

# A GRENACHE BY ANY OTHER NAME ...

## LET'S TOUR THE MEDITERRANEAN TASTING THREE VERSIONS OF THE MYSTERIOUS, DELICIOUS GRENACHE!

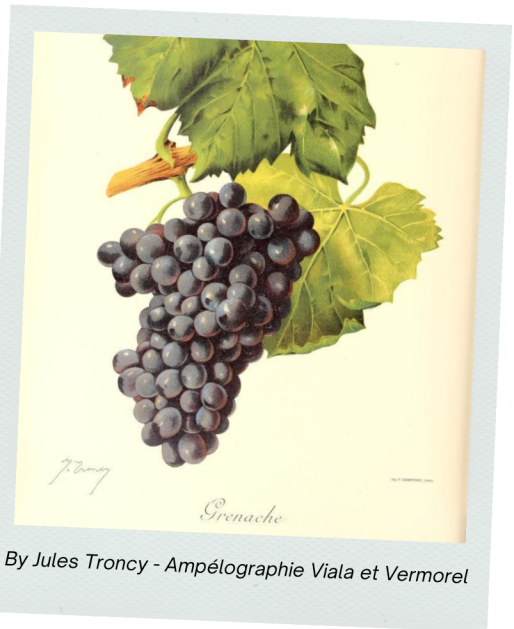
Several of my most impactful wine events took place in the early days of an underage winemaking career in Paso Robles. Starting as a harvest hand, it was picking grapes and driving tractors in the morning, then winery work 'crushing' grapes all afternoon and evening. After harvest, we switched to 'barrel work' (topping, racking, blending) on the previous vintage wines. I was still new to wine, but I was intrigued and curious, and one grape continued to blow me away.

Sticking your nose in a barrel of young Grenache is one of life's pleasures. Bright red fruit, spicy, intoxicating, and ethereal. It was my first love of wine that later took me to the heart of the Rhone Valley, the mountains of Spain, and getting lost on the windy dirt roads in the Languedoc. Almost always chasing some version of Grenache or the perfect blend of Grenache and Syrah.

Grenache has been a darling of the Mediterranean for centuries. It loves the warm, dry weather, and its sturdy bush vines withstand harsh winds and cool winters at high elevations. The origins of the grape continue to be debated, but a new breed of devoted, curious winemakers are looking to the past to secure a bright future for their regions.

They say smell is your strongest sense connected to memory. So when customers ask 'what's your favorite grape, region or wine', it's hard not to think back to those early days, nose in barrel, lost in the moment, oblivious to my future pursuit of great wines.

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Follow along with tasting videos to get a closer look at the wines before opening them up! [winesintandem.com/videos](https://winesintandem.com/videos)





*Winemaker and Director Fabio Angius in the cellar*

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**WE WANT TO MAKE SARDINIAN WINE THAT MARRIES WELL WITH SARDINIAN FOOD.**

**WE SPEAK SARDINIAN FIRST, THEN ITALIAN!**

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Is Cannonau also Grenache? Researchers believe the grape is Spanish and spread around the Med during centuries of Aragon rule, but Sardinians maintain it was theirs first, thousands of years earlier, making its way back to Aragon perhaps in the 1400's.

**Winery** The Pala family has been steadily growing their wine holdings since 1950. They now have 8 separate vineyards that are focused on distinctly Sardinian grapes, including the feature today - Cannonau di Sardinia. The Pala family still runs the show, but has entrusted winemaking duties to Fabio Angius, who over 25 years worked his way up the ranks to Managing Director, a role that includes international sales and marketing. His passion and skill have earned the winery many awards, including the prestigious Tre Bichierri award for their Cannonau Riserva.

**Region** Towards the south of the island, Sardinia showcases diverse landscapes of sweeping plains, coastal vines in white sand, and hillsides of vineyards planted near sites inhabited by Neolithic communities over 6000 years ago. Although quite hot, the climate is both Mediterranean and subtropical, providing water for irrigation of cereal grains and lots of fruit, especially grapes. Pala's Cannonau di Sardinia (cultivated for 500+ years) comes from a calcareous-sandy hill that rises nearly 1000 ft and is entirely covered by vines, aged 40-60 years old. This may be grape paradise.

**Wine** Within its lineup of reds and white wines, Pala has a strong affinity for Cannonau di Sardinia, a DOC wine made with the utmost attention and strict organic farming. The Centosere or 'one hundred evenings' is an homage to Sardinians longevity - one of the worlds 'Blue Zones' of longest living people. The Cannonau grape is renowned for its anti-aging properties. Centosere is balanced with bright red fruit aromas, hints of strawberry stems, a savory eastern mediterranean spice, and a soft, smooth finish.

**Pairing** The Pala wines are meant to pair with food. Cannonau's big taste / medium body profile means you can pair with a delicious Summer meal that is big in flavor, but doesn't overwhelm. Try with a fettuccine pasta, spiced with za'atar, fresh basil, and cherry tomatoes (perfect in September.) Add a bit more substance with grilled eggplant or salt & pepper rubbed pork chops. Is this the secret to reach 100? Maybe!

