

Press Kit

AD FINES

- VINS D'EXCELLENCE -

WHY CREATE AD FINES WITH AN ASPIRATION TO SUPERLATIVE QUALITY ?

A software engineer and alumnus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Michel Rocher initially pursued a career in programming. Over the course of several decades he filled various roles developing projects, creating products for the international market, and designing courses for the University of Paris VI (Pierre and Marie Curie University); and driving high growth for firms in France and southern Europe, and startups in Paris and San Francisco.



Michel Rocher admires the robe of the 2018 Serine

While working on projects in France and Silicon Valley he had a realization: though this newborn world of computing was a formidable invention with potential and actual powers of liberation, each computer program taken separately had its own unique, almost immutable limits.

Conversely, over the course of many tastings he discovered a seemingly inexhaustible mystery in every bottle of wine. Devouring books on the subject, he learned that the history of wine reaches back several thousand years before the invention of writing. Fascinated, he decided to make wine himself in order to enter into the mystery.

Michel's experience in computer programming had confirmed the importance of quality and it has naturally become aspiration of a wine of superlative quality.

In 1991 he purchased a property in Ménerbes (Provence), and in 1994 he acquired another three hectares that were mostly planted to vines. His goal was to produce *the best wine possible* from this slope in the Heyrauds vineyard.

This would mean enlisting the very best specialists; tearing up the existing vines; improving and reorganizing soils that would be cared for without any chemical products; opting for great grape varieties: Serine, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, which are recognized as among the best in France; building a functional cellar; establishing rigorous record-keeping; and, finally, tasting and reviews of the wines of Ad Fines by top experts.

LATE MAY, 2018: BAPTISTE OLIVIER BECOMES COPILOT OF AD FINES

Originally from Léognan, a wine-growing village in Bordeaux, Baptiste grew up surrounded by vines and immersed in the world of wine. His agronomy and oenology studies took him to Angers and an internship at Domaine de Bablut, where Christophe Daviau imparted a great passion for the terroir, the plant, and biodynamic principles. Baptiste then completed his studies in Montpellier, earning the titles of Oenologist as well as Viticulture & Oenology Engineer. After gaining professional experience in the U.S., Australia, and France at Château Smith Haut Lafitte amongst other vineyards. During his studies Baptiste fell in love with the wines of the Rhône Valley while conducting a study of the region's terroir.

In 2003 he accepted a position with a negociant near the city of Orange, providing viticultural and oenological consulting for their loyal suppliers. "Through this experience I became passionate about winegrowers and the importance of teamwork—the fact that through teamwork, you can go above and beyond."

In late 2004 he decided to dedicate his energies and his career to oenological consulting in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Ventoux, and the Luberon. He worked with small growers as well as large outfits, always with the aim of maximum expression of the inherent character of the raw materials and the growers' wishes.

<http://www.chateauneuf.dk/2016/boen.htm>

Baptiste was immediately thrilled by the Ad Fines project, and particularly by the plot of Serine vines whose grapes are "some of the best ever tasted in the region" in his opinion, with "pronounced aromas of blackberry and blueberry; the quality of the skins and texture of the tannins are remarkably elegant." He receives positively Michel Rocher's invitation to become copilot of Ad Fines in May 2018, taking on the role of Estate Manager and bringing new dimensions to the established competence.



Baptiste Olivier tasting

DRIVING CHANGE: ORGANIC AND BIODYNAMIC CERTIFICATION; A HEIGHTENED QUEST FOR TERROIR; A DIFFERENT BARREL SIZE

Numerous operations have been undertaken at Ad Fines, each one with the goal of improving the expression of the great terroir of the Heyrauds vineyard in Ménerbes.

Organic & Biodynamic Certification

From the very first vintage (2001) the estate followed organic practices out of respect for the environment and in order to allow greater expression of the terroir. The three-year organic certification process has begun in 2018 and will therefore give the opportunity to Ad Fines to be fully certified for the 2021 vintage.

Starting in May 2019 the vineyards of Ad Fines entered an era of biodynamics, and the vines have already seen the first steps toward this new approach. Through these practices the structure of the soils will be improved, will preserve freshness and further the intensity of the wines. The certification in biodynamics is already planned, but cannot begin until the organic certification is completed.

A Heightened Quest for "Terroir"

The potential of our terroir in the Heyrauds vineyard was evident from the start: limestone bedrock; sandy, rocky soils from limestone scree with considerable clay content. Everything was in place for the earth to provide the vines with a steady but measured supply of water—the key to perfect maturation, and a fruit profile and minerality worthy of the world's greatest wines.



Serine vines, viewed from a stone shelter at the northern end of the parcel

Barrel Size

It was decided to change the *élevage* but not the choice of wood, as it has an important impact on quality by increasing elegance, depth, and length. The wines of Ad Fines are naturally fleshy and crisp, with generous fruit aromas and succulent flavors, so it was clear that the influence of wood should be limited to respect the identity of the wines. A slightly larger barrel was then chosen to reduce the surface contact between wine and wood, opting for 600-liter *demi-muids* to elevate the Serine grape from the 2018 vintage, and a new *foudre* 1200-liter barrel for the 2019 Syrah.

A quest for more expression of our terroir was initiated by draining the parcels before the first planting in 1996. Superior grape varieties were selected, and other important decisions followed in 2001, the first vintage of Ad Fines: agronomical improvement of the soils; composting; treating (without the use of any chemical products); controlled yields; hand harvesting with severe sorting (known as *ciselage*, or "chiseling"); parcellary vinification; and consulting by Michel Tardieu. All of these actions contribute to the expression of terroir and were executed more painstakingly with each vintage, through 2017.

We will continue to introduce new practices with each coming vintage, inspired by the experience and good sense of the greatest winegrowers, particularly the Burgundians, and adapted to the conditions of our region.

