CHATEAU SAINTE-EULALIE PINOT NOIR
2019/$14.99

DESCRIPTION

The Black Mountains (Montagne Noir), on the south-western edge of the great Massif Central, give way to foothills that roll south to the famous Canal du Midi and the road that threads between medieval Carcassonne and ancient Narbonne.

In these foothills you will find the 40 hectares of Château Sainte-Eualie, a benchmark Minervois estate near the village of La Livinière, itself the first part of the Languedoc ever to be awarded cru status in 1999.

Isabelle Coustal and her husband Laurent bought the property in 1996 and have built it into an estate that we are proud to have worked with for many years. They farm sustainably and have been certified as such by the French government, and in 2006 invested in a warehouse relying on a geothermal system to maintain the optimum temperature.

The vines are nurtured on south-facing terraces and slopes at between 200 to 250 metres altitude, sheltered from the north winds by the mountain range. Sun-soaked syrah, grenache, carignan and cinsault grow alongside a little sauvignon blanc on pebbly soils containing a high percentage of clay, chalk and manganese, and some of the vines are deep-rooted centenarians. The harvested grapes are hand-sorted on arrival at the cellars to weed out any fruit not considered good enough before fermentation in a variety of vessels and vats.

The premium cuvée is La Cantilène, named for a Romanesque poem of 881AD, is only from the cru and it sees up to 50% new oak, while their other reds age in concrete vats. The consistent high quality of their Minervois and Minervois La Livinière AOC wines make this a Languedoc estate well worth following.

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The quest for high quality, affordable Pinot Noir can lead one down many paths, most of them disappointing in the end. While discussing this very subject over dinner with Laurent Coustal, owner and winemaker of Chateau Ste. Eulalie in Minervois, Laurent leapt up from the table, his face beaming. "Let me show you something," he exclaimed, as he bounded out of the room.

Tasting the unlabeled mystery wine that Laurent brought back from the chais, we were soon beaming, too. Distinctly Pinot Noir. Such bright fruit. No hard edges. "This is from a neighbor's vines. We make the wine together and I bottle it for him. The vineyard is on a remote hillside that the locals call 'L'Enfer, (French for 'Hell'), because the terrain is so rugged." It seemed that only by the grace of Ste. Eulalie herself, could a wine so fine and elegant have come from such an unforgiving place. We bought the entire production on the spot.

Grapes are harvested, then go through a 2-day cold soak. Primary fermentation takes place in neutral vat over two weeks, after which the wine stays in contact with its fine lees for five months. The young wine then rests for 6 months in stainless steel tanks before bottling.

About L'Enfer: Dubbed "Hell" due to the difficulty of farming on the rugged terrain, L'Enfer is located on a steeply-graded hillside abutting the Montagne Noire. This marks the end of the Massif Central and its continental climate, as the terrain begins its descent to the Mediterranean. The Eulalie parcel consists of 1.5 ha of Pinot Noir and 2 ha of Chardonnay. The cool microclimate of the hillside location allows for the gradual ripening of the delicate Pinot Noir grapes, unlike the many Pays d'Oc wines produced on the torrid plains.

Tasting Notes

Nose:
Aromas of lavender, juniper, thyme, rosemary, and sage mingled with red fruit notes.

Palate:
Rich cherry fruit, with a fine underpinning of Pinot earthiness and notes of garrigue. Luscious and fruity, but made with restraint, this is a lovely expression of cool-climate Pinot Noir with a distinct Mediterranean character.

Pairing:
Pinot noir pairs well with seared or grilled salmon, roasted chicken, beef bourguignon, beef wellington, roast pork, mushroom risotto, or portobello burgers.

Winery Website: [Home - Château Sainte Eulalie (chateausainteeulalie.com)](http://chateausainteeulalie.com)

Languedoc-Roussillon, France