

Terrasses DU LARZAC



DOSSIER DE PRESSE TERRASSES DU LARZAC AOC LANGUEDOC

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Terrasses
DU LARZAC

AOC LANGUEDOC
* Sud de France

Terrasses DU LARZAC

Environnement and area

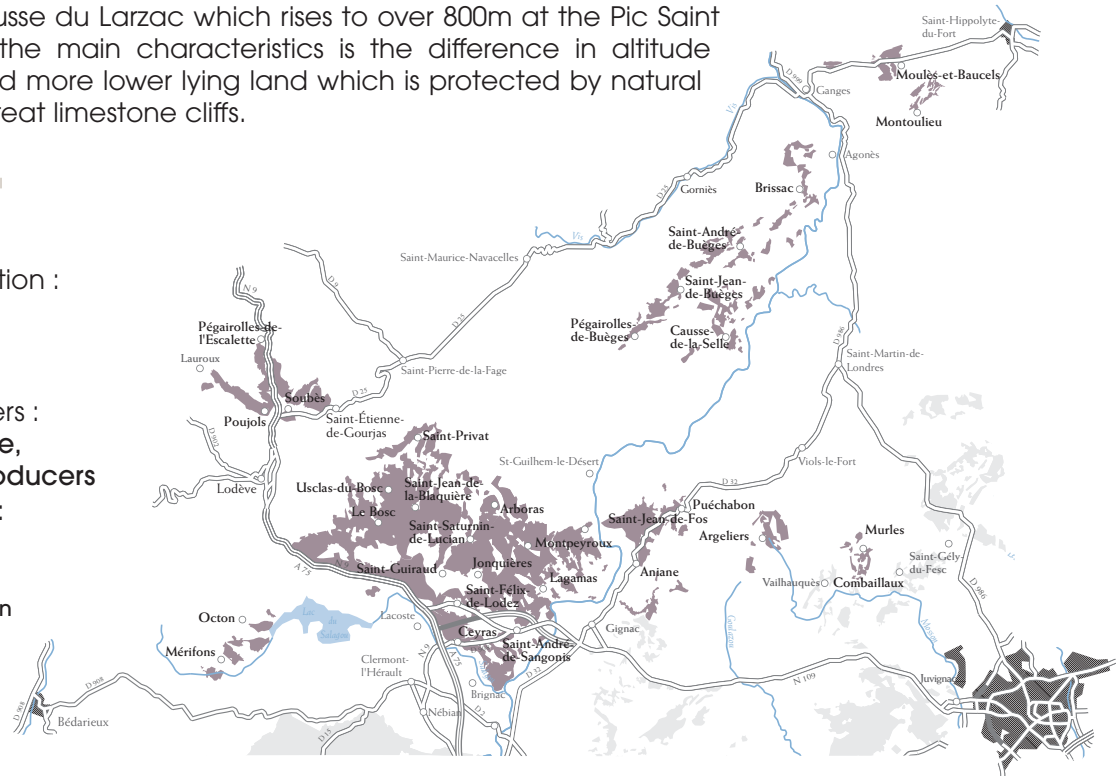
Well inland, in the foothills of the Larzac, the Terrasses du Larzac denomination was officially recognized in the decree of 25 February 2005. The area covers 32 communes which all fit well into the new AOC Languedoc hierarchical structure and produces some 75,000 hectolitres of AOC Languedoc annually. The Terrasses du Larzac red wines appeal to wine lovers thanks to a range of diverse flavours, savours and character. The wines combine delightful complexity and freshness with ever present hints of the garrigue.

A terroir in the north-centre of the Hérault

In a 'V' shape of 45kms by 20kms, the Terrasses du Larzac area is bounded to the north by the Causse du Larzac which rises to over 800m at the Pic Saint Baudile. One of its main characteristics is the difference in altitude between the hilly and more lower lying land which is protected by natural barriers formed by great limestone cliffs.

Key figures

- Area under production : around 2 000 ha
- Production area : 32 communes
- Number of producers : 8 caves coopérative, 85 independent producers
- Annual production : around 75 000 hl of AOC Languedoc (including Saint-Saturnin and Montpeyroux) and 9 000 hl of AOC Languedoc - Terrasses du Larzac.
- Maximum yield : 45 hl/ha
- Colours : red wines only



Les Terrasses du Larzac en fête 3 juillet 2010 : A wine circuit

This year Terrasses du Larzac producers are organising their wine enthusiasts' wine and food ramble around St Jean de Fos. Price between 39 and 44 euros.
Reservation : Syndicat AOC Languedoc/Coteaux du Languedoc. Tél. 04 67 06 04 44

Terrasses DU LARZAC

Countryside influenced by the history of the vines



As with the whole AOC Languedoc area, vines have been cultivated on the Terrasses du Larzac for over 2000 years. Even today, this heritage has left its mark on the villages and their surroundings areas.

From Roman times to the Middle Ages

The land around Lodève had great appeal to the Romans, stretching as it did along the busy Gallo-Roman road which linked Cessero (St Thibéry) with Segodunum (Rodez). Viticultural activity grew with the advent of Benedictine monks (Aniane, Lodève, St Guilhem le Desert) whose influence stretched over most of the land.

