



## KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

### DOMAINE CLAPE

Country: France

Region: Rhône

Appellation(s): Côtes du Rhône, Saint-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 will go down in history as one of the greats. A proud and uncompromising pioneer of fine winemaking in the Northern Rhône, his Syrahs from the *cru* of Cornas have earned their place 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 Auguste's 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, was a stately picture of grace and magnanimity—a no-nonsense wise man who never rested on his laurels and sought to better himself and his wines each year until his passing in 2018 at the age of 93. Today, his son, Pierre-Marie, and grandson, Olivier, carry on his legacy with honor and integrity.

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 via whole-cluster fermentation. Long *élevages* of twelve to twenty-two months in old, oval *foudres* add depth to the natural complexity of the wines. These Cornas 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, Clape's Cornas is the only place to start.



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## DOMAINE CLAPE (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Saint-Péray	80% Marsanne 20% Roussanne	40 years average	Clay, Granite	1 ha
Vin des Amis <i>Rouge</i>	Syrah	40 years average	Alluvial with <i>galets</i> (rounded riverbed stones)	1 ha
Côtes-du-Rhône <i>Rouge</i>	Syrah	30-60 years	Clay, Granite, Alluvial	1 ha
Cornas “Renaissance”	Syrah	Up to 30 years	Granite	1.2 ha
Cornas	Syrah	40-100 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 and aged in a combination of tank and *foudre*, depending on volume
- 2019 blend: two-thirds *foudres*, one-third concrete tank
- 2018 blend: two-thirds *foudres*, one-third stainless steel tank
- 2017 blend: 100% *foudres*
- Wine completes its malolactic fermentation
- Aged 11 months before bottling
- Fined, but not filtered

### Red Wines:

- Whole grape clusters are fermented with natural yeasts in open air cement tanks with punch-downs or pump-overs twice a day over 12 days
- Malolactic fermentation occurs in *foudre*

### Vin de France *Rouge* “Le Vin des Amis”:

- Fermented and aged in cement tanks, then 2 month passage in *foudres* before bottling
- Vineyards are situated between the village of Cornas and the Rhône river

### Côtes du Rhône *Rouge*:

- Made from two parcels: one is Syrah planted within Saint-Péray AOC, which is classified as Côtes du Rhône; the second is at the bottom of a slope just beneath the boundary of Cornas AOC, level with the village of Cornas
- In some years, a small amount (around 2%) of press wine from young-vine Cornas is added
- Fermented and aged in cement tanks with part of the wine passing briefly in *foudres*



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### DOMAINE CLAPE (continued)

#### **Cornas “Renaissance”:**

- A blend of fruit from younger vines
- Aged 22 months in 6- or 12-HL *foudres*

#### **Cornas:**

- A selection of the domaine’s oldest vines
- Aged 22 months in 6- or 12-HL *foudres*