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Secrets and Wines: Guigal Acquires the Historic Château de Nalys in Châteauneuf-du-Pape



**"We're not taking over a fancy name, or a fancy brand, or a fancy vineyard; we're taking over a terroir."
- Philippe Guigal, third generation winemaker, E. Guigal**

Always charming and gracious, I recently discovered that winemaker Philippe Guigal is also very skilled at keeping a big secret! In spring 2018, we had a laughter-filled **tasting** of his family's famous & fabulous **E. Guigal** wines from the Rhône Valley in the south of France. A few months later, I was invited to meet with Philippe again because he had some major news to share -- in July 2017, almost a year **before** our April meeting, his family had acquired the historic **Château de Nalys** estate & winery in **Châteauneuf-du-Pape**. Was I the last person on the planet to hear this news? (*Really, Philippe? Not even a hint did you give me. Well played, Monsieur!*)



However, all was forgiven when **Philippe, and his lovely wife Eve**, hosted a special tasting of the Château de Nalys wines in November 2018. Since their founding in 1946 by Philippe's grandfather, Etienne Guigal, E. Guigal has always produced a Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine but they did not have their own estate in this prestigious winemaking region in the southern Rhône.



The Guigal family had been searching for a property in Châteauneuf-du-Pape for more than 20 years. Acknowledged in land registers as far back as the 16th century, Nalys is one of the oldest estates in the region. But it isn't just age that makes Nalys special. A true rarity, Nalys actually contains all 13 of the grape varieties that are permitted in the Châteauneuf-du-Pape blend. This extraordinary vineyard consists of 3 adjoining parcels spanning more than 125 contiguous acres. Impressive!



During our meeting, Philippe and Eve spoke of the deep love and respect that they already have for this great land. They don't view the acquisition of Nalys as just an expansion of the Guigal legacy but as a commitment to serving as stewards and protectors of this precious terroir. With this in mind, Guigal will be making some improvements to the winemaking and vineyard practices at Nalys but in a respectful way that honors its legacy.

2017 marks the first Château de Nalys vintages produced by the Guigal family. The wines display an elegance, energy, and expression of place that are a signature of the Guigal style. I can only imagine how impressive future vintages will be as the Guigals become even more intertwined with the property.



Saintes Pierres de Nalys Blanc Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2017 (\$58)

Saintes Pierres means holy stones, a cheeky play on the soils and history of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The region's soils are famous for a top layer of pebble shaped *galet* stones and the name of the region means "the Pope's New Home" -- a reference to the 14th century move of the Pope from Rome to Avignon. A blend of Clairette, Bourboulenc, Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, and Picardan; this white wine is a beautiful medley of mineral, citrus, peach, and herb flavors. Fresh and full.



Saintes Pierres de Nalys Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2016 (\$58)

A blend of Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, Muscardin, Counoise, and Mourvedre; this lovely wine strikes an impressive balance between richness and freshness. Juicy red fruit flavors wrap around a thread of earth and soft tannins.



Château de Nalys Grand Vin Blanc Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2017 (\$105)

A grand blend of Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Bourboulenc, and Picquepoul, this white is bold but full of grace. Full-bodied and plush with a touch of spice and cream. Vibrant citrus with a kiss of tropical fruit. Pretty and powerful.



Château de Nalys Grand Vin Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2016 (\$105)

There's nothing timid about this precise blend of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, Counoise, and Vacarese. Bold and complex flavors of dark fruit, rich earth, spice, and minerals open up beautifully in the glass.