

# PHARAON

“There are two ways of seeing: with the body and with the soul. The body's sight can sometimes forget, but the soul remembers forever.”

— Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*

Winemaker Dave Phinney experienced such an observation following a visit to the vineyards surrounding the idyllic town of Maury, France perched at the base of the Pyrenees Mountains in the spring of 2008. Taken aback by the raw beauty and potential for an exceptional wine, he immediately became invested in the region by acquiring prime, hillside vineyards. Beginning with 40 acres of 80-100 year old, head trained vines, a vision for a winery soon resulted to realize his dream. This idea required some serious contribution however, including multiple sojourns back and forth from his home base in the Napa Valley as well as ingratiating himself to dubious locals. A modern winery soon resulted and additional vineyards were carefully selected to become a part of what is now known as Department 66; and Dave's second home one week per month. Grenache along with trace amounts of Syrah and Carignan are the stars of the project, which are carefully blended together in a decidedly New World approach. The natives have now become friends, and together a collective spirit has emerged, primed to reveal what this singular region is all about.

Following four successful vintages in Maury and some acclaim, Dave determined he could offer more. Something truly exceptional that would represent the absolute best of what Department 66 is all about. Only four barrels were deemed worthy enough following a scrutinizing selection process. The result is called Pharaon and we are pleased to offer the first release of this powerful and intense wine.

As a child, one of Dave's favorite books was the Count of Montecristo. On page one, the protagonist, Edmond Dantes, arrives in Marseille, France on a ship named Pharaon, which has etymologic roots dating back to ancient Egypt. The name resonated and remained with him throughout his life. Favoring a unique approach to branding wines, it seemed especially appropriate to name his flagship wine, Pharaon. Ironically, Dantes fiancé turned enemy in the book, Mercedes, hails from Catalonia where the wine originates.

Only made in 2009, a select number of bottles have been sent to the United States to be sold on a limited basis. Not offered to retail due to scarcity, this is a winery exclusive that features actual schist soil deposits hand applied as the label and harvested from Maury, France.

O R I N S W I F T

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## WINEMAKER NOTES

Supremely intense and concentrated aromatics of wild berry jam, licorice, and exotic spices explode out of the glass. The entry is a powerful, yet concentrated shot of crushed boysenberry, anise, and blueberry, with delicate floral and mountain herb notes in the background to add intrigue. Supplanted with the most delicate tannins, the finish lasts seemingly forever.

ORIN SWIFT

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