

MARIE ET PIERRE BÉNETIÈRE

CONDRIEU 'LE RIOLLEMENT'

ORIGIN

Condrieu, Northern Rhône,
France

WINE TYPE & VARIETIES

Still dry white, Viognier

VINEYARD

0,2 ha Lieu-dit 'Le Riollment' in
the heart of the appellation

SOIL

Acid, loose granite,
some sand and schist

AGE OF VINES

Planted 1991-1994

VITICULTURE

Organic without certification

VINIFICATION

Manual harvest, whole bunch
pressing, indigenous yeast,
fermented in 1-5 year 400 L oak
cask at 22-23°C, lees stirred 3
months/until Christmas,
raised 12-15 months,
malo completed.
No fining. No filtering.

It is hard to do Marie and Pierre Bénétière's story justice with just words. It is a wondrous and humbling journey with immense amounts of hard work. Pierre is crazy in all the best ways – obsessed with his work, dedication personified and hard-core traditionalist to the likings of Gentaz-Dervieux, Trollat, Allemand and Verset. Pierre grew up with wine, his family was wine merchants in Condrieu but never produced any themselves. As the story tells it Pierre fell in love with wine and the dream to make it, just like the classic of the grandmasters in the region was created.

Pierre set out on his mission in the late 1980s, after studies in oenology and working at Domaine Georges Vernay, when he bought 1,5 hectares of overgrown land in the "Le Tinal"-valley in Condrieu AOP, just above Château Grillet. It took him 4 years to clear the slopes, restore them and once again making them suitable vineyards and plant vines of Viognier – this happened 1990. 4 years later he planted 0,2 hectares more in the lieu-dit "Le Riollment" further into the Tinal Valley where you find more sandy schist soils rather than granite. These both places have impressive, steep, terraced vineyards. During the same years 1 hectare of Syrah was planted in Côte-Rôtie. Two red wines come out of here, 1) "Cordeloux" which comes from the granitic site "Corps de Loup", and 2) "Dolium", made only the best years from a small parcel on the iron-rich schist-covered Côte Brune right in the centre of Guigal's praised "La Turquie". Only 2 barrels come out of here, one of which is blended with the Cordeloux.

Since Pierre set all the vines in the ground himself he has a very close bond to the land, hence respecting it through organic farming was a given – and given the estates tiny size he does not bother with official certifications. The steep nature of the vineyards inhibits all kinds of mechanical work – everything is done manually, harvest included.

Vinification is as old school as it gets. For Côte-Rôtie: no destemming, native yeast-fermentation, mostly submerged cap (sometimes remontage). Co-ferments with around 5 % Viognier. Wines age in oak, of which only 15 % is new. The reason for that is solely because Pierre does not trust second hand barrels (although he made an exception when he



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bought old barrels from DRC and Liger Belair to age his Dolium). Racking is avoided and wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Condrieu: only oak is used for fermentation, 400 litre-barrels of which 11 % are new, native yeast carries it through, wines then spend a year on the lees and go into bottle unfinned and unfiltered,

The first years for Bénétière was a period of extreme labour and economical challenge. This mission, or avocation, was of course made possible by Pierre's patient wife Marie. Not long ago are the days when people around Pierre laughed at him, saying it was an impossible task he set out to complete. 'De fick så de teg', as we would say in Swedish. Bénétière is today a hallmark of traditional northern Rhône – a unicorn legend and humble human.