**Retail price \$27.00 | Member price: \$21.60**



*Fernando harvesting a 100 year old Garnacha vine*

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**THIS LIMITED PRODUCTION “MICRO” WINE IS THE RESULT OF ROWING AGAINST THE STREAM.**

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In all its glory, Spain continues to shine new light on a history of ancient grapes vines in remote regions. At Wines in Tandem, we are constantly impressed by the hard work and dedication of a new generation of winemakers bringing new life to old Spain.

**Winery** Bodegas Frontonio, like its peers in the next generation, is a relatively new endeavor by two wine geniuses. Winemaker Francisco Mora is a Master of Wine and engineer by training, and Mario Lopez (not the actor from *Saved by the Bell*) is the grapegrower from a family of grapegrowers. Their first vintage was only in 2010, and they have since grown to over 100 hundred acres, all certified organic. This is an amazing feat in such a short time. They processed their entire 2019 vintage (the one in your glass) in a newly restored 200 year old building in Alpartir, Valdejalón, Aragón.

**Region** Francisco and Mario’s love of wine comes in part from their location and their vineyards. Aragón is the disputed birthplace of Grenache (Garnache) and there is an old Grenache vineyard around every corner. Just a short drive from Zaragoza, the vines benefit from high elevation (over 3000’ in places) and complex soil types formed along the base of granite peaks. It’s almost like good historic wine was supposed to come from here, and it would be a shame if the next generation didn’t come back to these small rural regions and bring life back to the vines.

**Wine** This is natural winemaking. Old vine grapes are hand-harvested from organic, high elevation vineyards, fermented during a long maceration in old oak barrels, and given only a minuscule amount of SO<sub>2</sub> added before bottling. Each vintage of Supersonico is slightly different and the 2019 has a splash of Macabeo (a white wine) blended in. Seductive aromas and flavors include crunchy red fruits, dried cranberry, grill smoke, orange citrus, balsamic and licorice. Give it time to open up in the glass.

**Pairing** If you’re wondering why Americans don’t cook Spanish food, it’s because we were never taught it on TV. But we have the ingredients and the techniques are quite simple. Try *Lentejas de Aragón* (brown lentils with ham and mushrooms) and *Pollo al Chilindron* (braised chicken and red peppers). For bold home cooks with the skills and patience, *Paella Catalunya* with sausage and prunes is another winner.

**Retail price \$33.00 | Member price: \$26.40**

# DOM. GRAMENON

# POGINEE DE RAISINS



Michèle in the vineyard, Maxime in the winery

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**THE WHOLE VINEYARD  
IS CULTIVATED  
WITHOUT CHEMISTRY,  
WITH RESPECT FOR THE  
LIVING.**

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Categorizing a major region with one description or style comes with challenges. No American wine drinker would be faulted for putting Southern Rhone in the camp of ‘big bold, overripe, jammy’, but that would be missing the mark entirely with Domaine Gramenon and their single varietal Grenache wines, especially “Poignée de Raisins”.

**Winery** Gramenon is a mother-son operation that was reshaped after the tragic accident of her husband. Michèle and Maxime-François are strict practitioners of natural farming (certified organic and biodynamic) and minimal winemaking. Their strength lies in 30+ vintages and a creative attitude as winemakers and artists that comes from being secluded in Montbrison-sur-Lez, on the doorstep of the French Alps. They make 8 single varietal Grenache bottlings (8!) and over 20 total wines.

**Region** Montbrison-sur-Lez is located in the Drôme, about as far north as you can be in the Southern Rhone Valley. Here, amidst the backdrop of the foothills, the pushing from the Alps created sandy layers left by marine sediments, along with a significant amount of limestone. Many of the vineyards are planted in soils that also contain a higher percentage of clay left behind by the Lez and other rivers, and the large rocks or “galets” that dot the southern Rhone landscape, remnants of the Rhone glacier and river that originates in the Swiss Alps. Vines date back 120+ years, and the estate’s first plantings from the 1980’s are starting to hit their peak. It is, without a doubt, the quintessential family-owned winery for Wines in Tandem, where everything in their entire life is built around the land, the vine, and the wine.

**Wine** The deep ruby color and aromas from “Poignée des Raisins” meaning “a handful of grapes” are the perfect indicator of the liveliness of this wine. Characteristic of the *garrigue*, the local shrub-like flora that practically infuses the region’s wines with dried herb, lavender, potpourri, perfume and black pepper spice. Dark cherry flavors blend perfectly into the smooth yet spicy mouthfeel that unfolds into an incredible long finish. Turn on the bistro lights, and serve this slightly chilled.

**Pairing** Exploring Southern France is a dream for most foodies. Try with spelt gnocchi (a French grain), with fresh green beans and walnut sauce. A peppery rack of lamb and oven roasted fall squash would tie it all together. I’m expecting an invite :-)

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