AD FINES IN THE MARKET

Ad Fines's presence in the market was driven by renowned tasters in France and worldwide; by sommeliers, merchants, and restaurateurs, large and small, who judged the wines, made selections, and placed orders. Our aim was always to gain the recognition that the wines merited, build our reputation and satisfy our clients more with every vintage, and increase appreciation of the excellence of the wines. The text below details the facts, stages, and journey of Ad Fines in the market.

Reviews of Ad Fines by Renowned Experts

Bernard Burtschy, one of France's most renowned experts (alongside Michel Bettane), tasted the 2001 Domitia (the first vintage of Ad Fines) in 2004 and deemed it "good quality, extremely fresh, with at least 10 years of aging potential." In 2014—that is, ten years later—in a vertical of 21 bottles of our production, he noted that "the Caius 2003 is a very, very good bottle, really exceptional, a great Cabernet in the style of Lafite; it must be compared to Lafite, and I didn't think that was possible;" and "the Domitilla 2010 is an excellent wine, very elegant, complex, fresh, and long ; it will go far."

Robert Parker, in the 2009 edition of his guide to the wines of France, gave 3 stars (out of 5) to Ad Fines as an estate, noting that "the sublime Domitilla 2006 evokes a Côte-Rôtie, it is ripe, opulent and round," and "the Caius 2006 is supple and quite simply delicious, pure, and full-bodied, with a deep color."

Ad Fines Recognized by the Maison de la Truffe et du Vin du Luberon (Luberon House of Truffles and Wine)

Founded in 2004 by the local government of Ménerbes, the *Maison de la Truffe et du Vin du Luberon* (Center for the Truffles and Wine of the Luberon) invites all winegrowers in the Luberon Regional Park to show their wines, which are then sold there at the same prices offered at the individual estates. To keep things simple this has served as the sales point for Ad Fines since the founding of the *Maison*, and in just a few short years the wines of Ad Fines rose to become the highest-quality wines offered there.



Conquering Michelin-Starred Restaurants

Ad Fines lost no time in conquering starred restaurants, earning a place on the list of three of the ten Michelin three-star restaurants in Paris: in 2006, the 2004 Domitilla at Pierre Gagnaire's flagship restaurant in the Rue de Balzac; in 2009, the 2005 and 2006 Domitilla at Guy Savoye; and in 2012, the 2008 Domitilla at l'Astrance. The fifth and latest sale to Pierre Gagnaire, which took place in 2019, included the 2014 and 2006 Domitilla, the latter aged 13 years at the time.

The list of starred restaurants carrying the wines of Ad Fines in our home department of the Vaucluse is very long: Édouard Loubet's La Bastide de Capelongue in Bonnieux, the Sammut family's La Fenière in Lourmarin, Christian Étienne in Avignon, Le Vivier in l'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, La Bastide de Gordes and Les Bories in Gordes, Xavier Mathieu in the hotel Le Phébus in Joucas, and Prévôt in Cavaillon. In one starred restaurant that has offered both Bomitilla and Caius since 2003, clients "no longer ask for the wine list, but rather for the list of Ad Fines wines."

Developing Sales in France

The praise from renowned experts, entry into Michelin-starred restaurants, and Ad Fines's presence at the local market in Luberon paved the way to develop sales to wine shops and restaurants around France, finding the wines a place in several hundred locations around the country. (Our website, adfines.com, features a convenient search function to find our wines by zip code.) These businesses are quite varied; the wine shops include 'Bacchus et Ariane' in the Saint-Germain covered market in Paris, 'La Cave du Clos' in the Val d'Oise department, 'DiVin' in the Vaucluse, 'Côté Vin' in the Gard, 'Boutique Vini' in the Haut-Rhin (Upper Rhine), 'De Vignes en Vin' in the Pyrénées Atlantiques, and 'Aux 4 Coins du Vin' in the Gironde; and the restaurants include 'L'Ardoise' near the Place de la Concorde in Paris, 'Le Verre à Vin' near the Gare de Lyon in Paris, the hotel 'Fontenille' in the Vaucluse, and 'Le Capucin Gourmand' in Haute-Savoie.

Developing Export Sales

To understand the development of our export sales it is useful to reference the Swiss importer 'La Vinothèque de la Charrière,' which in late 2018 ordered a pallet of Domitilla 2013 and Caius 2013. Since 1986 its founders, Dany and Nadia Pochon, scour France for "sublime" wines that evoke emotion and sell them, primarily in Switzerland. This company, which was named "Best of France" by the French Embassy for importing the best French wines to Switzerland, offers the following succinct presentation of Ad Fines: "This discovery is as wonderful as it is unexpected. But what a revelation, what a sensation—what a marvel! It is Ad Fines." After a dozen lines of tastings notes for the two wines, they conclude, "this is great art!" Our development of export sales consists of replicating this Swiss success story.

To conclude, beyond the development of sales in France, our main challenge is to discover the best importers and convince them to carry Ad Fines, then to meet their expectations by delivering great emotion through young and old vintages



Michel and Baptiste tasting the 2018 Serine from barrel

AD FINES - GALLERY



A parcel of Serine vines at daybreak, with its stony soil in the foreground



A parcel of Cabernet Sauvignon vines; Serine vines behind them, to the left; the village of Ménerbes and the Luberon mountains in the background



A parcel of Syrah viewed from the porch in front of the winery



A parcel of Syrah viewed from the south



A parcel of Syrah in early morning, with a view of the Luberon in the background



The terroir is sandy, with clay, limestone scree, and seashell fossils (which contributed to the formation of the limestone)



A superb stone shelter, known as a *borie*, in the northwest corner of the Serine parcel; in the foreground, a Serine vine