



# Mas Combarèla - Press Review **2022**

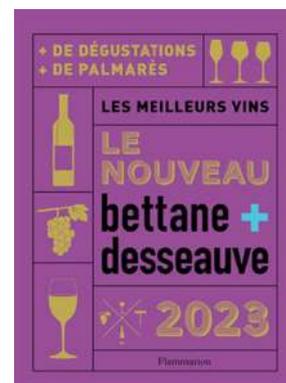


**Bettane + Desseauve 2023** ([mybettanedesseauve.fr](http://mybettanedesseauve.fr), Oct. 2022)

• **Mas Combarèla ★★★**

*“Olivier Faucon keeps surprising us with his wonderful reds, ethereal and with a rare intensity, impressive by their delicacy and their **saline finishes**. Since its first vintage, this 11-hectare estate has continued to draw closer to the big names. Third star in three vintages, this is not that usual but that is justified”*

- **Des Si et Des Mi Rosé 2021** 90/100 (=15/20)  
*“Delicious and very fresh with a **delicate unctuousity** for this rosé very well made”*
- **Des Si et Des Mi Blanc 2021** 90/100 (=15/20)  
*“Beautiful fruity juice, Williams pear and fresh flowers, a **true delicacy** in mouth.”*
- **L'éclat 2021** 90/100 (=15/20)  
*“With **more substance** than the Des Si and Des Mi Blanc cuvée, without its immediate aromatic radiance, it aims for a short aging.”*
- **Des Si et Des Mi Rouge 2021** 90/100 (=15/20)  
*“Delicious fruitiness, melted tannins, a fresh palate, this is a **superb thirst-quenching wine** with mind blowing length.”*
- **Le Clos Secret 2021** 91/100 (=15.5/20)  
*“Superb emphasis on the cinsault, a variety unfairly forgotten. With ancient rose aromas, garrigue, liquorice and its very fine tannin. This wine is of a very noticeable drinkability.”*
- **Les Vieux Mazets 2020** 93/100 (=16.5/20)  
*“One of the finest, subtle, deliciously aromatic and fresh, it is **one of the most ethereal Languedoc carignans that we have tasted here**. Its tactile charm will seduce the most hostiles to this criticized variety.”*
- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2020** 94/100 (=17/20)  
*“Tasted in samples, this vintage confirms the **gracile style of this delicate and full bodied cuvée**, an ode to all those who were ignorant but who now know what is a great wine.”*
- **Lueurs d'Espar 2020** 94/100 (=17/20)  
*“This cuvée gives pride of place to the Mourvèdre which was called Espar in the past. Classy, the tannin are fine and the mouth has a **supplement of complexity, persistence and length** compared to the other red cuvées (all noteworthy) of the domaine”*



**Jancis Robinson (Wines to cool down with - Tamlyn Currin) (Oct. 2022)**

In the Languedoc, freshness heroes include Domaine Begude, Famille Fabre, Aubert et Mathieu, Mas **Combarèla** and Mas des Brousses.



• **Des Si et Des Mi Blanc 2021** 16.5/20 (=93/100)

*“Gorgeous ripe, green-melon fruit, bold, clove spice, a lovely sweet-green bay-leaf leafiness. Beautiful bounce and roundness, juicy apples, **really delicious**. Little fizz of fennel-seed spice and fennel-sweet leaf (2022-2026).”*

• **Les vieux Mazets 2020** 17/20 (=94/100)

*“It seems counterintuitive to put a 100% Carignan into an article focused on fresh, cool wines, but perhaps that's the magic of old vines? A wine with **silk-soaked tannins**, elderberry-silk fruit. Striated with bitter-orange peel, wild thyme, fresh oregano, cumin seed. **So fresh**. A lithe dance of energy with just enough of a bitter bite to remind me that it's Carignan and not some domesticated grape variety...(2022-2027)”*

So, if you're going to go low-carbon with your wine choices this winter, look for Ch d'Anglès, Borde Rouge, Mas **Combarèla**, La Pèira and Mas Gabinèle.



