

DOMAINE
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15 YEARS

OF ETERNAL YOUTH

P R E S S P A C K



Domaine Gayda's cypress-lined driveway cuts through its vineyards with draughtsman's precision, looking like it has always been there. It stands as a beacon in the heart of the Malepère appellation fanning out as it reaches the building housing the winery, the gleaming tanks and the restaurant nestled amidst the vineyards, with its deliberately understated design. This image of an estate that fits perfectly into the landscape belies its youthfulness: Domaine Gayda was actually built from scratch in 2003 by a trio who met in South Africa. It was here, in Brugairolles, South-West of Carcassonne, that Tim Ford, a British ex-pat who spent many years in South Africa, the investor Anthony Record and French winemaker Vincent Chansault realised their dream of creating an estate in Languedoc. Achieving that dream would take years of investment and hard work because this diminutive Aude estate in Brugairolles was a blank canvas waiting to be painted. The original 18th-century farmhouse – a former coaching inn bought a few years previously as a holiday home – was surrounded by fields of sunflowers and nothing else. Over the years, they would gradually make way for vineyards.

MEDITERRANEAN AND LOIRE GRAPE VARIETIES

Beginning in 2003, the estate's 12 hectares of unbroken land embracing myriad inclines and aspects became home to Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Chenin blanc,

FOUNDED IN 2003 SOUTH-WEST OF CARCASSONNE, DOMAINE GAYDA HAS FOR THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS BEEN THE FOCUS OF AN INSATIABLE DESIRE TO CONSTANTLY PUSH THE BOUNDARIES. CAPITALISING ON THE DIVERSITY AFFORDED BY THREE ICONIC TERROIRS BETWEEN LANGUEDOC AND ROUSSILLON, ITS GROWERS HAVE MADE THEIR WINES SYNONYMOUS WITH CREATIVITY AND EXCELLENCE.



Sauvignon and even 1 little hectare of Côte Rôtie. The cherry-picked varietal range includes both Mediterranean and Loire grapes and exemplifies a spirit of freedom that challenges the conventional local wisdom of the appellation system. It speaks volumes about the mindset of the estate's founders who, from the outset, would follow one guiding principle: to produce wines of excellence with no preconceived ideas about grape varieties or terroirs, keeping an open mind in order to select the finest varietal characters in typical New World spirit. This inherent curiosity would be an integral part of each stage of the estate's development.

A MOSAIC OF TERROIRS

In 2004, Domaine Gayda chose three vineyard sites located in both Languedoc and Roussillon. The chalky sandstone around Brugairolles, near Limoux, is complemented by the finesse of the limestone plateaux in Minervois-La Livinière following the purchase of a six-hectare vineyard in the foothills of the Montagne Noire. At the same time, the estate broadened its range of terroirs to include schist, red clay in Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet and granite in Latour-de-France in the neighbouring department of Roussillon by buying meticulously selected fruit straight from the vineyard. By leveraging the diversity of these three terroirs - maximised by differing weather patterns (oceanic, mountain etc) - Domaine Gayda structured a range of 20 wines in red, white and rosé. All of them are labelled as Pays d'Oc PGI with the exception of *Villa Mon rêve Cuvée*, the estate's top bottling which is classified as AOP La Livinière.

Understanding and fully getting to grips with the vineyards of the La Livinière appellation would take ten years. Only then could the bespoke *Villa Mon Rêve* label be released for the first time in 2015.

A TEN-YEAR LEARNING CURVE IN THE VINEYARD

Long before they established Domaine Gayda, Tim Ford, Vincent Chansault and Anthony Record aspired to creating wines by strictly adhering to the same uncompromising standards as for Grands Crus. In Cape Town, they sought advice from Marc Kent, director of South Africa's prestigious Boekenhoutskloof winery who would provide Vincent Chansault with assistance for the first vintage of the *Chemin de Moscou* label. But their ambition at Domaine Gayda is not to replicate a New World style in Languedoc - the wine growers aim to champion the quintessential character of their adoptive region and thus embarked on a steep learning curve in a bid to fully grasp

the intricacies of the soils of Languedoc and Roussillon. To achieve this, they opt for hand-crafted, single-vineyard fermentations, using small tanks (15 to 100 hectolitres), 20-kg crates for harvesting, a sorting table, a selection of the finest casks - mindful to select the best origins, toast, coopers and wood grain - all of which are seen as a prerequisite for successfully analysing viticultural potential. Choosing to focus on fundamental research is time-consuming and building up the estate's range of wines would not happen overnight. But now, the wines - including the best-selling *Chemin de Moscou* label - have secured recognition for their intrinsic qualities and are distributed in Horeca channels, where they are served in around sixty Michelin-starred restaurants (the 2-star Michelin Les Cèdres in Granges Les Beaumont; Bernard Bach's Puits Saint-Jacques** in Pujaudran; the Violon d'Ingres* in Paris etc).

