



PLATINUM SERIES



Select, Ultra Premium, Collectable Wines from California's Best Winemakers

His route toward becoming a successful winery owner in California might be considered as somewhat circuitous, but French-born Stephan Asseo makes a serious point when explaining his current role as owner of L'Aventure.

"Life is truly a great adventure," he recently related. "You are faced with a series of challenges and decisions, and what you do ultimately guides your life."

Asseo won a scholarship in 1982 to the highly regarded L'Ecole Oenologique de Macon, Burgundy's great wine school. After graduation, he found prices on land in Burgundy extremely high so he opted for Bordeaux and its storied collection of great Chateaux. A close friend owned a Chateau in Pomerol, a small appellation and home to the marvelous Chateau Petrus and Asseo set about learning to make wines. Along the way, he also developed the reputation of a maverick Bordeaux winemaker.

In 1996, Stephan Asseo felt hampered by the strict rules of the Bordeaux appellation and decided to seek a new venue for his winemaking talents. He eventually came to California and looked at both Napa Valley and Sonoma. He sought a perfect terroir for his new venture, but availability and price forced him to continue his quest. He next tried Monterey County and finally explored the area around western Paso Robles where he finally found "a perfect place on which to grow my great assortment of vines." In the mind of Asseo, the rolling topography of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range with deep calcareous soils, along with the maritime influence of the renowned Templeton Gap all combine to produce a world-class wine growing location, with the potential to craft some of the world's greatest blends.

He considers his move to "Paso" as he calls it, "as just following my instincts. I knew what I wanted and finally found it. The soils were wonderful and the analysis that followed proved I was right about the spot. I had no initial idea about ocean influence, which has proven to be really important. The area produces extremely long cycles for the vines and makes for grapes with deep maturation."

The 68-acre tract was planted in numerous varieties that produced a total of 58 individual one-acre blocks, each carefully delineated by Asseo. He uses a

number of blends for his wines, a fact that sets him apart from most of his Paso Robles growing and wine-producing neighbors.

Stephan Asseo calls his phrase "the Paso Blend." The term is gaining momentum among local vintners that have embraced the marketing idiom in the fiercely competitive California wine market. As originator of the term, Asseo reaps the benefit of its success.

L'Aventure's first release of nearly 2,000 cases came in 1998 and was greeted with a great deal of early success. The wines have continued to gain momentum and L'Aventure now ranks high among the Central Coast's list of top wineries.

Excellent scores and awards have followed L'Aventure's wines throughout the winery's relatively short history.

Since 2008, all of L'Aventure's releases have earned estate status, part of Stephan Asseo's initial plan for the winery. "I want to be able to produce a little bit of everything, he explained further. "I have the grapes to easily produce a Bordeaux blend or a Chateaufeuf du Pape blend, but I don't want my wines to be a copy of either. L'Aventure is basically a family vineyard that is unlike any other in the area. I have very little ego, and I prefer to let my wines speak for themselves."

Asseo also admits to feeling more passion than business about his winery, a rather unique sentiment in the wine business. He has leveled off production at around 6,000 cases and will continue at that level in the foreseeable future.

"Since I do practically all the work at L'Aventure myself," he explained, "our current level allows me to have complete control of our quality. I think we are still breaking new ground with our wines and I still have some surprises for the future. After all, with a name like L'Aventure to work with, it would seem reasonable that our adventure would never end, right?"

The wines of Stephan Asseo and L'Aventure bring an adventuresome spirit to both the Central Coast region and to all of California's premier wine-producing areas. Asseo is a true pioneer at a time when revolutionary winemaking and innovative wine introduction is a more than risky enterprise. L'Aventure is to be commended for their efforts.



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Dear *Platinum Series* Members,

I am pleased to present to you my 2010 *Optimus*. *Optimus* is my flagship wine, and my *raison d'être* for being here in America. It was in order to make this Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah blend that I left Bordeaux after 17 vintages, and my family and I came here to Paso Robles' west side, where we have resided since 1998. Here I have the freedom to craft blends of my *terroir*, not simply of the appellation.

Our west side *terroir* is unique, and has the potential to produce world-class wines. Hillside topography, calcareous soils, and our Templeton Gap maritime influence combine to make it so. Here, a diverse number of varieties are able to flourish, including my Bordeaux varieties Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, as well as the Rhône varieties for which our AVA is fast becoming known. When I first created *Optimus* in 1998, it was the only Cabernet/Syrah blend in the area, and everybody took me as a crazy French guy! Today, there are more than a dozen, and, maybe, this blend really is becoming a signature for Paso Robles, as well as for L'Aventure!

L'Aventure 2010 *Optimus* is a blend of 55% Syrah, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 18% Petit Verdot, my signature "Paso blend!" Made from fruit that is farmed utilizing biodynamic practices, it is the product of a rigorous selection process in the vineyards, as well as inside the winery. Beginning with our 2,200 vines per acre high-density plantation, we exercise carefully selected shoot thinning and cluster dropping, which result in roughly 30% to 40% of our crop being dropped on the ground. Inside the winery, two sorting tables and a *saignee* of the fermenting red musts provide further selection. By March following the vintage, as I begin the blending process, I have my best resources before me, and am able to blend accordingly.

Syrah simply brings something to Cabernet that the other Bordeaux varieties cannot, its exuberance deftly countering the grip and strength of Cabernet Sauvignon. 2010 *Optimus* is deep ruby in color, with bright cherry, powdered cocoa, and mineral notes in the aroma. Lush red and black fruit, with pronounced blueberry, wash over the palate in a rich attack. Leather and a peppery zest underpin the fruit, which finishes long and well integrated in soft tannins and subtle French oak. While this wine is drinking well today, it will continue to develop in bottle and drink well for another decade, so please save a few bottles for 5-6 years! Enjoy it with your favorite grilled meats (duck and lamb are among our favorites!), a rich ragout, wild mushroom risotto, a good cassoulet....!

Merci!

Best Regards,

Stephan Asseo
Vigneron

L'Aventure....where Bordeaux meets the Rhone!

TASTING NOTES

94 POINTS

-The Rhône Report

92 POINTS

-Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

The 2010 *Optimus* is a classically-styled wine that truly embodies the winery's saying 'L'Aventure...where the Bordeaux meets the Rhône!' This beautifully blended red wine is comprised of 55% Syrah, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 18% Petite Verdot to achieve a unique complexity with layers of complementing aromas and flavors. Inky purple in color, the 2010 *Optimus* has ripe dark berry and cherry aromas with hints of cocoa, cola, and anise. A wave of lush fruit attacks the palate with cherry and blueberry, underpinned by leather, cassis, violets, and a peppery zest. The silky texture and juicy mouthfeel gives way to a spicy, vibrant finish with soft tannins and hints of dark berry and French oak. The purity in this wine is exceptional. Aged 14 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2020.

ORDERS

L'Aventure
2010 Optimus

Retail Price at the Winery: \$45.00

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