

Tariquet & Domaine Joy

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Recently I reported on the wines of [Madiran and Pacherenc du Vic-Bilh](#). Whilst on the same trip I managed to visit two of Southwest France's best-known producers of both Armagnac and table wines under the Côtes de Gascogne appellation, Tariquet & Domaine Joy.

Tariquet

The family Grassa (today led by the indomitable Maité Tariquet, right) bought their business in 1912, originally growing vines only for making Bas Armagnac. Based around a lovely 1683 château, the latest members of the dynasty to be involved are Maité's nephews, Armin and Rémy. It was their father Yves who was the first to switch some of their production to table wines in 1982, and that first vintage took a gold medal in the Montpellier wine competition, then gold again with their second and third vintages too, I presume dispelling any doubts the family may have had about the decision.



Pioneers of wine making here in Gascony, they also planted international varieties including Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc and Semillon, later to be joined by Merlot and Syrah. In fact this is the largest family-owned estate in France, with 900 hectares of vines producing both Armagnac and table wine. They have 26 years of stock for their Armagnac and Maité tells me: "we need a large inventory to make a homogenous blend." All Armagnacs and wines come from estate vines, and various different wines and brands are available from stockists including The Wine Society, Caves de Pyrène and Stone Vine & Sun. See all UK stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

the wines

Domaine du Tariquet, Classic 2010

Only 11% alcohol (some vintages it is only 10.5%). 70% Ugni Blanc and Colombard. Fresh apple skin tang, with lemony fresh fruit. Very crisp, perhaps a little modest in the mid palate, a touch dilute, but then it has a lovely tangy orange and lemon finish. 85-86/100. £5.00. (Sold as Domaine de Planterieu in Waitrose)

Domaine du Tariquet, Sauvignon 2010

Very nice Sauvignon nose, with a lightly green, herby touch to the nose. The palate has plenty of crunch. There's a softening edge of peach skin sweetness, but the focus of the zesty lemon fruit pulls through the slightly underpowered mid-palate to again leave this fresh and crisp. 85/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, Chenin Chardonnay 2010

60% Chenin, 40% Chardonnay, the Chardonnay aged 10% in new oak. Slightly neutral nose, a little apple skin and a little touch of green herbs. The palate has a nice fullness and quite a punchy character, with a touch of oatmeal and a really punchy finish. 86-87/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, Chardonnay 2010

This has 10% of new oak ageing (using inner staves from Seguin Moreau). Gently mealy nose, with a tight apple fruitiness, some lemon freshness. On the palate it has a little bit of weight, and retains that white fruit racy tautness and acid character. 86/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, Coté Chardonnay Sauvignon Blanc 2009

50/50 Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, co-fermented. They are harvested at the same time, which means Chardonnay is picked late and Sauvignon early. Quite a mealy note to this again, but an orangy fruit brightness comes through with a little herbal cut. The palate is very pleasing with an exotic fruit character and a hint of sweetness with around 10% residual sugar. 86/100. £8.25, Wine Society.

Domaine du Tariquet, Les 4 Reserve 2009

40%, Gros Manseng, 30% Chardonnay, 20% Sauvignon and 10% Semillon. Aged six months in French oak. The oak is giving a gently toasty depth to the nose, with hints of vanilla and honey, and clean orchard fruits beneath. The palate has a mouth-filling texture and has a real core of sweetness, and a nice, punchy personality. I find something about it that is just a touch cloying, but I am told it is dry with 4-5g/l of residual sugar. 86/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, Chardonnay Tete de Cuvée 2009

Made only in the best vintages. Fermentation and one year in barrel with battonage. Lots of creamy, smoky and custardy oak dominating here over that dry apple and melon fruit. The

palate has masses of spice and oak too: rather too much for the dry, sweet but quite restrained, white fruit. The finish has a juiciness, but again I get this impression of slight sweetness that I'd prefer not to notice against such relatively cool fruit character. 87/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, Rosé de Presse 2010

Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Tannat. Light, vibrant cherry colour. Creamy strawberry nose, with a pleasing redcurrant dryness on the mid-palate, and then a trace of sweetness comes through. Easy drinking and enjoyable. 85/100. £6.95, Museum Wines Wiltshire.

Domaine du Tariquet, Marselan Rosé 2010

2009 was first vintage from the Marselan vineyard planted in 1999 (Marselan is a cross of Grenache and Cabernet Sauvignon). Tariquet say there were lots of experiments before deciding to make and bottle this rosé, a tiny proportion of which is barrel aged. Drier, with a rosehip and cranberry dryness, a very nice fresh finish that has a bit of tannin and grip, and very good, gastronomic acidity. 87/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, Les Premieres Grives 2010

100% Gros Manseng. Medium-sweet, harvested as normal but fermentation stopped with around 50% of sugar remaining. 11% alcohol. Creamy on the nose, there is quite a lot of sweetness, a sweet pear and juicy ripe apple character, the acidity is good, though the finishing impression is quite sweet. The suggestion is to drink this as an aperitif, with foie gras or with light, fruity desserts. 86/100. £8.29, Tanners

Domaine du Tariquet, Les Dernieres Grives 2010

100% Petit Manseng. Harvested when they see the last flights of thrushes (grives) flocking to leave for Morocco in September. 100g/l of residual sugar. More figgy and overripe on the nose, with one year in French oak adding creamy richness. The palate has delicious sweetness with an exotic richness of mango and lychee, and a fuller, more viscous mouth-feel. The acidity is very good here, and it seems to me to be a more complete wine than the Premieres. 89/100.

Domaine de Mage, Merlot Syrah 2009

A tiny bit reductive, but with crisp, crunchy red fruits and a background of lightly spicy, earthy character, perhaps enhanced by 10% of barrel ageing for the Syrah component. The palate is very dry, with a cherry ripeness to the fruit, but drying tannins and a certain freshness in the finish. 86/100.

Domaine de Mage, Tete den Cuvee 2008

100% Syrah, spending one year in barrels, around 50% new. Still that tiny note of reduction, but much deeper, more gamey and leathery aromas, with dark berry fruit and some coffee and spice. The palate has lots of grip - no shortage of tannins here - and the fresh acidity lifts the finish, the fruit dry but quite light. 88/100.

Domaine du Tariquet, l'Idée Folle

Gros Manseng, Chardonnay and Sauvignon, like a Floc de Gascogne with Eau de Vie of Folle Blanche added to stop fermentation. 17% alcohol. The nose has a pleasantly woody note, fig and quince, and a straw-like note. On the palate it is fully sweet, with nice length and a lovely crunch. A lovely aperitif style, not unlike a white Port. 87/100.