

**James Molesworth – The Wine Spectator**

## **One Last Stop in Gigondas: Grapillon d'Or**

**Céline Chauvet's 2017s are finessed follow-ups to back-to-back top vintages**



Photo by: James Molesworth

Grapillon d'Or is the end of the road in Gigondas this year.

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I made my last stop in Gigondas at Domaine de Grapillon d'Or, nearly 10 years after my first visit. Céline Chauvet, 47, is as charming and affable as ever; the tasting room is shiny and modern now, though, with a pretty impressive collection of corkscrews to boot.

The domaine totals nearly 50 acres of vines, with 35 in Gigondas. It's not easy to add holdings in Gigondas, Chauvet notes. "When I started in 2010, a hectare [2.47 acres] of good *terroir* with vines was 50,000 euros," she says. "Today it's 200,000."

All of her Gigondas holdings are on the plateau below the town, and the domaine is planted to only Grenache and Syrah, a bit of a rarity in an appellation where Mourvèdre, Cinsault and Clairette play roles. Winemaking is unchanged here, with the grapes destemmed before fermentation. Chauvet was among the first to prefer this technique, eschewing the accepted tradition of the appellation. "Now it is more prevalent in Gigondas," she says. "It's why the wines have more elegance and finesse now than in the past."

Fermentation then takes place in cement vats followed by *élevage* in a mix of cement, steel and *foudre*; there is never any new oak used here.

The **2017 Gigondas** is a blend of 80/20 Grenache and Syrah, from the domaine's younger vines situated on sandy soils. It's very pure and racy, with fresh cassis and cherry preserve flavors lined with a subtle chalky spine.

The **2017 Gigondas Excellence** is a 60/40 Grenache and Syrah blend sourced from the domaine's older vines on a mix of clay and limestone soils. There is no *foudre* used during the *élevage* for this cuvée, which is denser, darker and offers more spice and *garrigue* notes through its long, perfumy finish. Both are excellent follow-ups to the impressive 2015 and 2016 duo here, easily the best wines produced by this domaine to date.