



# CHÊNE BLEU

## WINERY & WINEMAKING

### STATE-OF-THE-ART WINERY

As the vineyards began to thrive and the family realized the extraordinary potential of their terroir, they were driven to build a winery worthy of the commitment they had already made to the grapes. A state-of-the-art winery was essential, so for several years Xavier and Nicole visited some of the most impressive and advanced wineries in the world, consulted advisors, studied equipment and construction plans. They then designed and equipped a winery to be built on four levels.

Excavation of a 12-meter-deep (36 feet) crater through solid rock was their first daunting task. Using the natural topography, they were able to situate the winery next to a hill, so the two lower levels were below ground level and the top two floors were against the hillside. In this way they were able to build a gravity-flow winery without disrupting the landscape and forested panorama. They used special materials instead of the usual reinforced concrete to avoid the "Faradic cage effect." (This, named after the 19th-century scientist Michael Faraday, describes the potential for electromagnetic energy to be trapped inside the structure, potentially affecting the wine.)

minutes from the winery sorting tables. The whole bunches are transported immediately to the winery in shallow crates so that the berries remain whole and retain their ripe juice. Double-sorting takes place on two separate sorting tables: a slow-moving belt that sorts bunches and removes leaves, then a vibrating table that removes imperfect grapes as well as any leftover stems. All whites and 90 percent of the reds are destemmed (very ripe stems can sometimes benefit a red wine fermentation).

The grapes and wine move through the facility via gravity flow, without pumping. A Vaslin press, which is a closed cylinder with a pneumatic bag, ensures gentle pressing with less risk of excess tannin extraction and oxidation. Three conical oak tanks are reserved for natural micro-oxygenation for some reds, while 22 temperature-controlled, stainless-steel tanks are used for some reds and all whites and rosés. The winery is specifically designed for small batches, with small tanks to vinify each mini-block separately, using a combination of oak, concrete and stainless steel. All wastewater is recycled through a bamboo forest planted especially for this purpose, in keeping with the estate's philosophy of long-term sustainability.

### HARVEST & WINEMAKING

Harvest is by hand, and yields are deliberately tiny (usually 14 to 25 hectoliters per hectare), compared to the average of 30 to 45 hl/ha for most super-premium wines in nearby Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas, and 60 hl/ha in the neighboring valley. All vineyards are no further than 12

Aging in the cellars requires an exacting barrel selection for the top quality wines, using mainly 50 percent new and 50 percent 1-year-old Burgundian oak barrels. The cooperages of Seguin-Moreau, Taransaud, Damy, François Frères, and De Vienne provide barrels with varying light or medium toasts from the forests of Tronçais, Nieve and Vosges.

