

A tale of three siblings

If Gratien Mayard were alive today, he would doubtless be delighted by the latest news: his great-granddaughter Françoise Roumieux-Mayard has been named president of the Femmes Vignes Rhône group, an association of 30 women winemakers based in the Rhône valley whose aim is to highlight the role of women in the traditionally masculine world of wine and develop the profile of the Rhône *appellations*.

Founded in 2004, this group of dynamic French female producers cultivates a down-to-earth approach to wine via their presence at public events and trade shows. This year's VinExpo in Bordeaux (June 19-23) sees them presenting their wines to visitors from around the world at a special "off" event on Monday June 20 from 3pm - 6 pm at the Palais des Congrès (Bordeaux-Lac), in association with other French women winegrowers from the national Femmes de Vin group.

Heading up the Femmes Vignes Rhône group is just one of the responsibilities of 45 year-old Françoise. With her older brother Didier (a wine broker by trade) and younger sister Béatrice (the domaine's marketing manager), she now runs the 43-hectare estate that is Vignobles Mayard. To date, five generations of the Mayard family have laboured at this historic Châteauneuf-du-Pape winery where internationally-acclaimed cuvées are created.

However, at the end of the 19th century, the future was looking less bright: with his vineyards ravaged by phylloxera, Gratien Mayard was tempted to cut his losses and move to the United States. Fortunately for his descendants, his attachment to French soil triumphed. Gratien chose to stay put and painstakingly replant his vineyard, vine by vine, paving the way for future generations; today, the three Mayard siblings and their team continue to uphold their predecessor's values.

With Business and Commerce studies under her belt, it would have been logical for Françoise to be involved in the sales and management side of the business, but she was drawn to wine making and started working alongside her father in 1989.



FRANÇOISE ROUMIEUX-MAYARD
HAS BEEN NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE
FEMMES VIGNES RHÔNE GROUP

A decade later, she took over the domaine and continued to modernise the winery and develop the vineyard, focusing on environmentally-friendly, sustainable farming methods. Thus,

FAMILY BUSINESS



(L-R) FRANÇOISE ROUMIEUX-MAYARD, DIDIER MAYARD, MARIE ANGÈLE MARTINEZ, BLAISE DEL BANO, BÉATRICE MAYARD, ALAIN NARJOUX

the soil is worked mechanically and vineyard pests are fought using sexual confusion methods; herbicides and pesticides are not used, and yields are carefully managed (25 hl/ha is the average) to allow this world-renowned terroir its full expression.

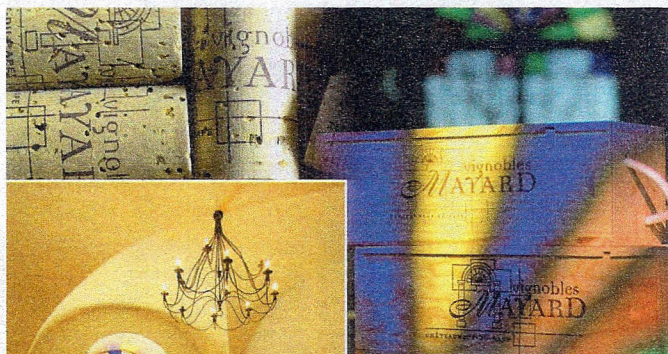
The Mayards' forty-odd parcels are spread across the Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation, with a concentration in the south (21 hectares) and a smaller ensemble (eight hectares) on the

Crau plateau to the north-east. This variety of *terroir*, combined with moderate rainfall (600 millilitres per annum) and the bracing Mistral wind, translates into a range of wines with firmly-enscribed typicity, whose complex aromas and structure are particularly appreciated by fans of an elegant, Old World style.

The Mayards and their team tend a portfolio of nine varieties: Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Bourboulenc, Roussanne and Picpoul are used to create fruity, mineral white wines, while Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Cinsault are the stars of the red show, giving birth to the full-bodied La Crau de Ma Mère (named after the siblings' grand-mother Marie-Louise Mayard, the 2005 vintage was scored 90-92 by Robert Parker).

Situated in the heart of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the Mayard domaine is also Didier's home (his sisters live nearby). Visitors can sample Vignobles Mayard's production in the tasting room and visit the recently-renovated, 17th century former barrel chai, complete with vaulted ceilings. Those attending VinExpo in Bordeaux this summer would do well to stop by the Femmes de Vin event, where Françoise will be pouring the fruits of her family's labour, along with almost a hundred other women winemakers from seven French regional associations.

Louise Hurren



THE 17TH CENTURY
FORMER BARREL
CHAI HAS
VAULTED CEILINGS