

2016 Domaine Saint Prefert / Isabel Ferrando Châteauneuf-du-Pape Collection Charles Giraud

A perfect wine that's up with the top handful of wines in this incredible vintage, the 2016 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Collection Charles Giraud (60/40 Grenache and Mourvèdre) boasts a sensational nose of currants, cured meats, kirsch, exotic spices, and sandalwood. Deep, full-bodied and powerful, yet with an incredible sense of elegance and purity, it just glides across the palate and, despite its awesome intensity, it never seems heavy or over the top. Give it 2-3 years, and it will keep for two decades or more.

Proprietress Isabel Ferrando has taken her Saint Prefert estate to France's highest level, and she's unquestionably making some of the most profound wines on earth today, including both reds and whites. The estate is located in the southern portion of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and covers roughly 55 acres, from which she releases five cuvées: two whites and three reds. Looking at the reds, the classic Châteauneuf-du-Pape is always a rough blend of 90% Grenache (from 70-year-old vines) and the balance Syrah and Mourvèdre aged in demi-muids and smaller barrels. The Reserve Auguste Favier comes from 60- to 100-year-old vines and is based largely on Grenache with around 15% Cinsault, aged all in older barrels. This cuvée always shows a seamless, elegant profile. Lastly, and what I would consider her top wine, the Collection Charles Giraud is always a blend of 60% Grenache and 40% Mourvèdre, with the Grenache aged in tank and the Mourvèdre in demi-muids. I've also included her Châteauneuf-du-Pape Colombis cuvée here, which is released under the Isabel Ferrando label. It's 100% Grenache from the sandy soils of the Colombis lieu-dit located on the western edge of the appellation. As I've written in the past, readers looking for the essence of Grenache shouldn't miss this beauty. While the style changed slightly in 2009, when she started including more stems and harvesting earlier, these latest releases show sensational depth of fruit and texture, and are almost overflowing with Provençal charm. Today, she is assisted by consultant Baptiste Olivier, who's increasingly working with the top estates in the region. Madame Ferrando is at the top of her game.

- Jeb Dunnuck (8/28/2018)