Small stone shelters and dry stone walls are everywhere

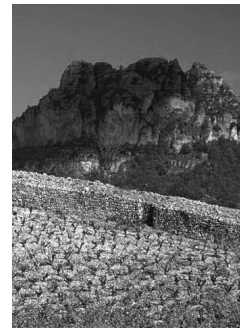
From the XVI century onwards wine growing took off in the most stony areas in cleared scrubland joining olive and almond plantations. Often laid out on stone built terraces (faysses) which needed regular clearing, local records from the time show that each inhabitant owned at least one patch of vines which were often interspersed with fruit trees. The fruit was destined for personal consumption, the vines brought in cash. Even today, this heritage has left its mark on the countryside. Here and there the small stone shelters and walls built to separate individual pieces of land as well as the terraces built into the steepest slopes are reminders of these times. The countryside around Pégairolles de l'Escalette is covered with little horizontal stone walls forming a sort of geometric mesh on the hillsides. And there are some fifty XVIII century 'capitelles' (igloo shaped stone huts) well away from the homesteads in the commune, which served as storage space for grape producers or shelter for roaming shepherds. All these were built as stones were cleared over a long period, thus allowing the crumbling Larzac hillsides to be stabilised, creating terraces for the vines, and improving the soil.

Increased exchanges

In the XVII and XVIII centuries, the area grew in importance thanks to increased exchanges between those living on the Causse and beyond. As in the rest of the Languedoc, vineyards of the area increased during the XIX century even though yields were lower than in other regions. Disaster struck in 1850. First odium, then phylloxera. The vines were almost totally destroyed. And although a way of fighting the insect had been discovered in Montpellier, many most producers chose to dig out their old vines and replant plants grafted onto American stock. During the XX century, the vineyards saw new life.

Terrasses DU LARZAC

A homogenous terroir



Made up of gritty, pebble covered soil, the Terrasses du Larzac's ideal orientation at the foot of the Larzac plateau means the area is unique. The arid, fast draining soil acts as a natural influence on the vines' balance.

The climate

Average temperatures are relatively cooler than elsewhere in the AOC Languedoc area due largely to its distance from the sea ; the maritime influence is felt during the growing stages, when day and night time temperatures can vary enormously. On average these differences vary on average by 13 °C and 14 °C during summer months, compared with only 11 °C at the coast. The variation is also influenced by cool or fresh air sweeping down from the Causse.

Soil types

All geological eras are present, but two in particular : the Primary epoch consisting of schist, sandstone and sedimentary rock and the Quarternary epoch featuring scree or soil washed down by water (old alluvial terrasses and spreading talus).

Where the vines grow

Although the natural boundaries of the Terrasses du Larzac can reach to over 800 m in altitude, the planted and permitted AOC zones are situated at between 50 and 300 m high on the foothills of the Causse and on old terraces.

The environment

Unusually well protected, plants within the Terrasses du Larzac area are those especially well suited to the land such as the original Salzman pine, Holm and Kermes oak... There's a lot of garrigue too : juniper, thyme, rosemary, heather... all grow freely. Olives have long been cultivated here too, and are still very much present.

The Terrasses du Larzac denomination was recognized as from the 2004 harvest.

A keen supporter of the hierarchical principle since it was part of the VDQS in the 1950s and '60s, some thirty producers came together in 1997 committed to the Terrasses du Larzac project. The terroir was recognized as "Terrasses du Larzac - AOC Languedoc" in the decree of 25 February 2005 which modified that of 24 December 1985 relating to the AOC Coteaux du Languedoc status.

See : www.legifrance.gouv.fr/

Terrasses DU LARZAC

From vines to wine



In an especially unspoilt countryside, the Terrasses du Larzac area includes a number of villages which live off wine. Even the names stem from their geographic location and the vines planted on their terraces.

Known for being so homogenous, Carignan, Cinsault, Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre grapes flourish contributing their riches to the Terrasses du Larzac red wines. Each adds something to the wine, ensuring its great fresh complexity, and reflecting the savours of the garrigue.

Grapes and yields

The red wines must be made from these five grapes : Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Carignan, Cinsault, and must include at least two of them. The proportion of a blend including Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah must not be less than 60 % of the total. The proportion of any one of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah grapes must not be higher than 75 %. The proportion of Mourvèdre and Syrah – together or separately – cannot be less than 20 %. If the wine includes Carignan, the proportion of Grenache cannot be less than 20 %. The proportion of Cinsault cannot exceed 30 %.

Yields must not be over 45 hl/ha.

Vinification

After de-stemming, vinification is usually traditional. Grapes must be picked only when they are fully mature. Only wine produced from vines that have been planted for at least four years may be labelled AOC Terrasses du Larzac.

In the glass

Terrasses du Larzac wines are a brilliant ruby colour (with violet highlights). Garrigue aromas (bay, thyme) often dominate the nose. They open very fresh, well balanced with good spice and tannin. Many will age well (3 to 5 years or more).

Wine and food

Red Terrasses du Larzac wines go splendidly with meat based characterful dishes such as rib of lamb, wild boar stew, game, grilled meat or tajines. As a dessert, the more fruity reds could not be better with Flaune (a south Aveyron pudding, resembling a cheese mousse, produced by heating ewes' milk whey to 95 °C°).

32 communes have been able to produce Terrasses du Larzac wine within the AOC classification since the 2004 harvest. (official journal 25 February 2005).

Terrasses DU LARZAC

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Terrasses DU LARZAC

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Terrasses DU LARZAC

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