• **Des Si et Des Mi Rouge 2021** 16.5/20 (=93/100)

*“Sappy strawberry-and-toffee fruit streaked with dried thyme and sprinkled with gravel dust. Black-olive bitterness and savoury, attractively oily texture and flavour. A little hot towards the end, but the fruit has fragrance and sinew and a menthol-minty freshness. The **structure of the tannins has a soft-leather tough-strength tactility**. (2021-2029).”*

• **Le Clos Secret 2021** 17.5/20 (=95/100)

*“Raspberries, rocks, rain. A wine that tastes of the vines, the earth their roots reach deep into, and transmission of rock to soil to trunk to fruit. Rugged, honest, with the sweetness and openness of an upturned palm, of a ready smile, of untampered with Cinsault. There's a wildness, a pressed-dried-strawberry intensity, a lick of whortleberry jam and the taste of hot, wet, dark, uneven rocks. **Chalky fine textured tannins**. Olivier Faucon's most beautiful wine this year... .. (2023-2030)”*

• **Ode Aux Ignorants 2020** 16/20 (=92/100)

*“Big, meaty, wild-animal Syrah, chunky with concentration and powerful, rugby- muscle-broad shoulders. **Savoury and pretty hot**. Prunes and cooked blackberries. I'm missing the freshness that I found in the 2019. This tastes more of heat and extraction. Need a slow-cooked, dark, meaty stew. (2024-2030)”*

• **Lueurs d'Espar 2020** 17/20 (=94/100)

*“**Dense and languid and deeply muscular**. Infused with heat and spice. A wine with a guttural growl in the core of its soul. The taste of tarmac on hot dusty roads, black rocks towering up on one side, the tumble of rocks and scraggy trees clinging to rocks and rugged mountain herbs steeply dropping off on the other. A wine of rock and sky and storm. Despite its power, the tannins have bones of silk and the fruit, dark as night, blue-black sheen. The **wild, tattooed soul of Mourvèdre**. (2023-2029)”*

**Le Figaro** (60 Top Organic Languedoc - Oct. 2022)

**LE FIGARO**

- **Des Si et Des Mi 2020** 92.5/100 (=16.25/20)

*“Vegetal nose of aromatic herbs and red berries. Juicy mouth, fresh on the attack, fruity, sapid, balanced. Lively and harmonious finish, it goes like clockwork.”*

**La Revue du Vin de France** (Wine and comics books article - Oct. 2022)

**“How wine conquered bubbles** by Thierry Masclot

**For a decade, wine and comics have been in perfect love. Deciphering of a phenomenon which ages better with time.**

(....)

October 2011, ‘Les Ignorants’ (named in English ‘The Initiates’), relates the story of a crossed initiation. A superb graphic novel by Etienne Davodeau, published by Futuropolis. More than 300,000 copies sold, about fifteen translations worldwide, now a reference status. The comic book even inspired Olivier Faucon to become a winegrower in the Terrasses du Larzac at Mas Combarèla. Grateful, he now produces a wine called Ode Aux Ignorants... (...)

**Le Point** (Wine Special Edition - Sept. 2022)

- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2019** 16.5-17/20 (=93-94/100)

*“Typical nose, black fruits, bigarreau cherry, rich, fleshy mouth, tight tannins, sapid and spicy finish.”*



**Hachette Wine Guide 2023** (Sept. 2022)

- **Les Vieux Mazets 2019 ★**

*“75 years old carignan vines which are not in a hurry to reveal their aromas of black fruits and spices. Young, of good volume, concentrated and round at the attack. The mouth, corseted for the moment by firm tannins, shows the same restraint. Well built and made to last.”*

- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2019 ★**

*“The 2019 vintage succeeds the 2017 and 2016 already awarded in previous editions. A commendable regularity for this cuvée aged 24 months in demi-muids and concrete egg, open to ripe fruit and aromatic plants. A beautiful freshness crosses and lightens a dense, warm, firmly tannic mouth, which has everything it takes to age gracefully.”*



### **“Terrasses du Larzac, discovering new estates**

Three years after a feature on this dynamic appellation published in two parts in issues 134 and 135, Le Rouge & Le Blanc returned to this A.O.P. whose number of estates is constantly evolving.

Since 2014, the year of the admission of A.O.P. Terrasses du Larzac, about thirty winegrowers have settled. They are now a little more than one hundred for 700 ha cultivated (for a potential of 1500) and the profile of the courses of these newcomers is varied (see below "The visited domains").

75% of these new farms are certified organic or in the process of being so (conversion in progress). A local event, at the Château de Malmont in the spring of 2021, allowed us to taste the production of thirty-one more or less recent estates covering more than 160 ha for a production of about 4570 hl.

