank near Vacqueyras as well as to the eastern flank near Beaumes de Venise and points north). The third parcel grows on the lower western slope. Roughly three quarters of all of these vines date from 1925—hence the name *Terres des Aînés*, or soil of our elders—and the vineyard breakdown for each parcel is 80% Grenache and an unusually high 20% Mourvèdre, giving terrific structure and depth to this wine. Production averages 6,250 cases.

- *Gigondas Confidentiel*: This comes from a micro *terroir* of 2.5 acres within the 25-acre Montirius vineyard growing on Gigondas' lower western slope. Traditionally, the harvesters came at this vineyard from the south; in 2004, they came at it from the north and the juice of this small parcel filled one vat that from day one stood apart from the other Gigondas vats. Thus was *Confidentiel* born, and subsequent trials confirmed the impression that this not only stood alone, but improved the *Terres de Aînés* wine by being kept separate. *Terres des Aînés* is classic Gigondas in its chiseled structure; *Confidentiel* is much closer to Châteauneuf in its power and breadth. Production averages 400 cases.