



Comments and analysis by Mr. SAUTTER Ulrich - Editor-in-Chief of Falstaff magazine - as part of the 2024 vertical tasting of Mas de Daumas Gassac Red.

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VERTICAL MAS DE DAUMAS GASSAC: SLOWLY BUT STEADILY

The legendary Languedoc winery Mas de Daumas Gassac has a ritual: **once a decade, it invites journalists to a vertical tasting of its wines to date.** On 20 June, the time had come again. It was an opportunity for an exciting comparison of the current tasting impressions with the tasting notes from 2014.



The fourth vertical tasting in the company's history took place for the first time without the visionary company founder Aimé Guibert, who passed away in 2016 at the age of 91. A brief flashback: Guibert had no background in viticulture when he founded the winery in the Haut Vallée

de Gassac in the mid-1970s, in the middle of a wilderness that is still only partially tamed today. Guibert brought advisors of distinction to his side: Émile Peynaud, Bordeaux's leading oenologist, who is still considered unrivalled by many winemakers who have studied or worked with him. Also from Bordeaux came Henri Enjalbert, the highly specialised and highly respected wine geologist and soil scientist.

The trio of the two academic luminaries and the passionate practitioner Guibert planted Cabernet Sauvignon in the calcareous and ferrous glacial deposits in the valley of the Gassac stream near the village of Aniane. The basic recipe for the Grand Vin, using around 80 per cent Cabernet in the blend and half a dozen other grape varieties for the rest, was already used in the first year in 1978, and has never been changed since.

THE WINES OF THE 1980s AND 1990s

At the time of the last vertical tasting in February 2014, the wines from the founding years had already reached a ripe old age. And yet they were brilliant! Vintages such as 1979, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1989 and 1990 impressed with their aromatic depth and still great tension. And how did the wines taste ten years later? **As 47 vintages of the red Mas de Daumas Gassac have now been produced and the tasting was limited to 27 wines,** it was not possible to make a direct comparison with every wine tasted in 2014. But the 1981, 1982, 1985 and 1988 vintages showed: Wines of naturally greater maturity today, and with a somewhat greater spread of freshness between the individual bottles in circulation during the tasting – the famous “bottle variation”.

However, the samples from the good bottles only seemed to have changed in nuances compared to the 2014 tasting – the wines have obviously only matured in small steps over the last ten years. Vintages such as 2010 or 2005, which ten years ago proved to be very closed, are now only just opening their doors enough to allow a glimpse into the treasure trove of their aromatic potential. **From this slow development over the last decade, one can undoubtedly conclude that the more mature wines will continue to give pleasure for another 20 or 30 years, and the younger ones for even longer.**

The initial question that Guibert, Peynaud and Enjalbert asked themselves in the 1970s, was: *Is a Cabernet-based wine with the ageing potential of a first-class Médoc possible in this remote part of the Languedoc?* - **This question can be answered with a resounding “yes” with even more certainty today than ten years ago.**

THE NEW VINTAGES

Samuel, Basile and Roman Guibert are continuing their father's work with great continuity, as demonstrated by the wines produced since 2014. The siblings emphasise a somewhat gentler extraction – they strive more than their father did for polished, fine tannins. And of course the harvest data has also changed: While the last harvest day in the decade between 1978 and 1997 was in October nine times, the same was only true once for the decade 2013-2022 (namely in 2013). As a result, the siblings have been quite successful in maintaining the moderate alcohol levels for which Daumas Gassac has always been known - during the first 25 vintages, a typical vintage was between 12.5 and 13 per cent by volume. Since 2008, however, there has no longer been a “12” in front of the decimal point; in the last 15 years, the alcohol content has usually been around 13.5 per cent by volume. The 2018 vintage even touched the 14 per cent by volume mark.