LeRouge&leBlanc was present and, among the wines of the estates tasted on site, those of about ten properties were distinguished. We then proceeded as usual, i.e. submitted these vintages blind to our Parisian tasting committee which selected four particularly qualitative estates. We visited them to present them to you here.

(...)

#### **Mas Combarèla**

Even though he comes from a farming background, Olivier Faucon is a neo-winemaker in the sense that he made a complete career change before creating his estate in 2016. A former marketing and communication specialist, he went back to school in Beaune (BTS Viti-oeno) at the age of 40 and then did internships, especially at Mas Cal



Demoura, before settling in the Terrasses du Larzac. Olivier Faucon continues to exchange ideas and ask for advice from Vincent Goumard of the aforementioned domain, his "mentor" in a way.

A lover of comic books and wine, Olivier may owe his career change to the comic book "Les Ignorants" by Etienne Davodeau, published in 2011, the title of which illustrates one of his vintages, and to the book's winemaker hero (Richard Leroy)"

At the head of 11 ha, he took over in 2016 vines previously managed with chemical products belonging to cooperators. The conversion to organic farming was completed in 2019. He is now preparing for biodynamic practices with the help of Vincent Masson.

The vines of Mas Combarèla (meaning valley in Occitan) are planted on three plots :

- 3.5 ha of syrah, grenache and carignan vines in Arboras, at an altitude of 350 m, on stony soils of very old dolomitic limestone,

- 6 ha of vines of white and black carignan, grenache, cinsault, mourvèdre, chenin, vermentino, near Saint-Jean-de-Fos, at Combarels, located at 150 m altitude on an ancient plain with a dominant of white lacustrine limestone.

- 1.5 ha of white grenache and syrah between Aniane / Saint-Jean-de-Fos and Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert, in the Herault Valley on white riparian limestone soils fragmented by the frost, with pebbles, at the height of 90 m

Since the acquisition of the plots, tillage has gradually resumed and Olivier calls on experienced staff; he has just hired an agricultural employee at the end of 2020. It is moreover in contact with these agricultural workers that our winegrower completed his technical training.

When the soils can be worked, it is done with inter-vine hoes, with a pickaxe or by manual brushing. As a project, some trials of animal traction are being conducted with the older vines...

The harvest is manual and the fermentations are carried out using native yeasts, but when they do not start or slip too much, a neutral yeast can be used as a yeast starter. Different maceration and aging containers are used such as concrete, stainless steel, wood (barrels from 228 to 500 l and casks), sandstone amphoras. The new cellar, dating from 2018, offers more comfort and flexibility than the old facilities.

The production is quite diversified with eight cuvées, only two of which claim the Terrasses du Larzac appellation. A total of one rosé wine, two whites and five reds are produced.

We have tasted on site the two cuvées in Terrasses du Larzac in the 2020 vintage : L'Ode aux Ignorants without reduction, dense with a light dryness and a pleasant retro on the cocoa and licorice; followed by the "excellent" cuvée Lueurs d'Espar (ancient name of mourvèdre), with a still present woody taste, presenting a nice bitterness with some hints of sun dried tomatoes and bitter orange.

The estate is doing quite well, which allows its owner to continue to invest, but at the expense of a possible remuneration that he still does not receive. Laure, his partner, continues to work outside the domain.

The wines are present in reference restaurants among the Michelin starred chefs of Marseille and Paris (Mazzia, Gagnaire...)

Olivier Faucon possesses the qualities necessary for a winemaker, notably curiosity, tenacity and attention to detail. At forty-nine, his future is (almost) still ahead of him.

