

*The benchmark Saint Joseph domaine!* John Livingstone-Learmonth

**Producer Information:** Brothers Pierre and Jean Gonon work their 9 hectares of vines situated around Mauves, Tournon and St Jean de Muzols, birthplace of the appellation St Joseph. The family name is embedded into the history of this sector and can be found throughout the record books as one turns back the pages to learn of the important *lieu-dit* (named parcels) of the villages and the names of those who farmed them. They have continued to develop their small 'domaine' by planting new vines on the hillsides of Tournon and acquiring older vines in St Jean de Muzols.

The *massale* selection vines average 35 years and are densely planted. The soils are fertilized only with their own composts and plowed for aeration. Only natural treatments are used in the vineyard, including copper, sulphur and plant extracts. Yield are kept very low by short pruning and green harvesting in July, resulting in yields of 30 hl/ha for the reds and 38 hl/ha for the whites. Grapes are harvested only by hand and fermentation takes place only in the presence of indigenous yeasts.

Uninterested in the current trend toward single vineyard bottlings at the expense of the "entry level" cuvées, the Gonon brothers uphold the best virtues of the appellation system and draw from all of their historic parcels, each lending a distinct character, to craft only a single white and a single red Saint Joseph cuvée.

## Saint Joseph 2006

**Terroir:** 5.5 hectares of vines situated around the original St. Joseph villages of Mauves, Tournon and St. Jean de Muzols. The individual parcels, *Les Oliviers, Aubert, Montagnon, Martinot, Côtes des Rivoires and Croix de Peygros*, range in altitude, the highest at 308 m, and soil composition, but all with varying percentages of poor, crumbly to sandy granitic base.

**Average age of vines:** Massale selection, 35 years and planted to density of between 6,000 and 9,000 vines per hectare.

**Characteristics of the Vintage:** The 2006 growing season in the Northern Rhone, with its mix of warm and cool weather scattered throughout the spring and summer months, can only be considered, by most measures, to have been a classic vintage producing classic wines. As a result, the wines from this vintage might not possess the sheer density of the renowned 2005 vintage, but at the same time they do not lack for concentration, have a charming fresh fruit profile, lovely acidity with more relaxed tannins and should be far more approachable at an earlier stage in their respective evolutions than was the case for the wines from 2005.

**Tasting Notes:** The 2006 Saint Joseph rouge is more approachable in its youth than the previous vintage. A basket of black fruits, prunes and olive flavors intermingle in the creation of a wild, gamey and savory bouquet. Wonderful concentration of fruits, structure and finely integrated tannins will clearly make this a charmer in its youth but also, like all the vintages from this domaine, something far more intriguing after some years in the cellar.

**Grape Varieties:** 100 % Syrah

**Harvest:** All harvesting done by hand in small trays each with a 7.5 Kg capacity.

**Vinification:** All of the grapes are vinified in large, open top, wood fermenters, using partially de-stemmed grapes. Only indigenously occurring yeasts are used. In its early stages of fermentation and maceration, regular attention is given to the 'remontages' and 'pigeages' repeated as needed daily, for two to three weeks.

**Elevage:** Following the primary fermentation, the wine is transferred to oak barrels, *barriques, demi-muids*, and large casks, *foudres*, ranging in age from 3 to 15 years, where it stays for 14-16 months. During this time it is racked three times, and fined using egg whites before being bottled without additional filtration.

**Production:** 23 000 bottles / 1916 cases

