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Wine & Spirits

SPECIAL ISSUE

Winter 2016

CHÂTEAU
LA NERTHE
CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

Top 100 Wineries of 2016 Château La Nerthe

WINE & SPIRITS "TOP 100 WINERIES 2016", WINTER 2016



Ralph Garcin

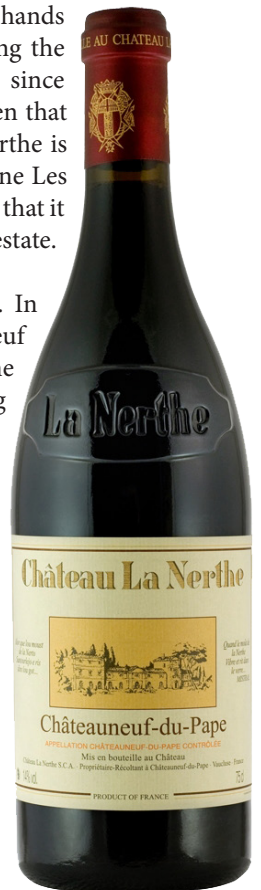
Founded: 1560
Winemaker: Ralph Garcin
Viticulturist: Jean-Michel Rieux
Owners: The Richard family and Richard Vins & Domaines
Acres owned: 225
Annual Production: 17,000 cases
Estate grown: 100%
Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports Harrison, NY
Website: chateaulanerthe.fr

One of the oldest estates in France, Château La Nerthe has played a major role in defining Châteauneuf-du-Pape with its regal, sophisticated wines.

Charmed Location: Winegrapes have been grown at La Nerthe for centuries, thanks to an underground spring that made the land particularly attractive to farmers. The Tulle family purchased the grange in 1560 and spent the next 317 years building it in size and reputation, shipping their wines all over Europe and America. After phylloxera decimated the vineyards, the estate went through the hands of a number of different families, each intent on keeping the property in one piece. The Richard family has run it since 1985, farming 225 acres, an unusually large holding given that it's one contiguous plot surrounding the château. La Nerthe is known for supple, sophisticated reds; even the young-vine Les Granières is so rich in flavor and firm in structure in 2011 that it would be hard to guess that it's the "second wine" of the estate.

White Wines: While La Nerthe's reputation is based on its red wines, the whites are just as polished and elegant. In 2014, the organically farmed vineyards weathered the cool, rainy summer well, turning out a white Châteauneuf so robust in minerality it feels as though it were wrung from stones. A barrel-fermented, lees-aged roussanne blended with grenache blanc, bouboulenc and clairette fermented in stainless steel, it strikes an appealing balance between mouthfilling density and bright, fresh notes of lemon zest, grass and wildflowers.

Patient Cellaring: When Ralph Garcin joined Château La Nerthe as managing director earlier this year, after Christian Voeux retired, one of his first moves was to release some of the vintages the estate had been cellaring. The 2004 - from a vintage remembered for its drought-like conditions up until August - is slow to emerge from the soft, caramel notes of age. The fruit comes up gradually, gauzy but present, a delicate background for a kaleidoscopic array of spices, herbs and umami flavors. It's a hunger-inducing reminder that, as seductive as La Nerthe's wines can be upon release, it's worth tucking a few bottles away in the cellar. -T.Q.T



Top-Scoring WINES

93 '04 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge \$65 (6/16)

93 '14 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc \$63 (2/16)

92 '04 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Granières de la Nerthe \$45 (2/16)



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