• **Ode Aux Ignorants 2018** 13.5/20

*"Dolomitic limestone soils from the Secondary Era, syrah, Carignan, grenache, aged half in barrels and half in concrete eggs, Organic.*

*A serious, juicy, ripe wine, endowed with red fruits and possessing density. It still seems young, its tannic grip is marked as well as the bitterness. But, already tasted six months ago, it begins to relax. Probably have to wait a bit..."*

• **Lueurs d'Espar 2018** 14/20

*"Dolomitic limestone soils from the Secondary Era and white limestone from the Tertiary Era, mourvedre, Carignan, and a bit of syrah, grenache and cinsault; aging 50/50 in barrels and concrete eggs, 600 bottles, Organic.*

*A family resemblance with the previous wine. A more qualitative aging, more classy and a more present substance. Silky tannins for some, salient for others – but isn't it thanks to the structure of the soil? – along with a **sensation of freshness and salinity, enveloped in an elegant and long touch.**"*



southern Rhône valley, for a year and a half. But, after each visit, it is always towards the Terrasses du Larzac that his gaze is pointing. Learning that winegrowers wanted to sell their plots, located between Montpeyroux, Saint-Jean-de-Fos and Arboras, the opportunity, he then considered, was too good to let go, even if he had to create ex nihilo his domain.

Hosted for two years at the Domaine de Salente, in Gignac, while waiting for his cellar to be ready, he focuses all his attention on converting the vines to organic farming. "It was obvious for me to do so from the outset, because our home being planned to be in the middle of the vines, I did not want to expose my relatives and my customers. Then, I wanted to work in the cleanest and most natural way possible", he comments. He opted for tillage with inter-vines, stricter pruning to obtain better quality grapes, and resumed planting. If the 5 grape varieties he had at that time, namely Syrah, Grenache noir and blanc, Carignan and Cinsault "were a very good starting point, I wanted to explore other roads. For this, I grafted Mourvèdre, Carignan Blanc, Chenin and Vermentino, grape varieties that I really like," he says.

If the neo-winemaker makes a series of beginner's mistakes at the beginning, he never hesitates to rely on his peers and to document himself as much as possible. "What is difficult at first is the lack of peasant knowledge. In fact, making decisions on which you do not have all the keys, when you are a new winegrower, and even a new farmer like I was, arouses some apprehension, but you have to move forward. Fortunately, I have a bit of a "risk-loving" side and like to try experiments", he confides. And to do the same for its wines.

### **Highlighting the identity of the grape varieties**

Even if the winemaker seeks to make the most natural wines possible, understand with the least, or even without added sulphites, and with stringent yeast management, he goes on "without dogma", but with a very specific objective: to produce wines that offer pleasure, elegance and balance, as well as cuvées top-of-the-range highlighting the expression of identity of local grape varieties and terroirs. The wines are aged in stainless steel, concrete, casks, barrels, sandstone amphoras or concrete eggs, for 8 to 30 months depending on the cuvée.

From his first signature cuvée, 'Ode aux ignorants', to the last, 'Lueurs d'Espar', he immediately won the votes of wine critics. The neo-winemaker, who continues to call himself a "neophyte", has not finished making people talk about him. Always driven by the desire to explore the thousand and one nuances of the wines he dreams of making, the "neophyte" continues to amaze. It is therefore impossible to ignore his cuvées.

### **The key numbers:**

11 ha in production

9 grape varieties: mourvèdre, carignan, syrah, grenache, cinsault, grenache blanc, carignan blanc, vermentino, chenin

20 hl/ha: average yield, all vines combined

36,000 bottles in a year without climatic hazards

3 appellations: AOP Terrasses du Larzac, AOC Languedoc and IGP Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert

8 cuvées: 5 reds, 2 whites and 1 rosé

Jancis Robinson (/Tamlyn Currin, UK) (Jan. 2022)



