



Domaine Serre Besson

Region: Rhône

Village: Vinsobres

Appellation: 4 ha Vinsobres

Growers: Victor Taylor and Xavier Nyssen

Website: <https://serre-besson.com/>

The hilltop village of Vinsobres is situated between the Pré-Alpes and Mont Ventoux in the northeastern corner of the Côtes du Rhône “méridionale”. After having been classified as Côtes du Rhône Villages, Vinsobres was elevated to “Cru” status in 2006, becoming the first in the Drôme department. The majority of Vinsobres’ vineyards were planted as a result of the devastating frost of 1956 which wiped out the village’s olive groves. The slopes were re-planted with vines giving the appellation a high percentage of old vines. The vineyards range from 200 to 500 meters in elevation and Vinsobres’ unique terroir is considered by many to be the finest for Syrah in the southern Rhone.

Victor Taylor is an American wine professional who somehow wound up in the remote town of Nyons in the Drôme department (had to be either a witness protection program or an addiction to olive oil). In 2011, not far from Nyons, he stumbled upon some old vines sloping away from the Vinsobres plateau with a breathtaking view of Mont Ventoux and a “for sale” sign. Let us just say that after 5 years of relentless effort he and his partner, Xavier Nyssen produced their first vintage in 2016.

The 10 hectare domain lies at an altitude of 450 meters in the “lieu dit” called “Les Côtes”. The land is split evenly between vineyards and forest. The Serre Besson vineyard slopes down from the forested mountain crest with the Syrah planted at the highest elevation and the other varieties continuing down the slope. Within the 5 hectares of vineyards, there are 11 parcels, one hectare of which was planted in 1961 with mixed rows of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre. The vineyard’s soils are a mix of clay, limestone and river stones rich in calcite. Victor and Xavier began farming organically in 2016 and obtained certification in 2019.

That same year they built a small winery into the side of the mountain allowing them to use gravity rather than pumps to move their crushed grapes into the fermentation tanks. They harvest by hand and manually sort all of the grape bunches that enter the cellar.

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Vinsobres

The Vinsobres blend changes according to the vintage, but is typically 50% Grenache, 35% Syrah, and 15% mixed Cinsault, Mourvedre, and Carignan. Reflecting the different varieties and parcels, four lots of wine are fermented separately, including the co-planted old vines which are harvested together and give this lot an interesting mix of ripeness and alcohol level. Victor and Xavier are risk averse and fermentation with indigenous yeast if conditions permit. All grape bunches are de-stemmed before being fed into cement tanks with a certain proportion of the stems layered back in with the grapes. Blending of the lots is done the following spring. The wine is then matured partially in cement tanks and partially in 400L oak ovals.



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Côtes du Rhône Rosé de Macération

The Serre Besson Rosé is a blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Viognier. The Viognier is picked two weeks before the red varieties and is left to macerate on the skins for two days before pressing and fermentation in stainless steel. The Grenache is pressed directly and the juice is fed into a cement vat for fermentation. The Syrah is de-stemmed before the grapes are fed into a cement vat for a brief maceration. The juice is then drawn from the tank and put into another cement vat for fermentation. After fermentation, the three grapes are blended and aged in barrels for 4-6 months before bottling.

