

Mas de Daumas Gassac Vertical: The Unexpected Finesse of the South



When Véronique and Aimé Guibert fell in love with an old country house with a water mill in 1971 and bought it from the Daumas family, they could never have imagined that, barely ten years later, wine critics would call it the “Château Lafite of the Languedoc”. Sprawling and hilly, the estate, named “Mas de Daumas Gassac”, borders the Gassac stream and offers superb views of the Arboussas and Larzac mountain ranges.

A friend of the family visited the estate at the very beginning and was thrilled, with good reason. As a geographer and specialist in vineyard geology, Henri Enjalbert immediately recognised what a rough diamond the family had acquired. The limestone and sandstone soils reminded him of Burgundy’s Côte d’Or. Combined with a contrasting microclimate, they would preserve the finesse and freshness of the grapes even in summer.

This was the start of a perhaps somewhat crazy adventure. Alongside local grape varieties, the family above all planted a flagship Bordeaux variety, Cabernet Sauvignon. It proved to be a masterstroke. Thanks to the unique terroir, it revealed a finesse unusual even for this variety, delighting critics and wine lovers alike. A few years later came a wide range of white

varieties, above all Viognier and Chardonnay. This too was a clever move, as the whites are every bit the equal of the reds.

Today the estate covers around 45 hectares, made up of plots scattered across the hills and bordered by forest. Since the early 2000s, the family's second generation has been in charge, but little has changed in the wines, which remain as magnificent as ever. Just one piece of advice: open the wine ahead of time.

Tasting and text: Birte Jantzen

At a Glance

Although located within the "Terrasses du Larzac AOP," the estate has retained its "Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert IGP" classification — Cité d'Aniane, where Saint Benedict of Aniane developed viticulture in the Gassac Valley beginning in 780 A.D. In 1971, Véronique and Aimé Guibert purchased a country house there, along with the attached watermill. 1972: The first vines were planted, including Cabernet Sauvignon from a mass selection. The wine cellar was set up in the old mill. 1978: Visit by the renowned French oenologist Émile Peynaud. Impressed by the vineyards' potential, he became the family's wine consultant; the first red wine was released. In 1982, critics hailed the red wine, calling it the "Château Lafite of the Languedoc." In 1986, the first white wine was released. Over the following decades, the estate established itself as a pioneer in the Languedoc region.

White Wines

Blanc 2025: 95 points | 2026 to 2046

Complex and fresh, with fine spice and structure, this is a young high-flyer. Peach compote, ripe lemon, a little verbena and lemon balm sit alongside freshly grated almonds, jackfruit and wild mint. Already very well balanced, it still needs a few years to hit full speed. A wine with great potential.

Blanc 2021: 95 points | 2026 to 2046

Melting freshness and a hint of tannin. It is both silky and wonderfully present on the palate. Its fine, expressive bouquet suggests yellow peach, herbs, flowering garrigue, juicy pear, candied ginger, quince and wild mint. Very long on the finish, harmonious and full-bodied. Already great fun to drink.

Blanc 2016 🏆: 97 points | 2026 to 2040

An emblematic wine of the South. Apricot jam, ripe pear, black basil, a touch of anise, orange blossom and wild mint, toasted almonds, spice and cardamom. Racy and balanced, it is only now beginning to open up fully. Long on the finish and harmoniously fresh, it is a sheer delight.

Blanc 2012: 95 points | 2026 to 2040

Fully developed, rich, generous and long, it is both nuanced and full of character. Notes of fruit paste (peach, apricot, quince), mirabelle plum jam, anise and cardamom, with a little liquorice and wild mint. All of this is carried by melting freshness and a finely structured texture. Still plenty of potential.

Blanc 2006: 96 points | 2026 to 2036

Opulent, with harmoniously balanced freshness, it is long and spicy on the finish. Mature aromas of candied fruit, mandarin, heather honey, caramelised tarte Tatin, green tea, a little popcorn, fine notes of anise and wild mint, and a hint of garrigue. The wine truly breathes the South and is a real pleasure to drink right now.

Blanc 2000 🏆: 97 points | 2026 to 2036

Candied fruit (quince, pineapple, a hint of mango), lightly caramelised. There is a touch of wild mint, mirabelle plum compote, aniseed biscuit and apricot tart with pistachio cream. A poem of complexity: very long, balanced and fully developed, with a fine tannic structure on the palate. A fresh, self-contained wine with a lot to say.

Blanc 1998 🏆: 97 points | 2026 to 2036

Very closed at first, it needs some time in the glass. It then shows a great deal of charm and character. Dried fruit, lemon verbena, genmaicha tea, mandarin zest and wild mint, along with candied apricots, peach compote and ripe quince. Complex, very fresh and long on the finish, it still seems almost youthful. Stunning.

Red Wines

Rouge 2024: 95 points | 2027 to 2046

Still very young, both untamed and elegant. It needs another year of rest, or should be decanted. Plenty of dark fruit (blueberry, blackberry, juniper berry), a little menthol, mocha and fine leather, as well as violet, graphite and anise. All of this is underpinned by very silky tannins and lots of freshness. Long, with fine bitter notes and plenty of spice.

Rouge 2023 🏆: 97 points | 2026 to 2046

Plenty of personality in the glass, with an enchanting dynamism. It is at once a teenager and a southern French poet. Elegant and very promising, with juicy fruit, graphite, candied fruit (black cherry, blueberry, blackberry), and a little mocha and liquorice. Delicate and densely woven, with silky tannins and perfect freshness. Outstanding.

Rouge 2018: 96 points | 2026 to 2046

Harmonious, approachable and elegant, it unfolds notes of blood orange, clove, clementine, lingonberry, wild herbs, dark fruit and a little mint. With its rough-velvet texture, it dances on the palate, balanced and wonderfully fresh. Supple, with a brilliant future ahead.

Rouge 2017: 96 points | 2026 to 2046

A bouquet of forest floor, candied orange, mocha, dark chocolate, wild mint and violet, black tea with bergamot, blackberry and blueberry, and black cherry. Complex and balanced, it has dense, silky tannins and plenty of freshness and suppleness on the palate. It gains substance in the glass, so it is well worth decanting.

Rouge 2011 🏆: 98 points | 2026 to 2040

Elegant, fully developed and balanced in style. Caramelised fruit, forest floor, tobacco, mocha, fine leather, a little mint, blueberry and blackberry, juniper berry and unsweetened black cherry jam from the Basque Country. Lots of freshness and a velvety texture on the palate. A textbook southern French Cabernet in the Margaux style.

Rouge 2000 🏆: 98 points | 2026 to 2036

A gentleman on the palate. Self-contained and harmonious, it has radiant freshness and an exemplary velvety tannic structure. It has plenty of substance and yet real lightness. Fine notes of mocha and noble leather, tobacco, candied blood orange, blueberry, black cherry and wild berries. Perfect now.

Rouge 1994 🏆: 97 points | 2026 to 2036

Minty, with small berries (blueberry and blackberry), mocha, blood orange, a little gingerbread, and ripe, candied fruit. Lots of freshness and velvety tannins with an elegant, tweed-like structure. A wine of character with great presence on the palate. Perfect now.

Rouge 1989 🏆: 99 points | 2026 to 2036

An absolute high-flyer of radiant freshness, full and lively, it recaptures its youth in the glass. Notes of roasted aubergine and bell pepper, aniseed biscuit, blueberry and blackberry, a hint of mocha, tobacco and blood orange, and slightly floral notes. All of this rests on silky tannins. Full of finesse and truly astonishing.

🏆 *Top favourites of the tasting*