ORGANIC AND BIODYNAMIC

Working to such high standards has also led Domaine Gayda to break the mould and go down the organic route. It began the switch-over in 2008 and was certified in 2011 and is now pushing the boundaries of AB-certified organic farming by introducing biodynamic preparations in the vineyards at Brugairolles in 2017. These low-impact agricultural techniques are far from a passing fad and aim to restore the plant's balance and natural defense mechanisms, in response to the vine's needs. "*The calcareous sandstone soils of the Malepère area have characteristically high pH levels, they are compact and support vigorous growth. They needed to be revitalised*", explains Vincent Chansault. The estate's winemaker is on a relentless mission to identify the perfect definition of terroir, maximising expression in the fruit from each vineyard. The new 'En Passant' range, released autumn 2017, typifies this approach. It embraces a collection of intentionally short-lived labels and mirrors the determination by these Languedoc wine growers to constantly show reverence to the different terroirs across the Occitanie region, and explore every facet of them.



DOMAINE GAYDA

THE STORY

IN 2018, DOMAINE GAYDA CELEBRATES ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY. HERE IS A LOOK BACK OVER A STORY THAT BEGAN JUST BEFORE 2003 IN THE PROVINCE OF CAPE TOWN.



Before 2003, Tim Ford was a rose producer in Zimbabwe. Vincent Chansault, the team's French member from the Loire Valley, was plying his trade as a winemaker in the vineyards of Stellenbosch, South Africa. Investor Anthony Record had just bought an 18th-century farmhouse whilst on holiday in Languedoc. But Cape Town was where the threesome decided to realise their dream of creating an estate in Languedoc. In 2003, the dream became reality: Domaine Gayda came onstream, building work began on the winery (and was completed in 2004) and the first Syrah vines were planted in Brugairolles.

IN 2004, as planting continued in Brugairolles with Cabernet franc and Chenin blanc, the acquisition of six hectares of vines in the La Livinière appellation area paved the way for the first vintage of Domaine Gayda, labelled *Chemin de Moscou*. After spending two years maturing in oak casks and a few more months in bottles, it was released in 2007 and is now the estate's best-selling wine.

IN 2006, Domaine Gayda opened its restaurant amidst the vineyards, followed by four gites in the historic converted farm buildings. Ahead

of its time, the estate became a centre for wine tourism, in some ways encapsulating the Anglo-Saxon way of life and turning Domaine Gayda into a go-to destination: between the gourmet restaurant, gites, estate tours and tastings, 10,000 people visit the property every year.

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AFTER CONVERTING TO ORGANIC IN 2008, Domaine Gayda was certified in 2011. The initiative stems from the deep-rooted beliefs of its wine growers: Tim Ford and Vincent Chansault were already using organic techniques in their previous ventures. Organic has now evolved into the use of biodynamic techniques, which have been trialled in the vineyards at Brugairolles since 2017.

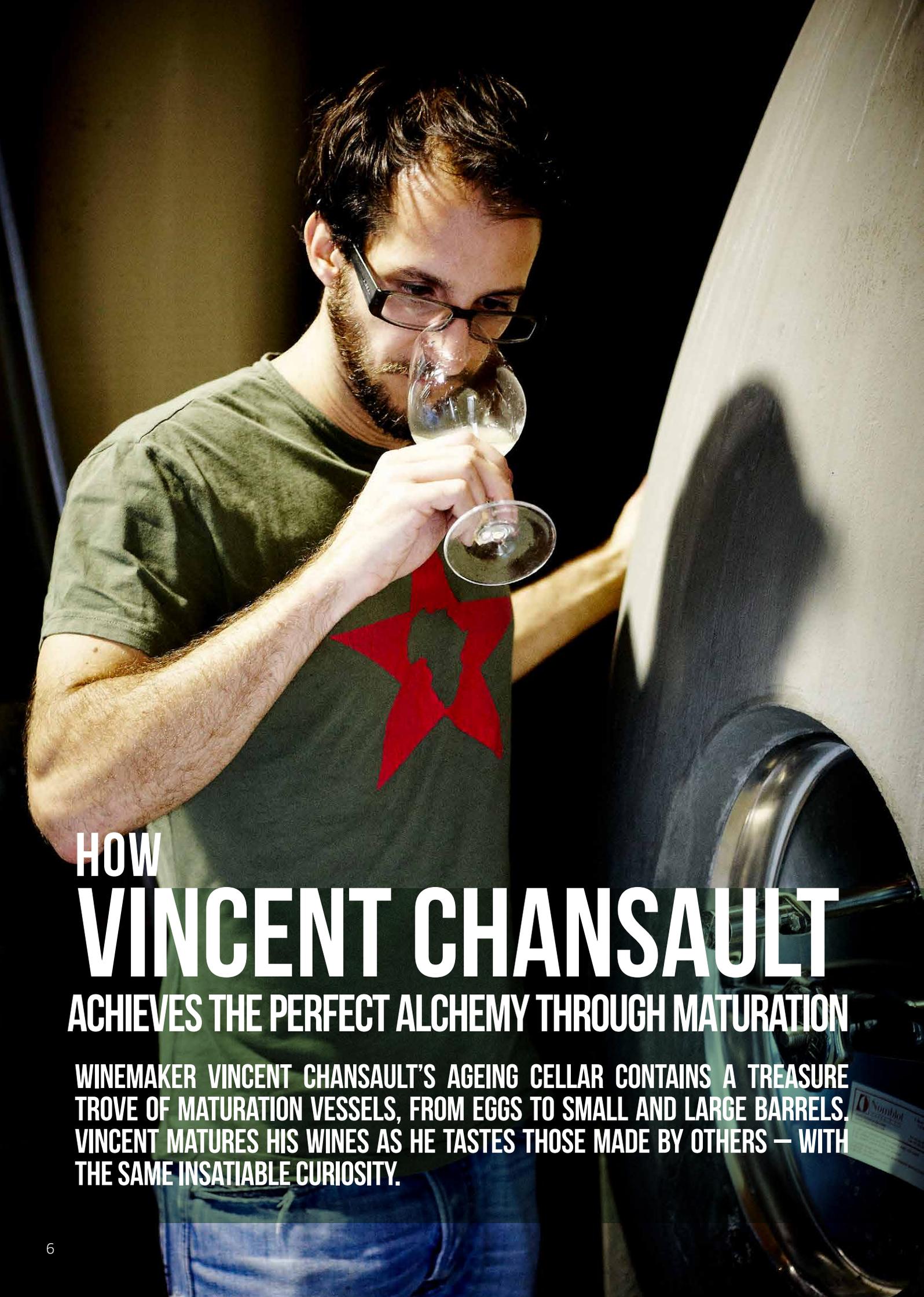
IN 2013, with production now topping 1 million bottles – half of them exported to 41 countries – the winery had to be extended to keep up with increased production. Its footprint was doubled to 1,500m² and the same year, the wines were bottled on site.

