



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

AUGUSTE CLAPE

Country: France

Region: Rhône

Appellation(s): Côtes du Rhône, St. Péray, Cornas

Producer: Pierre & Olivier Clape

Founded: 250 + years old

Annual Production: 2,500 cases

Farming: Lutte Raisonnée

Website: N/A



In the world of wine, there are many good winegrowers. However, there are only a very select few who are truly great, and Auguste Clape is among them. Critics and connoisseurs alike all agree that he is one of the greatest pioneers of the Northern Rhône, and his Syrahs from the *cru* of Cornas are among the most celebrated wines of France. The Clapes have been *vignerons* for many generations, but the infamous grower strikes of 1906 and 1907 forced his grandfather out of the Languedoc and into the Northern Rhône to start anew from practically nothing. The Clapes rebuilt their fortunes, terrace-by-terrace, along the steep, western slopes of the Rhône River. For many years, the majority of growers in Cornas sold their fruit to *négociants*. Auguste was the first to bottle his own wine, which eventually paved the way for such contemporary superstars as Thierry Allemand. Without pretense or fanfare, Auguste, the former mayor of Cornas, is a stately picture of grace and magnanimity—a no-nonsense wise man who is still interested in learning. Today, he works side-by-side with his son, Pierre-Marie, and grandson, Olivier.

Though the Clapes farm only eight hectares, the challenge presented by the rough, tightly stacked terrace vineyards of Cornas is largely enough to handle by anybody's standards. The dicey precipices make using any machinery in the vineyards impossible. All work must be done by hand. There are no official rules to their viticultural methodology—they work the old-fashioned way, by instinct, feeling, and common sense. The vineyards sit on granite subsoil, behind the village, with optimal sun exposure. They farm a number of prime parcels, including *Reynards*, *La Côte*, *Geynale*, *Tézier*, *Petite Côte*, *Les Mazards*, *Patou*, *Pied La Vigne*, *Chaillot*, and *Sabarotte*, the latter purchased from Cornas legend Noël Verset. Their only secrets: starting with old vines, and optimizing the ripeness of the fruit as best they can. They accomplish this by holding out before they harvest—a risky game of 'chicken' where the trick is to keep the fruit on the vine as long as possible while still harvesting before the rains. Individual parcels are vinified separately in old, oval *foudres*. Long *élevages* of twelve to twenty-two months add depth to the natural complexity of the wines. The wines are capable of tremendous longevity in the cellar, although Kermit also encourages trying them while they are young and fresh, to better appreciate the evolution to come. For a taste of the old-style Syrah from the fabulous, sculptured slopes of the Northern Rhône, Auguste Clape's Cornas is the only place to start.



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AUGUSTE CLAPE (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Vin des Amis Rouge	Syrah	40 years average	Round river stones	1 ha
Saint Péray Blanc	Marsanne	40 years average	Clay, Granite	1 ha
Côtes-du-Rhône Rouge	Syrah	30 to 60 years	Granite	1 ha
Cornas “Renaissance”	Syrah	12 to 20 years	Granite	1.2 ha
Cornas	Syrah	30 to 60 years	Granite	4.3 ha

* “ha”=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- All wines are harvested by hand, sorted and are not de-stemmed

Saint Péray:

- Wine is fermented in cement *cuve*
- Wine completes its malolactic fermentation
- Age in stainless steel for 8 months

Red Wines:

- Whole grape clusters are fermented with natural yeasts in open air cement *cuves* with punch-downs or pump-overs twice a day over 12 days
- Malolactic fermentation occurs in *foudre*
- **Cornas** and **Cornas “Renaissance”** are aged for 22 months in 6 or 12 hl-*foudres*
- **Côtes du Rhône** and **“Vin des Amis”** are aged for 6 months in cement *cuves* and 6 months in *foudres*
- **Côtes du Rhône:** Grapes are sourced from a small parcel of Syrah from Saint Péray and a parcel of Côtes du Rhône near the village of Cornas. Approximately 20% of the blend is free run juice from young vine Cornas.