

Domaine Gauby – Notes Parker

Gerard Gauby (increasingly assisted by his son Lionel) continues – restlessly, experimentally, but with obvious focus – to pursue his rigorous biodynamic viticultural regimen as well as his stylistic ideals of elegance, refinement, distinctive minerality, and moderate alcohol, none of which – he demonstrates – are incompatible with ripe flavors and sheer density. (One stunningly floral and fruit-filled lot of 2008 Grenache destined for Muntada was harvested at a record-low 13.3% alcohol.) The key quality factor in stony, sun-drenched Roussillon, Gauby opines, is density of root structure sufficient to support steady vine metabolism, because shut-down or stop-start maturation under stress is what ultimately causes tannins to harden and pH and sugars to rise independently of maturation. Reds here from the last five vintages are more exciting than ever, if stylistically distinct from their more obviously robust and alcoholically-rich predecessors. Gauby has been the regional leader in white wines as well, which seem especially to benefit from the high-elevation and mixture of schistic and chalky soils around the town of Calc. A recently-acquired parcel of Grenache Gris vines planted in 1947 that he is “restoring” represents, says Gauby, the last such acreage available in his neighborhood. Propagation of cuttings will take a long time to mature to the point where they bear outstanding fruit, and he has enough old vines to keep him entirely busy and supplied. Apropos white grapes and young vines, Gauby is inter-planting Malvoisie with some of his red vines to achieve an effect similar to that conferred by the occasional blanc and gris vines that are a feature of Roussillon’s oldest remaining stands of Carignan and Grenache. Incidentally, there is an utterly alluring Gauby 2004 vendange tardive still in barrel, subtly oxidizing.

2007 les Calcinaires Rouge

RATING: 90 points

A blend of mainly Syrah with Mourvedre, Grenache Noir and Carignan. Deep purple colour. Very pretty, vibrant primary fruit nose: dark cherry, blackberry/blueberry, star anise, cassia and cumin. Medium bodied with concentrated dark berry and spice flavours enlivened by medium to high acidity. Medium+ level of approachable tannins. Great balance with a long peppery finish. Drink now to 2015. Tasted February 2009.

Gauby’s 2007 Cotes du Roussillon Villages Les Calcinaires – incorporating Grenache, Syrah, Carignan, and Mourvedre, and vinified in a mixture of tank and older fuders – is hugely aromatic, with blackberry and black currant, tar, roasted game, and licorice all continuing onto a juicy, bright palate, spare in texture and suggesting a saturation of crushed stone and pencil lead. This is as clear an expression of distinctively Roussillon-typical black grape character as you would want, and will drink well for at least 3-4 years.

2007 Vieilles Vignes Rouge

RATING: (94-95) points

Assembled into a foudre when I tasted it, the Gauby 2007 Cotes du Roussillon Villages Vieilles Vignes – relatively equally divided among Carignan, Grenache, and Syrah with a smaller amount of Mourvedre, and exposed to around 20% new wood – smells of thyme, rosemary, fennel, and tar, along with ripe black fruits. With a bitter edge to its almost severe palate concentration of cassis, blackberry, juniper berry, resinous herbs, licorice, and tar, this strikingly dense, palate-staining cuvee exhibits a juiciness of fresh fruits and exuberance, as well as a refinement of tannins, that distinguish all of the best recent Gauby wines, and that keep it from austerity. Nor – amid a virtual torrent of finishing fruit – is a diversity of impressions missing that, while hard-to-describe, can only be categorized as mineral. I would anticipate being rewarded by bottles of this for 12-15 years.

2007 la Muntada

RATING: (97-98) points

Gauby's 2007 Cotes du Roussillon Villages Muntada – from 100 year-old, pre-phylloxera Carignan vines and 60-80 year old Grenache, plus a bit of Syrah, and tasted assembled from barrel – is almost dizzying in its aromatic diversity and strength. Shrubby herbs, licorice, tar, cedar, game, daffodil and marigold floral notes lead into a palate that improbably combines sheer viscosity and riveting intensity with invigorating brightness of fresh fruit and saline, crystalline, shimmering minerality. From its deep carnal, stony depth, through its multitude of herbs and berries, to the distillate-like intensity of its floral, salt-tinged top notes, this profound and exuberant wine is brilliantly scored for full orchestra and resonates long after swallowing. This opus – **whose mysterious, savage beauty and luminosity brought to mind La Tache** – will not be bottled until summer, but is sure to go down as one of Gauby's greatest, and be worth following for at least the better part of two decades.

2007 Calcinaires Blanc

RATING: 91 points

Gauby's 2007 Cotes du Roussillon Blanc Les Calcinaires – from Muscat., Chardonnay, Macabeu, and Grenache Gris, vinified in tank and older barrel – smells of pineapple, lime, mint, and pistachio. Silken and subtly oily in texture, yet bright and refreshing, its mouthful of ripe Persian melon and pineapple is tinged with honey, mint, citrus zest, pistachio, and white pepper, leading to a luscious finish with chalky underlying suggestions. While delightful now and intended for early drinking, it is quite capable of remaining interesting for at least another 3-4 years.

2007 Vieilles Vignes Blanc

RATING: 94 points

Composed primarily of Macabeu and the two Grenaches, Gauby's 2007 Vieilles Vignes Blanc offers mint, hyacinth, iris, and honeydew melon aromas that deliver on their promise of luscious succulence, along with creamy texture; a starching of chalk and salt; and refreshing, ripe acidity. Flowers, citrus zest, and pronounced minerality are accompanied every step of the long finish by mouth-watering fruit. Especially easy to enjoy now, this bell-clear rendition of Vieilles Vignes white will surely lose some of its youthful exuberance and lusciousness within a year or two but offer more than compensatory complexity – and evolution of its already intriguing florality and minerality – over the subsequent 5-7 years. The 2002 is gem-like today.

2007 Coume Gineste

RATING: (93-94+) points

Tasted from a large Austrian cask, Gauby's 2007 Coume Gineste – composed of slightly more Grenache Blanc than –Gris – is saline and citric, bright and refreshing from its nose to a long tail as incandescent as that of a skink or (four-legged) Smaragd. The combination of palpable extract, shimmering minerality, and razor-sharp clarity is remarkable, although right now what we have is at best 30% satisfaction and 70% fascination and potential. "It's just a baby, after all," says Gauby. Maybe, but it already has a full set of teeth! Get on line, though, because this is going to be a show-stopper in a few years – even in the short term it may reveal a lot more nuance – and is likely to reward 12-15 years' cellaring.