

Domaine de la Terre Rouge

TERRE ROUGE® AND EASTON WINES

This minty red blend shows how wines can take on the flavors of plants that grow nearby



Esther Mobley
April 28, 2021

“Garrigue” is one of those perfect wine words — a concise term that encompasses a larger, and very beautiful, idea. The word refers to the unique mix of vegetation that grows throughout part of southern France, near the Mediterranean Sea: fragrant, shrubby plants including lavender, thyme, rosemary, white flowers and juniper. It’s thought that the oils from the native flora make their way onto grapes in nearby vineyards, imbuing the resulting wines with the intoxicating flavors and aromas that recall those plants.

That exact set of flora doesn’t appear in California, of course, but we do have our own version of garrigue. Ours is called chaparral, and it is often marked by the presence of scrub oak, sage, [chamise](#) and manzanita, among other plants. Although you can find chaparral-influenced wines

Domaine de la Terre Rouge

TERRE ROUGE® AND EASTON WINES

throughout the West Coast, one place where its imprint is particularly potent is in the Sierra Nevada.

A delicious red wine from the Sierra foothills, in Amador County, pays homage to that. [Domaine de la Terre Rouge's](#) Garrigue cuvee is a hearty, rich, structured red, but its overall effect is lightened by its lilting fragrances and fresh flavors — its deep notes of blackberry and blueberry are countered by lightly herbal and intensely floral accents. Mint, thyme, resinous pine needle and earthy, wet soil appear alongside the fruit.

Winemaker Bill Easton has no doubt that those notes are the gifts of nearby vegetation. Wild chapparal — buck brush, coyote brush, toyon, yerba santa — surrounds the vineyards whose fruit goes into this wine. Some of the area's vegetative signature, he says, connects directly with that of southern France: Both places have pine trees and wild thyme, for example. But even when they diverge, Easton believes “there's something similar about the smells and tastes you get from these resinous types of plants.”

The Garrigue wine pays a more specific homage, too, to a winery in Provence called Domaine de Trevallon. Its red wines are an equal blend of Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon, two grapes rarely seen together. Syrah is prevalent in this part of southern France, but Cab — a popular grape variety in other French wine regions, like Bordeaux — is anything but. Yet Trevallon has earned an ardent following for its unorthodox blend, and Easton counts himself among its biggest fans.

“I've always liked that perky spiciness,” Easton says of the Trevallon red. “That's what really inspired me here.”

His blend washes out a little differently, with about two-thirds Syrah and one-third Cabernet. Domaine de la Terre Rouge is currently selling the 2013 vintage of Garrigue, which is old for a current-release wine. That's standard practice for Easton, who holds back all of his red wines several years before selling them. In my mind, the delayed release adds value to the bottles, since the winery has already done the aging for you. And like many of Easton's reds, the Garrigue has held up nicely at eight years old, with flavors that still feel fresh and vibrant and primary. The advantage is that the few extra years of age have softened and smoothed this grippy wine's texture. For that type of elegant, aged, structured red wine, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more fairly priced wine in California than this, which goes for about \$25.

The wine is available from [Domaine de la Terre Rouge's website](#), K&L or William Cross Wine Merchant. Please note that price may vary slightly depending on the retailer, and stores may run out of inventory.

Domaine de la Terre Rouge Garrigue Sierra Foothills 2013 (\$25)

Esther Mobley is The San Francisco Chronicle's wine critic. Email: emobley@sfchronicle.com Twitter: [@Esther_mobley](https://twitter.com/Esther_mobley)