vinetur

Laudun Elevated to Cru Status

Rhône Valley's White Wine Pioneer, Laudun, Achieves Cru Status

Saturday, September 21, 2024



Vineyards and village of Laudun in the background

Laudun, a village situated north of Lirac on the western bank of the Rhône River, has been elevated to Cru status. This promotion, officially confirmed on September 11, 2024, by the French National Institute of Origin and Quality (INAO), marks the first addition to the ranks of Côtes du Rhône Crus in nine years. The last such advancement occurred in 2015 when Cairanne achieved the coveted designation. For Laudun, this milestone is the culmination of more than a decade of efforts, with the initial

application for Cru recognition dating back to 2013.

Cru status in the Rhône Valley is a mark of excellence, representing the highest tier of classification in this renowned wine region. With this new addition, there are now 18 Crus in the Rhône, with 10 located in the southern Rhône and 8 in the northern part of the valley. For Laudun, which has held the Côtes du Rhône Villages designation with a geographical mention since 1967, this new status affirms its long-standing reputation for producing wines of exceptional quality.

The journey to Cru status has not been an easy one for Laudun's winemakers. Decades of hard work and persistence have been required to achieve this recognition. Local vintners have long argued for the official acknowledgment of the distinctive quality of their wines, and this promotion is seen as a triumph for the entire community. In joining the ranks of prestigious appellations such as Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Gigondas, and Hermitage, Laudun now stands among the elite producers of the Rhône Valley, a region celebrated for its diversity and excellence in wine production.

One of the distinguishing features of Laudun is the prominence of its white wines. In a region known predominantly for its reds, whites make up a notable 32% of Laudun's total wine production. This emphasis on whites helps to set Laudun apart and adds an important dimension to the Rhône's winemaking profile, which is already known for its wide-ranging styles and varietals. In 2023, Laudun's vineyard area covered 591 hectares, with a total production of 22,390 hectoliters of wine. The strong presence of white wines in this southern Rhône appellation highlights its role in diversifying the region's offerings.

Laudun's elevation comes at a time when other areas of the Rhône Valley are also evolving and advancing in their classifications. Gigondas, for instance, recently extended its Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) to include white wines starting with the 2023 vintage, following a unanimous vote in favor of the measure. This move was the result of years of discussion and analysis, further showcasing the Rhône's ongoing commitment to refining and expanding its wine classifications.

The example of Gigondas underscores the Rhône's continuous push towards innovation and quality. Both Gigondas and Laudun have had to meet rigorous standards set by the INAO, which oversees the classification of French wines and ensures that only the highest-quality vineyards achieve Cru status. This process guarantees that the wines from these regions maintain the exceptional quality that consumers have come to expect from the highest levels of French appellations.

The elevation of Laudun to Cru status adds to the Rhône's already rich tapestry of wine-producing areas. While much of the Rhône's reputation has been built on the strength of its red wines—particularly the powerful, age-worthy reds from appellations like Châteauneuf-du-Pape—the addition of more white-focused appellations like Laudun and the newly expanded Gigondas highlights the region's diversity.

This latest promotion is a sign that the southern Rhône, in particular, continues to evolve and redefine itself. While appellations in the northern Rhône, such as Hermitage and Côte-Rôtie, have long been celebrated for their Syrah-based reds, the southern Rhône is increasingly gaining recognition for its ability to produce high-quality wines across a variety of styles. From full-bodied reds to aromatic whites, the region now offers a broader spectrum of wines that appeal to a wide range of palates.

Laudun's new status as a Cru is expected to bring increased attention to the region, not only from wine critics and professionals but also from consumers who are eager to explore the diversity of Rhône wines. For the local winegrowers, this recognition is the fruit of years of dedication and effort, and it sets the stage for even greater achievements in the future.

The designation also comes with responsibilities, as the growers of Laudun must now adhere to even stricter standards to maintain the Cru designation. This includes everything from vineyard management practices to yield controls, all designed to ensure that the wines produced under the Cru banner continue to meet the highest standards of quality.

For the broader Rhône region, Laudun's promotion is a reminder of the dynamic nature of this historic wine-growing area. As winemakers in the Rhône continue to push boundaries and seek new ways to improve the quality of their wines, the addition of

Laudun as the 18th Cru solidifies the region's position as one of the most important and innovative in the world of wine.

Laudun's rise to Cru status is a significant moment for the Rhône Valley, representing the culmination of years of dedication from local vintners and further enhancing the region's reputation for producing wines of exceptional quality. With its unique emphasis on white wines, Laudun brings a fresh dimension to the Rhône's winemaking identity. As the region continues to evolve, the promotion of Laudun underscores the importance of tradition, innovation, and collective effort in the ongoing story of one of the world's most celebrated wine regions.