- **Des Si et Des Mi Blanc 2020** 16,5/20 (=93/100)  
*“White flowers, chalky hay, wet chalk, soft rye bread warm out the oven. You can smell the Grenache Blanc! Very flowery on the palate, but in that distinctive Grenache-Blanc palate which is all about tiny, dried, wild rock flowers caught up with dried grasses and pressed between rough flax-paper pages. Only Grenache Blanc manages to taste both sepiia and newly snapped at the same time. Lemon verbena. Sage. Golden pears canvassed across a taut framework of bitterness. **Introvert complexity. This is so gourmand...** practically begging for fish en papillote or plaice in brown butter and caper sauce. (2022-2024).”*
- **Des Si et Des Mi Rouge 2020** 16.5/20 (=93/100)  
*“**Friendly, juicy, sappy glugful of happy wine.** This wine tastes like a party at a festival in a retro Airstream trailer where the warm summer air tastes of ripe cherries and smells of weed, where the campfire smoke is playing darts with the incense sticks from the next-door tent, and languid folk music drifts up through the guy ropes and face-taps your furrowed brow until it gives in to a beatific smile. (2021-2023).”*
- **Le Clos Secret 2020** 17/20 (=94/100)  
*“Cinsault like this confirms my head-below-parapet conviction that Cinsault already is and will increasingly be, in this world of climate change, a variety that deserves to be reclassified as 'fine'. Retaining every ounce of its southern-France, wild, windswept, garrigue-scented, fresh-blood and strawberries dipped in liquid-Brighton-rock-candy Cinsault character, it nevertheless expresses itself with the **translucent grace and stained-glass-window glow that really beautiful Pinot Noir does.** The tannins have the same sylph-like slip: tricking you into thinking that they're not there, flickering in the shadows, biting in places you least expect them to be. This wine is **impish, magical, noble**; moon, rock, blood, herbs. The goddess Diana in a glass? (2022-2027).”*
- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2019** 17/20 (=94/100)  
*“This is earthy, in an earth-connected, earth-rooted kind of way. A wine that smells of wild hedgerow berries stained on your palms and your fingernails after you've been foraging and now you're lying on the autumn-damp raw earthed grass that is still warm from the dying afternoon sunshine but **the cool dew of the early night is already settling like invisible cashmere and you can see the first stars in the French-navy-blue of the early night sky.** You can smell fresh mushrooms, nearby – perhaps you kicked them accidentally as you walked up this barrow. You can smell the crush of green grass beneath your neck. And in this wine you can still taste the memory of the sharp, intense, black, ripe berries you've spent the afternoon picking and the bitterness of their leaves that got in the way and the warm skin and laughter and mock-serious concentration of the person you picked them with. A wine you want to drink with that exact person.(2022-2028)”*
- **L'éclat 2020** 16.5+/20 (=93+/100)  
*“Crisp, clear-singing fruit on the nose with white-linen and green-apple brightness and clarity on the palate. Seemed straightforward at first, but then **the acidity started to layer up the build,** bringing the intensity of apricots, a millefeuille of lime and grilled-grapefruit citrus, bay leaf, crushed cardamom and a certain grip. Subtle bitterness plays across the palate. **There's a lot going on here,** but it needs another year in bottle. I would leave it to the end of 2022 or 2023.(2023-2026).”*

- **Lueurs d'Espar** 17/20 (=94/100)

*“Classic Mourvèdre density and concentration on the nose, and then, like slowly drawing your finger through thick purple-blue ink on black vellum, a wine that is animal and animal skin and the rigidly tight skin of tannic wild winter berries and the tannic rigor-rigidity of bare bony winter trees etched against flint skies. There is no charm, but caverns of echoing soul in this essence-of-Mourvèdre wine. I say 'no charm', which makes it sound tough and unresilient, which it isn't either. The tannins are like Sylvia Plath's punctuation: you don't see them until you're taught to, and then you realise that every jolt of words is contained in the full stops, the commas, the marks that aren't words. **Don't drink this wild wine unless you have a wild soul**, and even then, don't drink it alone, and **don't drink it without a dark night and something slow-cooked and sensuously dark to eat.** (2023-2029)”*

**La Revue du Vin de France** (Changing life to become a winegrower - Jan. 2022)

**They have taken the plunge for the world of wine** by Idelette Fritsch

*They were bankers, engineers, computer scientists, journalists... Today they are winegrowers, wine merchants or sommeliers. Their success fuels the myth of a wine Eldorado accessible to those who want to change their lives and experience the dream of making wine. Between myths and stubbornness, the new promised land of the “neos” is terra incognita .*

October 2021. Olivier Faucon, who arrived in Terrasses du Larzac in 2016, is a happy winemaker. He has just bought the anniversary edition of *Les Ignorants*, the graphic novel by Étienne Davodeau (ed. Futuropolis) which he has been collecting in all languages since its release in 2011.

