



PATRICK ALLEN SELECTIONS

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Château Virgile Costières de Nîmes

The Domaine at-a-glance

Owners: Serge and Thierry Baret
Winemakers: Serge and Thierry Baret
Soil: Clay and Alluvial Deposits
Size: 35 Ha **Location:** Vauvert, Costières de Nîmes
Appellations Produced: Costières de Nîmes



Thierry Baret, Patrick Allen, and Serge Baret

This family-owned domaine is managed by two brothers, Serge and Thierry Baret, who along with their father, cultivate 35 hectares of vineyards. The domaine, which is located 15 km from the Mediterranean Sea, dates back to 1748. The vineyards which are planted right at the edge of a plateau, where there are deep alluvial gravel deposits from the Rhône River — a mixture of granite and limestone pebbles (known locally as *gress*). The vines enjoy the benefits of a Mediterranean climate on the sunny slopes above the *Natural Parc de la Petite Camargue*. The national park is a vast wetland famous for its pink flamingos, indigenous white ponies, and its gourmet salt, *fleur du sel*. The Mediterranean

climate in this region provides three characteristics that are beneficial to producing excellent quality grapes:

1) abundant sunshine; 2) rainfall within a limited number of days; and 3) favorable winds that keep the grapes free of moisture and mildew.

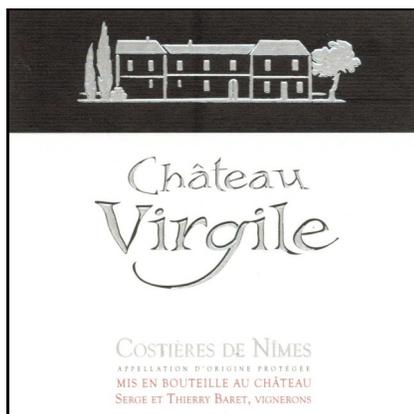
Though Costières de Nîmes is one of the oldest viticultural areas in France, it isn't until recently that it has received the recognition they deserves. In 1986 Costières de Nîmes was elevated from a Vin de Pays to A.O.C., and in 2004 the area was re-classified as part of the Côtes du Rhône. Today there are less than 100 private wineries, and the majority of wine in the area is produced by négociants and cooperatives.

The seemingly incongruous, and almost surreal symbol of the region, is a crocodile chained to a palm tree (see top left of this page). The symbol dates back to Nîmes' Roman roots, and represents their triumphal campaigns in Egypt. In the image,

Egypt is represented by a crocodile, and the chain attached to a palm tree symbolizes Egypt's capture. The victorious soldiers were then rewarded with farms and vineyards on the rolling hillsides around the city of Nîmes.

The name Château Virgile which now is used in reference to the noted Roman poet Virgil, was the name of the original owner of the domaine.

The entire Baret family is warm and hospitable. Serge and Thierry are very personable and hardworking winemakers dedicated to utilizing the latest technology to improve the quality of their wines and elevate the appellation of Costières de Nîmes.



A black Bull, in the Arena of Nîmes

Costières de Nîmes Blanc 2016

Marsanne 40%, Roussanne 40%, Viognier 10%, Rolle 10%

Technical Notes: The grapes are harvested at night to preserve their freshness. After which, they undergo a short 6-hour maceration in a pneumatic press. The wine ferments for 20 days in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks, and is then aged on the lees for 6 months before bottling. Interestingly, white wine accounts for only 4% of the entire production of Costières de Nîmes.

Tasting Notes: The Château Virgile Blanc is a beautiful example of a white Rhône. This is the second vintage in which they have added the grape variety Rolle (Vermentino). The addition of Rolle to the blend has brightened up the wine, making it a bit livelier than in previous vintages. The Roussanne, adds stone fruit flavors of peach and apricot, it also adds weight, texture, and body to the wine. Next, the Marsanne adds lively acidity, a hint of minerality, and citrus fruit flavors. Finally, the Viognier adds tropical fruit flavors to the wine, as well as beautiful, floral aromatics. This is a beautifully balanced wine, ideal for just about any type of shellfish, especially seared scallops, or simply on its own as an aperitif.