



LA PÈIRA

EN DAMAISELA



Dear Reader

A New Arrival

At La Pèira we have a rather orderly way of working on the whole.

We make three reds much in Bordelais mode: a Grand Vin (**La Pèira**), a second (**Las Flors de la Pèira**), and a third (**Obriers de la Pèira**). We like it. It's simple, clear, easy to understand, and allows for the purchase of wines for different occasions.

Of course, there are times when we taste the Syrah from the Bois de Pauliau and dream about bottling it alone. Or a great Cinsault with intensity yet a pinot-like delicacy and think, "wouldn't it be good". But there has to be limits.

Thus, when in 2008, various visitors tasted our Bois de Pauliau Mourvèdre 2007 and asked if we had considered bottling it as a separate wine, they looked quite crestfallen when the response in unison came (with all the outward over-forcefulness of those who inwardly resist temptation): "No."

Nor did we consider it when Andrew Jefford visited La Pèira in 2008 and wrote of the 2007 Mourvèdre, *"I'm not sure I've ever tasted better Mourvèdre; certainly not since I was last in Bandol"*.

Or when David Schildknecht wrote in 2009 in the Wine Advocate of the same: *"what Mourvèdre it is! Harvested only in late October, that component of this wine displayed the variety's archetypal chocolate, bay laurel, and raw meat."*

The Mourvèdre was destined for the La Pèira blend.

Yet the best-laid schemes of mice (or men) often come undone...

When blending the final La Pèira 2007 it became clear the Mourvèdre got a bit lost in the blend, and for some inexplicable reason did not contribute. Our hand was forced. It would have been negligent not to bottle it.

The Wine

And so - almost of its own volition - the **Matissat** cuvée came into being: a wine comprised of 100% Mourvèdre - topped up with Mourvèdre over the 18-month élevage period - from the Bois de Pauliau vineyard.

With all the giddy enthusiasm of a neophyte rule breaker, we were thrilled.

It was a wonderful expression of the Mourvèdre cépage, of the single 'Pauliau' plot where it was grown, and, of course, of the climate of the Terrasses du Larzac (*Bettane and Desseauve's French appellation of the year in 2011*).

The **Bois de Pauliau** is also where the La Pèira is grown, and is a bit of an anomaly in our region of the south of France. It has been an AOC since 1948, as the most northerly zone of the white Clairette - so for just over half a century. It received its second AOC Terrasses du Larzac designation (for reds) in 2004. Just nearby, still in the Clairette AOC again, *France's oldest winery (10AD) was discovered* (link: Decanter July 2007), and Clairette itself has been produced at least since 77-79 AD when Pliny the Elder named the whites of Baeterrae (Beziers) along with the resinous reds of Vienne as the only two wines of exception from what is now France.

It would not be an overstatement to say we have been pleasantly surprised with the quality of the Syrah and Grenache produced in the Bois de Pauliau in each vintage to date - and of the Mourvèdre, especially from 2007 - and would be happy to bottle any of them individually.

Also - harvested in the October mists, a time of chilled mornings, cold nights, and vine leaves turning to autumnal ruby, blood red, and rust, it's about as close we'll come at La Pèira to making a Nebbiolo. And Mourvèdre could be considered France's dark cousin to Italy's great Nebbiolo. It's late-ripening, tannic, with its own earthy inimitable character. Mourvèdre also has an extraordinary ability to age and unfold and show more with time. Andrew Jefford's description the cépage is characteristically apt: *"It reminds me of midnight: dark, quiet, impenetrable, enigmatic....but, at its best, full of strange magic."*

- What's more it was a complete and complex wine in itself.

There are, in truth, only a handful of pure Mourvèdre wines grown in France.

Blend or Pure

For while Mourvèdre may be synonymous with Bandol, or the Rhone, the view in its classic heartland is that pure Mourvèdre is a non-starter, and requires the support of other cépages in a blend.

This is explained in Richard James excellent overview *Understanding Mourvèdre* (Blend or Pure?) where Daniel Ravier's (of Bandol's **Domaine Tempier**) observes: "The tradition has always been to blend. You should be suspicious of 100 percent Mourvèdre cuvées, which can be simplistic". The piece goes on: "Alain Pascal of Gros Noré aims for 'as much Mourvèdre as possible,' usually at least 75 percent. 'I'm not convinced about 100 percent: you have Mourvèdre for extract and richness, but old Grenache brings fruit and Cinsault can add finesse.' Beaucastel's 'Homage' cuvée has around 60 percent, the latest being 2003 following a run of good vintages from 1998 to 2001."

But, in 2009, we had the proof in our glass. Like a Nebbiolo grown in Barolo or Barbaresco, or a Pinot Noir grown in Burgundy, here was a pure Mourvèdre that was valid on its own singular terms.

After bottling the 2007 we did not know if this would be a one-off, or a wine that could be made only in certain vintages. The 2008 was a cooler vintage for the region, but after a year or more in barrique that vintage began to emerge, as beautifully reserved and restrained as the 2007 was round and generous. 2009 and 2010 were wonderful vintages in the Terrasses du Larzac, and we have bottled the 2009. These subsequent vintages will be released in the near future.

The Release

Five harvests later - after that of **Matissat 2007**, we intend to release the first vintage.

As this is a completely separate wine from the LA PÈIRA estate wines, and made in such limited amounts, we have decided to offer it to those who have a real fondness for Mourvèdre, and who would wish to explore a case (or most probably a half case) over a decade or two - or perhaps more.

The production is minuscule. We have 43 half-cases of the 2007 - though a little more than double that in 2008 and 2009.

We also intend to do something special with the packaging. Life's too short to always do the same thing.

We plan to offer the **Matissat 2007** from the first of November, to be shipped shortly afterwards.

For updates on the final details of this exciting release drop us a line - to Jérémie Depierre or Rob Dougan at: Matissat@gmail.com

Many thanks for reading, and thank you for taking an interest in our work in the Terrasses du Larzac.

Kind regards,

Rob Dougan - La Pèira.