



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

DOMAINE LÉON BARRAL

Country: **France**

Region: **Languedoc**

Appellation(s): **Faugères**

Producer: **Didier Barral**

Founded: **1993**

Annual Production: **7,500 cases**

Farming: **Biodynamic (since 1995)**

Website: **www.domaineleonbarral.com**



Didier Barral represents the thirteenth generation to grow grapes in the tiny hamlet of Lenthéric, within the confines of the Faugères appellation deep in the heart of the Languedoc. While his forebears made a living off of cultivating the vine, Didier took the family business to the next level when he began estate-bottling and commercializing his wines on a larger scale in 1993. Named for Didier's grandfather, Domaine Léon Barral is a beacon of revolutionary winegrowing: shortly after founding the domaine, Didier decided that biodynamic practices were the best choice for farming his thirty hectares of vineyards. He has pioneered numerous innovative agronomic techniques with the goal of establishing his vineyards as a self-sustaining ecosystem. This Renaissance man, naturalist, and biodynamic maven commands tremendous respect among his peers for his visionary approach to topics like soil management, pest control, and drought mitigation in his vineyards.

Incorporating biodynamic practices necessitates enormous investment and an uncompromising work ethic. With so much land to farm, it is fortunate that Didier has so much help. His workers of choice? A team of twenty cows, horses, and pigs that roam the vineyards during winter, grazing the cover crops while adding natural fertilizer to the soil. Without compacting the earth the way a tractor would, the animals effectively cultivate healthy microbial activity, bringing mushrooms, ants, ladybugs, earthworms, and other essential life forms, which add important nutrients while aerating the soil. This is the concept of sustainability at its finest, where the ecosystem thrives from the symbiotic relationships Didier has fostered amid the vines.

This approach ultimately translates to tremendously powerful, complex, and age-worthy wines inflected with an earthy mineral note from the schist soils of Faugères. Most of Didier's vines get full southern sun exposure; in this Mediterranean climate where summer heat waves and drought are constant during the growing season, pruning in the gobelet style shelters the grapes from the blistering sun. Most of his vines are very old—some up to ninety years of age—keeping yields naturally low. Once in the cellar, Didier's harvest is cared for with the same zeal, although he would consider the wine all but finished once it leaves the vineyard. This level of artisanship was once nearly extinct, had it not been for Didier and the profound influence he is having over other viticulteurs who now see how his work ethic and ideology translates to results.



DOMAINE LÉON BARRAL (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Vin de Pays de l'Hérault Blanc	80% Terret Blanc and Gris 10% Viognier 10% Roussane	20 to 90 years	Schist	3 ha
Faugères	50% Carignan 30% Grenache 20% Cinsault	40 to 70 years		14 ha
Faugères "Jadis"	50% Carignan 30% Syrah 20% Grenache	30 to 60 years		10 ha
Faugères "Valinière"	80% Mourvèdre 20% Syrah	15 to 30 years		4.3 ha

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

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- Grapes are biodynamically farmed
- All grapes are harvested by hand and then sorted
- Depending on the variety, grapes are de-stemmed (in general, grapes from the youngest vines), however whole clusters are also used
- No SO₂ is added until a small dose at bottling
- Wine is vinified in gravity-fed, cement *cuvés*
- Wine is fermented with natural yeasts
- Maceration takes place for 3 to 4 weeks with regular, manual punch-downs in cement tanks
- Wines are never racked, filtered, or fined

Faugères :

- Wine is aged for 2 years in cement and stainless steel *cuvés*
- Maceration takes place for 3 to 4 weeks with regular, manual punch-downs in cement tanks
- After maceration, must is lightly pressed with an old, wooden, vertical basket press

Faugères "Jadis"

- Maceration takes place for 3 to 4 weeks with regular, manual punch-downs in cement tanks
- After maceration, must is lightly pressed with an old, wooden, vertical basket press
- Wine is aged for 24 to 26 months in barrel (10% new oak)
- The Syrah in this *cuvée* comes from a south-facing parcel



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DOMAINE LÉON BARRAL (continued)

Faugères "Valinière"

- Maceration takes place for 3 to 4 weeks with regular, manual punch-downs in cement tanks
- After maceration, must is lightly pressed with an old, wooden, vertical basket press
- Wine is aged for 24 to 26 months in barrel (10% new oak)
- The Syrah in this cuvée comes from a north-facing parcel

Vin de Pays de l'Hérault *blanc*

- A traditional old-vine field blend
- Grapes macerate for 3-4 hours in the press

MISCELLANEA

Didier Barral is one of the champions of the biodynamic movement in France and is highly respected among his peers for his uncompromising respect for the environment in which he lives and works—meaning the entire ecosystem surrounding his vineyards. Didier's red Faugères, grown in rugged schist soil, displays power, rusticity, and incredibly fresh, pure fruit. Treat it as you would the wines of Gramenon and Magnon—organic, living beings that demand care and respect. His Faugères ages beautifully in a good cellar.

Kermit Lynch