

Domaine Labranche Laffont

Madiran



Christine Dupuy has brought a high level of quality to this property whose terroirs are not all easy to work. From an exemplary viticulture, she produces plump, consistent wines, very "terroir," with a rare pearl: a très vieilles vignes cuvée from a parcel of largely century-old vines whose roots produce a nectar with a very velvety texture.

--Bettane & Desseauve, Guide des Vins 2016

France's Southwest region of Madiran has made wine since Gallo-Roman times, and the wine was noted by the court of Edward the Black Prince of Aquitaine in the 14th century.

Tannat's power and Madiran's microclimate combine to make one of France's truly big wines (it's worth noting that Irouléguay, the other Tannat appellation, is higher in the Pyrenean chain where the cooler, wetter weather makes for a more acid and angular rendition of wine).

Madiran's viticulture fell into steep decline with phylloxera and continued to fall during the long, dreary aftermath. In 1953, plantings of Tannat here were down to six hectares, or so the appellation records claim. Fortunately, Madiran (unlike Cahors), managed to escape the frost of 1956. Its revival began in the 1970s. Today, Madiran has some 1,300 hectares (3,212 acres) of vines of various stripes, with the majority in Tannat.

Christine Dupuy took over her family's six-hectare (15 acres) wine estate in 1992 when her father died unexpectedly. She was 23 at the time and the estate had been in the family since the French Revolution. By chance she had just finished her degree in enology, but she had little practical experience. So she went to neighboring Château d'Aydie, Domaine Capmartin, and Domaine La Chapelle Lenclos, all of whom were among the most prestigious domains in the appellation at the time. During that first year they helped this precocious young *vigneronne* get off on the right foot.

Christine has traveled well since, and today she farms 20.50 hectares (50.65 acres) of vines, all hand-harvested and tended organically. Of those, 17.5 hectares (43 acres) are devoted to red varieties and the rest to dry and sweet whites. Insofar as she works to refine Tannat's inherently tannic grip, her red wines are modern in style, but she loses none of the textural density that made the grape famous. Her reds are rich, ripe, and round—and surprisingly elegant for wines of such scale. If you want soft sweet red fruit, look elsewhere; but if it's chewy deep dark density that you seek, go no further! I'll add one more thing: if you are lucky enough to remember or know really good, old school Bordeaux, and are tired of the overworked and over-oaked concoctions coming out of so much of Bordeaux today, try Christine's wine. It will renew your faith.

Christine received certification for organic farming in 2014. She is a member of a group of organic growers in the Southwest known as A Bisto de Nas, www.abistodenas.com, and she is increasingly interested in biodynamic methods and in being as non-interventionist as possible.

Video (in French) of Christine speaking about her parcel of pre-phylloxera vines:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B77TGzvLt0g>