

MATISSAT

LA PEIRA

*"Make no mistake about it,
this is a very special wine
made on a very special estate."*

Jancis Robinson

Vintages 2007-2011

PREAMBLE

Never ones to wish to distract from the domaine's La Pèira wines ([for the latest reviews as of Oct 2012 click here](#)), we nevertheless found ourselves in 2007, harvesting Mourvèdre of excellent quality, that when it came to blending, could not find its place alongside the Syrah and Grenache in the La Pèira blend and so was bottled alone. This practice has continued, and each year for the last six years we have harvested a small plot of Mourvèdre that makes up the entirety of this wine - Matissat. The wine is grown few steps away from where it is vinified - on the same plot as the Syrah and Grenache of La Pèira on the Bois de Pauliau.

The Bois de Pauliau 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 for red wines, the Terrasses du Larzac designation ([Bettane and Desseauve's French appellation of the year in 2011](#)) 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 sole two wines of exception from what is now France.

Harvested in the October mists, a time of chilled mornings, cold nights, and vine leaves turning to autumnal ruby, blood red, and rust, there is something special both about this time of year, and this grape variety to us. Late-ripening, tannic, and with its own earthy inimitable character, Mourvèdre also has an extraordinary ability to age and to unfold and show more with time. Andrew Jefford's description of the cépage is interesting: "**It reminds me of midnight: dark, quiet, impenetrable, enigmatic....but, at its best, full of strange magic.**"

Given growing areas such as Bandol come to mind when thinking of Mourvèdre, or certain wines such as the Beaucastel's well-known 'Homage', it's a surprise to learn that these noted examples are mostly blends. The Beaucastel is 60 percent, and top Bandol estates such as Tempier advising against bottling pure Mourvèdre.

After repeated tastings - and having held off releasing the wine for a while (7 years), we started to feel we had the proof in our glass. And that like a Nebbiolo grown in Barolo or Barbaresco, or a Pinot Noir grown in Burgundy, here was a pure Mourvèdre that was complete, complex, and valid on its own singular terms. It's an exciting side exploration for us, and hope it is of interest. There follow reviews from Jancis Robinson, the Wine Advocate (David Schildknecht), and Andrew Jefford (Decanter) of Vintages 2007-2011.



MATISSAT 2007

LA PEIRA

"I'm not sure I've ever tasted better Mourvèdre; certainly not since I was last in Bandol" **Andrew Jefford (2008)**

"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."
Wine Advocate David Schildknecht (2009)

There is an intriguingly maritime scent here as well as intimations of ripe plum and pungent herbs. Rich mocha and chocolate along with confitured purple plum are tinged with bay, kelp, iodine, salt, and crushed stone on a dense palate possessed of powder-fine tannins. For sumptuousness and sheer persistence this is hard to top even from within the outstanding La Peira stable, though it lacks the dynamism or floral dimension exhibited by its immediate 2007 siblings. Surely this "stealth" bottling – which has yet to be offered for sale – is going to be worth following for at least another half dozen years. **Wine Advocate - David Schildknecht (Aug 2011) 93 Pts.**

Still very dark crimson. Direct blackberry essence on the nose. Sweet and subtle. Smudgy liquorice edge. Flattering and round and with almost melted tannins though there's a little chew on the end. Very luscious indeed but too low in acidity to refresh. Just a little overripe. 14.5% **Jancis Robinson 16.5 Drink 2010-2014**

"a particularly fine Languedoc wine.... their increasingly celebrated Matissat"
Jancis Robinson

MATISSAT 2008

LA PEIRA

"The all-Mourvedre, 600 case lot La Peira 2008 Terrasses du Larzac Matissat is even more maritime in scent and briny in flavor than its 2009 counterpart. Here the chocolate element is dark and bitter, and the pit of the plum as prominent as its flesh, making for a somewhat somber effect consistent both with its immediate 2008 siblings and with the brooding potential of this cepage. Impressions of crushed stone and bay help extend a palate-staining performance, which I would be surprised to witness flagging over the coming decade. As to what further elements will emerge from this bottling's dark recesses, I would count myself fortunate to discover."

Wine Advocate (David Schildknecht Aug 2011) 92 Pts.

Paler than the 2007 with some evolution at the rim. Very mineral and tarry on the nose. Racy and transparent. Lots of freshness. Recognisably related to the 2007 but livelier and drier. A little muscular. Not as heavy as the 2007. Very clean. Not too heavy. 14.5%

Jancis Robinson 17 2013-2020

MATISSAT 2009

LA PEIRA

"I blind-tasted, over a couple of days recently, almost ninety of Languedoc's finest red wines...on my scoresheet as well as for those I was tasting with, the winner was a new arrival: the 2009 Matissat from La Pèira. It was pure Mourvèdre, but I don't think Bandol-lovers would have recognized it, so pristine were its black fruits, and so elegantly had the garrigue allusions been incorporated. Yes, it had tiptoed right up to the tipping point, looked over — and stepped back: delicious." ([Link La Pèira's Matissat tops Andrew Jefford's Decanter Blind Tasting of "almost ninety of Languedoc's finest red wines"](#))

Andrew Jefford (2008)

"The pure Mourvedre La Peira 2009 Terrasses du Larzac Matissat evinces bitter-sweet, iris-like perfume along with scents of purple plum, dark chocolate, beef blood, and sea breeze, all of which reprise on a lush yet finely-tannic palate, with iodine, alkali, and mouthwateringly saline traces dominating the impressively lingering finish. This ought to prove more seductive and no less intriguing than its two predecessors, as well as worth a decade's attention.

Wine Advocate - David Schildknecht (Aug 2011) 92-3 Pts.

