

Maury

Mauray is without doubt one of France's most unusual, obscure and remote appellations. For a few of you who constantly and diligently seek new vinous thrills, that might be sufficient recommendation. Others who are curious should pay heed to words penned by Robert Parker more than a decade ago: "for those who are adventurous, or just true hedonists, a strong case is to be made for these amazing wines."

What's amazing? First off, the sheer, rocky terroir: hard grey schist in all directions and the stiff "T ram ontane" blowing relentlessly across an almost barren landscape north of the Pyrennes and some twenty miles back from the Mediterranean. Next, the vines: gnarled old stumps of ancient Grenache clinging tenaciously to the hillsides and producing tiny crops of thick-skinned, intensely flavored berries.

Then, there's the wine-making itself: Fortified with Grenache-derived spirit, Maury wine is either bottled young or else banished to the great outdoors in glass demijohns and left to face the searing heat of summer and the cold blasts of winter, after which it is further matured in large old fudres. The resultant family of rich, sweet, port-like wines are singularly complex, and incidentally singularly chocolate-friendly.

Mas Amiel has been the region's front-running estate for decades. But recently, the best took a turn for the even better. Olivier Decelle, a new owner with fresh capital and a passionately committed team headed by oenologue Stéfan Gallet is taking up where Charles Dupuy left off and, beginning in 2000, coaxing from the earth and crafting in the cellar incredible base wines that will set new standards for Appellation Maury.



But the excitement doesn't end there. In fact, the excitement really *begins* with something else: unfortified dry Grenache-based reds that will turn heads, especially for the price, plus some of the most intricate and exquisite variations ever played on the theme of Muscat.

In fact things are happening in this cellar that you simply won't believe until you taste them. We begin with a "base level" Grenache that is anything but base ... except in price. The name, "Le Plaisir" says most of what you need to know about this one. For appellation, "Le Plaisir" defaults to the generic "Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes" which offers two commercial advantages: 1) some of your customers have a rough idea about the location of Catalonia; 2) this allows the wine to be varietally labeled as "Grenache Noir".

If you act quickly, you can also treat yourself to one of Mas Amiel's sweet 2000 Muscats. There is the "petites grains" variety of Muscat with a bit of "Muscat Alexandria" at Mas Amiel. A riot of apricot, orange, fig, sage and resin awaits you with either.

Vintage Maury goes into bottle youthfully purple and plush, with black fruit, spice and chocolate at formidable strength. A wine for chocolate and much more. Still further wines - both dry and sweet, white and red - will follow in due course. Get on board for a wild ride!

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Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes Côte de Roussillon Villages Muscat de Rivesaltes

Varieties: Grenache, Muscat, Carignan, Syrah's.

Total acreage: 320 acres

Average production: 35,000 cases.

Vinification: Depends on type.

From among Mas Amiel's huge array of cuvées and wine types we currently offer:

Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes "Le Plaisir"

Côte de Roussillon Villages "Notre Terre"

Muscat de Rivesaltes

Maury Vintage

Maury Cuvée Speciale 10 Ans

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"Only five percent of [Mas Amiel's] decadently rich, fortified wines are exports, which is a shame given their high quality and surprisingly modest prices. Given the current American obsession with avoiding alcohol, calories, and products that provide pleasure, I wonder about the marketplace for products such as this. But for those who are adventurous, or just true hedonists, a strong case is to be made for these amazing wines." 6/91

Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate