



# CHÊNE BLEU

## GEOLOGY

Geology is key to understanding the terroir at Chêne Bleu. The distinctive, complex soils lend their signature to all the wines.

Chêne Bleu vineyards are planted on the slopes of the Dentelles de Montmirail (from “Dentelle,” meaning “Lace,” and the Latin “Mons Mirabilis,” meaning “Marvelous Mountain”). Located in the northern foothills of Mont Ventoux, this is a vertical slab of Jurassic limestone that has weathered into a lace-like outcropping. It all began 200 million years ago, with intense volcanic activity during the Triassic Era, whose famous “Trias de Suzette” soils still characterize the region today. 50 million years later, during the Jurassic era, shallow seas covered what is today southern France. At the bottom of these seas, extensive deposits of tiny shells and sea creatures accumulated as layers of limestone.

The whole area of Mont Ventoux (whose summit is bare limestone, appearing snow-capped in summer) and the Dentelles is located on the edge of the tectonic plate of Europe that smashed into the tectonic plate of Africa. In some areas, this collision resulted in the formation of mountain

ranges, such as the Alps, as well as in volcanic activity. In others, there was subduction, and this combination resulted in the formation of the Dentelles. During this tectonic activity, the edge of the plate was pushed up and onto its side. Buried layers of rock were thrust upwards into a vertical slab of limestone which weathered over the millennia into a dramatic, lacey formation, as well as an up-lifted cross-section of other strata.

These exposed strata contain deeply buried mineral- and iron-rich schist, volcanic basalts, chalk, mineral-rich clay, black shale (known for weathering into excellent soil for vines), alluvial deposits of sand, silt and prehistoric seashells (some of which are bigger than a breadbox). All of these are present in the Chêne Bleu vineyard.

Geologists come for field-trips to observe the otherwise inaccessible exposed strata of rock. Renowned soil scientists, microbiologists and viticultural gurus Claude and Lydia Bourguignon (founders of LAMS: Laboratoire d'Analyse Microbiologique des Sols) have examined and praised the rich potential of the soil composition.