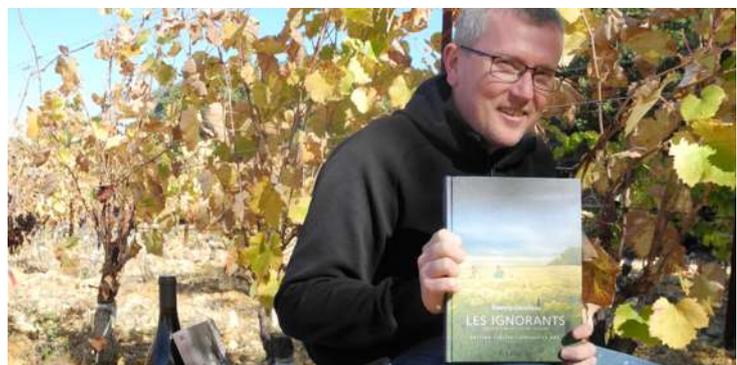


*In this limited edition augmented by a joint interview, the authors – the Angevin cartoonist and the winemaker Richard Leroy – pay homage to him between the lines by citing the – numerous – vocations aroused by this book. Olivier Faucon had sent them a case of his first wine *Ode aux Ignorants*, vintage 2016... The year of his rebirth as a winemaker at Mas Combarèla, after a first career in international marketing.*

### **Initiatory story**

*After fifteen years spent between Taiwan, Shanghai and Paris as an employee for holding companies (the survey company Kantar, the outdoor advertising giant JCDecaux and the Chinese conglomerate Haier, specialist in household appliances), Olivier acquires 10.5 hectares of vines on the Causse d'Arboras and in Montpeyroux, without cellars, to create his domain ex nihilo.*

*How could the reading of a comic strip, even in the form of an initiatory story, arouse the vocation of a second life, after the first already fulfilled? “Reading the true story of Richard Leroy, a former Parisian banker who became a winemaker in Anjou, I said to myself: why not me? “, recounts Olivier Faucon.*



*The stimulus, in 2013, comes at the age of 40 : leaving the Paris region, returning to the land, going through a solid training in Burgundy, doing a season with a star of the appellation (Vincent*

Goumard, at Mas Cal Demoura), investing all his savings in the purchase of vines, borrow from the bank over seventeen years to settle in 2016.

With, at his side, Laure Friscourt, who keeps her job in consulting in Paris, for the Ifop marketing institute. And, let's say it straight away, still no salary for him today despite recognized and appreciated wines. The case of this brilliant winemaker is far from isolated.

In a few decades, the world of wine has gone from a model of traditional family transmission to an abounding entrepreneurial dynamism: everywhere, people leave a structured, often urban living environment, to settle in the vineyard, make wine or approach it by marketing it. (...)

- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2019** 91/100 (=15,5/20)

*“Depth and power of a wine held by frank and fresh tannins, quite **delicate in a rapid dimension**. The flesh with dense fruit is delicately set with **fine tannin and perfect tension**. The finish is liquoricey and crunchy .”*

**ELLE à Table** (Terrasses du Larzac, the eldorado of neo-winegrowers - Jan. 2022)

- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2018**

*“A favorite for this estate which has continued to progress since its installation in 2016 on the Terrasses du Larzac. After 15 years of marketing, Olivier decides to change his life after reading a comic strip. But not just any: that of “Ignorants”, by Etienne Davodeau, which became a best-seller, and to which Olivier then paid homage by creating a tribute cuvée ‘Ode Aux Ignorants’. In 2013, he started a viticulture-oenology training in Burgundy, but it was on the Larzac side that he wanted to move. He landed an internship in one of the flagship estates of the appellation, Mas Cal Demoura, and at the same time looked for vines. He ended up finding a few hectares and had a cellar built. Its wines are **balanced, harmonious, elegant**. This is an ambition that shows itself but which is well controlled, which is not easy. **Very promising**. Our favorite cuvée: Ode Aux Ignorants .”*



**Terre de Vins** (Languedoc, gain altitude ! - Jan. 2022)

- **Ode Aux Ignorants 2019** ❤️ 16,75/20 (=93,5/100)

*“ ‘A paradise for grapes’, announces this estate with their vineyard located at 350 meters altitude, above the Hérault valley. And indeed, this cuvée Ode Aux Ignorants is a delight (52% syrah, 30% carignan, 14% grenache, 2% mourvèdre, 2% cinsault). It is named in homage to the comic strip of Etienne Davodeau, which was at the origin of Olivier Faucon’s adventure as a winegrower.*

*Clean, juicy, bloody, very garrigue, camphorated, here is a wine marked by superb freshness, a ripe and chiseled frame, a tonic and thirst-quenching material that **stretches in length and complexity**. Remarkable. Suggestion: pork tenderloin with its thyme jus.”*

