

# Domaine Marc Sorrel



Since at least 1893, the Sorrel family has been an important curator of one France's legendary terroirs: the hallowed slopes of Hermitage. And today, under the guidance of Guillaume Sorrel, the wines are among the Northern Rhône's most singular bottlings.

## A LEGACY ROOTED IN HERMITAGE

Though the family had long tended vines in Hermitage, the business was officially registered in 1928 by Felix Sorrel. The estate sold its production in bulk until the 1970s, when Felix's son, Henri, began bottling a portion of the production.

Henri quickly built a reputation with the prodigious 1978 and 1979 Hermitage Le Méals, both aged in ex-Romanée Conti casks. They are still drinking beautifully, and both remain highly sought-after to this day.

Henri's son, Marc, took the reins from his father in 1984 and strengthened the family legacy by acquiring additional parcels in Hermitage's best *lieux-dits*. It is exactly that great vineyard heritage that allowed today's steward, Guillaume Sorrel, to thrive when he took over after the 2018 vintage. His success in the years since has been nothing short of meteoric.



## RICHES BEYOND GOLD

The domaine boasts over 2.5 hectares in the prized *lieux-dits* of Le Méal (-0.80ha red/0.20ha white), Les Bessards (-0.15ha red), Les Greffieux (-0.20ha red) and Les Plantiers (-0.50ha red/0.10ha white), and Les Rocoules (-0.60ha white).



These sites represent the essence of Hermitage, known for their granitic soils, steep slopes, and exceptional exposures. It is here that Sorrel's old vines—many of which exceed 60 years in age—produce wines of striking depth and complexity.

In addition to Hermitage, Marc struck gold in 1991 when he acquired the rights to just under 2 hectares in nearby Larnage. Larnage is in a small, wind-swept valley just north of the Hermitage hill, and it has a distinctive white-clay soil that traps moisture. With only 60 total hectares planted, this relatively cool valley yields rare and utterly unique red and white Crozes-Hermitages—wines of finesse with personalities to rival most Hermitages.

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And, while Marc's father had occasionally used the term "Gréal" on his label, it was Marc who was responsible for codifying the two wines that would cement the domaine's name among Northern Rhône insiders: his sumptuous Hermitage Blanc "Les Rocoules" and his imposing Hermitage Rouge "Le Gréal." Both wines take the power inherent in Hermitage while adding a measure of unmatched elegance and perfume.



*"The legendary Les Rocoules and Le Gréal bottlings are in a class of their own." Joe Czerwinski (January 2022)*

## A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Guillaume's ascension for the 2019 vintage marked the beginning of a new era for the estate. Trained in both viticulture and oenology, Guillaume brought a fresh perspective while remaining deeply committed to the traditions he inherited from his ancestors.



He introduced a new level of healthy vineyard work that is bringing even more character to the wines and is helping the vines adapt to today's hotter, drier vintages. The sequence of vintages produced under his watch has been truly dazzling, with critics jumping over each other to lavish praise on his bottlings.

## THE WINEMAKING

In the cellar, the estate remains staunchly traditional. Guillaume may adjust according to the vintage, but he tries to use whole bunches for the reds whenever stems are ripe (often 100%). Macerations last 30-40 days with early pump-overs to oxygenate the yeasts and he punches down the caps only as needed. The wine then ages for 1-2 years in well-used oak barrels and is bottled without fining or filtration.

Winemaking for the whites is even simpler, with fermentation and aging done primarily in old oak barrels and bottling after ~16 months. It is as old school as it gets in today's wine world.



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## THE WINES

In most vintages, six cuvées are produced.

The flagship wines are, of course, the Hermitage classiques from the breadth of the estate's parcels. The **Hermitage Rouge**, primarily from Les Plantiers and Les Bessards, is archetypal Hermitage –supple and restrained but showing the power of Syrah from these granitic slopes. Likewise, the **Hermitage Blanc**, sourced from Plantiers and Greffieux, is a testament to the great potential of Marsanne grown on the perfect site.

But, for collectors, Sorrel's two lieu-dit-based Hermitages are truly iconic.

The famed **Hermitage Le Gréal** derives its name from the two *lieux-dits* that Sorrel uses to blend the wine: Les Greffieux and Le Méal. Most of the fruit is selected from the estate's oldest Le Méal vines (a majority planted in 1927-1928) that naturally imbue the wine with great complexity and density. Greffieux brings more perfume to the blend, and a small percentage of Marsanne adds to the wine's explosiveness and balance.



The **Hermitage Blanc Les Rocoules** hails from arguably the appellation's greatest site for white wines. [Chave, too, sources a key portion of its Hermitage Blanc from Rocoules]. Sorrel's vines in Les Rocoules were initially planted in 1928 with additional vines planted in the 1930s and 1950s. Plantings consist of 95% Marsanne, though Guillaume will incorporate up to 15% Roussanne into the final blend for enhanced balance and perfume.

Finally, the **Crozes-Hermitage Rouge** and **Blanc** are two of the finest values in the entire Northern Rhône. Sourced from 2ha in Larnage, and made essentially the same as the Hermitages, these two wines combine power and delicacy in a way that is rare in the entire Rhône Valley.

In the pantheon of Rhône greats, Domaine Marc Sorrel stands tall. The estate symbolizes a dedication to authenticity and is a reminder of why Hermitage continues to hold a place in the hearts of wine lovers worldwide.

For those who seek purity, precision, and the true taste of Hermitage, Sorrel's wines are nothing short of a revelation.