

## SOUTHWEST

## CÔTES-DE-DURAS

**MOUTHES LE BIHAN**  
**LOT-ET-GARONNE**


**OVERVIEW** | Catherine and Jean-Mary Le Bihan became passionate winemakers by chance. They settled in 1989 in Lot-et-Garonne, an area of mixed agriculture and the AOC Côtes-de-Duras vineyards. Situated South-East of Bordeaux, on the southern edge of Périgord and the Bergerac AOC, Côtes-de-Duras is a large appellation with 2200 hectares of vines (5500 acres) that make largely forgettable wines targeted for supermarket sales in France. The area has never been thought of as a source for fine wine, although the appellation has existed since 1937, and lives in the shadow of Bordeaux, with which it shares many of the same grape varieties.

**VINEYARD AREA:** 18 hectares

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 5800 cases

**SOIL TYPES:** marl and clay limestone

**GRAPE VARIETIES:** merlot, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, malbec

At first, the Le Bihans ran a service business for farmers, doing heavy agricultural work with big machinery. In 1997, they took over Jean-Mary's father's estate, which was mainly grains and grazing fields, but with 5 hectares of vines. Jean-Mary and Catherine knew nothing about viticulture and winemaking and had to ask their neighbors for the most basic of help.

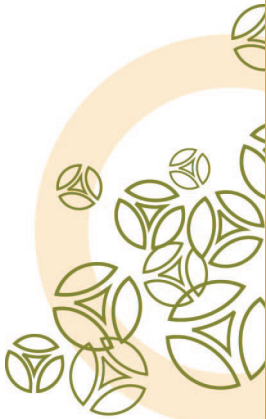
**VINEYARD/CELLAR PRACTICES** | After three vintages of making wines they did not like, and sold in bulk, they were ready to sort their best grapes and pick them by hand, and they made their first six barrels of red and two of white. From then on, they changed all their viticultural methods to organic practices, notably by pruning short, making the treillageage higher so that more foliage would be exposed to the sun, getting rid of superfluous bunches to keep yields low, and using exclusively organic fertilizers. They also started plantations of new vines at a much higher density than is common in the area, 5600 vines per hectare rather than 3000 vines, and selected low-yielding root-stocks.

They built a winery, bought vinification equipment and by the fall of 2000, they were able to pick their entire crop by hand. The average yields that year were 50hl/ha, and have since gone down to 30hl/ha in 2001 and 20hl/ha in 2002. Their vineyard acreage has grown to 18ha, and they still have other crops -- soy, lentils, wheat, sunflowers, fava beans, and prunes -- all grown organically. They have phased out the machinery business to concentrate on their vines and wines. Catherine also breeds Arabian horses, with a stable of 25.

**WINES** |

La pie Colette - 80% Merlot 20% Cabernet Sauvignon

Viellefont - 50% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc, 10% Malbec


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