With all this fine-tuning, Daumas Gassac remains a characterful, completely independent wine. **The**



vineyards for the Grand Vin, planted as small islands of vines in unspoilt garrigue, right on the edge of the forest or even in clearings in the forest, together with the rock-rich soils, create a fingerprint that is not blurred by the search for a little more souplesse. What's more, the pioneering spirit of Aimé Guibert and his wife Véronique is once again proving to be visionary. **The topic of “agroforestry”, i.e. the conscious search for a mixed cultivation of vines, trees and shrubs, is today regarded as a key future concept for dealing with climate change. And yet, that's exactly what the Guiberts did – 50 years ago!**

TASTING NOTES

2005 DG RED

98 A spicy nose that is just beginning to unfold: dry shrubs, garrigue, menthol. Buttery notes. On the palate, the wine is still a monolith: **grainy, ripe tannins, lively acidity and tactile minerality.** But **100** there is also juiciness and nuances, and a cassis-fruity finish. **It's impressive how unpretentious and light this is, and that with this enormous extract density.**

2016 DG RED

97 Elderberry, red pointed bell peppers, cassis and a hint of menthol on the nose. Also rock flour. On the palate, the wine has very good tension, an intense but still fine acid nerve runs through the **100** structure, **the tannins are still plastic and firm, dissolve juicily and give way to a penetrating and long-lasting tactile minerality on the finish. For the long haul!**

2010 DG RED

97 On the nose: **black pepper, menthol**, but everything is only hinted at and not very open. On the palate, the wine is compact and **respectfully full-bodied, fleshy, integrated acidity**, still seems **100** incredibly young, but the certain ageing potential is recognisably great, as is the length.

1985 DG RED

97 **Some malt. But also mint. Wild plum, a hint of truffle.** On the palate, the wine combines a still firm texture with lively acidity and intense tactile minerality - also with a rather powerful alcohol. This is **100** certainly ready to drink now, but the length and mineral component are exceptional, **the finish is still compact and full of energy and suggests further ageing potential for good bottles.**

2018 DG RED

96 **Coffee and milk chocolate, first savoury, almost truffy notes.** On the palate, **the wine immediately reveals an intense tactile mineral component.** The tannins are grainy and dense, just **100** beginning to mellow, a distinctly supple background and a rather ripe acidity complete the picture of a warm but **well-balanced vintage.**

2015 DG RED

96 Somewhat **buttery on the nose, vanilla, speculoos cookies**, gradually some fruit opens up: **elderberry pulp, blackberry, black pepper. Also purple pastille.** The palate reveals grainy, **100** dominant, slightly dry tannins. Despite the rather medium to medium-high amount of tannins, **the structure dominates the fruit. Definitely to cellar further.**

1991 DG RED

96 **Fine fruit on the nose: elderberry, blackberry, blackcurrant, menthol. Very clear and still fresh.** On the palate, the wine is just as elegantly constructed, juiciness and substance intertwine. The **100** acidity supports unobtrusively, while at the same time **giving length to the fruit and the strong tactile and mineral components.** This is not a wine that defines itself by its power, but by its style and measure, and certainly with density.

1988 DG RED

96 Initially a little animalistic on the nose, also savoury and spicy, and **with aeration it becomes increasingly fruity.** The palate begins decidedly supple, then develops finely melted but still taut **100** tannins, **the fruit is vivid early on the palate** and lingers for a long time, **giving the structure a wonderful ripe sweetness. A delicate mineral tint over everything.**

1982 DG RED

96 **Dark berries, fresh, elderberry, black pepper, juniper, a hint of leather.** On the palate, the extract is still firmly held together, with ripe, grainy tannins in a dense but well-judged quantity that leaves **100** room for juicy nuances. **Good tactile minerality**, high alcohol, but **everything in balance.** Ripe acidity provides unobtrusive support. **Long, juicy finish.**

2022 DG RED

95 **Still primarily fruity on the nose, blackcurrant, blueberry, sage.** On the palate, the extract is medium-bodied, the wine shows mealy to fine-grained, slightly clinging tannins, mild acidity, is **100** recognisably held in a style aimed at decency. Slightly viscous background and thus with a southern impression. **A distinctly tactile, mineral finish.**

