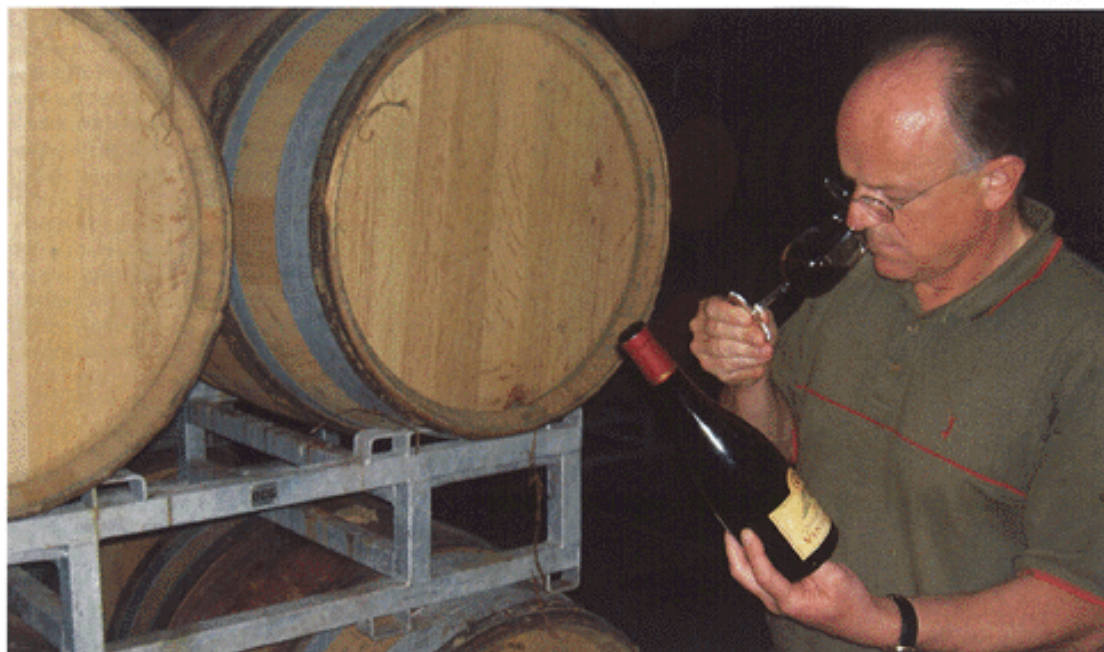


## VINSOBRES: THE PRODUCERS

The banker who gave up his career to buy a vineyard; and a forward-looking co-op with a high-tech selection system – just two of the producers making a name for Vinsobres. **Christelle Guibert** meets them, and recommends her top 10 wines to try from the cru they call ‘the north of the south’



**ABOVE:** The Belgian Gérard Constant resigned from his job in finance and took a crash course in viticulture. It paid off

### DOMAINE CONSTANT-DUQUESNAY

**PASSIONATE ABOUT WINE** since the early 1980s when he used to travel the world on business and visit vineyards in his down time, Gérard Constant knew that one day he would be making his own wine. The day finally arrived in 2004, when he decided to resign from his financial job to invest in a 12ha property in Vinsobres.

At the age of 46, with no previous experience, Constant took a crash course in winemaking and, after talking to producers, found this high-altitude, south-east facing vineyard for sale. ‘The sale was a painful transaction for the previous owner,’ explains Constant. ‘This vineyard had always been in the family but the son didn’t want to take over so he was left with no option other than to sell the land.’

The first three years didn’t mark a positive start; with no cellar to make his wine, Constant subcontracted production. He was so disappointed with the finished

**‘I don’t have any Mourvèdre and I would love to find a small parcel, but I promised my wife I will not expand – or it’s divorce’**

wines that he persuaded the previous owner to allow temporary use of his cellar. He had to invest extensively in equipment and he is now looking to buy more land on which to build his own cellar.

‘There isn’t much land available near the vineyard but I would like to build a very modern cellar, discreet outside but designed to a very high spec inside,’ says Constant. For the last two years, he has been using the well-regarded Philippe Cambie as a consultant. He also practises sustainable agriculture: ‘I am convinced that wines are 80% made in the vineyard and 20% in the cellar. I am attracted to

biodynamic methods, but there are certain things, such as cow horns, that I don’t believe in,’ he says.

Constant is not planning to expand the vineyard; he is aware that 12ha won’t make him a millionaire but he is doing it for the love of wine. He also needs to preserve the love of his wife, however. ‘I don’t have any Mourvèdre planted and I’d love to find a small parcel,’ he says, ‘but I promised my wife I will not expand – or it’s divorce.’

The Belgian Constant doesn’t yet consider himself a local, but he doesn’t take offence: ‘If you’re not from within 20km of this area, you are a foreigner,’ he laughs.