2015: ten years after the vineyards were bought in La Livinière, Domaine Gayda released the very first vintage of *Villa Mon Rêve*.

EN 2017, the acquisition of 18 hectares of vines in Roussillon secured the future of the best-selling label *Chemin de Moscou*. For over ten years the vines had provided fruit for the estate's wines through a long-term partnership with the wine grower who ultimately retired.

THE END OF 2017 saw the launch of a new range of wines, 'En Passant', a collection of short-lived labels which marks another milestone in the estate's history..





HOW

VINCENT CHANSAULT

ACHIEVES THE PERFECT ALCHEMY THROUGH MATURATION

WINEMAKER VINCENT CHANSAULT'S AGEING CELLAR CONTAINS A TREASURE TROVE OF MATURATION VESSELS, FROM EGGS TO SMALL AND LARGE BARRELS. VINCENT MATURES HIS WINES AS HE TASTES THOSE MADE BY OTHERS — WITH THE SAME INSATIABLE CURIOSITY.



CHEMIN DE MOSCOU, THE TOP-SELLING LABEL

The *Chemin de Moscou* label, created in 2007, is Domaine Gayda's 'Alpha & Omega': it is a blend of old vine Syrah from La Livinière with their alter ego from the granite soils of Latour-de-France in Roussillon, along with Cinsault and Grenache grown in La Livinière, Roussillon and La Malepère. This best-seller's quirky name in fact encapsulates a story with strong local roots: it is named after the Moscow tree and the estate's namesake vineyards listed on land registry.

GAYDA IN BRUGAIROLLES.

History tells how airmail pilots flying over the village's vineyards, delivering post between Toulouse and Barcelona in the aftermath of the First World War, used it as a landmark. Struck by lightning, this totemic tree has since then disappeared from the landscape but its name lives on with this lush blend marketed as PGI Pays d'Oc with its expressive nose of black fruits and spices.

Constantly searching for the ideal wine, the demanding winemaker relentlessly experiments with new containers. His quest for the ideal barrel, which took ten years of hard work with coopers to find the right dense, fine grain and extensive drying period for instance, culminated in the ultimate collection of casks in Domaine Gayda's 500-barrel cellar: the outstanding 'Ecrin' barrique by Saury and prestige 'Marcel Cadet' barrels by Dargaud and Jaegle.

But in 2010, the search continued and larger-volume barrels (500 litres) were bought, followed in 2013 by sixteen 2,000-litre tuns for fermenting Grenache grapes. In 2012, experiments began with the estate's first concrete egg-shaped tanks, each with a capacity of 16 hl - there are now six of them in the winery. "Whilst tasting wines with a Swiss wine grower who fermented half the fruit from one of his vineyards in oak, the other half

in egg-shaped tanks, I was able to test this style of ageing. I liked what I saw.

The egg shape allows me to work with the lees, which are constantly moving, creating even smoother tannins", explains Vincent Chansault.

Although these ageing methods are not destined for one particular wine, they may well become the norm one

day for one of the labels. "When you leave college at 22, you do not want to take the same approach to winemaking as the previous generation. The vineyard is your teacher: nature gives you back what you give it.

It's part of your life's journey, so you want to try everything but with a different, simpler approach", adds Vincent. His search for the Holy Grail continued in 2017 when a white and a red wine were fermented in terracotta amphorae and egg-shaped tanks.

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