

NEWS

## Leading Vintners in Châteauneuf-du-Pape Make Two Big Acquisitions

The Guigal family has purchased Domaine Les Clefs d'Or in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, while the owners of Château Mont-Redon have acquired a winery in nearby Cairanne



Domaine de L'Oratoire St.-Martin, to the north of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, has 62 acres of old vines. (Courtesy Mont-Redon)



By Suzanne Mustacich

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Two top wine names in France's Rhône Valley have acquired wineries this week. The [Guigal family](#).

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search fl](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_fl)

has purchased Domaine Les Clefs d'Or in Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe, giving the Northern Rhône vintners [another property in the Southern Rhône](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/guigal-2016-vintage-chateauneuf) [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/guigal-2016-vintage-chateauneuf>]. And the Fabre-Abeille family, owners of [Château Mont-Redon](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_fl:Redon) [[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_fl:Redon](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_fl:Redon)] in Châteauneuf, has acquired the historic [Domaine de L'Oratoire St.-Martin](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_fl:Martin) [[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_fl:Martin](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_fl:Martin)] in nearby Cairanne.

"We've been looking to buy another vineyard with exceptional *terroir*. When Oratoire came up for sale, we jumped on the occasion," Pierre Fabre, co-owner and president of Château Mont-Redon, told *Wine Spectator*.

Domaine de L'Oratoire St.-Martin has been in the Alary family since 1692, with many well-tended old Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Marsanne, Roussanne and Clairette vines, some a century old. Fabre entered into negotiations with brothers Frédéric and François Alary 18 months ago. "We weren't alone in bidding for the estate, as you can imagine," said Fabre, himself a fourth-generation vintner. He added that they did not make the highest bid, but they promised to maintain the continuity of the estate.

The brothers had been running the 62-acre estate since 1984; nearing retirement and with their children having chosen different careers, they decided to find new owners who would maintain the spirit of the estate, which is certified organic and biodynamic. Ahead of their time, the Alary brothers have eschewed pesticides and chemical fertilizers for the past 30 years.

"Mont-Redon is HVE3 [High Environmental Value] certified. At Oratoire, we'll learn more about organic and biodynamic growing and see what we can adapt to use at Mont-Redon," said Fabre.

The wine will continue to be made at Oratoire, though eventually they might renovate the cellars. "The site is exceptional, with 85 percent [of vines] on the hillside. We'll produce 80,000 bottles, about 85 percent red, 15 percent white and no rosé."

Fabre took over from his father and uncle three years ago, and works with his cousin Aurelie Abeille, who focuses on marketing and logistics. Mont-Redon has 247 acres under vine in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, 62 acres in Côtes du Rhône and 82 acres in Lirac. They also produce 33,000 cases under their négociant label Réserve Mont-Redon.

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Meanwhile the Northern Rhône négociant E. Guigal has expanded its holdings in Châteauneuf-du-Pape with the acquisition of Domaine Les Clefs d'Or. Philippe Guigal first came to the appellation in 2017 with [their acquisition of the historic 124-acre Château de Nalys \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/e-guigal-purchases-chateauneuf-du-pape-domaine\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/e-guigal-purchases-chateauneuf-du-pape-domaine), after a decade-long search for a prime Châteauneuf estate.

[Philippe Guigal \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/new-york-wine-experience-2016-wine-star-philippe-guigal\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/new-york-wine-experience-2016-wine-star-philippe-guigal), general director and winemaker, was looking for more vines in the La Crau *lieu-dit* of Châteauneuf, because he believes the area produces fresher, more vibrant wines, even as the climate grows warmer.

Les Clefs d'Or has been in the Deydier-Méry family for six generations. The property now includes 87 acres spread between Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Côtes du Rhône-Villages. The 47 acres in La Crau, next to some plots of Nalys and near Clos des Papes, includes a plot of old Grenache vines believed to have been planted in 1896.

Nalys has a large contiguous vineyard in the La Crau, Sénéseau and Grand Pierre *lieux-dits*. The Guigal family also owns the 17-acre Domaine Mercier. Both Les Clefs d'Or and Mercier will be folded into the production at Nalys from the 2020 vintage, with the same technical team of vineyard manager Lionel Duplessis and agronomist-enologist Ralph Garcin. A new cellar is being planned for Nalys.

The transaction also includes vines in Côtes du Rhône-Villages Massif d'Uchaux, which will be integrated into the Guigal portfolio.