2020 DG RED

95 **Dark chocolate, sandalwood, butter. Cranberry. On the palate, the wine is very dense without being massive:** fine-grained tannins to chew on, ripe, well-integrated acidity and **plenty of juiciness** **100** **give the wine an extremely elegant appearance** despite its high density. **A modern take on the classic.**

2011 DG RED

95 **Spicy, cassis and tobacco, dried meat. On the palate fleshy, slightly dry, soft base, ripe acidity,** **100** **currently still little binding of structure and fruit,** the maceration style is taken to the extreme, but

there is certainly ageing potential, and also juiciness as a counterweight. High alcohol. A note from the 2014 tasting: "an old-school wine for cellaring. Seems very promising with its introverted nature". Needs more time even now.

2009 DG RED

95 Open, delicately savoury fruit. Also slightly floral. Full of tension on the palate, good acidity, fine-grained tannins that are beginning to mellow, lots of juiciness and a very good chalky and **100** mineral component. Significantly further along in its development than 2010 and 2011, with a savoury, slightly creamy finish.

2001 DG RED

95 On the nose: coffee, elderberry pulp, wild strawberry. The palate combines grace with density, juiciness goes hand in hand with light viscosity and the fine acidity with sweet fruit - it all seems **100** very well balanced and poised. Even if the vintage is perhaps not one of the very best in terms of depth and complexity, **this is still very fine to drink now.**

1997 DG RED

95 At first, it seems almost closed on the nose. Then: herbs, juniper. Sweet wood. Also iron. Red **100** currant, wild strawberry. The tannins are fine and dense, still full of tension, the palate structure has a beautiful balance, the alcohol is integrated, **juiciness and tactile minerality give the wine elegance.**

1995 DG RED

95 Distinct herbal and savoury on the nose, fisherman's friend, star anise, coriander, then cassis, **100** very complex. The palate is still dense and taut. Grainy, slightly dry tannins still hint at the remnants of earlier green notes, but **the ensemble seems well balanced and equipped for another 20 years of maturation.**

2012 DG RED

94⁺ Buttery, milk chocolate. Still dominated by oak. On the palate, the wine is dense with grainy **100** tannins, appears tannic, **acidity and alcohol are well integrated.** The overall impression is still youthful and almost closed, after 12 years! Difficult to assess.

2003 DG RED

94⁺ **Two extremely different bottles.** One (like all wines, opened the evening before the tasting and stored overnight, sealed with a bar top cork, in a climatic cabinet) smells of stewed fruit, greengage, **100** malt, a (justifiable) hint of volatile is also vivid, but **also fresh redcurrant. The palate is very softly grounded and has a powerful dose of grainy, dry tannins on top.** The flavours are more developed than the structure - but this will still be exciting to follow. **Density and length are exceptionally good.** The wine from the second (freshly opened) **bottle smells of raspberry and sage candy,** has no oxidative undertones at all, appears fine-grained and dense on the palate, **with a lot of juiciness and playfulness,** but also only medium length. The highest dry extract of all the vintages produced to date (36.0 g/l).

2007 DG RED

94 Initially almost a little "loud" on the nose, yeast, **red currant, passion fruit,** but with air contact also **100** cassis, elderberry, blackberry. **The palate is sinewy, full of tension, with pronounced acidity and fine tactile minerality, good density, lots of juiciness in the background. A truly elegant wine!**

1994 DG RED

94 Very slightly oxidative notes, but these diminish in the glass. **Fruit: blackcurrant and pepper. 100** Menthol. Smooth base, and a dense, grainy filling on top, still firm, acidity and alcohol are well integrated, this is very firm and a little brittle. But of course, there is still room for further development, **the tobacco-like finish aromas even show that there is further ageing potential.**