

## DOMAINE JEANDAUGE

GERES, SOUTHWEST FRANCE · FRANCE



SÉBASTIEN FEZAS

The sheep arrived before the good wine did. Sébastien Fezas took over his family's estate in Courrensan in 2012 – deep in Bas-Armagnac country, where his father had spent decades selling bulk wine at sixty cents a liter to négociants. Fezas stopped the herbicides immediately and planted cover crops, but healing the soil took years. His first natural vintage didn't come until 2017: around 330 cases of rosé and about 40 cases of an oxidative Chardonnay. That was it.

The estate is large by natural wine standards – twenty-eight to thirty hectares of vines – but Fezas only vinifies about two under his own label: a hectare of Syrah, a half-hectare each of Tannat and Colombard-Ugni Blanc. The rest is sold wholesale. He also distills Armagnac, aging it in casks that sit quietly in the dark.

What fills the vineyard besides vines is what makes Jeandauge unusual. Fifty sheep graze between the rows, keeping the cover crops in check and returning what they eat to the soil. Warré beehives stand at the vineyard's edge. Twenty birdhouses and bat boxes hang from posts and trees. Fezas plans to plant trees directly within the vine blocks – vitiforesterie, the French call it – blurring the line between agriculture and forest.

He has added zero sulfites since 2020. His experiments push further: pétillant naturels, oxidative whites aged for years in casks without topping up, letting air do what most winemakers spend their careers preventing.

The scale he wants is smaller, not larger. He plans to reduce the estate to around fifteen hectares – enough for the sheep, the bees, the bats, and a few thousand bottles of wine that couldn't come from anywhere else.

The Gers is quiet country. Rolling hills, sunflower fields, Armagnac cellars older than most villages. The sheep move slowly through the Tannat vines, pulling at the grass.

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### WINES AVAILABLE

#### CUVÉE



**Franche Lippee Syrah VDF 2022**

Vin de France

Syrah

Zero added sulfites since 2020. Fifty sheep graze the rows; beehives, birdhouses and bat boxes at the vineyard edge. Two of thirty hectares vinified under the label.