This wine seems to get lighter with every vintage. Mid ruby with some evolution at the rim. Not much aroma. Light spiciness and then both sweet and some chewy dryness. I'm not convinced about the balance of this wine. The flavour seems to have been rather baked out. A bit awkward. 14.5%

Jancis Robinson 16 Drink 2015-2020

"I'm not sure I've ever tasted better Mourvèdre; certainly not since I was last in Bandol"

Andrew Jefford



MATISSAT 2010

LA PEIRA

Mid crimson. Gosh so different from the 2007! Transparent and lively and very young and racy. I think this could turn out to be a very fine wine indeed. For the moment it's still quite chewy but there is impressive energy here. 14.5%

Jancis Robinson 17+ 2016-2024

MATISSAT 2011

LA PEIRA

Firm transparent deep crimson. Showing the mineral side of this wine at the moment. Delicate but sweet and seductive too. Very appealing. Transparent. This doesn't taste like a 14.5% wine. Very clean, pure and driven. Great energy.

Jancis Robinson 17.5 Drink 2016-2026

[The superb reviews of the La Pèira 2009-2010 vintages can be seen by clicking here](#)

- Jancis Robinson's full article on La Pèira's Matissat follows -



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La Pèira's varietal Mourvèdre

15 Oct 2012 by Jancis Robinson

This vertical of a particularly fine Languedoc wine is offered as a taster for the big collection of tasting notes on wines from this, surely France's best-value wine region, to be published later this week.

La Pèira, or La Pèira en Damaisèla to give it its full name, is a particularly promising enterprise in the exciting Terrasses du Larzac subregion high above the plain of the Languedoc. The illustration below shows exactly where the estate, advised by the admirable oenologist Claude Gros, is to be found. There is clearly real sensibility for the local terrain and varietal traditions.

But as one of the outfit's partners, musician Rob Dougan, pointed out to me, they decided to try one variety that is not strictly speaking of the region and, moreover, to make it, most unusually, in 100% varietal form. Here's how he described their increasingly celebrated Matissat:

We think it's a wonderful expression of Mourvèdre as grown in the inland hills of the Hérault - in the piedmont of the Larzac - far away from its coastal haunt of Bandol.

We're surprised to find it's one of a handful of pure Mourvèdre wines each year in France, and that even in Bandol the practice is frowned upon: 'The tradition has always been to blend. You should be suspicious of 100% Mourvèdre cuvées, which can be simplistic' (Daniel Ravier of Dom Tempier in Bandol.

Here in the Terrasses du Larzac, temperatures drop sharply in late September and October. My father-in-law, who studied medicine in Montpellier, remembers one winter, a fellow student from Norway complaining he'd never been so cold in his life. Harvested in October's morning fogs (as I mentioned in my letter to you) it's about as close we'll come at La Pèira to making a Nebbiolo.

With the same process and single cépage each year, I'd hope the wine might offer an interesting window on vintages 2007-2011 in the Terrasses du Larzac (Bettane and Desseauve's 'Appellation of the Year' in 2011).

Five harvests later, after that of Matissat 2007, we've begun to release the first vintage(s). The few bottles taken up by Berry Bros in the UK, and by our importers in Europe, have almost sold out.

We received various expressions of interest on mentioning the bottling some time ago (and would be more than happy to add others for information only or for direct purchase at Matissat@gmail.com).

The letter to which he refers said:

In 2007, the quality of the Mourvèdre, from the Bois de Pauliau plot (grown metres away from where it's vinified), was excellent. It was destined to go into our first wine (La Pèira) and to join the Syrah and Grenache grown in the very same parcel. It never found its place there. And while we've bottled it each year since, we've never shown it, nor offered it for sale until recently. We thought it was a fascinating expression of Mourvèdre, grown in the hinterland of the Hérault as opposed to its heartland by the sea, and of the Terrasses du Larzac.

Also, with the vinification, vineyard work, and the single cépage as constant, it offers an interesting insight into the vintages 2007-2011 in this region.

Since the first bottling, over the years, we've struggled (repeatedly and happily, mind you) to comprehend why this pure Mourvèdre was not valid, complete, and complex on its own singular terms.

Harvested in October fogs here, it's about as close we'll come at La Pèira to making a Nebbiolo. And Mourvèdre could, in a way, be considered France's dark cousin to Italy's great Nebbiolo.

As you can see from my notes, presented from first to most recent vintage, I was impressed. When I tasted the 2007 initially I was blown away by the intensity of the fruit and its superripe liquorice character, but I have to confess that when I tried it with food (a particularly delicious but not excessively spiced Ottolenghi chicken dish), the wine became a little bit porty and tired.

What I loved, however, was the gradual lightening up of the wine, the greater energy and refreshment factor - with the possible exception of the 2009 wine. Make no mistake about it, this is a very special wine made on a very special estate.

I asked Rob whether there had been any evolution in winemaking and he replied, on 1 October:

There's been no conscious change. But no doubt many tiny cumulative changes in vineyard work, harvest dates, soil, age of vines...

This weekend saw 70 mm of rain with many producers unharvested, so 2012 in the Terrasses du Larzac should be interesting.

Wine-searcher cite stockists in France, Germany and the UK (Berry Bros, who list the 2007 and 2009 at £50 a pop).

I see that the New York retailer [[the famous Zackys](#)] once offered a La Peira wine on the basis of a quote [[full link](#)] from California winemaker Manfred Krankl of Sine Qua Non, who urged people to buy it whatever the price. We'll also be publishing Julia's notes on her first exposure to SQN wines later this week.

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(We're delight to provide information about, or the purchase of, Matissat c/o Matissat@gmail.com)

“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”

David Schildknecht - Wine Advocate

*For more information, updates, availability,
or purchase email: Matissat@gmail.com*